

THE FUNCTION OF SYMBOL AND METAPHOR:
A STUDY OF KAFKA'S THE TRIAL AND
MELVILLE'S PIERRE OR, THE AMBIGUITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

This study began originally out of an interest in the nature of Franz Kafka's popularity in America. I emphasized thematic relationships between Kafka and American authors of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries early in my research, but then turned from an examination of specific social themes to problems of aesthetics as well. Poetic perception, early English Romantic theorists held, is a matter of investing an object with that quality of life which arises out of the perceiver's sensibility. Perception is active, permitting--indeed, demanding--the subject's unity with the object in his act of conceiving it.

This concept provides the basis for the extreme sense of vulnerability which Kafka's protagonists feel in the presence of their environment. The nature of their perception forces the world to confront and reject them. The same is true in some of Melville's works, especially in Moby-Dick and Pierre or, The Ambiguities. In the latter, the hero conceives a stranger as his sister, a fact which also leads to his conception of the social environment as false. Since the identification of Pierre's conception and perception force him out of the given social structure, but provides no alternative mode of life, he perishes, just like many of Kafka's protagonists.

The basis of the aesthetic study in this thesis is Ernst Cassirer's Language and Myth, in which Cassirer shows that in mythic thought language draws man into a unity with objects. Extending this phenomenon to literature, I hold that

poetic or metaphoric language also unites subject and object. Thus poetic perception leads one into a unity with the object of perception. Metaphoric thought breaks through logical systems, permitting one not only to find significance but also have ~~have~~ meaning revealed. Kafka's strength lies in revealing meaning which defies systematization, as I attempt to show in a study of "A Country Doctor."

Since I did not adopt this approach to literature until I began my work on Kafka and Melville, this paper is more of an attempt at an integration of these thoughts than primarily a comparison of Kafka and Melville or a definitive work on either. I do not concern myself with any specific relationships between the two authors in terms of mutual influences, nor do I attempt to place them into a similar Weltanschauung in terms of categories such as "existentialism" or "alienation." Nevertheless, I think that the study does show basic similarities regarding attitudes both toward society and toward literature.

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INTRODUCTION

This study began originally out of an interest in the nature of Franz Kafka's popularity. Next to Bertold Brecht, Kafka is probably the most widely read German author of the twentieth century on this continent. My first concern was primarily thematic and thus I read extensively in twentieth-century writers who dealt with the themes of naivete, guilt, and alienation. Gradually, however, I turned from the study of specific social themes to more aesthetic problems, especially as they have been formulated by Romantic theory. In The Mirror and the Lamp, M. H. Abrams presents a history of Romanticism which explains the significance of the change from using the image of the mirror to the image of the lamp or fountain to describe the nature of poetry. Poetic perception, the early Romantic theorists held, was a matter of investing the object with the quality of life which arose out of the perceiver's sensibility. Hence the poetic image became the congruence of outer object and inner emotion.

This concept aids the critic of Kafka's works a great deal, for it stresses the active nature of perception, and points to the poet's unity with the object. It also provides the basis for the extreme sense of vulnerability which Kafka's protagonists feel in the presence of objects of the external world. Turning to American literature again, I found this sense of the unity between man and nature especially strong in the

works of the American Romantics of the nineteenth century. In Melville especially I found a novelist in whose best work the division between outer activity and inner sensibility vanishes. I also found in Melville the themes of naivete, guilt, and alienation which I had found in Kafka. Since these appeared the strongest in Pierre Or, The Ambiguities, I decided to concentrate on a comparison of Kafka's The Trial and Melville's Pierre. Melville's novel was further suitable for my study because in this book Melville treats critically the basis of his whole art as it arises out of the Romantic insistence that the poet enters into relationship with the object of his perception.

As a result of my interest in this area I began reading further. According to Susanne Langer in Philosophy in a New Key, the chief obstacle to understanding the phenomena of the mind is the conviction that the mind is passive in perceiving reality. In fact, she argues that the very opposite is true, for, as the nineteenth-century Romantic critics, both English and continental, had discovered, the mind is active in perceiving the world---for mind does not only perceive the world, it also conceives the world. As the mind meets new experiences, it objectifies them by naming them, and thereby it is able to retain them in its memory. In primitive cultures this naming activity goes on constantly, as new experiences are added to the reservoir of man's knowledge. As culture and language evolve, however, this naming activity gives way gradually to the use of words which, through constant use, gain those fixed meanings which form the basis of our discursive language. The activity of naming becomes

weaker and weaker, until it seems to stand in direct contrast to simple discursive language, which has become the norm. Thus the difference between the "presentational" and the "discursive" symbol arises.

Owen Barfield and Martin Foss also discuss these two different aspects of language, applying their knowledge directly to the study of literature as they present their theories. Because of my interest in this area of thought, I decided to adapt the thrust of my work on Kafka and Melville to these aspects of Romanticism in order to gain more freedom to examine the application of these theories to literature. I determined to make this study of the nature of language the basis not of a comparative work, but of a mutual study of both authors. Hence my study will take the form of a mutual interpretation of Kafka and Melville. This format has also been used in Mark Spilka's study of Kafka and Dickens, for instance, or Geoffrey Hartman's study of Wordsworth, Valéry and Rilke.

Since this whole area of thought is still rather new to me, this paper is more of an attempt at an integration of what I have been studying than a definitive paper on either Kafka or Melville. Nevertheless, I am confident that for me this paper contains valuable insights into both Kafka and Melville, and that it can act as a base for a further study of both authors. The simple juxtaposition of the two authors has proved valuable in itself, for it has forced me to consider facets of their works which have received less study than other aspects of their work.

In Kafka, for instance, it reveals the nature of his symbolic art, while in Melville, the juxtaposition leads to a closer study of the relationship of the aesthetic aspects and the social aspects of the "poetic novel." Further, I think a study like this is valuable, because in pointing to the similarity of the two authors, it invites the transference of criticism from one to the other. Kafka's critics could learn, for instance, not to ask questions like, "What does the Castle represent?" for that type of question has been shown to lead nowhere in the study of Moby-Dick. Thus the castle or the court is what it does, just as the white whale is just what it does. Just as Moby-Dick is not God or the devil, so the court is not heaven or hell. Melville's critics, on the other hand, could learn to look for the social implications of the works, thereby finding Melville not only a consummate master in handling an open form but also a person of a very keen social conscience.

In conclusion, I repeat that this is not primarily a comparative study, nor is it a study of influences of one author on the other. It is doubtful that Kafka ever read any of Melville's works, for Moby-Dick was first translated into German in 1927. It is probable, however, that both Kafka and Melville were influenced by German Romanticism, but that is a problem which goes beyond the scope of this essay. Here I deal with the nature of metaphor and poetic thought as it applies to what has been termed symbolic or mythic literature, dealing especially with Kafka's "A Country Doctor" and The Trial and with Melville's Pierre Or, The Ambiguities.

CHAPTER I

STORED IN ONE'S HOUSE: "A COUNTRY DOCTOR"

In attempting to explain the work of Franz Kafka, criticism involuntarily enters the world of Kafka as he himself found it. The difficulties faced by both Kafka and his critics are problems which have dogged philosophers through the centuries: what is real knowledge; what is the meaning of meaning; and what is the reality of meaning? Kafka's short story "A Country Doctor" serves as an excellent point of departure for yet another attempt to chart the region overshadowed by Kafka's, and more generally man's, epistemological problems. In this task, one cannot but feel akin to the landsurveyor K., who, upon entering the village dominated by the castle, quickly finds himself without instructions or duties of any kind.

Like the landsurveyor and many other Kafka characters, such as the country doctor and Joseph K., critics have often accepted the assistance of helpers in the form of theologians, sociologists or psychologists, but often the various helpers have proven to be no more helpful than K.'s assistants, Artur and Jeremias, or Joseph K.'s aids such as the lawyer Huld or his nurse Leni. In my study I propose to find a possible area which would include both these popular approaches of theology and psychology, while getting nearer to the dilemma that not only Kafka,

but many other writers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries face as well. One can say that today these problems are not only the concern of literature, but also the concern of philosophy, religion and psychology as well, since all these areas of study concern themselves with the nature of reality. This is the central problem in "A Country Doctor" and also the central problem of this thesis.

Along with the rest of Kafka's works, "A Country Doctor" has often been described as symbolistic. Hence critics have set out to explain what the symbols represent, thereby hoping to determine what the story really means, since, in their approaches the story is obviously inconclusive as it is written. This symbolic approach makes several assumptions about literary criticism without ever stating them; assumptions which, if considered and stated, would clarify some of the difficulties in the criticism of "symbolistic" works. A few critics of "A Country Doctor" have recognized some of these basic assumptions and have pointed out the fallacies of critics who have not. Nevertheless, many of these who have recognized part of the traditional error have not been able to correct it since they have remained within the same basic framework of criticism. Maurice Beebe's Literary Symbolism,¹ an anthology of works and criticism on symbolism in literature, contains Kafka's short story as well as three critical essays on it. All three essays are based on the assumption that the story must be made meaningful in terms of some accepted category of literature, or that it must be explained logically in order to have meaning. Because they pinpoint the difficulties

of a great deal of criticism of "symbolistic" works, I will use the three essays as the basis of argument in this chapter. Margaret Church,² who includes other works of Kafka in her argument, states that Kafka criticism has tended to be too narrow, that Kafka writes "of all human experience and thought, leaving the reader with a wide range of interpretation." In the same paragraph, however, she also says that "[any] interpretation of Kafka requires a point of view toward his works." The approach is that though several approaches may be correct, some defined approach, which must necessarily exclude other approaches must be taken. Thus she interprets this story, as well as The Trial and The Castle, as a quest.

Stanley Cooperman states, "It is necessary to accept a simple dream narrative as the literal level of 'A Country Doctor,' since only a dream can give it any literal meaning whatsoever."³ His article goes on to extract the literal meaning by subjecting the story to a psychological interpretation. Then he shows how the story may also be interpreted as a "symbolic restatement of the classical existential situation," in which an individual is confronted with a crisis to which the doctor's cry, "I could see no way out," is an "echo of the philosophers of crisis from Kierkegaard to Sartre." Like Church, he concludes that the work cannot be exhausted by any isolated interpretation: it is "a weaving and reweaving of many themes, and it cannot be approached bluntly or singlemindedly." Yet, he has presented two mutually exclusive interpretations, thus contradicting his statement that

both "must occupy the same space at the same time." They cannot as I will show later in this study (pp. 40-41).

In the third essay in Beebe's collection, Basil Busacca attempts to integrate the various approaches by proposing that Kafka, like Aesop, concerns himself not with specific situations, but with relationships which these situations display: "The mean-
ing could be expressed in the x's and y's of symbolic logic more economically than in language, albeit, less charmingly, because it is concerned with particular relations and not with specific termini. . . . The formula of relations (the meaning) may, like a proverb such as 'A stitch in time saves nine,' be applied to any set of specific termini whose relations may be conceived as analogous."⁴ Busacca thus attempts to find a solution for the problem that Cooperman and Church point out by saying that interpretations approaching the work from one point of view are inadequate. Busacca goes on to interpret the story by substituting different termini in four different situations, in effect giving four different interpretations for the story. In doing this Busacca, however, does not solve the problem since he too is finally forced to provide single-minded interpretations which, insofar as they retain a logical pattern, must remain mutually exclusive as individual essays. He cannot, for instance, unite his existential, psychological and religious interpretations into one unified essay, just as Cooperman cannot, in spite of his assertions of the validity of his basic pattern.

All three critics agree that Kafka presents a whole of human experience, "the stuff of the human soul," according to

Cooperman. Yet they also agree that he can only be approached by breaking down this whole, by examining him in mutually exclusive segments till all have been exhausted. Though this attitude impresses any reader of the immense depth of Kafka's writings, it also destroys the works as the reader first meets them. It assumes that the work is not somehow "alive" as an experience, both within itself and within the reader. This brings us back to the original assertion that Kafka's writing is meaningless until it is deciphered, until it is brought into the framework of some categories which give it "literal meaning." The assumption is that meaning is dependent on some accepted category of thought such as psychology, existential philosophy, or religion. The result is the difficulty that Busacca especially tries to overcome in pointing to a basic formula which is to integrate the various interpretations. As logical systems, they must, however, be mutually exclusive, since each approach attempts to solve the same problems as the other approach.

The question that follows naturally from this is whether meaning itself is in some way isolated in terms of rational categories. If meaning can be known only as it becomes isolated, a writer like Kafka can only be approached from a myriad of mutually exclusive positions. In that case, to gain the meaning of Kafka's work one must become a mental acrobat, leaping from meaning to exclusive meaning--until, on the one hand one postulates that Kafka must have had serious mental difficulties in order to write like that, or, on the other hand, until one assumes that Kafka is concerned with the absurd; that the mean-

ing of his work is the paradox that there is no meaning. Neither of these solutions is adequate, since both fly in the face of the widespread and enduring responsiveness of readers to Kafka and other writers like him whose works also defy a single-minded approach on the part of the reader.

Rather than continuing in speculation, we can turn to "A Country Doctor" in an attempt to find a new point of departure for an understanding of Kafka, and perhaps other symbolistic fiction as well. ^{It does not begin as a conventional story: the first sentence is not a telling sentence; it's physical perplexity of Kafka's own.} Kafka's narrative begins as a conventional story.

x The dramatic setting is introduced in the first sentence, and the
 y second sentence provides the background for this setting. The doctor is in great perplexity; he has a patient, seriously ill, waiting for him in a village ten miles away. Though he is ready to go, he cannot because his horse has just died as a result of the hard work in the severe winter. The suspense increases as the doctor thinks about his situation. Logically nothing can be done; his own horse is dead, and though his servant girl is now in the village trying to find another horse, the situation is hopeless; no one will lend him a horse in this weather for fear it also will die. Everything is perfectly clear--logic tells him he cannot fulfill his obligation by meeting the needs of the patient.

At this point the story becomes unconventional. Confused and tortured, the doctor, who until now has been physically inactive, kicks at the door of a pigsty, long unused, in desperation; the door opens and swings back and forth on its hinges. Warmth

and a smell of horses reaches the doctor; a blue-eyed man crawls out, asking whether he shall harness the team. At this point the servant-girl says, "One never knows what is stored in one's house."⁵ This statement focuses the events of the story up to this point, and directs the further progression of the narrative. Rather than being logical, explaining the inexplicable situation in terms of some external point of reference, the statement is proverbial and fuses the experience into the condition of human existence as man has experienced it in history. The girl's statement, as simple evocation of truth, stands in contrast to the doctor's logical thought which establishes his dilemma. Though Kafka omits the transitions by inserting semi-colons in his sentences, the progression of thought is clear from the first phrase of the story. The dilemma is presented in simple cause and effect reasoning: "I was in great perplexity [because] I had to start on an urgent journey [because] a seriously ill patient was waiting for me ... [because] a thick blizzard of snow filled all the wide spaces between him and me ... [because] there was no horse to be had, no horse." Why was there no horse? "[Because] my own horse had died [because] it had been worn out by the fatigues of this icy winter." The girl appears without a horse from the village because no one will lend her one because it too would be endangered by the long trip.

By using semi-colons rather than verbal transitions, Kafka seems to present the situation as conclusive without emphasizing the logical process. Like the proverbial situation pointed out by Rose, the girl, this situation too seems to fit into the pat-

of life as it is experienced. The difference is that the experience that is acknowledged by the proverb resolves the impasse which the doctor has reached. It introduces another one, of course, but as we shall see, further difficulties are precipitated by the way the doctor conceives them. In this case, the doctor becomes totally revitalized by acknowledging what he has stored in his house. While the girl is in the village the doctor stands forlornly, the snow gathering more and more thickly upon him while he is more and more unable to move. In kicking open the pigsty door, however, the doctor's experience changes radically. Before he is fully aware of the consequences of his action, his immobility as well as the blizzard have passed. In a moment he finds himself at his patient's home which is flooded with moonlight.

Professor Cooperman is correct in recognizing that the story, as it is, has no literal meaning. In asserting that one must find a literal meaning for the story by subjecting it to a psychoanalytical interpretation though, he fails to follow the progression of the story, which presents the reader with a meaning that defies the traditional dependence on logic. Again we are thrust back to Rose's statement which points to the qualitative difference in the experience of the doctor. The existence of the groom is uncaused, it simply becomes; the existence of the earlier impasse, in contrast to this condition, is very logical--it is clearly caused by a series of related events. As the story continues this condition of simply experienced events is continually interrupted by logical events as the doctor

considers his situation, until, at the end, refusing to reflect on his situation any longer, the doctor concedes that once one has lost his grip on experience, he cannot help but give himself over to the progression of events just as they happen.

The dilemma of man in his compulsion for order is the dilemma of Kafka's protagonists. Like Kafka's critics, the protagonists themselves attempt to establish literal meanings in their own existence as they are confronted with life as it is conceived in a directness unbroken by reflection, which functions divisively. In attempting to do what Kafka's protagonists cannot do, many critics place themselves outside the essential progression of the stories. The critics themselves become Kafka's protagonists as they are confronted with the undifferentiated experience of Kafka's works. Yet to argue that Kafka's works concern themselves only with finding literal meaning is to miss the entire realm of meaning that is poetic rather than literal, meaning that is more basic than literal meaning which can be logically defined. Indeed, this poetic meaning is itself the ground out of which logical meaning arises, it is the ground which includes the totality of experience which constantly eludes those who search only for literal meaning. Unlike literal meaning, this poetic meaning is not static, it cannot be defined apart from its existence in a work, for it exists only within the process of a work of art.

In "A Country Doctor" therefore, we have a two-fold duty; first, to examine the dilemma of the doctor's attempt to establish and to enforce a literal meaning in his very existence;

secondly, to examine the dilemma of the critic in resolving the doctor's search for meaning with the thrust of the poetic meaning of the work as a process of meaning which illuminates existence as a complete totality. In other words, the function of the critic should be to follow Kafka rather than Kafka's protagonists. A short narrative entitled "Gespräch mit dem Betrunkenen," an early work of Kafka's, introduces us into the heart of the first problem. In order to follow the progression of thought I will quote the beginning of the narrative without omission:

Als ich aus dem Haustor mit kleinen Schritten trat, wurde ich von dem Himmel mit Mond und Sterne und großer Wölbung und von dem Ringplatz mit Rathaus, Mariensäule und Kirche überfallen.

Ich ging ruhig aus dem Schatten ins Mondlicht, knöpfte den Überzieher auf und wärmte mich; dann ließ ich durch Erheben der Hände das Sausen der Nacht schweigen und fing zu überlegen an:

"Was ist es doch, daß ihr tut, als wenn ihr wirklich wäret. Wollt ihr mich glauben machen, daß ich unwirklich bin, komisch auf dem grünen Pflaster stehend? Aber doch ist es schon lange her, daß du wirklich warst, du Himmel, und du Ringplatz bist niemals wirklich gewesen."

"Es ist ja wahr, noch immer seid ihr mir überlegen, aber doch nur dann, wenn ich euch in Ruhe lasse."

"Gott sei Dank, Mond, du bist nicht mehr Mond, aber vielleicht ist es nachlässig von mir, daß ich dich Mondbenannten noch immer Mond nenne. Warum bist du nicht mehr so übermütig, wenn ich dich nenne 'Vergessene Papierlaterne in merkwürdiger Farbe.' Und warum ziehst du dich fast zurück wenn ich dich 'Mariensäule' nenne, und ich erkenne deine drohende Haltung nicht mehr, Mariensäule, wenn ich dich nenne, 'Mond der gelbes Licht wirft.'"

"Es scheint nun wirklich, daß es euch nicht gut tut, wenn man über euch nachdenkt; ihr nehmt ab an Mut und Gesundheit."°

This passage is interesting not only because it reveals the activity of Kafka's poetic conception, thereby assisting one in entering other works of his, but also because it parallels so

closely what students of language and philosophy have discovered about the history of language as it relates to perception and the development of knowledge.⁷ In this short section the conditions of the environment change actively as the narrator considers them reflectively in detail. To dismiss this activity as an aberration of the narrator's perception, as one naturally tends to, is to cut oneself off from an understanding of the activity taking place in the work itself. On the other hand, an understanding of the activity would also demand a change in ideas about perception insofar as those ideas have dominated our philosophy at least since the eighteenth century. The problem centers around the difficulty we have in realizing that perception is not a passive process of the mind, that perception cannot take place without conception, which is the active process of engendering life when related to processes of the mind as well as to biological processes. Since an understanding of this concept is basic to my interpretation of Kafka, I will examine it in detail before continuing with my discussion of "A Country Doctor."

In Scepticism and Poetry D. G. James points out that Wordsworth and Coleridge derived their basic ideas about poetic perception and the poetic imagination from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Considering that aspect of Kant's philosophy which deals with the role of the mind in the perception of one's environment, James summarizes the revolutionary hypothesis of the German philosopher in this way:

But one thing is certain, that Kant presented a view of the human mind in knowledge which was radically different from those of his predecessors; and in general this

radical difference consists in his regarding the mind, not as essentially passive in the face of the world communicating itself to mind, but as essentially active in exercising certain powers which, he held, are a necessary condition of knowledge, and of knowledge of a world of objects The presence of objects existing in an ordered world is to be explained primarily not by the possible reality of such objects in an ordered world, but by the activity of the mind which operates on the limited material presented to it, synthesizes it in doing so, goes beyond it and represents to itself a world of objects.

James explains, however, that it is not the logical understanding which synthesizes concepts in the perception of an individual whole, for then the individual whole would be known "not as an individual but as an exemplification of certain concepts and principles."⁹ In order to account for the individual whole prior to the reflective analysis which works upon it, we must "ascribe the primary labour of synthesis not to the reflective analysis but to a logically prior and immediate grasp of the individual; and it is this labour of synthesis which we may call the activity of the imagination in knowledge."¹⁰

Coleridge based his theories of the primary and secondary imaginations on the foundation which Kant had laid. Poetry conceived by the secondary imagination is but an extension of the activity of the mind in physical perception. For Coleridge poetry and knowledge of the sensible world are essentially of one order, and in the first of his famous two paragraphs in the thirteenth chapter of the Biographia Literaria he asserts the unity of poetry and knowledge very directly:

The IMAGINATION then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of

creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify.

Just how closely the poetic imagination and knowledge of the sensible world are associated will become apparent in the course of this essay.

While Kant was preparing to write his epoch-making critique of reason, a fellow east-Prussian and sometime student of Kant's, Johann Gottfried Herder, was considering the origin of language. In a prize-winning essay entitled "Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache" in 1770, Herder refuted the concept of a divine source for the languages of mankind. By stating that language was the result of the development of man's mental capabilities, he laid a foundation for the difficult task of determining the true geneses of man's verbal communication. Though Herder himself could not prove conclusively that language, poetry, and religion had a common beginning in human pre-history, the problem was not lost to philosophical thought, and later German scholars did much to advance this area of thought and to spread many of their ideas until they became basic questions of western thinkers. With the wealth of a century's concentrated study on the problem of meaning and knowledge as background, Susanne Langer, in Philosophy in New Key, sets out to present the significance of the work of these predominantly German scholars. The main problem, as she presents it, is still a continuation of the problems that

Kant and Coleridge dealt with. Many, she says, still regard the mind as a passive organ of man, simply used to organize the data of perception to make it useful for man in his physical existence. Language then exists solely for the purpose of communicating knowledge, and all words exist for the purpose of conveying denotative meaning. Mrs. Langer assumes that this approach to language has been borrowed from the study of mathematics and of the sciences which were originally based on empiricism. Though mathematics cannot be considered empirical in the strict sense, it is allied to the sciences in its use of purely logical symbols which represent concepts just as symbols in the sciences represent empirical facts. Since words are also symbols, and since symbols are apparently invented for the sole purpose of referring to facts (concepts in absentia) it was taken for granted that the study of language should follow the same principles as the study of the sciences. Owen Barfield agrees with this analysis:

Our poets have not been much disposed to bother themselves with Hume and Coleridge and Goethe and all that. What they have done is to absorb, as it were through their pores, the findings of scientism and with them the underlying attitude from which it partly springs and which it in part begets. Accordingly they have presented us with the human spirit as bewildered observer or as agonized patient ... helpless to alter anything but his own pin-pointed subjective emotion.¹¹

He refers to John Locke as one of the principle early proponents of this approach to the origins of language. "His definitions of words are perfect models of abstract thought," says Barfield, "and he proceeded to attribute this defining activity of his own to primitive man, as the process by which language came

into being." Barfield quotes the following hypothetical example of Locke's:

"One of Adam's children ... roving in the mountains, light on a glittering substance which pleases his eye. Home he carries it to Adam, who, upon consideration of it, finds it to be hard, to have a bright yellow colour, and exceeding great weight. There, perhaps, at first, are all the qualities he takes notice of in it, and abstracting this complex idea, consisting of a substance having that peculiar bright yellowness, and a weight very great in proportion to its bulk, he gives the name zahab, to denominate and mark all substances that have these qualities in them. ¹²

Barfield terms this notion of the history of language a historical delusion. Mrs. Langer simply says that this direction of thought, though it has permitted the sciences to expand immeasurably, has led the study of language to an impasse. The methods of the natural sciences lead away from rather than toward the problems under scrutiny. "That," she says,

signifies that the generative idea which gave rise to physics and chemistry and all their progeny ... does not contain any vivifying concept for the humanistic sciences. The physicist's scheme, so faithfully emulated by generations of psychologists, epistemologists, and aestheticians, is probably blocking their progress, defeating possible insights by its prejudicial force. The scheme is not false--it is perfectly reasonable--but it is bootless for a study of mental phenomena. It does not engender leading questions and excite a constructive imagination, as it does in the physical researches. Instead of a method, it inspires a militant methodology.¹³

Though language functions through referential symbols just as do the sciences, which have achieved a remarkable advance because of their free use of symbolization, the study of the activity of the mind has not progressed because, from a common ground, symbolization proceeds in two distinct and incompatible directions. One course of symbolization leads to the logic of the sciences,

the other leads to the generation of the creative arts. And the common ground out of which both courses proceed is the constructive function of the human imagination.

The process of symbolization is rooted in the very nature of man, conceived not only as a rational but also as preëminently a creative being. Human thought is more than just a conditioned < response. "The symbol-making function is one of man's primary activities, like eating, looking, or moving about. It is the fundamental process of mind and goes on all the time."¹⁴ This does not mean that man simply names things he sees in order to manipulate them, for a "sign" is not the same as a "symbol;" to use Mrs. Langer's terms. "A sign indicates the existence--past, present or future--of a thing, event, or condition. ... The logical relation between a sign and its object is a very simple one: they are associated, somehow, to form a pair; that is to say, they stand in a one-to-one correlation. To each sign there corresponds one definite item which is its object, the thing ... signified."¹⁵ A sign is often a signal evoking direct action appropriate to the order of its object. On the other hand, "symbols are not proxy for their objects, but are vehicles for the conception of objects." She continues,

To conceive a thing or a situation is not the same thing as to 'react toward it' overtly, or to be aware of its presence. ... Of course a word may be used as a sign, but this is not its primary role.... In itself it is a symbol, associated with a conception, not directly with a public object or event. The fundamental difference between signs and symbols is this difference of association, and consequently of their use by a third party

to the meaning function, the subject; signs announce their objects to him, whereas symbols lead him to conceive their objects.¹⁶

It is this central function--the activity of conception--that is so important in symbolization. Symbolization is the activity of man conceiving his world, it is man's way of knowing. Through the conception of symbolization man presents the world to himself and himself to the world; he enters into a relationship with the world.

Clearly, this concept of symbolization differs from the other, more common form, in which symbols function strictly as representative of known factors, thus corresponding to the function of a sign as defined by Mrs. Langer. Such symbols, including much of our vocabulary, occur only after a language has advanced from its primary stages; it is the product of a purely conceptual symbol. In its early stages language does not explain, it presents reality to its conceiver, as Ernst Cassirer shows in his discussion of language and myth. Mythical concepts are not arbitrary attempts at entertaining oneself and others in the light of physical phenomena, they "are not culled from a ready-made world of Being,"

they are not mere products of fantasy which vapor off from fixed, empirical, realistic existence, to float above the actual world like a bright mist; to primitive consciousness they present the totality of Being. The mythical form of conception is not something super-added to certain definite elements of empirical existence; instead the primary "experience" itself is steeped in the imagery of myth and saturated with its atmosphere.¹⁷

Language is an integral part of the myth-making procedure; for the religious consciousness it is impossible to have one without

the other. In that sense the myth-making process is the language-making process. Barfield, in saying that the poetic conceptualization must be traced back to the "myth-making" period of language, asserts that the earliest meanings "were not arbitrary creations of 'poets,' but the natural expression of man's being and consciousness at the time. These primary 'meanings' were given, as it were, by Nature."¹⁸ Cassirer attempts to clarify this experience by equating it with the creation of what H. Usener¹⁹ terms momentary deities:

These beings do not personify any force of nature, nor do they represent some special aspect of human life; no recurrent trait or value is retained in them and transformed into a mythico-religious image; it is something purely instantaneous, a fleeting, emerging and vanishing mental content, whose objectification and outward discharge produces the image of the "momentary deity." Every impression that man receives, every wish that stirs in him, every hope that lures him, every danger that threatens him can affect him thus religiously. Just let spontaneous feeling invest the object before him, or his own personal condition, or some display of power that surprises him, with an air of holiness, and the momentary god has been experienced and created. In stark uniqueness and singleness it confronts us; not as a part of some force which may manifest itself here, there and everywhere, in various places and times, and for different persons, but as something that exists only here and now, in one indivisible moment of experience, and for only one subject whom it overwhelms and holds in thrall.²⁰

The myth-making and language-making processes thus come together in that language as conceptual symbolization is able to grasp and hold what has been objectified in the mind of the individual. In the naming of the "momentary gods" both the name and the god stand forth as one truth. The mythic and linguistic form emerge "in a process of almost violent separation and individuation."²¹

Introducing the union of language and myth, Cassirer says that "the mythmaking genius 'has' separate and individualized forms only in so far as it 'posits' them, as it carves them out of the undifferentiated whole of its pristine vision."²² The basis of both language and myth are laid in this one act.

At a great risk, we could simply say that the process of symbolization in myth is a process of objectification. The risk is present because normally, objectification presupposes the presence of a subjective ego which objectifies something. This concept of either a subjective ego or a separated object is foreign to the mythic consciousness, which can only effect the activity of symbolization as it experiences an active relationship with the object of its intuition, losing itself in it in a moment of intensity. Again, referring to the discovery of momentary gods, Cassirer describes the activity this way:

Instead of a widening of intuitive experience, we find here its extreme limitation; instead of expansion that would lead through greater and greater spheres of being, we have an impulse toward concentration; instead of extensive distribution, intensive compression. This focusing of all forces on a single point is the prerequisite for all mythical thinking and mythical formulation. When, on the one hand, the entire self is given up to a single impression, is 'possessed' by it and, on the other hand, there is the utmost tension between the subject and its object, the outer world; when external reality is not merely viewed and contemplated, but overcomes a man in sheer immediacy, with emotions of fear or hope, terror or wish fulfillment: then the spark jumps somehow across, the tension finds release, as the subjective excitement becomes objectified and confronts the mind as a god or a daemon.²³

The self recognizes the object of its intuition only in giving itself up completely to the reality it experiences; the two fuse into an indissoluble unity. In this process both the self and

the "momentary god" gain meaning in that each comprehends the other. The self recognizes the god as the experience of that which is immanent, and it recognizes itself as that which has entered a relationship with that "momentary god." One must be careful to qualify the process of objectification that has taken place because the self does not recognize itself as autonomous subject, nor does it recognize the god as autonomous object; both exist only as contingencies reacting upon each other, as two poles of a bi-polar unity.

The process of conceiving "momentary gods" as Usener describes it is, according to Cassirer, the process of conceiving language. The two are necessarily linked for the god comes into existence only as man conceives and fixates it by giving it a name. That name, be it for a god, or later in the evolution of man's consciousness, for another object of reality, arises out of the use of metaphor. The use of metaphor in this sense is so different from its accepted use today that Barfield chooses not even to call it a metaphor, but pure meaning.²⁴ Only the basic concept that the name of one object may be used to denote another is the same, but this concept is applied in a radically different way. Cassirer argues that a basic principle of all mythic thinking is that a part equals a whole. The name, therefore, of any entity applies equally to all of its parts. Indeed, as any individual part becomes the centre of attention, it is conceived as separate and complete in itself when it receives its name. Individual experience, related unconsciously to all parts of that experience, receives the same name.

If, however, the part equals the whole, the part becomes the whole, conceived through the name of the whole.

The similarity of the aspect fixed by the word causes all other heterogeneity among the perceptions in question tend to become more and more obscured and finally to vanish altogether. ... By virtue of the "equivalence" principle, entities which appear entirely diverse in direct sense perception or from the standpoint of logical classification may be treated as similars in language, so that every statement made about one of them may be transferred and applied to the other.²⁵

The logical relationship of separateness and mutual difference is absent from the beginning, however, "for in this realm of thought there are no abstract denotations."²⁶ Barfield agrees with Cassirer for in speaking of relationships as perceived by the primitive he writes, "The language of primitive men reports them as direct perceptual experience. The speaker has observed a unity, and is not therefore himself conscious of a relation."²⁷

Then he says, "But we, in the development of consciousness, have lost the power to see this one as one." Another power replaces it, and this new power is logical thought, which gradually grows as man's culture evolves. Cassirer explains it like this:

Yet in the advance of human mentality, this conjunction [the unity of all experience conceived through one name], close and essential though it seems to be, begins to disintegrate and dissolve. For language does not belong exclusively to the realm of myth; it bears within itself, from its very beginning, another power, the power of logic. How this power gradually waxes great, and breaks its way by means of language, we cannot undertake to set forth here. But in the course of that evolution, words are reduced more and more to the status of mere conceptual signs.²⁸

Supplementing Cassirer's study, Susanne Langer adopts Philip Wegener's terms²⁹ to explain the growth of language. Basically she holds that metaphor, originally conceived unconsciously, is the source of generality in language. "It is the power

whereby language, even with a small vocabulary, manages to embrace a multimillion things."³⁰ Gradually language undergoes a process of emendation, thereby becoming more useful for discourse. Like the original conception of words, emendation is also not a conscious product, for, she says, "No savage society of unintellectual hunters and squaws could ever build a language; they could only produce it by some such unconscious product as endless misunderstanding, modification, reduplication for emphasis ... and 'filling in' by force of a formal feeling based on habits."³¹ As a word is used more and more frequently, and as it becomes isolated from its relational generality, it gradually undergoes a process of reduction until it functions denotatively. "Wegener calls such a word a 'faded metaphor' and shows ... that all general words are probably derived from specific appellations, by metaphorical use; so that our literal language is a very repository of 'faded metaphors.'"³²

In the first chapters of his book Symbol and Metaphor in Human Experience, Martin Foss also points out that the result of emendation is a negation of the principle of generality in a metaphor. It is the rationalist who is concerned about the denotations of words, and he is active and imposing in his use of language, constantly refining the use of words.

He makes statements, and in making them he stabilizes the sensuous flux; he delimits, marks clearly, and connects in a different relation what he has defined and differentiated. To make things distinct is to show their difference, and so that rationalist is concerned with nothing so much as with drawing lines of demarcation and regarding these lines as essential. As the sensationist was in fact unable to draw any line of demarcation,

so the rationalist can do little else except outline and demarcate. And in order to make these lines clearer than nature presents them, he has to simplify, omit, select.³³

The end of this process is the complete isolation of all symbols as the process of demarcation continues. To counterbalance this, another aspect of the rational mind is drawn into play, and this is the "discursive" aspect. Though Cassirer sees this principle acting primarily to overcome this isolation of the conceptual symbol, it is also active in drawing concepts isolated through rational demarcation together.

We can show that all the intellectual labour whereby the mind forms general concepts out of specific impressions is directed toward breaking the isolation of the datum, wresting it from the "here and now" of its actual occurrence, relating it to other things and gathering it and them into some inclusive order, into the unity of a "system." ... The apparently singular fact becomes known, understood and conceptually grasped only in so far as it is "subsumed" under a general idea, recognized as a "case" of a law or as a member of a manifold series. ... This synthesis cannot be achieved immediately and at a single stroke, it has to be worked out step by step, by a progressive activity of relating separate notions or sense impressions with each other, and then gathering up the resultant wholes into greater complexes, until finally the union of all these separate complexes yields the coherent picture of the totality of things. The will to this totality is the vivifying principle of our theoretical and empirical conception.³⁴

The store of man's knowledge resides in symbols in so far as they have not become completely abstracted, for it is in symbols that man first conceives experience. In the initial conceptual symbol this knowledge is completely subsumed in the meaning which, at that stage of language, is inherent in the symbol itself. One might say that the symbol is so meaningful that it has no significance; the perceiver is so overcome by the exper-

ience of that which is mediated through the symbol that for him the symbol has no active referent qualities, though these are potentially Present. As language becomes discursive, this meaning becomes referential, it becomes the knowledge of man's experience, though in so far as it is known through symbols, and in so far as symbols in themselves remain isolated, this knowledge remains isolated. The function of the rational mind is to break the isolation of this knowledge, integrating it into a total human experience. Following this pattern of thought, Barfield recognizes that without the rational principle, neither reflective truth nor knowledge could ever have been, "but only Life itself." Nevertheless, he realizes that "[the rational] principle cannot add one iota to knowledge. It can clear up obscurities, it can measure and enumerate with greater and ever greater precision, it can preserve us in the dignity and responsibility of our individual existences. But in no sense can it be said to expand consciousness." This is the function of metaphoric conceptualization, which he calls "poesy."

Only the poetic can do this: only poesy, pouring into language its creative intuitions, can preserve its living meaning and prevent it from crystallizing into a kind of algebra. "If it were not for the Poetic of Prophetic character," wrote William Blake, "the philosophic and experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, and stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round." Like some others of the mystics, he had grasped without much difficulty the essential nature of meaning. For all meaning flows from the creative principle, the *to nousiv*, whether it lives on, as given and remembered, or is re-introduced by the individualized creative faculty, the analogy-perceiving, metaphor-making imagination. In Platonic terms we should say that the rational principle can increase understanding, and it can increase true opinion, but it can never increase knowledge.

Barfield's seminal book is an attempt to place the development of language into a perspective which includes the poetic, correcting some of the disdainful attitudes of philologists who earlier saw the initial periods of language as non-specific and ungainly. These attitudes arise from the desire of thinkers to use language strictly for the expression of abstract thoughts. "This fact grows more and more apparent as one reads on," he says, "until at last one realizes that, where Coleridge failed, Mr. Jespersen has succeeded in 'taming down his mind to think poetry a sport for idle hours.'"³⁶ This attitude is finally also entertained by both Cassirer and Langer, who are ultimately loyal to reason as opposed to the poetic mode of thought. "If language is to grow into a vehicle of thought, an expression of concepts and judgments," Cassirer recognizes that "this evolution can be achieved only at the price of forgoing the wealth and fullness of immediate experience. In the end, what is left of the concrete sense and feeling content it once possessed is little more than a bare skeleton." Then he continues,

But there is one intellectual realm in which the word not only preserves its original creative power, but is ever renewing it; in which it undergoes a constant palinogenesis, at once a sensuous and a spiritual reincarnation. This regeneration is achieved as language becomes an avenue of artistic expression. ... The greatest lyric poets, for instance Hölderlin or Keats, are men in whom the mythic power of insight breaks forth again in its full intensity and objectifying power.

At this point Cassirer makes a statement which appears to me to undermine the whole foundation he has built up for poetic thought:

But this objectivity has discarded all material constraints. The spirit lives in the word of language and in the mythical image without falling under the control of either. What poetry expresses is neither the mythic word-picture of gods and daemons, nor the logical truth of

abstract determinations and relations. The world of poetry stands apart from both, as a world of illusion and fantasy.³⁷

Mrs. Langer agrees: "All forces that cannot be scientifically established and measured must be regarded, from the philosophical standpoint, as illusory; if, therefore, such forces appear to be part of our direct experience, they are 'virtual,' i.e. non-actual semblances."³⁸ Speaking of contemporary dance, she recognises that "the substance of such dance creation is the same . . . Power that enchanted ancient caves and forests, but today we invoke it with full knowledge of its illusory status, and therefore with wholly artistic intent."³⁹

Generally speaking, of course, Mrs. Langer reflects the attitudes of most people today, but most people do not have the insights into the history of language and culture that Mrs. Langer does. She is correct in stating that "our primal world of reality is a verbal one,"⁴⁰ but it appears as though she has allowed this verbal world to become strictly referential. Thus she has espoused the attitudes of empirical thought which she regards as inspiring a methodology which is "bootless for the study of mental phenomena." Instead of placing the centre of reality in man's experience of life, she has placed it in language, not as it conceives reality in words and speech, but as it signifies that which the words of the language denote. Through rational language, human existence becomes highly significant, but essentially meaningless. Barfield holds that due to our conception of language "separation of consciousness from the real world, is today only too conspicuous alike in philosophy, science, literature, and normal existence."

Isolated thus, suspended, as it were, in vacuo, and hermetically sealed from truth and life, not only the proper name, but the very ego itself, of which that is but the symbol, pines and dwindles away before our eyes to a thin nothing--a mere inductive abstraction from tabulated card-indexed behaviour whose causes lie elsewhere.⁴¹

In Symbolism and American Literature Charles Feidelson Jr. recognizes that the premises of the approach presented by Cassirer and Langer can lead to other conclusions.

It is quite possible to take poetry as the norm and to regard logical statement as the fantasy; this, indeed, seems the more natural outcome of a philosophy which begins in a contrast between logical sign and creative symbol. The literary symbolist is inclined to consider poetry as peculiarly symbolic, in that poetry (and by extension, all literature) holds to the creative speech from which logic tends to depart. From this point of view, the symbolic status of literature constitutes a positive victory over logic, the reinstatement of "concrete fact" in the face of abstract fiction.⁴²

This argument about the locus of reality reveals the fact that though the symbolism of literature and the symbolism of reason both have their roots in metaphorical thinking, their growth proceeds in opposite directions, until the full-blown products of both processes actually oppose each other. "Figures of speech fly in the face of logic," Feidelson says; "their structure is ordered on a different plan." He continues, saying, "In civilized language at least, literary structure is a reshaping of the logical form into which words may also fall. It ... has a cognitive value quite on a level with the logical use of words and actually reshapes the body of speech from inside out and from head to toe."⁴³ Even in advanced cultures active symbolic cognition remains a principle of life, for through it man comes to knowledge, which is not primarily the product of reason, and

in so far as symbolic cognition is at the root of man's experience of the cosmos, logical thought is necessarily aberrant in determining man's knowledge. The situation of man living in a highly rationalized world is somewhat analogous to man in the early stages of intellectual development since the conceptual or presentational symbol is common to both mythic and literary thought.⁴⁴ The experience of deepest lyrical perception is identical with the mythic perception of "momentary gods" as described by Usener.⁴⁵ Mrs. Langer's analysis of the genesis of poetry in the poet's concrete experience of life demonstrates this activity.

Every good work of art has, I think something that may be said to come from the world, and that bespeaks that artist's own feeling about life. This accords with the intellectual and, indeed, the biological importance of art; we are driven to the symbolization and articulation of feeling when we must understand it to keep ourselves oriented in society and nature. So the first emotional phenomena a person wants to formulate are his own disconcerted passions. It is natural to look for expressive materials among the events of real emotion, events and objects perceived are prone to appear in a Gestalt congruent with the emotion they elicited.⁴⁶

Coming full circle, the last statement leads us back to Coleridge's concept of the imagination, and to his assertion that the secondary imagination is identical to the primary in the kind of its operation. D. G. James opens his book with a gloss on this concept:

Wordsworth and Coleridge based their view of the creative imagination on a doctrine according to which imagination is a primary factor in all knowledge whatsoever.... They held that the imagination of the artist and the poet, when rightly seen, is recognized as essentially of a piece with the most prosaic knowledge of the world, and has therefore as much claim to be taken seriously as the everyday perception of objects.⁴⁷

Coleridge's further comments on the secondary imagination, however, reveal that the nature of the secondary imagination appears to be different from that of the primary imagination, for unlike the primary imagination, "it dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create." In other words, the re-creation is recognized not as identical with the original creation, though the method of achieving it is the same in some basic ways. If the primary imagination is associated with rational perception, and the secondary is associated with metaphorical perception, the secondary imagination must first destroy the validity of the rational world before it can assert the truth of its re-creation. Though both the world of the primary imagination and the world of the secondary imagination exist together they nevertheless oppose each other. Feidelson asserts that "figures of speech ... cast through the body of language a light that erases the lines drawn by logical discourse and creates new contours in the same stuff. Literature can exist only à rebours."⁴⁸ This rearranging is basic to metaphorical process, and Foss draws a deep distinction between simile and analogy on the one hand, and metaphor on the other.

The simile and the analogy link the unknown to the known, in an expedient and practical way, closing the problematic entity into a familiar pattern. The metaphorical process, on the contrary, raises the problem even there where we seemed at home and shatters the ground on which we had settled down in order to widen our view beyond any limit of special practical use.⁴⁹

Rather than being static, symbolic literature, by means of metaphoric thought, is active, and it must be perceived not in its signifying of concepts but in its active presentation of

experience. It is known not by what it says so much as by what it does, for its symbols are not constant since their significant referent can never be fixed. Whitehead explains this by saying,

The conception of the world here adopted is that of functional activity. By this I mean that every actual thing is something by reason of its activity; whereby its nature consists in its relevance to other things, and its individuality consists in its synthesis of other things so far as they are relevant to it.⁵⁰

"Whereas 'two logical concepts, subsumed under the next higher category, as their genus proximum, retain their distinctive characters despite the relationships into which they have been brought, 'poetic structure depends upon fusion,'" says Feidelson quoting Cassirer. Then, borrowing from Foss, he says, "Two poetic words, brought into metaphorical relationship, actually lose their distinctive characters in the light of the whole meaning."⁵¹ Foss terms the symbols themselves as "only material; they undergo a complete change in losing their familiar meaning in each other and give birth to an entirely new knowledge beyond their fixed and addible multitude."⁵² A symbolic work, therefore, cannot be judged by the images it contains, either in part, or as a whole, for the totality can only be a function of the activity of all the parts as they relate to each other. The meaning of the work must be discovered in the activity of the work itself; it is "the meaning rather than the meant."⁵³

The full import of this meaning can be known through what Foss calls "world," a concept basic to mythical thought.

World is not a system, but a process, not an object but a function.... World as a metaphorical process transcends all totalities, sums, systems, environments--or whatever the symbolic reductions or relational togetherness may be called. World is absolute and infinite, and only the metaphorical process is absolute and infinite.⁵⁴

This process of the infinite is not a denial of the material environment, for 'world' is dependent on it in that it finds its source there. Foss relates the infinity of "world" to infinity as it is experienced in mythic creation where "the living creation is born out of destruction of the old" in that the old is entirely absorbed in the creation of the new.

In the light of creation the [rational] togetherness of things develops into naught and disappears in the unity of an infinite process. The naught of creation stands for the totality of relative symbols; it is the naught of matter Matter is not omitted in the process of creation, but is a necessary element. Yet it is this only when transcended, when overcome.⁵⁵

Barfield, as well as agreeing with Wordsworth and Coleridge that poetic thought is not restricted to a special class of poets, also finds meaning to be mythological rather than rational. In a passage quoted earlier he says, "It has been shown that poetic values abound, as meaning, in the early stages of those languages with which we are familiar; this meaning has then been traced back to its source in the theocratic, 'myth-making' period, and it has been shown that the myths, which represent the earliest meaning, were not the arbitrary creation of 'poets,' but the natural expression of man's being and consciousness."⁵⁶ Foss describes this process as consciousness ever carrying beyond itself into the actual, with the necessary meaning lying "permanently ahead of the potential consciousness as its direction and future. This meaning appears, therefore, as revealed." The "revelation," however, "does not originate in a realm foreign to the entity to which it is addressed

and does not reach backward from a future, totally detached from the present."⁵⁷ Foss admits that the process can really only be presented in terms of life itself:

Wherever life becomes conscious of its creativity, it is faced by a living entity, the "Thou," and this Thou is to the I a revelation of its own meaning and future. It is always a Thou, and only a Thou, as an expression of life which carries the I forward and makes it aware of its destiny. Not self-consciousness, but consciousness of the Thou is fundamental to life. The I, to be sure, remains the potential, but a potential for the Thou which reveals and expresses the I in its movement upward and beyond. In the process of life, expression means always communication with a Thou which is never fully realized but remains an inexhaustible power, leading on into a meaningful future.⁵⁸

In this sense man denies his ego⁵⁹ in the creative metaphorical process. As Foss says, "We 'forget ourselves' in the great tasks of life: whenever such a task calls upon us, we give ourselves without restraint. Just so, or even in a higher degree, we forget our own selves in the process of the present which signifies the metaphorical process of artistic creation."⁶⁰

In the sense that reality is revealed to the artist, he exists as a receptive consciousness rather than as a projective consciousness, and as such he creates not mere "things" but takes part in the ever creative process of life. "Only where the artist failed, the work is nothing but a thing," and "things," according to Foss, "fall out of the process of creative life." Further, the ability to see nothing but things is contingent upon the generation of the ego. "Whenever we are faced with things and nothing but things, our own consciousness is in danger of being itself turned into an object," says Foss. "The ego is the counterpart of material things, in relation to these

things, in objective causal, mechanical or final relativity. It is itself merely relative--relative to a totality of objective things which it calls the 'exterior world,' although the exterior world is not 'world' but merely the limited totality of symbolically reduced means, called 'environment.' The environment only is the exterior world, and it is exterior with regard to the object."⁶¹ Barfield expresses this truth in terms of knowing and poetic creation: "In the moment of knowing, which is also the real moment of poetic creation, the knower ceases to exist as subject at all; and, conversely, when he comes fully to himself, as subject, he ceases to know."⁶² Like Foss, Barfield also relates self-consciousness with logic (Foss's symbolic reduction):

The historical function of logical method has not been to add to the sum of knowledge. It has been to engender subjectivity--self-consciousness. Once this has been achieved ... there is no more that logic can do. Self-consciousness is indeed a sine qua non of undreaming knowledge, but it is not knowldege, it is more like its opposite: and once it has been achieved, logic, as far as the business of knowing is concerned, is functus officio.⁶³

Barfield, however, does not denigrate logic or self-consciousness, for he understands that it is necessary for an appreciation of art, and this is basic for his definition of metaphor as metaphor is differentiated from meaning:

Inasmuch as man is living the poetry of which he is the maker, and as long as he is so doing, it cannot be poetry to him. In order to appreciate it, he himself must also exist, consciously, outside it Now nothing but the rational, or logistic, principle can endow him with this subjective--self--consciousness. Hence ... the rational principle is indispensable, if appreciation is to take place. The absolute rational principle is that which makes conscious of poetry but cannot create it; the absolute poetic principle is that which creates poetry but cannot make conscious of it.⁶⁴

Metaphor, for him, is conscious conception, while meaning is unconsciously conceived. Consequently literature, as art, can only exist in an advanced state of language where the rational principle is active. Feidelson, in dealing with the same problem, does not see it in terms of the history of language, but in terms of the choice an artist must make between the loss of a reflective consciousness in the metaphorical process--which he terms symbolism--and the presence of the reflective consciousness in rational thought. "In practice," he says, "the symbolist will be caught between the consequences and the necessity of his method--between a sort of pathless void, pregnant with significance [meaning], and a radically unknowable world of absolute distinctions."⁶⁵ The artist must be both critical and creative if his art is to have significance. And it must have significance, for without the presence of logical relationships tying it to significant existence, the work of art will exist as a process only within the consciousness of the artist relating directly with the object of his experience. Foss describes the bridge between meaning, in the purity of experience, and the rational world, in its disjointedness, in terms of the imagination: "It is Imagination as the power of the poetic genius, which extends environment to world, uses the things of nature, but widens them so that they lose their narrow appearance and grow into the distance of universal greatness. Imagination is not an arbitrary capacity of invention, it is more a power of discovery: discovery of greatness in small things, discovery of distance in nearness and narrowness, discovery of the infinite metaphorical

Present in the fragmentary symbol of transitional things and events."⁶⁶

He then goes on to a final refutation of the argument that this creative reality of the imagination is naught but fantasy.

Imagination and the distance it creates detach us from our narrow environment and lift us into a world of intensive reality. This reality has often been misunderstood as an 'artistic appearance,' as a 'make believe,' and people have been led to the assumption that the satisfaction which tragedy conveys is the awakening from the dream-world of the stage and its horrors to a true and more balanced reality of everyday life. But just the opposite is true: the reality of the tragedy is so strong that it shakes the foundations of our empirical existence and makes us see its vain superficiality.⁶⁷

The attempt, therefore, to reproduce the experience of the imagination as it is perceived in its non-empirical reality in a manner that relates it strictly to the reality of the rational mind is bound to end in disorder. The divisiveness of logic will be able only to dissect without hope of realizing a consequent fusing, for the metaphoric experience as given can never be achieved by merely seeking a totality made up of the sum of parts. Indeed, Feidelson gives this as the very earmark of literary structure:

We recognize literary structure as such by the necessity of multiple statement when we try to render the meaning in logical terms. . . . Multiple statement is the effort of the univocal terms of logic to measure the equivocal language of literature.⁶⁸

This statement brings us back to the concern of the critics cited at the beginning of this essay, for in their attempts to find literal meaning in "A Country Doctor" all three attempt to interpret the story by approaching it on dif-

ferent levels. The beginning of Dr. Cooperman's last paragraph pinpoints the difficulty:

The two interpretations I have presented concern the same work, and in addition rely to a great extent on the same symbols. But they are not mutually exclusive; in the symbolic art of Kafka two methods of criticism may, and indeed must, occupy the same space at the same time. Kafka is ambiguous and difficult, but his material--the stuff of the human soul--would be violated if he presented a single dimension of meaning. The work has many truths, a weaving and reweaving of many themes, but it cannot be approached bluntly or single-mindedly.

The difficulty lies not with Kafka as much as with the critical approach. Cooperman's and Bussaca's essays are attempts to "measure the equivocal language of literature" with the "univocal terms of logic." As we have seen, rational thought can be divided into two phases. First the rationalist objectifies reality by setting one object or concept off from another in order to render it distinct from the rest of the environment. Then he attempts to integrate the now isolated concept into an already established system of thought, for it is only as the isolated fact becomes a part of a system or falls under the control of an established law that it becomes known. Since Kafka's work does not fall readily into an established system, rational criticism must first delimit the material in order to see it clearly. Then it must attempt to integrate it into some system of rational thought in which experience is already conceived.⁶⁹ Cooperman and Busacca delimit the material by extracting those symbols which will allow them to fit "A Country Doctor" into some system. At that stage, however, the work is only half done, for Cooperman feels that he has violated the totality of the work.

Hence he attempts to overcome the difficulty by stating that both of his interpretations must be entertained at once--"they are not mutually exclusive," he says. They are, however, mutually exclusive because one system of thought (the psycho-analytical) cannot enter another system of thought (the existential) for that would obscure the lines of delimitation which identify the two systems as distinct from each other and from still other systems--systems which are necessary for the story to have "literal meaning." This is reflected by the study itself, for the two interpretations are not given simultaneously. The problem cannot be solved simply by saying the two methods must occupy the same space, for the initial delimitation undertaken in order to integrate the story into the two systems of thought has discarded that truth which obscured the lines of demarcation. The experience of literature cannot be re-created by finite rational thought.

Is there such a thing as "infinite" rational thought? This is stupid. The experience of literature can be presented by that devotion to the text which fixates the reader on it.

By way of entering the experience of "A Country Doctor" then, we return to Kafka's short narrative given earlier. As the narrator is confronted by the moon, the star, the statue of Mary, and the church, he asks, "Was ist es doch, daß ihr tut, als wenn ihr wirklich wäret. Wollt ihr mich glauben machen, daß ich unwirklich bin . . . ?"⁷⁰ The situation is a reversal of the conditions of rational perception in which the ego is firmly established as a fixed entity by relating to objects as fixed entities. Here, as the narrator finds his environment relating to him/unmediated by perception through rational categories he finds the very existence of his ego threatened. He is filled

there is no such "environment" - everything in Kafka is intensely mediated by perception - that is why his texts are so fascinating; the least detail is mediated.

with terror when, as Cassirer describes it, "external reality is not merely viewed and contemplated, but overcomes a man in sheer immediacy." As the passage continues, it shows clearly the active role of the imagination in perception. Seen in this way the whole passage becomes a study in the creative role of the secondary imagination. As the narrator begins to reflect, one can see the mind struggling to "idealize and to unify" that which is "dissolved, diffused and dissipated." "Es ist ja wahr," he says, "noch immer seid ihr mir überlegen, aber doch nur dann, wenn ich euch in Ruhe lasse."⁷¹ As he reflects, he gradually regains the solidity of his rational ego as he actively orders the objects of his perception. Finally he says, "Es scheint nun wirklich, daß es euch nicht gut tut, wenn man über euch nachdenkt; ihr nehmt ab an Mut und Gesundheit."⁷²

Like this narrator, the Country Doctor is himself concerned with maintaining an environment of rational solidity, and his concern for himself varies with his ability to maintain control over his world. The reality of the doctor lies in the rational, where significance is given to things as they concern him. The story begins with the words, "I was in great perplexity." Then the series of clauses follows which explains the difficulty of the doctor. This world is not beneficent, but it is solid. Though he is in a quandry, it is a quandry which his mind can fathom. One can literally say that the doctor is not lost in this world; indeed he is so "found" that he has nowhere to go. His rationally conceived world has so trapped him that he is rendered immobile. "I knew it," he says, "and I stood there for-

lornly, with the snow gathering more and more thickly upon me,
 more and more unable to move." *This is an extremely poor interpretation of this passage. Its felt significance is utterly dependent on the lightning-like speed with which the doctor set out.*

Liberty from this constriction which is determined by the
for god's sake, this constriction is determined by "a false claim which cannot be made good"!
 inevitability of rational causation, cannot come from some out-
 side "saviour," it is latent in his own "house," and it is re-
 vealed as the doctor breaks the strictures of debilitating reason
 by letting his body rather than his rational mind determine his
 existence. Even as this takes place one notices a tension in
 the very narration of the story, for a-rational activity is
 rendered in terms of the necessity to order existence. "My strides
measured the Court once more;" says the doctor, "I found no way
 out" (my emphasis and translation). Then the non-rational is
 released: "in my confused distress I kicked at the dilapidated
 door of the year-long uninhabited pigsty." In doing this the
 doctor opens himself to experience unmediated by rational
 categories which constitute his ego; he enters a direct relation-
 ship with his experience. *Meaning he was not "in one" before? They are not*
 This change is reflected by the new
 style in the narration: instead of logical reasoning strung
 together in causal clauses, the sentences become short and
 direct in a simple description of his experience.

As the doctor and his maid sense the freedom of this new
 mode of existence, the consternation of the earlier mode falls
 away. But life is not that simple, especially when the entire
 ground of previous existence is swept away. In entering a dir-
 ect relationship with experience a new tension arises--the
 tension of fear and terror of that which now becomes the all-
 encompassing immanence to which life itself has been given

over. The fear is not a rational fear, for reason knows the object of its fear. Further, reason can also determine that part of the self which is jeopardized, for reason can isolate and categorize according to the significant past. The fear present in direct experience, however, is the terror of mythic existence where one perceives a "Thou" which cannot be held. One can only behold it, and as one beholds it one is beholden to it. The doctor does not feel physically threatened by the groom; rather he feels threatened morally. Though he cannot pinpoint the threat in terms of his physical existence, he feels that part of the domain of control that he has held is in jeopardy. And he is unable to regain control of the lost area, though he thinks he knows how to do so. As he begins to think in terms of his rational existence, however, he realizes that to save Rose he may be placing the very purpose of his being, as he has conceived it, in jeopardy. "'You brute,' I yelled in fury, 'do you want a whipping?'" but in the same moment reflected that the man was a stranger; that I did not know where he came from, and that of his own free will he was helping me out when everyone else had failed me."

With this the doctor enters into a struggle to regain the identity of the ego that he lost in entering a world of unmediated experience. He strives to control the world of his experience, to control the "things" he is confronted with, and thereby to conceive himself as a thing, as ego, as well. But his attempt to become assertive fails:

"I'm not thinking of paying for [the journey] by handing

the girl over to you." "Gee up!" he said; clapped his hands; the gig whirled off like a log in a freshet; I could hear the door of my house splitting and bursting as the groom charged at it and then I was deafened and blinded by a storming rush that steadily buffeted all my senses.

Even that limited consciousness of the ego disappears as the experience of existence overwhelms the rationalizing functions of the mind. All sense of space and time are lost as the doctor is overcome by the flux out of which the conceptual powers of man must again and again tear the objects of their experience. The arrival at the patient's home brings back the doctor's sense of identity. Here he can function according to his rational experience. True, he cannot understand the conversation of the patient's family, but this cannot stop him from doing the duties for which he has trained. In performing these duties the doctor can once again regain control of that which has overwhelmed him.

The unintelligible conversation, however, is not the only omen of what is to occur. Upon entering the room of the patient, the doctor again experiences the discomfort of choking stricture. The experience that is to liberate him from that which overcomes his ordering faculties itself becomes unbearable, for "in the sick-room the air was almost unbreathable; the neglected stove was smoking." He determines to open the window to relieve himself from this oppressive condition, but first he wants to see the patient--his duty is of prime importance, for only through performing the function of a doctor can he regain the identity of a doctor, thereby regaining his

sense of self as he had lived it prior to the death of the horse. The attempt is fruitless though; the ailment of the boy is not physical and cannot be cured by the doctor. The boy wants to die. When he cannot regain his identity by healing the boy, he attempts to assert his self by becoming the savior of Rose, for it is only by relating to something other than himself that he can believe in his own existence. The family, however, still see him as the healer of the boy, and thus he turns to the boy again. With the neighing of the horses, who have already liberated him from his first impasse, he is able to find the real wound of the boy.

As the doctor begins to recognize the true nature of the wound, his problems are compounded by the boy, who now wishes to overcome his illness, which has not a physical but a spiritual root. Unwilling to confess that his functions are restricted to physical ailments, the doctor attempts to assume an identity which will enable him to control the new realm of existence with which he is confronted. Already he recognizes that his earlier identity is useless.

That is what people are like in my district. Always expecting the impossible from the doctor. They have lost their ancient beliefs; the parson sits at home and unravels his vestments, one after another; but the doctor is supposed to be omnipotent with his merciful surgeon's hand. Well, as it pleases them; I have not thrust my services on them; if they misuse me for sacred ends, I let that happen to me too; what better do I want, old country doctor that I am, bereft of my servant girl!

Truly he has lost his identity. And as he finds himself exposed before the world, the family and the elders of the village strip him of his professional robes and lay him into bed with the boy,

whose condition is also hopeless. Again the conditions of the exterior world fade as everyone leaves the room. The door is closed; the singing stops; clouds hide the moon; the horse heads become shadows in the window frames.

The boy recognizes that the doctor has no ground for existence:

"Do you know," said a voice in my ear, " I have very little confidence in you. Why you were only blown in here, you didn't come on your own feet. Instead of helping me, you're cramping me on my deathbed."

Reflecting, the doctor agrees, confessing that his own condition is also difficult. He assures the boy that his condition is common, that many would welcome it. The doctor himself welcomed it in his difficulty, though now, like the boy, he is trying to escape it. So as the boy accepts his condition and becomes quiet, the doctor, still naked, flings himself not onto the wagon, but onto one of the unearthly horses and urges it forward to the site of his earthly dwelling where he hopes to resume his earthly practice. But as the blizzard returns he recognizes the futility of his attempt.

Never shall I reach home at this rate; my flourishing practice is done for; my successor is robbing me, but in vain, for he cannot take my place; in my house the disgusting groom is raging; Rose is his victim

Reflecting on his condition, he realizes that he is headed toward another impasse. Hence he now too gives in to his condition by saying, "I do not want to think about it any more. Naked, exposed to the frost of this most unhappy of ages, with an earthly vehicle, unearthly horses, old man that I am, I wander astray." He experiences that once the disintegration of the rational process has begun, nothing can stop it: "A false alarm on the

night bell once answered--it cannot be made good, not ever."

Understanding "A Country Doctor" as the disintegration of the rational process makes the story significant for Kafka's readers. By relating the story to other experiences which man has conceived within the framework of a system enclosed by rational thought does give the story literal meaning. This dissection, however, is incomplete for it robs the story of all meaning itself. As the story becomes significant, it loses what is meaningful. This is the problem that confronts anyone who attempts to explain rationally what the mind conceives actively.

D. G. James explains the problem in this manner:

We all know how an artist can transfigure an object which we have known, and to which we have given little attention. Two men may be "seeing" the "same thing"; yet if one, who has a strong imagination, undertakes to paint it, the other may quickly realize how differently the object appeared to the painter's imagination and to his own. The object present to their respective imaginations was really not one and the same, though no doubt they could, if they took the trouble, agree on an 'objective' description of it. But such an objective description, if it is to be agreed on, must be extremely unimaginative; for . . . the strictly "given" and "discoverable" elements are an abstraction from a whole present to the imagination, and become transformed when they are re-integrated into the total object which the imagination prehends. . . . We must therefore realize that the total object is an object to the imagination; and that what of the world is "discoverable" is a world eviscerated of imaginative content, if indeed it can be called a world at all.⁷³

The work of the artist consists of clothing the potential meaning of his own experience in a revelatory form, thereby liberating that meaning from its experiential isolation within him. The duty of the critic should be to go into the form and approach the meaning of the work itself. The problem in "A

Country Doctor" is thus not only to recognize that Kafka says that the world of the doctor is "the most unhappy of ages," he must also approach the very conception of this "most unhappy of ages." The critic must take part in the activity of "the meaning rather than the meant" by entering the process of which the doctor himself is always but a part.

When the story is apprehended as a metaphorical process, its centre, consisting of the plot of which the doctor is the subject and the "most unhappy of ages" is the object, dissolves, leaving just the activity of the narrative. The story takes on the quality of myth, the truth of which lies not in its assertion, but in the dynamic of its activity in the sense that John Dewey ascribes to myth:

Empirically things are poignant, tragic, beautiful, humorous, settled, disturbed, comfortable, annoying, barren, harsh, consoling, splendid, fearful; are such immediately and in their own right and behalf. . . . Any quality as such is final; it is at once initial and terminal; just as it exists.⁷⁴

The dynamic of the story must be sought in the quality of the emotions, in the intensity of experience, in the rhythm of movement. The meaning of the story is the story itself. The story becomes the reader's experience as it is presented and clarified in the light of the activity of Kafka's conceptualization of that which to him is immanent.

Significance and meaning merge in the metaphorical process, not by providing a system into which all significant interpretations fall simultaneously, but by subsuming all these differing interpretations. The metaphorical process is neither an adding

up of significances, nor a denial of them. "Life, energy, spontaneity, is . . . indeed beyond [referential] symbols and their familiar relations. But it is wrong to seek this life by eliminating all symbols and by plunging into the darkness of nothingness. . . . The simple is not the exclusion of the complex, it is the overcoming of the complexity."⁷⁵ Though the doctor himself does not overcome the complex, Kafka, as author, does. In his diaries Kafka repeats the well-known story of Zeno and the arrow: "Zeno sagte auf eine dringliche Frage ihm, ob denn nichts ruhe: Ja, der fliegende Pfeil ruht."⁷⁶ Kafka achieves this active rest in the realm of metaphor, which is "a process of tension and energy, manifested in the process of language."

The metaphorical realm is a realm beyond quantity, multitude, and togetherness. The metaphorical sphere transcends the many and realizes a simple and indivisible unity, although not the unity of a total and complete object or symbol or word. It is the unity of tension and process. This unity of process may materialize in a single word . . . but far oftener it will find expression in passing from word to word, not as a summing up and addition, but as a function of indivisible unity . . . [The] known symbols in their relation to each other are only material; they undergo a complete change in losing their familiar meaning in each other and give birth to an entirely new knowledge beyond their fixed and addible multitude.⁷⁷

Through metaphor Kafka achieves an artistic unity which transcends the Aristotelian unities of space and time by introducing the revelatory unity of an infinite present.

What achieves continuity is not the natural continuum of the setting, but the inner necessity of destiny, revealed in the life and character of the hero, and wherever this destiny manifests itself, continuity is felt, as the tension of a representative life, indivisible, simple and reaching in a lasting present over spaces and times. . . . In the face of this heroic life,

men and things lose their self-importance and independent existence and point beyond themselves to a sphere with regard to which they are only transitional stages of one and the same world process.⁷⁸

The existence of the doctor as individual loses its centrality insofar as it remains a referential symbol of man fighting to assert his dominion over the environment by means of his rational faculty. Indeed, the story really continues past the point where the doctor perishes in the unending blizzard which prevents him from ever reaching his home again. Kafka's story concludes by entering the realm of tragedy where the impure is destroyed in order to provide for a new creation, and in this it once again reaffirms the principle of metaphoric transcendence; the fixed and static dissolves as it provides the material for that which is unending in its activity. It corresponds, again, to Coleridge's secondary imagination which dissolves and dissipates before it re-creates.

"A Country Doctor" enters the realm of Foss's "sublime," which "is not a quality of the things, of the environment, depicted and described, it resides in the process by which things and environment are surpassed."⁷⁹ The sublime is not a matter of pleasure or displeasure, both of which are "limited to practical expediency, and . . . belong entirely to the realm of the purposive ego which has reduced itself to a definite end and its fulfillment in an environment of suitable and unsuitable means. Pleasure is the reaction of this ego to suitable means and the easy fulfillment of the goal; displeasure is the reaction to unsuitable means and inexpediency of the environment." Man, however, "properly understood, begins where the bodily

mechanism of ends with its reduction to pleasure and displeasure is left behind."⁸⁰ Pleasure and displeasure is the realm of the doctor's limited experience, but his failure is the same as the boy's: he does not have a "wide enough view." The story itself enters the infinite present of the creative process. This is reflected in its very structure, which is not broken up into logical segments, but consists rather of a total experience rendered in a single paragraph. Though the story begins in the past tense, it changes to the present. It changes back to past briefly as the doctor tries to rescue himself, but it concludes in the present as the doctor realizes that he is never to return home.

By introducing the activity of life through metaphor, ~~X~~ Kafka's story presents a freedom which transcends the restrictive thought processes of the doctor, and others who would have the boy's wound and proffer their side, but "can hardly hear the ax in the forest, far less that it is coming nearer to them." The story frees man from reflective ratiocination which ties the activity of the mind to man's physical being, and thus to the realm of pleasure and displeasure. This does not mean that man's physical being must be denied, rather it must be affirmed for, as the story shows, it is only through it that man lives. "Soul, says Foss, "is not an entity, fenced off from body and mind."

Body and soul belong together as symbol and metaphorical process. We live our purposive bodily existence in a sensuous environment with its short satisfaction, its empty and full times, its empty and full spaces. But this whole sensuous construction and symbolic order is

* carried by a tension of the present which we call spirit or soul, transcending the reductions of our fixed relationships. Spirit overcomes sensuality, soul overcomes body. But on the other hand, it is the sensuality, this body over which alone spirit and soul can expand and proceed.

"Beyond the system of mind and body," Foss continues, "as a whole of related parts, stretches a process of questioning, willing, loving infinity which cannot be explained by mind or by the physiological body-organization. It manifests itself in both, although never exhausted by any of them. because it transcends them in the consciousness and communion of I and Thou, and this, indeed, is what we call soul or spirit."⁸¹ Kafka recognizes both the physical and the spiritual in an aphorism in which he also asserts the transcendence of the spiritual while accepting the necessity of the physical.

There is nothing besides a spiritual world; what we call the world of the senses is the Evil in the spiritual world, and what we call Evil is only the necessity of a moment in our eternal evolution.⁸²

In the sense that Kafka affirms this life of the soul which transcends both body and rational mind, he stands apart from ordinary human existence which is caught up in the struggles of the rational mind. Hence readers of Kafka have correctly noticed a sense of distance which many have interpreted as a sense of irony in his works. One critic finds the irony in the classical situation where the hero goes from his goal in attempting to gain it.⁸³ Another says that Kafka's heroes can only act as they do by being innocent outsiders, for "Der Unwissende wagt mehr."⁸⁴ Still another says, "Franz Kafka aber gestaltet die Welt vom Blickpunkt einer 'auserhalb unserer Menschheit' stehenden her. Er weigert sich vom Lebens- und

Bewußtseinsstrom tragen zu lassen, 'tritt zuruck' aus dem Strom der Zeiten und 'sieht anderes und mehr als die anderen, er ist doch tod zu Lebzeiten und der eigentlich Überlebende.'"85

Kafka's books are really meant to tear the reader out of his systematized existence and to present him with a new existence which will render his earlier one uncomfortable. This is the purpose of literature, as he writes to Oskar Pollak early in his career:

Ich glaube, man sollte überhaupt nur solche Bücher lesen, die einen beißen und stechen. Wenn das Buch, das wir lesen, uns nicht mit einem Faustschlag auf den Schädel weckt, wozu lesen wir dann das Buch? Damit es uns glücklich macht, wie Du schreibst: Mein Gott, glücklich wären wir eben auch, wenn wir keine Bücher hätten, und solche Bücher die uns glücklich machen, könnten wir zur Not selber schreiben. Wir brauchen aber die Bücher, die auf uns wirken wie ein Unglück, das uns sehr schmerzt, wie der Tod eines, den wir lieber hätten als uns, wie wenn wir in Wälder verstoßen würden, von allen Menschen weg, wie ein Selbstmord, ein Buch muß die Axt sein für das gefrorene Meer in uns. Das glaube ich.⁸⁶

Like the Country Doctor, this "most unhappy of ages" has a frozen sea which literature must crack. Many hear the ax in the distance, but wait in vain for it to come nearer, for they seek only to establish literal meaning on the basis of established systems such as psycho-analysis or religion, thereby thickening, not cracking the ice within. *

CHAPTER II

POSITIVE NEGATION IN KAFKA'S THE TRIAL

In his introduction to the work of Franz Kafka, Wilhelm Emrich gives a short history of the disintegration of absolute social values in nineteenth-century Europe. He emphasizes, on the one hand, the drive of science into the confines of man's inner life with the result that "Christianity's immortal soul, Kleist's absolute 'feeling,' Goethe's superempirical 'Daimonion,' etc., become a transparent, unmysterious natural phenomenon that . . . is subject to scientifically comprehensible laws."¹ On the other hand, he says that the novelistic art which dealt with these themes postulated ethical norms on which to base their critique of society, for their work was socially oriented. However, the further they progressed toward the twentieth century, the more difficult it became to establish norms, for the social order that Goethe had so successfully established as basic in Wilhelm Meister, for instance, was rapidly dissolving. The result was that the artists gradually succumbed to accepting the criteria of the society in which they worked, thus entering society as it was in reality. In order to re-establish critical values then, the artist was forced to become critical of these relative systems of value which fettered man even more than the earlier absolute values had. Only by negatively breaking down these arbitrary bonds could the artist reveal the freedom which

is humanity's right. In Kafka Emrich sees a writer who attempts to re-establish this freedom.

The early Kafka "was not only an extreme Darwinist, but was actually a follower of Ernst Haeckel,² and for many years was under the influence of the scientific view of life and the psychology of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, with its scientific orientation." Emrich continues, "Improbable as it may sound, Franz Kafka's earliest writing can best be understood as stemming from naturalism rather than expressionism."

For the early Kafka it is above all a matter of "description" that records, and of exact reproduction of everything that exists. . . . In the early story "Wedding Preparations in the Country," from the period of 1906-1907, Franz Kafka, like a naturalist, records accurately all the events that take place . . .; he tries to seize life as it flows past and to record it with exactness by stringing the individual events along additively without their deriving a definite, recurrent significance and function in the total work through the compositional layout.³

Martin Greenberg agrees with Emrich. Pointing out Kafka's naturalistic training in a German Gymnasium, Greenberg goes on to show Kafka's interests in scientific naturalism from his diaries. "Hardly any account has been taken of this 'naturalistic' side of Kafka's," says Greenberg, noting that

there is little trace of it in Brod's biography and criticism until recently has overlooked it. But it was very prominent in his formative years and remained a part of him in some sort to the very end. The matter has importance because it indicates Kafka's literary as well as intellectual provenance.⁴

The prime characteristic of Kafka's naturalism is its emphasis on details, an emphasis which demands extremely close perception. It is this emphasis that begins to have an ever growing influence

in Kafka's early work as the naturalism evolves. Because of the purity of his vision and the refusal to add to what he perceives as reality in the world, his reality begins to differ from the "reality" of others, and consequently "it is precisely the most ordinary events that are given the designation of what-which-is-astounding and that-which-is-incomprehensible."⁵ - 146.

Kafka's protagonists begin to feel reality as it really happens to them, not how, in the eyes of others, it is supposed to happen to them.

In a sketch entitled "Unglücklichsein" the narrator leaves his room, in which a ghost has appeared. On the stairs he meets a neighbor, with whom this conversation ensues:

"Sie gehen schon wieder weg, Sie Lump?" fragte er, auf seinen über zwei Stufen ausgebreiteten Beinen ausruhend. "Was soll ich machen?" sagte ich, "jetzt habe ich ein Gespenst im Zimmer gehabt."

"Sie sagen das mit der gleichen Unzufriedenheit, wie wenn Sie ein Haar in der Suppe gefunden hätten."

"Sie spaßen. Aber merken Sie sich, ein Gespenst ist ein Gespenst."

"Sehr wshr. Aber wie, wenn man überhaupt nicht an Gespenster glaubt?"

"Ja, meinen Sie denn, ich glaube an Gespenster?"
Was hilft mir aber das Nichtglauben?"⁶

Physical experience cannot be denied, no matter what attitude one takes. Emrich points out that for Kafka this is not merely a philosophical problem, but a problem of his very existence in the world as he reacts to his environment:

Here it is not so much a matter of the old epistemological insight that man cannot perceive things "in themselves," but rather the much more serious moral problem: that man's contemplation and thought schematize, limit, and mutilate the full reality of that-which-is. Through his own imagining and thinking, man blocks his access to the "whole," indeed to the primordial purity, beauty, excellence and truth of that-which-is.⁷

Discussing the suffering of Kafka's characters, suffering which the characters do not see in each other, Emrich continues:

it is precisely people's own "normal" consciousness that obstructs their knowledge of all mutilated life; but at the same time it prevents them from having access to an existence that may be unutilated, one that is whole in "truth," and existence in which things still possess courage and health, beauty and repose.⁰

Kafka, as a person, lived in this realm of "truth"; he was a man of scrupulous honesty. Kafka was one with his characters in this: once given, a fact of life could not be altered. Milena Pollak, a woman with whom Kafka was passionately in love toward the end of his life, wrote of Kafka in a letter to Max Brod,

For, obviously, we are capable of living because at some time or other we took refuge in lies, in blindness, in enthusiasm, in optimism, in some conviction or others, in pessimism or something of that sort. But he has never escaped to any such sheltering refuge, none at all. He is absolutely incapable of living, just as he is incapable of getting drunk. He possesses not the slightest refuge. For that reason he is exposed to all those things against which we are protected. He is like a naked man among a multitude who are dressed. Everything that he says, that he is . . . it is such a predetermined state of being in and for itself, stripped of all trimmings that could help him by distorting life--distorting it in the direction of beauty or of misery, no matter. And his asceticism is altogether unheroic All "heroism" is lie and cowardice. One who conceives his asceticism as a means to an end is no true human being; the true human being is one who is compelled to asceticism by his terrible clarity of vision, purity and incapacity for compromise.

It is this clarity of vision that forces Kafka to speak metaphorically for he conceives a world different from that of normal perception. In an attempt to reveal that world which he sees, he must express it in terms which will not lead to the distortions inherent in

the fixed denotations and connotations of normal language.

Thus his world is not rational--it is real, and the metaphorical expression of Kafka reveals the world in its pure activity.

Readers rooted in the rational comfort of contemporary life where the very existence of something which is not rational is put in question cannot but find Kafka's work difficult to understand. Because our normal perception of our environment is mediated through the rational orders which we have been taught, we can no longer experience reality in all its starkness, whether that reality is physical or social. A speaker on the Deutschlandfunk at the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of Kafka's birthdate recognized this, and stated that rather than accept Kafka's perceptions as truth, we prefer to dismiss what he says.

Franz Kafka ist der einzige Dichter unseres Jahrhunderts, der die immanenten Gesetze unserer sozialen und persönlichen Wirklichkeit kritisch erkannt und anschaulich ins Bild gebracht hat. . . . Daher ist er. . . der rätselhafteste und erschreckendste Dichter für alle diejenigen, die mehr oder weniger bewußtlos oder unkritisch in diese Gesetze der Wirklichkeit bestrickt sind oder sich gar mit ihnen identifizieren. . . . Diese müssen den unabweisbaren Schock erfahren, daß Franz Kafka die Wahrheit der Wirklichkeit enthüllt, die Wahrheit, die jedoch so unerträglich ist, daß ihr Bewußtsein sich gegen sie sperren und sie abdrängen muss ins Verlies des Verbotenen, Anrühigen, Grauenhaften, Irrationalen oder gar pervers Dekadenten.¹⁰

One of the most popular attempts to engage in dismissals of Kafka is to see Kafka's works as allegory. I can do no better than to quote Wilhelm Emrich here again.

Man in this state will. . . feel that whatever has been given form in Kafka's writing is an 'unreal' assertion and representation, since it is

no longer compatible with [sic] and comprehensible in terms of his own conceptual world. In Kafka, what has been stated and given form cannot--in his view--signify simply itself, but must conceal 'beyond' itself an 'other', 'real' meaning. Since, for example, the 'trial' seems no longer to correspond to the outward forms of a conventional court case, something else must be 'signified' by this trial. And the effort of the reader or interpreter is then directed at 'deciphering' this real meaning that is hiding the unreal discussion of the trial. Consequently the work is understood as a secret 'allegory' for which one needs only the 'key' in order to 'decipher the meaning.'¹¹

Like Emrich, Erich Heller points out the nature of this reaction, which is almost involuntary. "So deeply engrained is positivism in the critics of this age," he says, "that even when they are genuinely moved by the symbolic reality which the author has created, they will soon regain the balance of mind required for the translation of the symbol into what it 'really' means; and by that they mean precisely that meaningless experience which the artist has succeeded in transcending through his poetic creation."¹² In the following pages I will discuss the symbolic process that Heller speaks about by examining Kafka's The Trial as an experience in the life of Joseph K., and to show that the novel has meaning not through allegorization, but through the activity of the novel as it is experienced by Joseph K. himself.

One key to understanding the nature of Kafka's novel lies in properly understanding the title in German. The translation of Der Prozess as The Trial is true to only a part of the original title, which, in addition to denoting a court hearing also denotes an ongoing process. Perhaps a title like "A Judicial Process" would be truer to the original than the present title, through the present one follows Kafka's

manner of revealing truth in its stark reality. The suggestion of process in the original title is of utmost importance in the work itself, for the novel deals precisely with the problem of Joseph K.'s inability to recognize his trial not as isolated hearings before a group of individual judges, but as an ever expanding reality encompassing an ever greater part of his existence, until it becomes the exclusive condition of his life --which is his death. The difficulty that many critics have found in discovering this very process because of their inability to free themselves from the static concepts of rational categories has placed them in the same situation as Joseph K. Not only Joseph K.'s situation is "Kafkaesque" then, so is the critic's who finds that situation "Kafkaesque." The irony of this is, of course, that Kafka's works are not nearly as "Kafkaesque" as is generally taken for granted.

From the moment of his arrest, Joseph K. finds the Court irrational, and therefore unworthy of existence. The book's very first sentence reveals the error of the Court, which must be following false testimony: "Someone must have traduced Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning."¹³ Though he feels the truth of the arrest through the disruption of his entire routine, through the interest of an old couple living across from him, and through his sense of vulnerability before these strangers who appear in his room, he holds to the fact of the error. He admits that he doesn't know the law, but he persists in asserting the Court's delusion, though when he is brought

before the Inspector in Fräulein Bürstner's room he concedes that it may not just be a joke as he had previously allowed himself to think. "I don't say that it's a joke," says K. "But on the other hand . . . it can't be an affair of any great importance either. I argue this from the fact that though I am accused of something, I cannot recall the slightest offense that might be charged against me" (p. 16). As time passes; Joseph K. begins to accede to the necessity of the Court, but at the same time he becomes more aggressive in his fight against it. At the first interrogation he tells the presiding judge that he recognizes the Court only out of compassion, so that he can describe its nothingness to the magistrate.

K. judges everything by attempting to understand it rationally; his personal existence is based on the order of a closed system in which every object of concern is placed into relationship with everything else. In the last chapter we noted that in rational thought a new fact "becomes known, understood and conceptually grasped only in so far as it is 'subsumed' under a general idea, recognized as a 'case' of a law or as a member of a manifold series."¹⁴ When K. is arrested, therefore, he attempts to understand the action brought against him by fitting it into the rationalized order within which he lives his daily life. He attempts to fit his arrest into some kind of civil or criminal law. "Who could these men be? What were they talking about? What authority could they represent? K. lived in a country with a legal constitution, there was universal peace, all the laws were in force; who dared seize him in his own dwelling?" (p. 7). In an attempt . . . the warders onto

a plane where he can grasp the meaning of what is taking place, he asserts a sphere of existence that his mind can conceive. He opens the drawers of his writing desk, in which everything is in the greatest order, and gets out his birth certificate in order to prove the legitimacy of his life. Confronting one of his accusers with this document, he demands answers to his questions. "But how can I be under arrest? And particularly in such a ridiculous fashion?" When his opponent refuses to answer these questions he says, "You'll have to answer them Here are my papers, now show me yours, and first of all your warrant for arresting me" (p. 9). The right to live and act is, for him, a matter of legislation predicated upon a political or social system in which he is considered an individual by reason of his physical existence, which is a matter of empirical reality. But this is precisely the non-reality that Kafka's radical naturalism cannot conceive.

K.'s personal life, like his desk drawer, is kept in careful order; it is divided into activities that are predictable in their regularity:

That spring K. had been accustomed to pass his evenings in this way: after work whenever possible--he was usually in his office until nine--he would take a short walk, alone or with some of his colleagues, and then go to a beer hall, where until eleven he sat at a table patronized mostly by elderly men. But there were exceptions to this routine, when, for instance, the Manager of the Bank, who highly valued his diligence and reliability, invited him for a drive or for dinner at his villa. And once a week K. visited a girl called Elsa, who was on duty all night till early morning as a waitress in a cabaret and during the day received her visitors in bed. (p. 23)

An unfinished chapter tells us who these elderly men are, and

why K. enjoys their company.

The company he met at dinner in the evenings had always impressed him as particularly calculated to inspire respect and he never denied in his inmost thoughts that it was a great honor for him to belong to such a society. It consisted almost exclusively of judges, prosecuting counsel, and lawyers, although a few quite young officials and lawyers' clerks were also admitted; but they sat right at the bottom of the table and were only allowed to take part in the debates when questions were addressed to them directly, such questions being nearly always put in order to divert the rest of the company. (p. 296)

Joseph K. enjoys this company because it helps establish his position in the business circles of the city. He takes advantage of defined social customs in order to rise to the top more quickly. Through his associates he learns about correct social attitudes, for we are told that "he was very courteous and modest with everyone; and (much more important than modesty and courtesy) he knew how to differentiate between the various grades in the legal hierarchy and how to treat everyone according to his rank" (p. 300). Thus the evening company serves to help K. establish his position in the world of rational order which he is so concerned about. Through his associates with the elderly lawyer Hasterer, K. becomes a man of note as he walks through the streets with his arms linked into the lawyer's. He is unconcerned that Hasterer's position is not based solely on merit, but on his ability to force people to cower before him.]

The centre of Joseph K.'s ordered existence, and the area of his greatest security is the Bank. "At home," he confesses to Frau Grabach after the arrest, "one is so unprepared."

In the Bank, for instance, I am always prepared, nothing of that kind could possibly happen to me there, I have my own attendant, the general telephone

and the office telephone stand before me on my desk, people keep coming in to see me, clients and clerks, and above all, my mind is always on my work and so kept on the alert, it would be an actual pleasure to me if a situation like that cropped up in the Bank. (p.26)

The Bank is so important in K.'s life that one might call it K.'s raison d'être. He prides himself that he is the chief clerk—his mother even thinks he is president. "Thoughts about the Bank . . . preoccupy him exclusively" (p. 291) as his whole private life is ordered about it. It is through his work in the Bank that he has come to join the company of lawyers in the evenings; and he continues in their company because he thinks that sooner or later the experience may profit him, though he cannot take part in much of the conversation. Even now his prestige is often raised by his being able to mediate in debates in which his practical knowledge is of value to the lawyers:

It frequently happened that when two of the diners could not agree on a point of commercial law they appealed to K. for his opinion on the facts of the case, and his name was then bandied about in all the retorts and counterretorts and even figured in the most abstruse speculations long after he had ceased to follow the trend of the argument. (p. 298)

In cases like this the existence of K. as a person has ceased to matter, for it is only his position as knowledgeable bank clerk that carries weight as his name is mentioned. This situation reflects how K. views his position in the Bank. On the morning of his arrest, for instance, he is not unduly concerned that he will be missed, "considering the comparatively high post he held there" (p. 12). As his case proceeds and as he becomes more and more tired while working, he often hides

behind the facade of business in order to carry on his personal tasks. He is quite content that others view him only as a functionary, rather than as a person with a value reaching beyond his mere position. Functional worth is equal to value in his utilitarian, rational environment; inherent worth is non-existent.

Of course, when the meaning of life is measured in terms of function, one finds himself in a vulnerable position, but Joseph K. enjoys this, since it means that the possibility of rising in the system is increased and his vulnerability decreased since he considers himself a man of high intelligence. The rivalry present between K. and the Assistant Manager is therefore welcome to K., for it points to his power. But the rivalry also points to a defined social order, which is very important to K. in his concern for prestige, for only as one ascends in the social order is one's prestige enhanced. The social order is an important aspect in the rational qualities of K.'s environment. Hence K.'s contempt for the Court tends to grow with every social slip it commits, as reflected in his attitude toward the Inspector on the morning of his arrest. The Inspector tells him, "I was assuming that you would want to go to the Bank. And to facilitate that, and render your arrival at the Bank as unobtrusive as possible, I have detained these three gentlemen here, who are colleagues of yours, to be at your disposal." Though K. is surprized that he has not recognized the three, he nevertheless thinks that they are his subordinates, they are not really his colleagues: "--that was putting it too strongly and indicated a gap in the omniscience

of the Inspector" (pp. 21-22). Joseph K. fails to realize that the Court does not organize its activity in the same way he organizes his own. The life of the Court is not concerned if it really exists only in the heads of the warders, as Joseph K. says it does. All that concerns the Court is reality; all the conjectures of its victims concern it not one whit. The Inspector tells K.; "I was requested to inform you of this [his arrest], I have done so, and I have also observed your reaction" (pp. 19-20). This reaction of Joseph K., which the Inspector notes, will change as the process of the trial continues; Joseph K.'s boundaries of reality will be expanded to include what now lies beyond the scope of his rational existence. He will realize the truth of Willem's reply, "You will come to feel it,"¹⁵ to his taunt that the Court "probably exists nowhere but in your own head" (p. 10).

Joseph K. cannot conceive the Court as a fact of his own existence because of the divergence between experience and reason. Again, the first sentence of the novel shows how his mind excludes the very possibility of his guilt before the Court. Rather than even entertaining the possibility of guilt, he rationalizes that someone must have traduced him. Further, the legal system of his country, which he can understand with his reason, does not account for any legal proceedings of this nature; hence he argues that he cannot be guilty. The very premises of his thoughts function to exclude anything that does not fit their accepted patterns. Reason can only deal with what it can incorporate into its relative laws, so K.

finds it impossible to come to grips with the Court in contesting his case, even when his experience with it draws him further and further into the Court. In drawing up his first plea the real issue is excluded because he attempts to fight the Court as he would a business competitor:

In a relatively short time he had managed to work himself up to his present high position in the Bank and to maintain himself in that position and win recognition from everybody; surely if the abilities which had made this possible were to be applied to the unraveling of his own case, there was no doubt that it would go well. Above all, if he were to achieve anything, it was essential that he should banish from his mind once and for all the idea of possible guilt. There was no such guilt. This legal action was nothing more than a business deal such as he had often concluded to the advantage of the Bank, a deal which must simply be obviated. The right tactics were to avoid letting one's thoughts stray to one's own possible shortcomings, and to cling as firmly as one could to the thought of one's own advantage. (pp. 158-159)

Even at the end of his ordeal he still clings to the logical necessity of his innocence. "But I am not guilty," he tells the chaplain in the cathedral, "its a mistake. And, if it comes to that, how can any man be called guilty? We are all simply men here, one as much as the other" (p. 264). The chaplain ignores the argument, simply replying, "That is true . . . but that's how all guilty men talk." Actually K. forgets his arguments when he is directly confronted with their futility, like at Titorelli's, when the painter tells him his case is simple if he is indeed innocent:

K.'s eyes darkened, this man who said he was in the confidence of the Court was talking like an ignorant child. "My innocence doesn't make the matter any simpler," said K. . . . I have to

fight against countless subtleties in which the Court indulges. And in the end, out of nothing at all, an enormous fabric of guilt will be conjured up." (p. 186)

Nevertheless, he continues to insist on his innocence, though he feels that in fact it cannot be so. Speaking of the ostensible acquittal and the indefinite postponement, Titorelli tells him, "Both methods have this in common, that they prevent the accused from coming up for sentence," to which K. replies "in a low voice, as if embarrassed by his own perspicacity," "But they also prevent an actual acquittal" (p. 202). K.'s difficulty in comprehending the significance of the Court is explained at the beginning, when he is arrested: "it was not usual with him to learn from experience" (p. 8). His mind, instead of helping him to meet his environment directly, erects a barrier so that he is unable to understand the forces that govern his life.

The discrepancy between his perception, which is controlled by his reason, and his experience, is clearly apparent on the morning of his arrest. Frau Grubach's living room, for instance, is first seen as full of rugs, furniture, china, and photographs, though with a little more room than usual. Yet, strangely, when K. looks about for a place to sit down, only one chair, which is already occupied by one of the warders, is available. Further, when K. is summoned to appear before the Inspector, he is taken to the room of Fräulein Bürstner, whom he hardly knows: "This room, as K. knew quite well, had recently been taken by a Fräulein Bürstner, a typist, who went very early to

work, came home late, and with whom he had exchanged little more than a few words in passing" (p. 14). Later that evening while waiting for her to come home, he cannot even remember exactly what she looks like. Yet when Frau Grubach hints that she will have to speak to the young typist regarding her moral conduct, K. defends her vehemently. "In fact," he says, "I frankly warn you against saying anything to her; you're quite mistaken, I know Fräulein Bürstner very well, there isn't a word of truth in what you say" (p. 20, my emphasis). This conflict between reason and experience also takes place before the Inspector at the time of his arrest. Agitated by the rebuke of the Inspector, K. determines to put an end to the nonsense by telephoning his friend, the lawyer Hasterer. When the Inspector tells him that he may telephone though it would help him nothing in this case, he seems to realize that this is so, so he refuses to telephone, despite the Inspector's subsequent urging.

These episodes that run contrary to K.'s ordered world are symptomatic of the fundamental changes that are to take place in K.'s life as the trial progresses. K. must begin to face the reality of his experience rather than the order of his mind. He must accept the fact that though rationally there must be some mistake in his arrest, he is nevertheless arrested. He has no choice but to change the orientation of his life from the activity of the Bank to the activity of the trial. Indeed, as time goes on, the Court becomes the complete object of his existence. This mental attitude, in which the Court

encompasses whole areas of experience begins immediately after the arrest, during his first day at the Bank: "But on this evening . . . K. resolved to go straight home. During every brief pause in the day's work he had kept this resolve in mind; without his quite knowing why, it seemed to him that the whole household of Frau Grubach had been thrown into great disorder by the events of the morning and that it was his task alone to put it right again" (pp. 23-24). Of course, the whole house has not been disrupted, and Frau Grubach does not seem as perturbed about the affairs of the morning as he had supposed she would be. She simply says, "It gives me the feeling of something learned which I don't understand, but which there is no need to understand" (p. 26). K., however, cannot dismiss the whole affair so lightly, though he says he thinks even less of it than does Frau Grubach.

The episode with Fräulein Bürstner establishes further the compulsion that has overtaken K. He defends her before Frau Grubach while hardly knowing the girl. Then he resolves to talk to her when he really has nothing to say. The longer she stays out, and the more reason he has not to bother her, the stronger becomes his urge to see her. When he finally accosts her, he confesses that her room was entered against his will, but that he was nevertheless responsible for the entry. Presuming that K. wants to explain this responsibility of his for something beyond his apparent control, she asks him to tell her what had transpired. K. is unwilling to do so; as the minutes pass it becomes obvious that his motive for

seeing Fräulein Bürstner cannot be explained. Somehow the necessity to talk to Fräulein Bürstner is rooted in that area of his existence which lies beyond the possibility of verbal expression, an area of experience that is made manifest only in the physical activities of life. It seems as though K. has a profound need for this non-rational activity, for when he kisses Fräulein Bürstner, it is like "some thirsty animal lapping greedily at a spring of long-sought fresh water." The need is sinister; tones of death pervade his actions: "Finally he kissed her on the neck, right on the throat, and kept his lips there for a long time."¹⁶

The activity in Fräulein Bürstner's room arises out of that area of K.'s life which also gives rise to the activity of the Court. The trial is not a legal action against K. originating outside his being; it is a "Prozess" arising out of the depths of his life, intimately related to the physical and mental realms of his existence. The Court, indeed the whole Trial, is the realization--the making real--of the sub-conscious realities previously existent in K.'s life. The story itself reveals the process of myth taking place; the process whereby man actively conceives the world of his existence. K. meets the Court as that which becomes immanent, the same as Cassirer's primitive is confronted by his god as the experience of that which is immanent to him is gathered into an object of experience.

Kafka was acutely aware of the constant creative activity of the mind; he knew that man's conception of the world in

which he lived was not determined solely by reason, but that it was dependent largely on his experience of reality which itself was the result of many factors. In one of his reflections, Kafka attempts to grasp part of the complexity of the growth of man's cosmology:

The first worship of idols was certainly fear of the things in the world, but, connected with this, fear of the necessity of the things, and, connected with this, fear or responsibility for the things. So tremendous did this responsibility appear that people did not even dare to impose it upon one single extra-human entity, for even the mediation of one being would not have sufficiently lightened human responsibility, intercourse with only one being would still have been all too deeply tainted with responsibility, and that is why each thing was given the responsibility for itself, more indeed, these things were also given a degree of responsibility for man.¹⁷

Kafka mentions a similar fear in the sketch "Unglücklichsein" referred to above.¹⁸ In answer to the narrator's assertion that not believing in ghosts is of no avail--"Was hilft mir aber dieses Nichtglauben?"--the neighbor answers, "Very simply. You must merely have no fear anymore when a ghost really appears to you." But this advice is useless too. The narrator answers, "Ja, aber das ist doch die nebensächliche Angst. Die eigentliche Angst ist die Angst vor der Ursache der Erscheinung. Und diese Angst bleibt. Die habe ich geradezu großartig in mir."¹⁹ The significance of this episode and of Kafka's reflection above meet in the word Ursache. Literally the word is a compounding of ur, meaning original, and Sache, meaning thing or subject. In normal usage, however, the word Ursache means cause. Thus the rationalization that the cosmology arising out of mythology is not valid because it arises out of pure emotion is itself

on guilt

rendered invalid, because the fear itself arises out of something concrete--a Sache, a thing which is real. Reason and experience must work together as man attempts to find a viable existence. Reality cannot become a static objectification of what only the rational mind has been able to fit into its categoris of existence, it must remain a process which is constantly modified by the experiences of life. The Ursache of something must not be divorced from the ur Sache.

Joseph K. attempts to separate cause and reality by making reality dependent on cause. Whatever has no cause, he argues, cannot rationally exist, and since existence is determined solely by reason, whatever has no cause cannot exist. He fails to realize that cause and reality are totally interdependent, and that the "Ursache" of his trial is the "ur Sache" of his life. Like the Country Doctor, the Trial of Joseph K. is something that is "stored in his house." His statement, "I don't know this law," does not effect the law itself, which, as Willem says, decrees that its officials never go searching for guilt, but that the law is drawn by the guilty, and must send out its warders (p. 10). K.'s guilt lies in the fact that he has broken the law of life which states that life cannot become reduced to the stasis of rational order. Thus his attempt to prove his legitimacy by producing his birth certificate serves to establish rather than disprove his guilt. This process of increasing guilt expands to pervade K.'s entire existence as the story continues, till finally guilt becomes a world order: in the cathedral K. calls the necessity of

this guilt a lie, and this, he says becomes a universal principle (p. 276). As a consequence of his mental attitudes, the Court becomes more and more an objectification of his own experiences, functioning to control the orientation of K.'s life just as the presence of a primitive's god orders the life of its worshipper, who as Kafka points out in the reflection above, worships his deity not only out of fear of the world about him, but also out of fear of himself.

Joseph K. is caught between these two fears: the fear of the Court and the fear of himself; the first conscious and the second unconscious, as we shall see later. Hence, he cannot accept either of the alternatives to escape from the Court that Kafka presents in the novel. The first alternative is to completely ignore the Court, to refuse to take his accusation seriously. In the unfinished chapter, "On the way to Elsa," K. asks the representative of the Court if he will be punished if he refuses to come to the Court of his own accord. When he hears the answer, "No," K. answers, "Splendid, . . . then what motive could I have for complying with this summons?" (p. 290) ^{then why does he continue to return?} and without hesitation drives off to Elsa. The other alternative is to do what the Court asks willfully, as Leni urges him to: ". . . don't be so unyielding in the future, you can't fight against this Court, you must make your confession. Make your confession at the first chance you get. Only then is a possibility for escape given, only then."²⁰ As mentioned though, neither of these alternatives is really possible, they only exist potentially. True, the official tells K. that he will not be

punished for not appearing of his own accord, but he also says, "We shall know where to find you," adding, "It is not usual to bring the powers of the Court upon one's own head" (p. 290). K. tries to put the affairs of this trial out of his mind, and to keep them hidden from others, but he is unsuccessful in this. Though he tries to keep the matter hidden from his uncle, for instance, his uncle forces him to take the fight more seriously than he has:

"And what have you got to say now?" asked his uncle, who had temporarily forgotten all his haste and agitation over the letter, which he seemed to be rereading. "Yes, Uncle," said K., "it's quite true." "True?" cried his uncle. "What is true? How on earth can it be true? What case is this? Not a criminal case, surely?" "A criminal case," answered K. "And you sit there coolly with a criminal case hanging round your neck?" cried his uncle, his voice growing louder and louder. "The cooler I am, the better in the end," said K. wearily. "Don't worry." "That's a fine thing to ask of me," cried his uncle Your attitude . . . doesn't please me at all, that isn't how an innocent man behaves if he's in his senses. (p. 117)

The uncle then forcibly takes K. to the lawyer Huld, thus enmeshing K. inextricably in the proceedings of his trial. As a fact of experience it is physically impossible for K. to escape the trial, for he is implicated by his complicity which he cannot escape. In Kafka guilt is not the result of radical acts or even abnormal attitudes. It is the absence of these which produce the guilt.

The other alternative is equally impossible to achieve, for K.'s very existence is predicted upon his guilt, which arises from the fact that he cannot recognize the Court, and

absence
of process
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therefore cannot accept it as valid. K.'s life is rooted in rational order, whereas the Court's order defies reason. For K. to admit his guilt would be to destroy his world. Left in this situation, K. challenges the Court with the only weapon at his disposal--his rational mind. In this, however, he only falls deeper into the clutches of the Court, for every victory in fact becomes a defeat. At K.'s first interrogation he thinks he is making a strong impression on one part of the audience because of their silence at his speech. So convinced is he of his power over the crowd that he openly accuses all the members of the Court of being scoundrels bent on tyrannizing innocent victims. But as he confronts them more directly, things change:

Had he been mistaken in these people? Had he overestimated the effectiveness of his speech? Had they been disguising their real opinions while he spoke, and now that he had come to the conclusion of his speech were they weary at last of pretense? (p. 59)

Too late does he realize that all the members of the Court belong to the same party:

"So! cried K., flinging his arms in the air, his sudden enlightenment had to break out, every man jack of you is an official, I see you are yourselves the corrupt agents of whom I have been speaking, you've all come rushing here to listen and nose out what you can about me, making a pretense of party divisions, and half of you applauded merely to lead me on." (p. 60)

Lest he still believes in the value of his accusation of the Court, the Examining Magistrate tells K. as he leaves, "I merely wanted to point out . . . that today--you may not yet have become aware of the fact--today you have flung away with your own hand all the advantages which an interrogation

invariably confers on an accused man."

This pattern of events is constantly repeated. K.'s accusation of the warders at the first interrogation does nothing but lead to his own torment when he sees the two being whipped in the lumberroom in the Bank. During K.'s first visit to the law offices he accosts another defendant who is so overcome with horror that he cannot answer K.'s simple questions. He thinks the man is struck dumb because of his own superiority, but later the merchant Block tells him that the man is rendered speechless because he reads the signs of both his own and K.'s destruction in the near future.

One of the basic rules which K. lays down for himself in preparing his own defence is that he must always maintain a position of advantage over the Court, just as he must in his commercial transactions. This, of course, is one of the prime concerns of his struggle to ascend in the competitive world of his rational existence, to which he compares the trial:

This legal action was nothing more than a business deal such as he had often concluded to the advantage of the Bank, a deal within which, as always happened, lurked various dangers which must simply be obviated. The right tactics were to avoid letting one's thoughts stray to one's own possible shortcomings, and to cling as firmly as one could to the thought of one's advantage. (p. 159)

He holds to this principle obstinately, even when it is apparent that it is false. In those cases he distorts his experiences by rationalizations which force the contents of his reversals into patterns supposedly showing not his but the Court's defeat.

The week after the first interrogation he returns to the court chamber, only to find a washerwoman who makes sexual advances which he ignores until a student appears and wins the woman's favor before his very eyes. When he then attempts to wrest the woman from the student, she tells K. to let him go since he is only obeying the orders of the Examining Magistrate. In an attempt to retain his advantage he is forced to rationalize:

K. walked slowly after them, he recognized that this was the first unequivocal defeat that he had received from these people. There was no reason, of course, for him to worry about that, he had received the defeat only because he had insisted on giving battle. While he stayed quietly at home and went about his ordinary vocations he remained superior to all these people and could kick any of them out of his path. (p. 73)

Standing in the hallway, he notices a sign pointing to the Law Courts in the attic of the tenement building. Reflecting on this, he again sets himself above the officials of the Court.

Now K. could understand too why in the beginning they had chosen instead to molest him in his lodgings. And how well-off K. was compared with the Magistrate, who had to sit in a garret, while K. had a large room in the Bank with a waiting-room attached to it and could watch the busy life of the city through his enormous plate-glass window. True, he drew no secondary income from bribes or speculation and could not order his attendant to pick up a woman and carry her to his room. But K. was perfectly willing to renounce these advantages, at least in this life. (p. 75)

K.'s use of reason, therefore, whether prospective or reflective, effectively hides him from his true condition. But it not only serves to conceal the compounding of his guilt; it also disguises the real truth that the whole trial is a

reaction of the experience of his life against the type of existence he is leading, the truth that, as mentioned above, while K. is afraid of the Court, he also fears himself, and that the Court is there to rescue K. from his sterile, rational existence. The first indication we have that K. lacks warm, personal relationships appears at the arrest. We notice that K. is a bachelor whose concern for women rests not in their social but in their utilitarian qualities. Upon waking, he rings for Anna to bring him his breakfast. His relationship with Elsa is part of his routine. He has not visited his mother for almost three years, and he is too busy to see his cousin Erna. The fact that K. is arraigned before the Inspector in the room of Fräulein Bürstner is indicative of his condition. The nature of his guilt is revealed when he speaks to her that evening. .. Totally disregarding her wishes, he takes advantage of her tiredness, approaching her "like some thirsty animal lapping greedily at a spring of long-sought fresh water" (p. 38). For him a personal relationship, apart from the routine of his Bank life, is indeed a "spring of long-sought fresh water." He cannot, however, establish any relationship like this as a consequence of the orientation of his life. Just before falling asleep that night he thinks a little about his behavior, and rather than realizing that he has failed again, he is pleased with it, "yet, surprised that he was still not more pleased." The direct relationship between his trial and Fräulein Bürstner is noted later when K. is reflecting about the course of his trial while thinking about his first plea: he notices that his relations

with Fräulein Bürstner seem to fluctuate with the case itself (p. 158).

The only explicit charge that K. finds against him but ~~which he refuses to acknowledge~~, is the charge of arrested sexuality. The indication of abnormality revealed by his long, death-connoting kiss on the throat of Fräulein Bürstner is reflected in the content of the law books used in his interrogation. He finds an opportunity to examine these books the next Sunday, and he recognizes the sexual indecency portrayed:

A man and a woman were sitting naked on a sofa, the obscence intention of the draftsman was evident enough, yet his skill was so small that nothing emerged from the picture save the all-too-solid figures of a man and a woman sitting rigidly upright, and because of the bad perspective, apparently finding the utmost difficulty even in turning toward each other. K. did not look at any of the other pages, but merely glanced at the title page of the second book, it was a novel entitled: How Grete was Plagued by Her Husband Hans. (p. 65)

The title may well have read, "How Fräulein Bürstner was Plagued by Joseph K." He is not content with the harm he has done the first night with Fräulein Bürstner, but he continually tries to meet her again, ostensibly to explain his actions. Little does he seem to realize that he cannot explain his actions adequately. The arrested picture is caused by the faulty perspective, and K. suffers from exactly this ill. The nature of that perspective is clearly shown in what happens just after he turns from the law books to speak to the washerwoman.

In answer to the comments, "These are the men who are supposed to sit in judgment on me," the washerwoman simply says, "I'll help you. . . . Would you like me to?" When K. declines this help, she settles herself on the edge of the platform, makes room for K., and begins complimenting him. K. under-

stands what she seems to be saying:

"So this is all it amounts to," thought K., "she's offering herself to me, she's corrupt like the rest of them, she's tired of the officials here, which is understandable enough, and accosts any stranger who takes her fancy with compliments about his eyes." (pp. 65-66)

He rejects her overtures until she tells him that she knows the Examining Magistrate intimately. However, not until the student comes to take her away does he really become anxious to win her favour. Even then his interest in her is not personal but only procedural. He wants her only in order to gain an advantageous position relative to the Court. Again he rationalizes:

And her offer of help had sounded sincere and was probably not worthless. And probably there could be no more fitting revenge on the Examining Magistrate and his henchmen than to wrest this woman from them and take her himself. Then some night the Examining Magistrate, after long and arduous labor on his lying reports about K., might come to the woman's bed and find it empty. Empty because she had gone off with K. (pp. 70-71)

Even when he finally is confronted with a situation where he can have a woman from the Court, it is the woman, Leni, who must take the initiative in establishing a relationship. Of course the relationship is perverted because K. accepts Leni not as a friend but as a means of gaining Court information. Leni, ironically, does nothing of the kind, for her purpose is only to trap K. for the lawyer Huld. She is thus a prostitute herself, letting herself be used by both Huld and K. and thus the exchange of Elsa for Leni is completely in keeping with the character of K., whose very existence is predicated upon the prostitution of others for himself.

K.'s desire for Fräulein Bürstner is partially an expression of a deep desire to rid himself of this mode of life which demands that others exist only for his use. K. longs for a healthy personal relationship like a thirsty animal longs for fresh water, as his kisses of the typist show, but he finds it impossible to establish this relationship for he cannot rid himself of the perverted demands of his parasitic ego to gain the advantage over others. His first thought after his argument with Frau Grubach already takes the attraction of Fräulein Bürstner in this direction: "As he lounged by the window and shut his tired eyes, he actually considered for a moment paying Frau Grubach out by persuading Fräulein Bürstner to give notice along with him" (p. 29). His failure to achieve a healthy relationship in the end is but a revelation of the ambiguity of his motives. Thus his feelings before falling asleep that night are also ambiguous.

The pattern of K.'s use of others is shown in almost all his relationships. The accusation from the priest in the Cathedral, "you cast about too much for outside help," is not restricted to K.'s Court procedure; it refers to the manner of his life and thus to the trial which pervades his whole existence. Frau Grubach, for instance, is one of the people over whom K. has an advantage, in fact, over all the tenants in Frau Grubach's house. After the outcry which frightens Fräulein Bürstner K. tells her not to fear.

You know how Frau Grubach, who has the decisive voice in this matter, particularly as the Captain is her nephew, you know how she almost venerates me and believes absolutely everything I say. She is also

dependent on me, I may say, for she has borrowed a fair sum of money from me. (pp. 35-36)

In an unfinished chapter this guilt arising out of K.'s wrong attitude to his fellow lodgers is made explicit. In visions of his trial he sees himself walking through the corridors of a law court where he meets Frau Grubach's lodgers who always appear as a group, standing "shoulder to shoulder with open mouths, like an accusing chorus." And right in the middle is Fräulein Bürstner (pp. 206-207).

In this conjunction, it is interesting to note that all of the accused in the Law Offices are men of advantageous positions: "All of them were carelessly dressed, though to judge from the expression of their faces, their bearing, the cut of their beards, and many almost imperceptible little details, they obviously belonged to the upper classes" (p. 78). They are presumably all men who have taken advantage of others in order to attain their position of wealth. K.'s attitude toward the three bank clerks shows how he fits into this group. In part of an unfinished chapter his treatment of them is presented: "K. hates Kullich, and not Kullich alone, but Rabensteiner and Kaminer too." He does not hate the three because of their association with the Court, actually the reverse is true: the trial is the result of K.'s hatred of the three, it is a reaction against K.'s physical and mental abuse of the clerks:

He believes that he has hated them from the beginning. Their appearance in Fräulein Bürstner's room had, it is true, first brought them to his notice; but his hatred is older. And lately K. has been almost sick with that hatred, for he cannot satisfy it. It is so difficult to get at them. They are now the lowest of all the officials;

and as they are all three completely inferior, they will never get promotion except through pressure of their years of seniority and even then more slowly than anyone else. So that it is next to impossible to hinder their careers. (p. 295)

K. goes on to consider the possibility of complaining to the Manager, in order to have them dismissed from their positions entirely, but he refrains from this because that is what the Assistant Manager would like in this case as well. However, he would use the three to gain an advantage over the Assistant Manager, if he would but favor them. Considering the character of K. then, one can understand the antipathy of the girl at Titorelli's studio, who tells the painter, "Please don't paint him, such an ugly man as that" (p. 187).

The principle upon which the Court comes to impeach K. time after time is illustrated in the whipping scene. In his first interrogation K. attempts to hide behind the corruption of the two warders, Willem and Franz, in building his defence. This abuse of the two comes back to torment him in the Bank, the very heart of his rational existence. He attempts again to obviate the situation by throwing the blame on the entire organization. "In my view," he tells the whipper, "they are not guilty. The guilt lies with the organization. It is the high officials who are guilty." *he indicts himself* The warders themselves then take up this tack, crying, "That's so," but, like K., they cannot escape their due. It is simply not possible for K. to keep the lumber-room of his personal life shut off from the world. Though he can order the clerks of the Bank to clear out the physical lumber-room of the Bank when its mess becomes

too oppressive, he cannot order anyone to clear away the filth which ^{and} the dirty ^{which the} Law Courts expose. Even in the cathedral he attempts to hide behind others--"We are all simply men here," he tells the chaplain. But the law is irreversible.

At the beginning of the trial K. is told, "You will get to feel it." On the Sunday after his interrogation, coming out of the Law Courts where he has fainted, K. asks himself, "Could his body possibly be meditating a revolution and preparing a new trial for him, since he was withstanding the old one with such ease?" (p. 90). He fails to realize that it is not a new trial, but an inherent part of the original trial that is revealed through his physical weakness. The entire Prozess is the revolution of his body against its suppression. This "body" is, of course, not restricted to K.'s physical organs; it includes the totality of his personality which has been suppressed by its rational taskmaster. It is the body that has been forced to act contrary to its nature. Furthermore, the rebellion does not begin in the choked atmosphere of the Law Offices, it begins in Frau Grubach's tenement building on the morning of his arrest, when he looks about for a seat but cannot find one in a room full of furniture. The weariness of his body, however, is most noticeable in the center of his business existence, the place where he most abuses it, and where he seeks to keep it in subjection even after the trial has begun. One winter morning, while K. is sitting at his desk pondering the affairs of the trial, he renews his efforts to rouse himself in order to fight his case.

It was absolutely necessary for K. to intervene

personally. In states of intense exhaustion, such as he experienced this winter morning, when all these thoughts kept running at random through his head, he was particularly incapable of resisting this conviction. The contempt which he had once felt for the case no longer obtained. . . . He hardly had the choice now to accept the trial or reject it, he was in the middle of it and must fend for himself. To give in to fatigue would be dangerous. (p. 158)

It is consistent with what is happening to him that his once ordered thoughts keep running at random through his head. No more are his faculties to be moved by reason; physical necessity becomes more and more influential as the case continues against him. As time passes the affairs of the Bank even become incomprehensible to him. The same morning a manufacturer comes to see K. about a transaction similar to one he had concluded a year before. But K. cannot follow the swift reasoning of the man, and when the Assistant Manager finally comes to his assistance, it seems "as though two giants of enormous size [negotiate] above his head," as the two discuss the plans beside him.

The feeling that they are negotiating about himself may not be wrong, for the Court comes to pervade his life more all the time, nowhere can he escape it. And as soon as the manufacturer is finished his business with the Assistant Manager, he does in fact come to give K. some advice that will draw him yet closer into the confines of the Court. When he goes to Titorelli then he is told, "You see, everything belongs to the Court" (p. 188). Of course everythings belongs to the Court because Joseph K. is his own Court. He confesses this in the Law Offices, where he openly associates himself with its influence when he begins to feel dizzy: K. is delighted when the stylishly dressed man remarks that maybe he should leave the

offices rather than go to a sick-room. "I should feel better at once," he says, "I'm sure of it . . . for I don't usually suffer from these attacks, I was surprised myself by this one. I am an official too and accustomed to office air" (p. 85). He is truly an official--over others in the Bank, and because of his attitudes there, over himself in the Court. But as he becomes prosecutor of himself, he loses his bearing in the outer world, since he has always lived only through his parasitical relationships to others. His dizziness is the result of the loss of his bearings when he turns from his outer existence in which he lives as he relates to other people in attempting to gain an advantage over them. As he becomes involved in his own life apart from others, he feels new sensations of being lost: "He felt as if he was seasick. He felt he was on a ship rolling in heavy seas. It was as if the waters were dashing against the wooden walls, as if the roaring of breaking waves came from the end of the passage, as if the passage itself pitched and rolled and the waiting clients on either side rose and fell with it" (p. 89). Being situated inside his own existence--the Court--he feels entirely out of harmony with the world outside as shown by its pitching and reeling.

In some ways the trial and the consequent illness of K. are similar to the illness of the lawyer Huld, whose associations with the Court are apparently just as baffling to himself as K.'s are to K. Like Joseph K., he can offer many rationalizations about the procedures of the Court, but can substantiate none of them. He also lives a parasitical existence, depending on his

clients, whom he victimizes mercilessly, in order to exist himself. Most important, however, is the fact that he has an ordinary practice as well as associating with the Court. K. is uncommonly reassured by the alliance between the Court and normal jurisprudence, especially when Block tells him that Huld may be better in the latter than in the former. Little do either of them realize that precisely this is the disconcerting aspect about Huld. He is really not qualified as a lawyer of the Court because this is not a rational Court; all he can do is rationalize, thereby holding his clients in subjection to himself and to the Court. Further, each trial is personal; as the doorkeeper tells the man from the country in the legend, "Before the Law," the door is meant for him alone. The authorities themselves want to "eliminate defending counsel as much as possible; the whole onus of the Defense must be laid on the accused himself" (p. 145), as Huld personally points out to K. Huld can never help Block or K. to an acquittal. In victimizing others though, he is also victimizing himself. His illness has striking resemblances to the weakness of those whom he hold in subjection, and well it might, for is he not also a member of the upper classes whose members exclusively make up the Court's victims? He is like the Country Doctor--he also has usurped another's position, and he too is unable to help his patient. His thought processes exclude truth.

Reason dismisses reality as a superstition. Even Block, at the advanced stage of his trial, is unwilling to believe what is undeniably true, as K. experiences later. Speaking of the people

waiting in the law offices, Block says, "But it's all nonsense."

Then he tells K. what the people believe.

One of the superstitions is that you're supposed to tell from a man's face, especially the line of his lips, how his case is going to turn out. . . . I tell you it's a silly superstition and in most cases completely belied by the facts, but if you live among these people it's difficult to escape the prevailing opinion. You can't imagine what a strong effect such superstitions have. (p. 218) *Person denies reality myth.*

The people are right and reason is wrong. The function of the Court is to free man from this error of his one-dimensional existence, and as a lackey of the Court, Huld helps it fulfill its function, at least insofar as it destroys K.'s ties to the environment which supports him. K. notices that the lawyer's methods amount to this, "that the client finally [forgets] the whole world and [lives] only in the hope of toiling along this false path until the end of his case [shall] come in sight" (p. 242). K. comes to rely less and less on others and more on himself as time passes. Initially his uncle had found it necessary to get K. to take his trial seriously. *except at his excursions* Toward the end K. becomes so self-reliant that he is willing to dismiss Huld, and Leni with him; neither are necessary any longer to keep K.'s mind on the proceedings. The process of the trial is truly taking place in K., though even to the end he fails to understand it. The chaplain tells him, "The verdict is not suddenly arrived at, the proceedings only gradually merge into the verdict" (p. 264). Nevertheless K. in his blindness insists on his view of the proceedings, not realizing that when he describes the Court to the chaplain, he is describing his own shortcomings.

Not the Examining Magistrate but he is a petticoat-hunter. He says openly, "If I could move some women I know to join forces in working for me I couldn't help winning through." In the light of K.'s misconception the chaplain cannot refrain from shrieking, "Can't you see one pace before you?" (p. 265).

In a reflection Kafka states,

One can disintegrate the world by means of very strong light. For weak eyes the world becomes solid, for still weaker eyes it seems to develop fists, for eyes weaker still it becomes shame-faced and smashes anyone who dares to gaze upon it.²¹

The progression of this ambiguous reflection parallels the process of the world as K. perceives it. His power has disintegrated the world as it stands before the novel opens. No real world exists beyond the social constructs which he affirms. As the novel progresses, however, the light begins to fade and the world becomes solid. He is arrested in the morning--just after sunrise; presumably the light should increase till mid-day. But the opposite happens. As the trial progresses the light is gradually blotted out by the elements of wind, rain and snow. The fading light is symptomatic of K.'s faltering reason, progressively less able to control the objects of his conceived world. The walls reel about him, and the Assistant Manager appears gigantic as he negotiates K.'s existence over his head. K. goes to the cathedral in the middle of the morning, but the atmosphere is almost dark, and he has to resort to a pocket torch to examine the paintings in the darkened building. Instead of getting brighter, the light fades even more as noon approaches; even the

light inside the cathedral grows dimmer:

There was no longer even a murky daylight; black night had set in. All the stained glass in the window could not illumine the darkness of the wall with one solitary glimmer of light. And at this very moment the verger began to put out the candles on the high altar, one after another. (p. 265)

Then even the lamp in K.'s hand goes out, leaving only the glimmer of a silver image, which is immediately lost in the darkness.

The last chapter takes place in the artificial light of the moon.

Through the course of the trial K. has lost the light with which he can disintegrate the world. The power of his mind has continually decreased until, at the end, the world does indeed smash him. He makes no resistance as two men in frock coats and top hats come to get him; actually he is waiting for them to come for him. Halfway to his execution he hesitates, but then he catches a glimpse of someone who may be Fräulein Bürstner, who reminds him of the condition of the existence he has led. He concedes that he has always "wanted to snatch at the world with twenty hands, and not for very laudable motives either" (p. 282). Now he is content to let the world return that injustice; to snatch at him with its hands. He has left his unyielding stubbornness. "Am I to leave this world as a man who has no common sense?" he asks. "Are people to say of me after I am gone that at the beginning of my case I wanted to finish it, and at the end of it I want to begin it again?" Now K. is willing to accept experience as reality, willing to meet the physical world without the mediation of reason which has isolated him from it. He now contrasts the use of his mental powers

to his earlier attempts to control things. Rather than snatching at the world with twenty hands, he now wants to keep his intelligence "calm and analytical." *he hasn't learned anything!*

In resigning his distorting faculties, K. finds a new life, in a sense, a new world which does not buffet him. He almost falls back to his previous existence at the last moment, but he overcomes the temptation.

His glance fell on the top story of the house adjoining the quarry. With a flicker as of a light going up, the casements of a window there suddenly flew open; a human figure, faint and insubstantial at that distance and that height, leaned abruptly forward and stretched both arms still farther. Who was it? A friend? A good man? Someone who sympathized? Someone who wanted to help? Was it one person only? Or was it mankind? Was help at hand? Were there arguments in his favor that had been overlooked? Of course there must be. Logic is doubtless unshakable, but it cannot withstand a man who wants to go on living. (p. 286, Emphasis mine)

K. has found a new life that defies the death-in-life from which he has been freed. A fragment from an unfinished chapter entitled "The House" clearly portrays the difference between the two modes of life. In a dream, his new experience is contrasted to his earlier experiences in the stultifying atmosphere of the law offices. Here he is being pulled through the courts by Titorelli:

In the twinkling of an eye they were in the Law Courts and flying along the stairs. upward and downward too, without the slightest effort, gliding along as easily as a buoyant craft through water. And at the very moment when K. looked down at his feet and came to the conclusion that this lovely motion had no connection with the hum-drum life he had led until now--at that very moment over his bent head the transformation occurred. (p. 309)

Without something to hold to, K. had earlier felt seasick, now he is elated. He has been freed from the strictures of his old

order, and now the transformation occurs: "The light which until then had been behind them changed and suddenly flowed in a blinding stream toward them. K. looked up He was in the corridor of the Law Courts again, but everything was quieter and simpler and there were no conspicuous details. He took it all in at a glance, detached himself from Titorelli and went his way." He has gained the light with which he can disintegrate the world from a new perspective. Now he is one with the world, so he does not experience an opposition to it. He no longer needs it to stand apart from him so that he can use it to establish his existence.

Wilhelm Emrich points out that K. is reborn here, as is illustrated by his change of clothes. "In Kafka," he says, "clothes always express a definite form of existence," and K.'s clothes are different now.²²

He was wearing a new long dark suit which comforted him by its warmth and weight. . . . In the corner of one of the passages he found his other clothes in a heap: the black jacket, the pin-striped trousers, and on the top the shirt stretched out with crumpled sleeves. (p. 309)

Emrich also notes another dream of Joseph K.'s which also points to redemption in death. It is entitled only "A Dream" and, with the parable, "Before the Law" was published in Kafka's collection "A Country Doctor." In it an artist is unable to inscribe a tombstone while K. watches, but when K. finally understands the artist's predicament and crawls into the grave, he is just able to see how "up above, his name, in mighty flourishes, raced across the stone." Emrich gives this reason

for Kafka's failure to include either of these endings in the novel: "Inclusion of the dream would have gone against Kafka's conviction that in phenomenal existence on earth every truth is perverted to a lie. Truth and redemption become visible only in death, at the sight of the self upon the gravestone."²³

How then is man to live? In the novel reason perverts the truth, it comes between K. and his experience. But man can ~~impossibly live without his rational faculty, for a social existence demands discourse, and discourse is predicated upon a~~ denotative language. Kafka recognized this, and thus he wrote,

There is nothing besides a spiritual world; what we call the world of the senses is the Evil in the spiritual world, and what we call Evil is only the necessity of a moment in our eternal evolution.²⁴

The use of the rational mind to orient oneself in the physical world is thus a necessary evil, and as such it cannot be viewed as a total evil. Though Joseph K. is guilty from the beginning, he is doing what he must in order to exist in his society, which itself is permeated with evil. As he is drawn to a deeper reality which exposes his evil, he finds it more and more impossible to come to grips with the problems of his physical existence, until in the end his only alternative is to leave it through death. As long as he even remains alive, he cannot find full release-- he can orient himself toward release, as he does in the last chapter, but he cannot take his own life, even though he knows that this is his duty.

Through the use of metaphor Kafka is able to present this conflict in its full ambiguity, for a true metaphor does not have

a static meaning. Since the meaning of the metaphor lies in its function, the Court is both good and evil: good in that it forces K. into the truth; evil in that it forces him to die.

As a metaphorical work, The Trial also functions as that disruptive force which Foss describes as the essence of metaphor, in contrasting it to the simile and analogy, which function within rational systems:

For it may now be stated: the simile and the analogy link the unknown to the known, in an expedient and practical way, closing the problematic entity into a familiar pattern. The metaphorical process, on the contrary, raises the problem even there where we seemed at home and shatters the ground on which we had settled down in order to widen our view beyond any limit of a special practical use.²⁵

Caught in the world of practical existence, too many readers of Kafka fail to notice the metaphorical thrust of The Trial, which disturbs the static concepts we have to our environment. For many the work is an allegory, which like the simile or analogy, links the unknown (the novel) to the known (the perceived environment) "in an expedient and practical way, closing problematic entity into a familiar pattern." The novel thus becomes psychological, sociological, or theological, whereas in truth the novel works to burst these categories in order to add a whole new dimension to human experience. Insofar as this realm cannot be reduced to familiar patterns it remains problematical and must be approached in its ongoing activity, for it remains constant only in this.

In the fact that the work remains problematical, it typifies what Coleridge must have meant when he said of the secondary imagination that "it dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create." Kafka's work is disrupting. It defies

- It is neither
It is not a
Physical phenomenon
K. is a
matter of
Indifference.

the static structures we have established, for it defies one-dimensional meaning. The Court is not one definite "thing." It is what it does. It forces K. to leave the world of the bank; it forces K. to negate his false social life; it forces K. to accept it against his will; yet it permits K. to enter a new freedom: it accepts K. when he comes. Kafka is undoubtedly a social writer, but not in the narrow terms of the common problem of sociological alienation as a result of the technology or bureaucracy of our age. These problems are subsumed in the larger problem which does not go beyond the individual person as he metaphorically represents humanity. Cassirer describes this metaphorical representation in terms of the mythic consciousness:

Every part of a whole is the whole itself; every specimen is equivalent to the entire species. The part does not merely represent the whole, or the specimen its class; they are identical with the totality to which they belong; not merely as mediating aids to reflective thought, but as genuine presences which actually contain the power, significance and efficacy of the whole.²⁶

Martin Floss also describes metaphorical representation as opposed to rational representation:

The idea of the "People," whereas it comes to life in the history of mankind, is a mythical or religious idea. It was a rationalistic misunderstanding that made the people a product of convention, addition, comparison, or agreement. . . . Every person, transcending his purposive, reduced, and merely symbolic ego, is a concentrated, purified, and widened unity of life. He is not less, but more than the single men and their aggregate. He is not just a part, but more than the whole.²⁷

After discussing the fallacy of a quantitative rather than a qualitative view of representation, he goes on to say,

The metaphorical representative . . . is not part and no addition of parts; he is no tool and he has nobody to release him from his responsibility. He is alone, he is unique. If he fails, all is lost. He must feel an unbound responsibility for those for whom he stands. He is guilty for them and takes the blame alone. His life is dangerous, but it is not the danger which threatens his own existence; it is the danger of losing the cause for which he stands. He is more powerful and more humble than the symbolic representative. The latter is very little, a mere instrument, but he is proud to take orders from a bigger whole and to fulfill them. The true representative is unrestricted, his responsibility is his order, but his task surpasses the possibility of fulfilment and leaves him to the humility of an infinite service.²⁸

Kafka himself seems to have been such a man, as Milena reveals him in her letters: "He always thinks himself the guilty

and the weak one. And yet there is not another person in the whole world who has his tremendous strength: that absolute, irrevocable, necessary drive toward perfection, purity, truth.

That is how it is."²⁹ And Kafka's protagonists are metaphorical representatives; their success or failure is the success or failure of mankind, and that is why Kafka's works are so serious.

Joseph K. is not only one individual among a thousand who is fighting for his existence, he is everyone fighting. He is also everyone attempting to take advantage of everyone else-- a terrifying thought in view of the necessity of this activity even as it is negated in the novel. Yet as K. is brought face to face with experience the hold of the perverted order about him is loosed as the disrupting mediation is obviated.

The metaphorical movement of the work which emphasizes primal reality breaks the power of rational thought which holds everything in subjection.

Thus the death of K. is not a defeat but a victory.

"Logic is doubtless unshakable, but it cannot withstand a man who wants to go on living." Max Brod is undoubtedly correct in emphasizing the optimism as well as the pessimism of Kafka. The very existence of the metaphorical reality which subsumes the social reality opens K.'s way into that new, ever-expanding all-pervading good which in his fifty-fourth reflection Kafka projected as the spiritual inevitability:

There is nothing besides a spiritual world; what we call the world of the senses is the Evil in the spiritual world, and what we call Evil is only the necessity of a moment in our eternal evolution.

CHAPTER III

THE MORTAL VIRTUE: PIERRE OR, THE AMBIGUITIES

The dilemma of Joseph K. in The Trial is similar to the dilemma of Pierre Glendinning in Pierre or, The Ambiguities. How is man to live when life has lost all meaning, and when the search for that lost meaning leads to a complete denial of man's very ability to live? After Herman Melville had written and published Moby-Dick in 1851 he immediately began another novel dealing with that problem even more extensively than he had in his great sea epic; then, still tortured after the appearance in 1852 of Pierre or, The Ambiguities, he continued to write short stories, and in 1856 another novel, The Confidence-Man, dealing with the same theme. By this time his family had grown so worried about both his physical and mental health that they sent him on a tour to the Middle East, thereby granting him the fulfillment of a life-long wish. En route he stopped in England to visit his erstwhile literary companion, Nathaniel Hawthorne, with whom he had, as he writes in his journal, "good talk." Hawthorne elaborates in his own journal:

Melville, as he always does, began to reason about Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had 'pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated;' but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. It is strange how he persists--and has persisted ever since I knew him, and probably long before--in wandering to and fro over these deserts . . . He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he

is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other.¹

Melville never did come to a solution other than the one he points to in his works--the solution of death, as he intimates to Hawthorne in 1856. Many of Melville's protagonists find the life they must lead a physical impossibility. Like Kafka's Joseph K., Pierre Glendinnings expanding awareness, for instance, eventually drives him to willful death.

Melville parallels Kafka not only in dealing with the impossibility of finding truth in normal life, but also in developing this theme through myth and metaphor. His concern for fate and free will is shot through with the truth that the reality of man's experience is determined by each individual's unique approach to life; reality is the result of man's active conception rather than his passive perception. Meaning in his works lies not in what something is but in what something does. Indeed, something is only by virtue of what it does. Truth is not an arbitrary fact, it is the consequence of experience, as is shown over and over both in Melville's four most metaphorical novels and his numerous short stories written between 1848 and 1856. Yillah, in Mardi, is much more than a Polynesian albino, she is the goal of Taji's quest. Her existence determines the quest, and as she ceases to exist as a reality, the novel loses its metaphoric force, degenerating into an allegorical treatise on the social and philosophical ills of mankind. The white whale in Moby-Dick likewise is more than an albino sperm whale. It is that all-inclusive reality which demands the very life not only of Ahab, but of the entire

crew, which accepts Ahab's conception of the whale as the focal point of its existence. And confidence in The Confidence Man is finally the experience that virtue itself is a cheat, that truth is a lie.

Pierre deals with the problem of truth in a slightly different manner from these three novels. In addition to presenting the activity of finding truth in the activity of the plot, Melville examines the manner in which an author attempts to find truth apart from the process of revealing it by giving it shape in a work of art. The novel thus raises technical problems which are compounded by a shift in focus as Melville moves from a primarily dramatic plot to predominantly overt description and assertion. In the end, however the result of Melville's continuing philosophical dilemma emerges more directly --though less artistically--than in any other of his works. The deeper man delves into truth the more falsehood he finds, until he begins to despise the truth of his own existence. "For the more and the more he wrote, and the deeper and the deeper that he dived," Melville writes,

Pierre saw the everlasting elusiveness of Truth; the universal lurking insincerity of even the greatest and the the purest written thoughts. Like knavish cards, the leaves of all great books were covertly packed. He was but packing one set the more; and that a very poor jaded set and pack indeed. So that there was nothing he more spurned, than his own aspirations; nothing he more abhorred than the loftiest part of himself.²

Man cannot live in this condition, and thus Pierre has no choice but to die. In the end Melville's disparaging view of life overcomes the metaphorical activity of the novel; the

process of revelation **falters**, overcome by rational assertions. Melville's own thoughts seem to fall to simile and allegory, concerned more with presenting a truth than revealing truth in its immediate activity. Thus the end of Pierre fails to rise above the negation of the hero's own death.

The novel begins conventionally, not only in terms of environment, but also in terms of literary tradition, for it is placed firmly in the pastoral tradition. It fulfills a promise that Melville had made to Mrs. Hawthorne in answer to her letter of December 1851, in which she had praised Moby-Dick. "--But, My Dear Lady," he wrote, "I shall not again send you a bowl of salt water. The next chalice I shall commend, will be a rural bowl of milk."³ The first pages are almost stereotypes of romance and a quiet country life.

There are some strange summer mornings in the country, when he who is but a sojourner from the city shall early walk forth into the fields, and be wonder-smitten with the trance-like aspect of the green and golden world. Not a flower stirs; the trees forget to wave; the grass itself seems to have ceased to grow; and all Nature, as if suddenly become conscious of her own profound mystery, and feeling no refuge from it but silence, sinks into this wonderful and indescribable repose.

Such was the morning in June, when, issuing from the embowered and high-gabled old home of his fathers, Pierre, dewily refreshed and spiritualised by sleep, gaily entered the long, wide, elm-arched street of the village, and half unconsciously bent his steps toward a cottage, which peeped into view near the end of the vista.

The verdant trance lay far and wide; and through it nothing came but the brindled kine, dreamily wandering to their pastures, followed, not driven, by ruddy-cheeked, white-footed boys.

As touched and bewitched by the loveliness of this silence, Pierre neared the cottage, and lifted his eyes, he swiftly paused, fixed his

glance upon one upper, open casement there. Why now this impassioned, youthful pause? Why this enkindled cheek and eye? Upon the sill of the casement, a snow-white glossy pillow reposes, and a trailing shrub has softly rested a rich, crimson flower against it.

Well mayst thou seek that pillow, thou odoriferous flower, thought Pierre; not an hour ago, her own cheek must have rested there. "Lucy!"

"Pierre!"

As heart rings to heart those voices rang, and for a moment, in the bright hush of the morning, the two stood silently but ardently eyeing each other, beholding mutual reflections of a boundless admiration and love.

Scarce older than either Romeo or Juliet, and with none of their problems, the two face the world with a boundless cheer.

In the first chapters of the novel Melville very consciously sets out to establish the impeccable heritage of his hero. Not content to simply portray the rural setting, he stops to emphasize its significance:

In conclusion, do not blame me if I here make repetition, and do verbally quote my own words in saying that it had been the choice fate of Pierre to have been born and bred in the country. For to a noble American youth this indeed--more than in any other land--this indeed is a most rare and choice lot. (I. 4, Melville's emphasis)

Melville then spends some pages in emphasizing the superiority of American aristocracy over that of the old world in order to prove Pierre's worthiness. "Should she choose to glorify herself in that inconsiderable way--our America will make out a good general case with England in this short little matter of large estates, and long pedigrees I mean, wherein is no flaw." Melville presents Pierre's ancestry, showing him to be the culmination of three new world generations. Over an arched

window in the hall of the manor hangs a tattered British banner or two, captured by his grandfather, whose name Pierre now proudly carries. This grandfather, a Major-General in the Revolutionary War, has also won battles over Indians in scuffles before the break with England. But no victories can turn him from honoring man's basic virtues:

And all this was done by the mildest hearted, and most blue-eyed gentleman in the world, who according to the patriarchal fashion of those days, was a gentle, white-haired worshipper of all the household gods; the gentlest husband and the gentlest father; the kindest of masters to his slaves; . . . a forgiver of many injuries; a sweet-hearted, charitable Christian; in fine, a pure, cheerful, childlike, blue-eyed divine old man; in whose meek, majestic soul, the lion and the lamb embraced--fit image of his God. (II. 3)

On his mother's side Pierre is also the grandson of a general, and is therefore of double revolutionary descent. But, like in his grandfather, this manly blood is tempered by the deepest element of all culture.

It had been a maxim with the father of Pierre, that all gentlemanhood was vain; all claims to it preposterous and absurd, unless the primeval gentleness and golden humanities of religion had been so thoroughly wrought into the complete texture of the character, that he who pronounced himself gentleman, could also rightfully assume the meek, but kingly style of Christian. At the age of sixteen, Pierre partook with his mother of the Holy Sacraments. (I. 2)

The dignity of Pierre's breeding is further accented by Melville's reliance on the content of the Old and New Testaments in describing Pierre and his ancestry, thereby raising Pierre's illustriousness by association. In addition to calling the eldest Pierre Glendinning a patriarch, further allusions are made to the Hebrews, God's chosen race. His mother is not only

called Mary, but she is further compared to Christ's mother by the narrator's description: she is among the purest of women, whose vanity "in a life of nearly fifty years had never betrayed her into a single published impropriety, or caused her one known pang at the heart." So ordered are her feelings, especially to her only son (whose father already rests in heaven), that Pierre's reverence for her is "invested with all the proudest delights and witcheries of self-complacency, which it is possible for the most conquering virgin to feel" (I. 3. My emphasis). She thanks heaven for Pierre's obedience and prays God that he might never be "called out to be a hero of some dark hope forlorn" (I. 6). Lovely, blond Lucy, Pierre's betrothed, is repeatedly referred to as "heavenly" and "angelic." By the standards of men, the hero of Melville's novel can only be termed as among the foremost of the human race. He embodies all the graces that traditions of civilization have cultivated.

Amid the description of grandeur, however, warning notes appear continually, as if to mar the effect of the praise. Though the country is a glorious benediction to Pierre, the narrator hints, "we shall see if that blessing pass from him as did the divine blessing from the Hebrews." The apex of the religious allusion, in which Pierre is compared to Christ himself, also carries a direct warning: "Such, oh thou son of man! are the perils and the miseries thou callest down on thee, when even in a virtuous cause, thou steppest aside from those arbitrary lines of conduct, by which the common world, however base and dastardly, surrounds thee" (X. 1). The first

intimations are much milder though, as the reader is told that one little uncelestial trait is the hearty appetite of Pierre, especially for breakfast. Yet when one remembers the youth of Pierre, and that his manly brawn and muscle loudly clamor for attention three times a day, this very vice becomes a royal grace and honor. That, however, only points to the truth that appearances may be deceiving, and that even Pierre's country breeding may be other than it seems. Though "Nature intended a rare and original development in Pierre," in planting him in the country, "hereby she proved ambiguous to him in the end" (I. 4). Further, though Pierre is a thorough-going Democrat, the narrator hints that his democracy may prove "a little too radical altogether" in the end. Following a description of Pierre's heritage, the narrator cautions, "Now Pierre stands on this noble pedestal; we shall see if he keeps that fine footing; we shall see if Fate hath not just a little bit of a small word or two to say in this world" (I. 4).

From almost the first page of the book, Melville begins to question the order that he goes to great lengths to establish. He hints constantly that surface truths are not to be trusted, and that no matter how deep tradition reaches, truth may lie beyond its range. Truth is a product of experience, and that is something Pierre lacks, for there is a "hiatus" in the "sweetly-writ manuscript of Pierre's life" since "a sister had been omitted from the text" (I. 2). The fullest appreciation of Pierre's heritage cannot suffice to fill that vacuum, for the narrator points out, "He who is sisterless, is as a bachelor

before his time. For much that goes to make up the deliciousness of a wife, already lies in the sister" (I.2). All of Pierre's material possessions and all of his pride of heritage cannot make up for the blow that nature has dealt him in keeping him sisterless. Being a double bachelor Pierre cannot have entered real life yet, for he has never been exposed to the experience of the heart and its "heavier woes, that . . . both purge the soul of gay-hearted errors and replenish it with a saddened truth" (V. 1). Melville reveals the impossibility of bachelor imaginations even conceiving woe in a short sketch entitled "Paradise of Bachelors," which he wrote a few years later:

The thing called pain, the bugbear styled trouble--those two legends seemed preposterous to the bachelor imaginations. How could men of liberal sense, ripe scholarship in the world, and capacious philosophical and convivial understandings--how could they suffer themselves to be imposed upon by such monkish fables? Pain! Trouble! As well talk of Catholic miracles.⁴

As the reader sees shortly after, Pierre is a man of liberal sense and ripe scholarship, and woe is foreign to his nature. "Yet have I never known thee Grief," he says, "--thou art a legend to me" (VII. 7).

If Pierre deceives himself about his true condition, his mother has a similar fault. One day, when Lucy brings a bowl of strawberries to the Glendinning manor Mrs. Glendinning compares herself to Lucy and finds herself superior. She feels that "in a certain intellectual vigor, so to speak," she is the "essential opposite of Lucy, whose sympathetic mind and person had been cast in one mold of Wondrous delicacy." Here the narrator interposes again.

But here Mrs. Glendinning was both right and wrong. So far as she here saw a difference between herself and Lucy Tartan, she did not err; but so far--and that was very far--as she thought she saw her innate superiority to her in the absolute scale of being, here she very widely and immeasurably erred. For what may be artistically styled angelicalness, this is the highest essence compatible with created being; and angelicalness hath no vulgar vigor in it. And that thing which very often prompts to the display of any vigor--which thing, in man or woman, is at bottom nothing but ambition--this quality is purely earthly, and not angelical. (III. 3)

Lucy's mother, as well, is a little given to calculating her superiority in riches of earth, rather than in those of heaven:

Mrs. Tartan was mistress of an ample fortune. She was, moreover, perfectly aware that such was the fact, and was somewhat inclined to force it upon the notice of other people, nowise interested in the matter. In other words, Mrs. Tartan, instead of being daughter-proud, for which she had infinite reason, was a little inclined to being purse-proud, for which she had not this slightest reason; seeing that the Great Mogul probably possessed a larger fortune than she . . . whereas, the Grand Turk, and all their other majesties of Europe, . . . could not, . . . boast so sweet a girl as Lucy. (II. 2)

But even Lucy herself is perhaps not without taint. She is a child of the city in spite of the fact that she spends her summers at her aunt's cottage in Saddle Meadows. She is a woman, like Pierre's mother, who is intent on basing her security on factors she can control, and for her this means knowledge, a matter of the head. Her life is to have no mysteries; for her the ties to Pierre shall be based on that which is hid from others.

"Knows not all, then loves not all, Pierre. . . . --
[and] Pierre, listen to me. Now,--in this inexplicable

trepidation that I feel, I do conjure thee, that thou wilt ever continue to do as thou hast done; so that I may ever continue to know all that agitate thee, the airiest and most transient thought, that ever shall sweep into thee from the wide atmosphere of all things that hem mortality. Did I doubt thee here;-- could I ever think, that thy heart hath yet one private nook or corner from me;--fatal disenchanting day for me, my Pierre, would that be. I tell thee, Pierre--and 'tis Love's own self that now speaks through me-- only in unbounded confidence and interchangings of all subtlest secrets, can Love possibly endure. . . . Did I only know of thee, what the whole common world may know--what then were Pierre to me? (II. 5)

Little does Lucy know that the profoundest depths of the human heart ever lie beyond the power of even the most willing to bring them to the surface, even for an instant. Reason grasps for complete knowledge; life and truth must be content to leave the depths unexplored, for only shallow waters can be measured.

The thrust of the entire novel is a negation of that which Lucy desires, for she is really asking Pierre to deliver up the control of his experience: "Then, swear to me, dear Pierre, that thou wilt never keep a secret from me--no, never, never;--swear!" This assault on the fortress of life's secret can, of course, avail nothing but futility. "Something seizes me," Pierre answers. "Thy inexplicable tears, falling, falling on my heart, have now turned it to a stone. I feel icy cold and hard; I will not swear!" Life's mysteries are not to be obtained just by demanding them, they are the product of painful experience, which itself is determined not by man's conscious perception of life as much as by his unconscious creation of it. "Say what some poets will," says Melville, "Nature is not so

much her own ever-sweet interpreter, as the mere supplier of that cunning alphabet, whereby selecting and combining as he pleases, each man reads his own peculiar lesson according to his own peculiar mind and mood" (XXV. 4). Pierre cannot tell Lucy about the dark face, for that dark face is a secret of his life which he has not even revealed to himself yet.

But perhaps that face is comprehended by Pierre anyway, for "here it may be randomly suggested, . . . whether some things that men think they do not know, are not for all that thoroughly comprehended by them; and yet, so to speak, though contained in themselves, are kept a secret from themselves?" (XXI. 3). The experience of his life is to be the affirmation of that face, which will initiate him into "the wisdom that is woe," and the woe that is madness.⁵

In harboring a secret at the vital centre of his being, Pierre sets himself apart not only from Lucy, but from others who pretend to control the secret processes of life itself. Lucy's mother is not only purse-proud, for instance, she is also a match-maker, ever attempting to improve on the efforts of Nature. Though her program for Lucy and Pierre is, "in some degree" already ordained in heaven, Mrs. Tartan years ago had begun making plans for the two. If the marriage were indeed set in heaven already, Mrs. Tartan's efforts must necessarily be superfluous, as the narrator notes: "Would Mrs. Tartan doctor lilies when they blow? Would Mrs. Tartan set about match-making between the steel and magnet? Preposterous Mrs. Tartan! But this whole world is a preposterous one" (II. 2). Mrs. Tartan's two sons

also belong to the preposterous world: they are naval gentlemen who not only attempt to control the affairs of nations, but the affairs of their sister as well. Coming home from sea one day and finding Pierre on the sofa not very remote from Lucy, they remark, "This is decidedly improper." Pierre's mother is another who shuns the labyrinthine ways of deeper life, and she insists on ordering her environment by ironclad rules of tradition and dogma. As the experience of the face grasps Pierre he realizes that his mother has excluded so much of the real world because it does not fit into her pattern of strict control that she can never understand him.

She was a noble creature, but formed chiefly for the gilded prosperities of life, and hitherto mostly used to its unruffled serenities; bred and expanded, in all developments, under the sole influence of hereditary forms and world-usages. Not his refined, courtly, loving equable mother, Pierre felt, could unreservedly, and like a heaven's heroine, meet the shock of his extraordinary emergency, and applaud, to his heart's echo, a sublime resolve, whose execution should call down the astonishment and the jeers of the world.

.....
 He too plainly saw, that not his mother had made his mother; but the Infinite Haughtiness had first fashioned her; and then the haughty world had further molded her; nor had a haughty Ritual omitted to finish her. (V. 1)

His fears are born out by the action of his mother when the reverend Mr. Falsgrave comes to consult her about the case of Dolly Ulver who had born a child to the man of another wife. Religion does not lead her into a reality beyond her own confined spiritual locale, it is nothing but a tool which she uses to order her social surroundings, in spite of Pierre's arguments:

"I will not think now of the man," said Pierre, slowly, and looking away from both his auditors--"let us speak of Dolly and her infant--she has, or had one, I have loosely heard;--their case is miserable indeed."

"The mother deserves it," said the lady, inflexibly--"and the child--reverend sir, what are the words of the Bible?"

"The sins of the father shall be visited upon the children to the third generation," said Mr. Falsgrave.

When the minister adds that this does not mean that they must refuse the sinless child assistance, Mrs. Glendinning continues,

"I understand you, sir, . . . you think me too censorious. But if we entirely forget the parentage of the child, and every way receive the child as we would any other, feel for it in all respects the same, and attach no sign of ignominy to it--how then is the Bible dispensation to be fulfilled?" (V. 4)

As we have seen, the function of man's reason is bent toward the ordering of all experience into a defined pattern in which every phenomenon becomes known in relation to other defined phenomena about it.⁶ Mrs. Glendinning has achieved this closed system, and she directs all her affairs according to it.

Lucy also finds herself within the confines of a systematized existence, and she fears anything outside its bounds. When Pierre refuses to give up his secret so that she can incorporate it into her frame of reference, she becomes afraid. That over which one has no control because it stands outside the conscious patterns of existence, threatens to force itself into experience, thereby shattering the structures of one's security. Pierre himself fears this, so when he feels the bonds that unite Lucy to him begin to dissolve as Lucy begs him to swear, he starts up, attempting to bring under control that which

threatens him by trying to subjugate it to the most powerful force with which he still feels secure:

"God help thee, and God help me, Lucy.
I can not think, that in this most mild and
dulcet air, the invisible agencies are plotting
treasons against our loves. Oh! if ye be now
nigh us, ye things I have no name for; then by
a name that should be efficacious--by Christ's
holy name, I warn ye back from her and me.
Touch her not, ye airy devils; hence to your
appointed hell! why come ye prowling in these
heavenly purlieus? Can not the chains of Love
omnipotent bind ye, fiends?"

Whereas Pierre is willing to fight that which is immanent to him, Lucy just wants to flee from it. "Up, my Pierre; let us up, and fly these hills, whence I fear, too wide a prospect meets us. Fly we to the plain" (II. 5). Truly that which she perceives is too wide a prospect, but it is not physical, though she can flee from it by forcing her mind to disown its apprehensions, just as Pierre's mother does.

Unlike Lucy and his mother, Pierre does not wholly reject the experience which threatens his comfortable life: it has an attraction for him, because his is not a prosaic mind, but a poetic one. He senses that the experience of the face, which he comes to symbolize metaphorically by calling it Grief, is somehow identified with the sweetness of poesy.

"Yet I have never known thee, Grief;--thou art a legend to me. I have known some fiery broils of glorious frenzy; I have oft tasted of revery; whence comes pensiveness; whence comes sadness; whence all delicious poetic presentiments;--but thou, Grief! art still a ghost-story to me" (II. 7). The poetic scope of Pierre's life is not relegated strictly to poetry

itself, but consists of that area of his self which is willing to move beyond the confining strictures of life as it is systematized by those about him. Hence, when he first sees Isabel, he cannot but affirm the emotions he feels. "The terrors of the face were not those of Gorgon; not by repelling hideousness did it smite him so; but bewilderingly allured him, by its nameless beauty, and its long-suffering, hopeless anguish" (III. 2).

This poetic nature which drives him to the affirmation of the face of Isabel is not totally unrelated to his physical nature as well. "He was sensible," the narrator relates, "that this general effect upon him, was also special; the face somehow mystically appealing to his own private and individual affections." The story continues,

Besides, what of general enchantment lurked in his strange sensations, seemed concentringly condensed, and pointed to a spear-head, that pierced his heart with an inexplicable pang, whenever the specializing emotion--to call it so--seized the possession of his thoughts, and waved into his visions, a thousand forms of by-gone times, and many an old legendary family scene, which he had heard related by his elderly relations, some of them now dead. (III. 2)

These "wild reveries" are not the same as the memories of stories told him of his grandfather's military feats. They are secrets that he will never share with his mother, for, "not for both worlds would he have his mother made a partner to his sometime mystic mood" (III. 2). It is not in the outside "facts" which fit the minds of people who exclude what they cannot understand that Pierre finds his reality. The

real experience is not even found in the sight of the face itself.

But his profound curiosity and interest in the matter--strange as it may seem--did not so much appear to be embodied in the mournful person of the olive girl, as by some radiations from her, embodied in the vague conceits which agitated his own soul. There lurked the subtler secret: that, Pierre had striven to tear away. From without, no wonderful effect is wrought within ourselves, unless some interior, responding wonder meets it. (III. 2. Emphasis added to last sentence.)

This principle of the active conception of reality is the basis of the development of Pierre's affairs throughout. Out of this principle arises the truth that perhaps "some things that men think they do not know, are not for all that thoroughly comprehended by them" (XXI. 3). It is a principle that Pierre's poetic nature had followed since childhood, in which, as we are told, man constructs his fate. "So, in youth, do we unconsciously act upon those peculiar principles, which . . . shall systematically regulate our maturer lives" (XX. 1). From early youth Pierre has thus been subjected to two principles, the prosaic of his environment, and especially of his mother, and the poetic of his own soul. For nineteen years now, he has lived in the prosaic, and for a good period of that time he has longed to somehow add a new dimension to his life. That new dimension appears in the person of Isabel, who is the answer to his prayers.

"Oh, had my father but had a daughter!" cried Pierre; "some one whom I might love, and protect, and fight for, if need be. It must be a glorious thing to engage in a mortal quarrel on a sweet sister's behalf! Now, of all things, would to heaven, I had a sister!"

Thus, ere entranced in the gentler bonds of a lover; thus often would Pierre invoke heaven for a sister. (I. 2)

Melville reproduces the emotions of Pierre in the mind of the reader by a constant foreshadowing. By refusing to follow the progression of the story chronologically, he presents the activity as it occurs in the soul of Pierre, which is not bound by time and space but only by its own psychological necessity. The first intimations that Melville presents concerning the attraction of Pierre to Isabel occur before Isabel has even appeared in the chronological sequence of events, and the presentiment of danger comes not from Pierre, but from his mother, whose thankfulness unconsciously projects her fears which are to be realized later. "How glad I am," she says, thinking of Lucy, blonde and blue-eyed, "that Pierre loves her so, and not some dark-eyed haughtiness, with whom I could never live in peace." (I. 6) Though this "dark-eyed haughtiness" does not denote Isabel here, the darkness is presented as the opposite of the felicity at Saddle Meadows, and thus, when transferred to Isabel later she becomes a negation of that which Pierre experiences in his youthful naivete. Introducing Isabel in this manner, Melville prepares the reader for the poetic rendering of Isabel, by which she becomes a totality of experience to Pierre, for even before she appears she represents a threat.

Next the concept of Isabel is introduced by Lucy, while she and Pierre are out in the wideness of the hills. Again the subject is introduced with a feeling of trepidation as Lucy speaks:

Let us hie homeward, Pierre. Some nameless sadness, faintness, strangely comes to me. Foretaste I feel of endless dreariness. Tell me once more the story of that face, Pierre,-- that mysterious, haunting face, which thou once told'st me, thou didst thrice vainly try to shun. . . . Pierre . . . tell me the story of the face,--the dark-eyed, lustrous, imploring, mournful face, that so mystically paled and shrunk at thine. (II. 5)

The experience of the dark-eyed face is thus presented by the two people closest to Pierre before it ever appears in reality. Later this is augmented by Pierre's association of the face with grief when the image of the face overwhelms him as he retreats to the pine tree behind the manor. Presented prior to her chronological appearance like this, she seems to transcend the normal rational categories of time and space within the experience of Pierre before he sees her at the sewing bee. She becomes a poetic necessity before she is revealed as a physical reality in the novel.

Pierre's affirmation of Isabel when he reads her letter is therefore a foregone conclusion; it is both a psychological and a poetic inevitability, and thus a mythic reality. The demarcation between Isabel as an object of perception to Pierre, and an object of his conception vanishes. "The emotions he [experiences seem] to have taken the deepest roots and subtlest fibers of his being," and he feels that he is "too much for himself." Other distinctions vanish: "He felt that what he had always before considered the solid land of veritable reality, was now being audaciously encroached upon by bannered armies of hood phantoms, disembarking in his soul, as from

flotillas of specter-boats" (III. 2). Pierre has here entered the world of Isabel, who has not been brought up in the world of reason and convention. Her world perspective does not isolate her from her environment through the process of rational objectification without her being conscious of it. She must tell herself that the snake is not human, but that she is; when she sees the lightning flash, she must tell herself, "The lightning is not human, but I am human" (VI. 5). Even this simple objectification is unwelcome to her, for she would be a part of the flux of the universe.

I pray for peace--for motionlessness--for the feeling of myself, as of some plant, absorbing life without seeking it, and existing without individual sensation. I feel that there can be no perfect peace in individualness. Therefore, I hope one day to feel myself drunk up into the pervading spirit animating all things. I feel I am an exile here. (VI. 4)

When Pierre first receives the note, he finds himself in a conflict between rational and poetic modes of behaviour. On the one hand he tells himself,

Pierre! thou art foolish; rebuild--no, not that, for thy shrine still stands; it stands, Pierre, firmly stands; smellest thou not its yet undeparted, embowering bloom? Such a note as thine can be easily enough written, Pierre; impostors are not unknown in this curious world; or the brisk novelist, Pierre, will write thee fifty such notes, and so steal gushing tears from his reader's eyes; even as thy note so strangely made thine own manly eyes so arid; so glazed, and so arid, Pierre--foolish Pierre!

This is an attempt to exclude from life that which does not fit its comfortable pattern through the process of rationalization. But finally Pierre cannot resist his stronger nature.

Oh! mock not the poniarded heart. The stabbed man knows the steel; prate not to him that it is only a tickling feather. Feels he not the interior gash? What does this blood on my vesture? and what this pang in my soul? (IV. 2)

As Pierre frees himself from the bonds of thought patterns that would hold him from Isabel, he gradually accepts her as the physical objectification, of that which is immanent to him. Whereas he had recognized and repulsed it partially with Lucy in the hills, where he had tried to conjure it away, he now concentrates all his thoughts on her. He strives "to condense her mysterious haze into some definite and comprehensible shape," (VII. 7) but even this becomes impossible. He cannot resist giving himself completely to that which he has affirmed in the unconscious area of his mind. After his first visit to her he cannot find any rest in the world about him or even within himself.

He could not bring himself to confront any face or house; a plowed field, any sign of tillage, the rotted stump of a long-felled pine, the slightest passing trace of man was uncongenial and repelling to him. Likewise in his own mind all remembrances and imaginings that had to do with the common and general humanity had become, for the time, in the most singular manner distasteful to him. . . . [Even] in the most withdrawn and subtlest region of his own essential spirit, Pierre could not now find one single agreeable twig of thought whereon to perch his weary soul. (VII. 7)

Pierre responds to Isabel the way the magical guitar responds to her breath and carresses. Pierre is caught up in that universal oneness of which Isabel speaks longingly. As "all the four winds of the world of melody [break] loose . . . only in a still more subtle, and wholly inexplicable way, Pierre [feels] himself surrounded by ten thousand sprites and gnomes.

and his whole soul [is] swayed and tossed by supernatural tides (VIII. 2).

Pierre's noble nature has ever striven to uphold the highest virtues that he had been taught emanated from the will of God. In Isabel this training and his emotions merge as he finds there both an outlet for noble action and an object of veneration which attracts him by a force previously unknown. "That intense and indescribable longing, which her letter by its very incoherencies had best embodied proceeded from no base, vain, or ordinary motive whatever; but was the unsuppressible and unmistakable cry of the godhead through her soul, commanding Pierre to fly to her, and do his highest and most glorious duty in the world." The call pervades the whole world, for there is "no veto of the earth" that can forbid the "deep voice of the being of Isabel" calling to him "from out the immense distances of sky and air" (X. 1). Isabel is more than a single person; the "being of Isabel" cannot be contained in the rational categories of the mind, as Pierre realizes before he receives her letter. "For me," he says, "thou hast uncovered one infinite, dumb, beseeching countenance of mystery, underlying all the surfaces of visible time and space (III. 2). To Pierre she seems to be a creature unaffected by physical reality, for though he knows that by deductive reckoning she must be older than he, he is "conscious of a feeling which independently [pronounces] him her senior in point of Time." Isabel is eternal, "a child of everlasting youngness" (VII. 8).

There is a reality of reason and reflection, and there

is a reality of innate knowledge which lies beyond analysis and synthesis. "In their precise tracings-out and subtle causations, the strongest and fiercest emotions of life defy all analytical insight," says the narrator (IV. 1).

For there is not faith, and stoicism, and no philosophy that mortal man can possibly evoke, which will stand the final test of a real impassioned onset of Life and Passion upon him. Then all the fair philosophic or Faith-phantoms that he raised from the mist, slide away and disappear as ghosts at cock-crow. For Faith and philosophy are air, but events are brass. (XXI. 2)

In Isabel Pierre experiences this quality of life, these events of brass. To deny these would be to deny the whole world, for it would be a denial of a reality reaching down to the bottom of his soul. It is an entirely different reality from anything he has experienced before. "Oh, hitherto I have but piled up words; bought books, and bought some small experiences, and builded me in libraries," Pierre confesses, "now I sit down and read." He realizes that, to his detriment, he has been too concerned about matters of the mind. "Well may this head hang on my breast," he sighs, "--it holds too much. He continues,

well may my heart knock at my ribs,--prisoner impatient of his iron bars. Oh, men are jailers all; jailers of themselves; and in Opinion's world ignorantly hold their noblest part a captive to the vilest. (V. 1)

Seeing his error, Pierre gives himself over to experience that defies the strictures of the mind. As if illumined by electricity, he now suddenly sees the world differently.

Not only was the long-cherished image of his father now transfigured before him from a green foliaged tree into a blasted trunk, but every other image in his mind attested the universality of that electrical light which had darted into his soul. Not even his lovely, immaculate mother, remained entirely untouched,

unaltered by the shock. . . . At her changed aspect, when first revealed to him, Pierre had gazed in a panic; and now, when the electrical storm had gone by, he retained in his mind, that so suddenly revealed image, with an infinite mournfulness. (V. 1)

In seeing this all so clearly, Pierre is forced out of the world of the past. The conviction that he must leave home now though is the culmination of a process of estrangement that has begun long before. From the moment he first sees Isabel, he is drawn away from his mother, even though he cannot understand why. "Was this his wont?" he asks himself when he lies to his mother after leaving the sewing bee. "What inscrutable thing was it, that so suddenly had seized him, and made him a falsifier --ay, a falsifyer and nothing less--to his own dearly-beloved, and confiding mother?" (III. 2). His relationship with Lucy undergoes a similar experience: "God help thee, and God help me," he says to her, but he knows that he cannot divulge more than he already has about the face. Upon the receipt of the letter, Pierre begins to understand the reasons for his dilemma: his mother, and others, he realizes, do not live in the same world he does. Indeed, his mother does not communicate with him, but only with her image of him.

She loveth me, ay;--but why? Had I been cast in a cripple's mold, how then? Now, do I remember that in her most caressing love, there ever gleamed some scaly, glittering folds of pride. Me she loveth with pride's love; in me she thinks she seeth her own curled and haughty beauty; before my glass she stands, --pride's priestess--and to her mirrored image, not to me, she offers up her offerings of kisses. (V. 1)

She lives in the world of her constuction, refusing to own any other than her own reality. She dislikes the portrait of Pierre's

father painted before her marriage because in it he appears differently from the way in which she knew him: "It is not he, she would emphatically and almost indignantly exclaim when more urgently besought to reveal the cause for so unreasonable a dissent from the opinion of nearly all the other connections and relatives of the deceased" (IV. 3). In his fancy Pierre considers revealing Isabel to his mother, but he recognizes the futility of attempting to cause a change in the edifice of his mother's creation:

And as Pierre thus in fancy led Isabel before his mother; and in fancy led her away, and felt his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, with her transfixing look of incredulous, scornful horror; then Pierre's enthusiastic heart sunk in and in, and caved clean away in him, as he so poignantly felt his first feeling of the dreary heart-vacancies of the conventional life. (V. 1)

This conventional life deprives men of that which is next to them, and it now deprives Pierre of his paternity: "Oh heartless, proud, ice-gilded world, how I hate thee," he thinks, "that thy tyrannous, insatiate grasp, thus now in my bitterest need--thus doth rob me even of my mother; thus doth make me now doubly and orphan, without a green grave to bedew" (V. 1). He feels himself "driven out an infant Ishmael into the desert, with no maternal Hagar to accompany and comfort him"; he now realizes that "not long will Joy abide, when Truth doth come, nor Grief her laggard be." Then, realizing as well why he has been forced to leave he cries inwardly, "The heart! the heart! 'tis God's anointed; let me pursue the heart!" Confronted with the choice of "God or Lucy" he cannot choose Lucy, for she too is of the world of reason and convention which stultifies the heart.

He casts aside all previous constraints, and defies even the strongest conventions by deciding to leave Saddle Meadows with his sister in the pretence that she is his wife. If the conventional world will exclude the unfortunate from its domain, he will affirm them in his, and thus he even chooses to take Delly Ulver along. So radical is his break that he destroys even the most precious of mementos in an attempt to affirm the new life of the heart that he will live. "How can lifelessness be fit memorial of life?" he asks.

Now I know this, that in commonest memorials, the twilight fact of death first discloses in some secret way, all the ambiguities of that departed thing or person; obliquely it casts hints, and insinuates surmises base, and eternally incapable of being cleared. Decreed by God Omnipotent it is, that Death should be the last scene of the last act of man's play; Therefore, never more will I play the vile pigmy, and by small memorials after death, attempt to reserve the decree of death, by essaying the poor perpetuating of the image of the original. Let all die and mix again. (XII. 3)

He flings the portrait of his father, the very thing which told him of his relationship to Isabel, into the fire, uneasily noting the lineaments of his father's face staring at him in beseeching horror as it disappears forever. Too late he grasps into the fire to attempt a rescue. Failing that, he rushes back to the chest, and flings his family papers into the flames, crying,

"Thus . . . I fling fresh spoils; pour out all my memory in one libation! . . . now all is done and all is ashes! Henceforth, cast-out Pierre hath no paternity, and no past; and since the Future is one blank to all; therefore, twice disinherited Pierre stands untrammelledly his ever-present self!--free to do his own self-will and present fancy to whatever end!" (XII. 3)

Little does Pierre realize the implications of stepping from one realm of existence to another. How shall his poetic heart thrive in this "bantering, barren and prosaic age" (VII. 6)? Listing a multitude of ills that Pierre foresees, but fails to take seriously, the narrator compares him to Christ:

Such, oh thou son of man! are the perils and the miseries thou callest down on thee, when, even in a virtuous cause, thou steppest aside from those arbitrary lines of conduct, by which the common world, however base and dastardly, surrounds thee for thy worldly good. (X. 1)

Pierre, in his nobility must indeed be a savior, for, having grasped the truth himself, shall he let the world about him suffer in error? Already in his room in the manor when he had first received Isabel's note, this truth had challenged him as he had opened Shakespeare's Hamlet and read, "The time is out of joint;--Oh cursed spite,/ That ever I was born to set it right!" His duty is not only to Isabel, but to all mankind, as Charlie Millthorpe says, "It's my opinion the world is all wrong. Hist, I say--an entire mistake. Society demands an Avatar,--a Curtius, my boy! to leap into the fiery gulf, and by perishing himself, save the whole empire of men!" (XX. 2). But Pierre must learn more yet ere he is motivated to "gospelize the world anew, and show them deeper secrets than the Apocalypse!" (IX. 2). The news he will tell the world will not be the "good news" of the heart, for the invisible powers do not bear him up. The threat of his invocation to them on the eve of his first visit to Isabel brings its consequences.

"If ye forsake me now," he cries in his despair,

farewell to Faith, farewell to Truth, farewell to God;
exiled far away from God and man, I shall declare
myself an equal power with both; free to make war
on Night and Day, and all thoughts and things of
mind and matter, which the upper and nether firm-
aments do clasp. (V. 6)

The vulnerability inherent in Pierre's turn from the norms of society, even though they fail to provide for the possibility of complete adherence to truth, is revealed clearly in the fragmentary pamphlet of the philosophy of Plotinus Plinlimmon, which Pierre finds in the coach on the way to the city. The philosophy of Plinlimmon is not at all a new way of life; it merely asserts the conventions of pragmatism over the calls of idealism. In this, however, it is of high significance to Pierre's situation, for it is a warning against absolutism of any kind, whether of the heart or of the head. The purpose of ideals, according to Plinlimmon, are not that an attempt should be made to attain them, but only that one recognize that one's own realities are not absolutes.

"But why then does God now and then send a heavenly chronometer . . . into the world, uselessly as it would seem, to give the lie to all the world's time-keepers? Because He is unwilling to leave man without some occasional testimony to this:--that though man's Chinese notions of things may answer well enough here, they are by no means universally applicable." (XIV. 3)

Plotinus points to nature to support the validity of his philosophy, thereby pointing toward the foolishness of Pierre's course of action.

"In short, this chronometrical and horological conceit . . . seems to teach this:--That in things terrestrial (horological) a man must not be governed by ideas celestial (chronometrical); that certain minor self-renunciations in this life his own mere instinct for

his own every-day general well-being will teach him to make, but he must by no means make a complete unconditional sacrifice of himself in behalf of any other being, or any cause, or any conceit. (. . . God's own sun does not abate one tittle of its heat in July, however you swoon with that heat in the sun. And if it did abate its heat on your behalf, then the wheat and the rye would not ripen; and so, for the incidental benefit of one, a whole population would suffer.)" (XIV. 3)

Finally the pamphlet foreshadows Pierre's whole future, asserting that if any individual will "seek to regulate his own daily conduct by [a chronometrical], he will but array all men's earthly time-keepers against him, and thereby work himself woe and death," or, he points out that the strict adherence to chronometricals will "involve those inferior beings eventually in strange, unique follies and sins, unimagined before." On the one hand they may "run clean away into all manner of moral abandonment, self-deceit, and hypocrisy," or else, run "like a mad dog into atheism." In short, the pamphlet points to the impossibility of that transformation of the world that Pierre must effect if he is to be able to live according to the dictates of his heart. Though the time may be "out of joint," he will find it impossible to "set it right."

The arrival of Pierre's party of three in the city on the first night reveals Pierre's situation in its full horror. Pierre's not knowing the number of his proposed residence is the first hint of trouble. He expects the correct house to be revealed to him, for he has come to the city by the light of the revelations of truth that he has received. Here, however, no light shines, especially not the light of cousin Stanley's cottage, where he had hoped to lodge. The light of Glendinning Stanley's

house itself shines, but not for Pierre, for Pierre has cut himself off from this world in which his cousin makes his home on the sound basis of social convention. In affirming Isabel, Pierre has moved into the truths of mythic reality, where the world of the senses corresponds to the truth of the imagination, where the physical world is the world of man's own conception. Now Pierre must learn that the city does not belong to his reality, but to rational reality which exists for the good of a whole population, not for the "incidental benefit of one," as Plinlimmon has stated in his pamphlet.

The central problem of Pierre's life and the central problem of the work which he hopes to complete in the city are the same. The narrator confesses that Pierre has still much to learn, for he has "not as yet procured for himself that enchanter's wand of the soul, which but touching the humblest experiences in one's life, straightway it starts up all eyes, in everyone of which are endless significancies" (XXI. 1). Though the experiences of the first night in the city show him that he cannot magically transform the outer world to fit the conditions of his needs and ideals, he must also learn that the imaginative world of the book he must write to support Isabel and Delly is just as hard to mold. Until he arrives in the city he does not know that a work of art must be destructive of the old before it can construct something new. He has falsely placed his hopes on his old work, of which the reviewers had said, "he never permits himself to astonish; is never betrayed into any thing coarse or new," and "This writer . . . is characterized throughout

by Perfect Taste!" (XVII. 1).

On the third night after arriving in the city, however, as Pierre sits by a lofty window of a beggarly room in the rear building of the Apostles', he comes to the realization that all he has done so far is rubbish: "Trash! Dross! Dirt!" Standing in front of the trunk containing his papers he cries out to Isabel, "In ten days I have lived ten thousand years. Forewarned now of the rubbish in that chest, I can not summon the heart to open it" (XIX. 2). Hitherto Pierre had not had any experiences which could have led to the conception of poetry of true value, without which not true art exists, for the narrator warns that

. . . though the naked soul of man doth assuredly contain one latent element of intellectual productiveness; yet never was there a child born solely from one parent; the visible world of experience being that procreative thing which impregnates the muses; self-reciprocally efficient hermaphrodites being but a fable. (XVIII. 1)

Pierre's situation now is analogous to his situation in Saddle Meadows when he first sees Isabel's face. There he had been comfortable in a life of convention and ease, in which he had been able to puff away with a Havana flavor the profits that his puffs of poetry brought him. Then, suddenly he had been confronted with the truth of life that forced him to reorient his entire existence. The appearance of Isabel had brought him to the realization that the depths of life cannot be known by the rational mind, even though the truth of this defied the neat, patterned abstractions upon which his life had been built by way of his "lynx-eyed mind":

Pierre had conned his novel-lessons; had read more

novels than most persons of his years; but their false, inverted attempts at systematizing eternally unsystemizable elements; their audacious, intermeddling impotency, in trying to unravel, and spread out, and classify, the more thin than gossamer threads which make up the complex web of life; these things over Pierre had no power now. Straight through their helpless miserableness he pierced, the one sensational truth in him transfixed like beetles all the speculative lies in them. He saw that human life doth truly come from that, which all men are agreed to call by the name of God; and that it partakes of the unravelable inscrutableness of God. (VII. 8)

Faced with the reality of this experience, he is willing to leave the systems which are no longer applicable and to trust the irrep-
 ressible urges which draw him to Isabel even though he will never know their deepest origin: "So Pierre renounced all thought of ever having Isabel's dark-lantern illuminated to him. . . . He determined to pry not at all into this sacred problem." In his own words, "I cast my eternal die this day, ye powers. On my strong faith in ye Invisibles, I stake three whole felicities, and three whole lives this day" (V. 6).

Pierre was certain that he was doing right in making this choice, for it had on it the stamp of approval of the greatest power of Nature itself, for he had been drawn to test his future path by a power far greater than himself. In questioning his mind, he had come to a remarkable geological curiosity which he had earlier named the Memmon Stone.

Huge as a barn . . . [it] was shaped something like a lengthened egg, but flattened more; and, at the ends; pointed more; and yet not pointed, but irregularly wedge-shaped. Somewhere near the middle of its under side, there was a lateral ridge; and an obscure point of this ridge rested on a second lengthwise-sharpened rock, slightly protruding from the ground. Beside that one obscure and minute point of contact, the whole enormous and most ponderous mass touched not another

object in the wide terraqueous world. (VII. 4)

"As if by some interior predetermination" he had thrown himself under that balancing rock and called on it to test his ways:

"If the miseries of the undisclosable things in me, shall ever unhorse me from my manhood's seat; if to vow myself all Virtue's and all Truth's, be but to make a trembling, distrusted slave of me; if Life is to prove a burden I can not bear without ignominious cringings; if indeed our actions are all foreordained, and if we are Russian serfs to Fate; if invisible devils do titter at us when we most nobly strive; if Life be a cheating dream, and virtue as unmeaning and unsequel'd with any blessing as the midnight mirth of wine; . . .--then do thou, Mute Massiveness, fall on me!" (VII. 5)

The experiences of his heart in Saddle Meadows had overcome the experiences of his conventional existence to such an extent that he had been forced to admit his entire existence up to that period of time invalid in the face of his new knowledge now. Sitting in the back room of the Apostle's, Pierre undergoes another such experience--but now the experience of his heart, upon which he has gambled three lives, is being called in question just as radically as had his previous life. The world of rationalized social existence which, though it may prove morally insufficient, nevertheless still governs his physical existence, for here he finds the truths of moral existence do not apply. Thus Pierre meets the central problem of life: truth is known by experience, not by reason, but life is governed by reason, not by truth. Herein lies the fallacy of the vast majority of men. What is fitted into rational systems of thought is called truth, but that is merely learning. The narrator points out the few rather than many ever attain truth:

. . . after all, what is so enthusiastically applauded as the march of mind,--meaning the inroads of Truth into Error--which has ever

been regarded by hopeful persons as the one fundamental thing most earnestly to be prayed for as the greatest possible Catholic blessing to the world;--almost every thinking man must have been some time or other struck with the idea, that, in certain respects, a tremendous mistake may be lurking here, since all the world does never gregariously advance to Truth, but only here and there some of its individuals do; and by advancing leave the rest behind. (IX. 1)

In meeting Isabel, Pierre has found the beginning of truth by discovering that truth is not the same as reason. The beginning, however, is not everything, but it seems that, for truth is experienced mythically, and mythic experience is conceived in terms of totalities of experience, rather than fragments.⁸ The experience of the city defies the totality of the mythic experience of Pierre, thereby calling the truth of the whole experience into question, and thus Pierre cries out,

"Ye heavens, that have hidden yourselves in the black hood of the night, I call to ye! If to follow Virtue to her uttermost vista, where common souls never go; if by that I take hold on hell, and the uttermost virtue, after all, prove but a betraying pander to the monstrousest vice,--then close in and crush me, ye stony walls, and into one gulf let all things tumble together!" (XIX. 2)

The very base of his reliance on the heart is called in question. He had been convinced of the necessity of leaving all because Isabel was his sister. Now things change:

"Hark thee to thy furthest inland soul"--
thrilled Pierre in a steeled and quivering voice. "Call me brother no more! How knowest thou I am thy brother? Did thy mother tell thee? Did my father say so to me?--I am Pierre, and thou Isabel, wide brother and sister in the common humanity,--no more. For the rest, let the gods look after their own combustibles." (XIX. 2)

The enchanter's wand, which he had not had in his early poetry, and had but little in his early experiences with Isabel, is

now truly lost.

Pierre's plight is serious, for he has lost both the reality of the heart and the reality of the head, for in affirming this he has been denied by the heart, but in following that he has been called in question by the head. Earlier his inmost emotions had told him that Isabel was his sister. Indeed, his inmost emotions had found their fulfillment in the dark face, for Pierre had perceived the "unsuppressible and unmistakable cry of the godhead through her soul" (X. 1). He had perceived that human life truly comes from "that, which all men are agreed to call by the name God; and that it partakes of the unravelable unscrutableness of God." He had been content with this for he felt its truth in his soul. In affirming Isabel he had not questioned "what," but only "how". True, he had begun to distrust himself, but "this distrust was not of the heart; for heaven itself, so he felt, had sanctified that with its blessing" (IX. 1). Now, however, heaven has gone, and with it the security of his heart and the conviction that he has done right.

Ah! now I catch glimpses, and seem to half see, somehow, that the uttermost ideal of moral perfection in man is wide of the mark. The demi-gods trample on trash, and Virtue and Vice are trash! Isabel, I will write such things--I will gospelize the world anew, and show them deeper secrets than the Apocalypse! (XIX. 2)

But Pierre is not yet ready to show the deep secrets, for he does not know them himself. Just because he understands books like The Inferno, Hamlet, or Job better now does not mean that he already has a new gospel:

While Pierre was thinking that he was entirely transplanted into a new and wonderful element of Beauty and Power, he was, in fact, but in one of the stages of the transition. That ultimate element once fairly gained, then books no more are needed for buoys to our souls; our own strong limbs support us, and we float over all bottomlessnesses with a jeering impunity. He did not see . . . that all the great books in the world are but the mutilated shadowings-forth of invisible and eternally unembodied images in the soul; so that they are but the mirrors, distortedly reflecting to us our own things. (XIII. 1)

As he sits down to his books, Pierre begins gradually to sense the results of his having cast out both head and heart because of their superficiality. Laboriously digging into his soul to find truth, he ultimately finds it as empty as a plundered Egyptian sarcophagus.

Ten million things were as yet uncovered to Pierre. The old mummy lies buried in cloth on cloth; it takes time to unwrap this Egyptian king. Yet now, forsooth, because Pierre began to see through the first superficiality of the world he fondly weens he has come to the un-layered substance. But, as far as any geologist has yet gone down into the world, it is found to consist of nothing but surface stratified on surface. . . . By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible groping we come to the central room; with joy we espy the sarcophagus; but we lift the lid--and no body is there!--appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of man. (XXI. 1)

Originally Pierre had followed truth and it had taken him to Isabel. Now, having achieved this goal of truth, "he entirely loses the directing compass of his mind; for arrived at the Pole, to whose barrenness only it points, there the needle indifferently respects all points of the horizon alike" (IX. 1). Pierre is now caught between the vacillations of that compass, as it swings from head to heart, each cancelling the other out.

Thus Pierre is the sequel to Melville's Moby-Dick, where Ahab and the crew only live in anticipation of getting the white whale, which Ahab has granted supernatural reality just as Pierre has granted it to Isabel. In Ahab's case, the whale destroys those who seek him; the ship goes down in the vortex into which Ahab has directed it. Pierre is also drawn into the vortex as he is attracted by Isabel,⁹ but he does not go down until he has had time to examine its action. In Pierre Melville defies the advice of Ishmael in the "Tryworks" chapter of Moby-Dick: "Look not too long in the face of the fire."

In 1851, while writing Moby-Dick, Melville had read Hawthorne's "Ethan Brand," the story of a man who had sought and found the unpardonable sin. Pierre, begun just a few months after Melville had read the story,¹⁰ follows somewhat the same pattern as Hawthorne's tale. As Ethan Brand looks into the fire of a mountain-side lime-kiln which he had once tended, he reflects on how his search had begun.

He remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life: with what reverence he had then looked into the heart of man, viewing it as a temple originally divine, and, however desecrated, still to be held sacred by a brother. . . . Then ensued that vast intellectual development, which in its progress, disturbed the counterpoise between his mind and heart. The Idea that possessed his life had operated as a means of education; it had gone on cultivating his powers to the highest point of which they were susceptible; it had raised him from the level of an unlettered laborer to stand on a star-lit eminence, whither the philosophers of the earth, laden with the lore

of universities, might vainly strive to clamber after him. So much for the intellect! But where was the heart? That, indeed, had withered,--had contracted,--had hardened--had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity.¹¹

Pierre becomes such a man as he delves down ever deeper, heeding not the world about him, cutting himself off completely from the affections of others:

People gaze at him in passing, as at some imprudent sick man, willfully burst from his bed. If an acquaintance is met, and would say a pleasant news-monger's word in his ear, that acquaintance turns from him affronted at his hard aspect of icy discourtesy.

"Badhearted," mutters the man and goes on. (XXII. 4)

Like Ethan Brand, he had begun his way with the highest intentions, certain he was doing the will of his God. Now things are changed: "With the soul of an Atheist, he wrote down the godliest things; with the feeling of misery and death in him, he created forms of gladness and life" (XXV. 3).

The change that has taken place in Pierre is not the result of only the forces of fate approaching him from without. The "stony walls all round that he could not overleap" are the walls he has constructed, for he had revealed them after the first interview with Isabel already, when he had invoked the Terror Stone. What he had asked to be saved from by being crushed by the huge stone does come to pass. These were the words he had whispered:

"If the miseries of the undisclosable things in me, shall ever unhorse me from my manhood's seat; if to vow myself all Virtue's and all Truth's, be but to make atresembling, distrusted slave of me; if Life is to prove a burden I can not bear without ignominious cringings; if indeed our actions are all foreordained, and we are Russian serfs to Fate; if invisible devils do titter at us when we most nobly strive; . . . if by

sacrificing myself for Duty's sake, my own mother re-sacrifices me; . . . --then do thou, Mute Massive-ness fall on me. (VII. 5)

It is not this stone, but another that falls on him. As Pierre and Isabel are about to leave Saddle Meadows with Delly, Isabel asks, "Tell me . . . do I blast where I look? Is my face Gorgon's?" (XII. 1). Neither she nor Pierre realize that Pierre will indeed become stone because he has espoused her cause, but the agency of the metamorphosis lies not in Isabel but in Pierre. She is his creation, as she tells him just before Lucy comes to join them in the city:

"Thy hand is the caster's ladle, Pierre, which holds me entirely fluid. Into thy forms and slightest moods of thought, thou pourest me; and I there solidify to that form, and take it on, and thenceforth wear it, till once more thou moldest me anew." (XXIV. 2)

Because he is a stone (pierre means "stone" in French) he casts his sister as Gorgon, and through her he finds himself revealed.

Pierre's entire environment undergoes a metamorphosis as he delves ever deeper into the unfathomable truths of man's being, finding them ever more ambiguous in their very non-existence. This is itself but the revelation of the prior emptiness of Pierre's existence, for he has cast out both head and heart and is thus left with a vacancy. His own silence brings back nothing but silence from the centre of the universe. Hence he concludes that "Silence is the only Voice of our God." When God no longer speaks because Pierre has cast off the voices of the world, the dejected hero can hear nothing but the echos of his own emptiness. Then it is as the narrator says: "Better might one be pushed off into the material spaces beyond the uttermost orbit of our

sun, than once feel himself afloat in himself" (XXI. 1). Pierre is caught in that infinite void between reason, and the innate knowledge of the heart. He feels truth, but he cannot know it, and thus his book can never be completed. He cannot write the book whereby he was going to "gospelize the world anew," for,

that which now absorbs the time and the life of Pierre, is not the book, but the primitive elementalizing of the strange stuff, which in the act of attempting that book, has upheaved and upgushed in his soul. Two books are being writ; of which the world shall only see one, and that the bungled one. The larger book and the infinitely better, is for Pierre's own private shelf. That it is, whose unfathomable cravings drink his blood; the other only demands his ink. But circumstances have so decreed, that the one can not be composed on the paper, but only as the other is writ down in his soul. "nd the one of the soul is elephantinely sluggish, and will not budge at a breath. (XXII. 4)

Pierre has reached the conditions in which it is impossible to live:

Thus Pierre is fastened on by two leeches;--how then can the life of Pierre last? Lo! he is fitting himself for the highest life by thinning his blood and collapsing his heart. He is learning how to live, by rehearsing the part of death.

The impossibility of living is not only mental and spiritual, for Pierre's writing is based on his experience in physical life. In deciding to write for a livelihood, however, he has also tied his physical body to his spirit. Thus he finds his material existence threatened as well, for he can impossibly embody the activity of his spirit in the book. Finally he sees that "the wiser and the profounder he should grow, the more he lessened the chances for bread" (XXII. 4).

In the midst of these difficulties Lucy once more appears,

thereby tying Pierre to the world of convention, and thus pointing to a way of salvation, for she promises to earn money by painting portraits. She sets up a contrast to Pierre's life with Isabel, for she is the woman of conventional reality who can sustain the body, but who is incapable of leading to truth since she can only follow her perceptions in her art. Isabel, on the other hand, cannot fit into the conventional world, for her art draws her out of the world. In a moment of jealousy she offers to rival Lucy by teaching students to play the guitar. "My poor, poor Isabel!" answers Pierre, "thou art the mistress of the natural sweetness of the guitar, not of its invented artifices; and these are all that the silly pupil will pay for learning. And what thou hast cannot be taught!" (XXII. 4). The contrast between Lucy and Isabel is further shown one morning when Pierre suddenly quits his books and invites the two ladies to accompany him for a walk, one on each arm.

As they passed through the low arched vestibule into the street, a cheek-burnt, gamesome sailor passing, exclaimed--"Steer small, my lad; 'tis a narrow strait thou art in!"

"What says he?"--said Lucy gently. "Yes, it is a narrow strait of a street indeed."

But Pierre felt a sudden tremble transferred to him from Isabel, who whispered something inarticulate in his ear. (XVI. 1)

Isabel is open to metaphoric meanings which Lucy cannot comprehend. The way of Pierre is straight indeed, probably even straighter than Isabel can comprehend.

The presence of Lucy is more than a physical presence to Pierre; it reaches into those depths to which Isabel alone had led him when she turned his face from the world of Saddle

Meadows. Lucy's presence now turns him back to the world he has left, and thus turns him from Isabel. Though he had already told Isabel that he and she were but siblings in common humanity, he had still persisted in considering himself responsible for her. He had never freed himself from the first conviction that she was indeed his sister. With Lucy as well as Isabel on his arm now, he enters an art gallery in which he sees a portrait entitled "A stranger's head" which bears a striking resemblance to the portrait of his father that Pierre had burned. The portrait hangs opposite a portrait of "The Cenci of Guido," which presents a contrast within itself.

The wonderfulness . . . consists chiefly, perhaps, in a striking suggested contrast, half-identical with, and half-analogous to, that almost supernatural one--sometimes visible in the maidens of tropical nations--namely soft and light blue eyes, with an extremely fair complexion, veiled by funerially jetty hair. But with blue eyes and fair complexion, the Cenci's hair is golden--physically, therefore; all is in strict, natural keeping; which, nevertheless, still the more intensifies the suggested fanciful anomaly of so sweetly and seraphically blonde a being, being double-hooded, as it were by the black crape of the two most horrible crimes (of one of which she is the object, and of the other the agent) possible to civilized humanity--incest and parricide. (XXVI. 1)

The blond and the dark meet in Pierre's soul, and by their juxtaposition in the painting Pierre arrives at a truth he has hitherto not found. Confronted with the enormity of what he has done, wild thoughts race about in his heart, thoughts, though they are devastating, that are not "wholly unwelcome to him."

How did he know that Isabel was his sister? Setting aside Aunt Dorothea's nebulous legend; . . . and setting aside all his own manifold and inter-folding mystic and transcendental persuasions,--originally born, as he now seemed to feel, purely of an intense procreative enthusiasm;--an enthusiasm no longer so all-potential with him as of yore; setting all these

aside, and coming to the plain, palpable facts,--how did he know that Isabel was his sister? (XXVI. 2)

Not only Pierre feels the rift that has occurred.

Isabel also feels the loss of the life she had found in Pierre, and she also feels Lucy's power drawing Pierre away from her. In the room at the Apostle's she had felt herself powerless before Lucy, but now that she senses her power over Pierre waning she longs for the world she has left--the world of the sea, for that is whence she has come.

"Look, let us go through there! Bell must go through there! See! see! out there upon the blue! yonder, yonder! far away--out, out!--far, far away, and away, out there! where the two blues meet, and are nothing-- Bell must go!"

Again Lucy is unable to grasp the meaning of words that do not conform to her physical conceptions. "Why, Isabel," she murmurs, "that would be to go to far England or France; thou wouldst find but few friends in far France, Isabel." Isabel replies in words showing that she conceives truly what has taken place in Pierre's inner being, and in Lucy's:

"And what friends have I here?--Art thou my friend? In thy secret heart dost thou wish me well? And for thee, Pierre, what am I but a vile clog to thee; dragging thee back from all thy felicity?" (XXVI. 3)

Pierre has indeed found the confines of Isabel's being too close, and he has found the presence of Lucy appealing, thus completing the circle begun with the first sight of Isabel's face. Nevertheless, the return to the innocence of his first love is impossible, as is the return to the world of conventional physical existence. Even more, he finds that physical existence impossible when he returns to his room, for there he finds two

letters, one from the publisher and one from Frederic Tartan and Glendinning Stanley. Both letters accuse him of lying--of denying truth, that to which he had dedicated his life. Now Pierre is forced to accept the one truth that has faced him from the first moment that he conceives of a reality outside the confines of his order in Saddle Meadows. At Pierre's first reading of the letter from Isabel the narrator comments, "Ay, Pierre, now indeed art thou hurt with a wound, never to be completely healed but in heaven." When he had now so suddenly called to Isabel and Lucy to accompany him in his walk, moreover, Isabel had cried, "That vile book it is finished!" Pierre's answer then is more than a negation of her inference:

"Not so," said Pierre' and, displacing all disguisements, a hectic unsummoned expression suddenly came to his face; --"but ere that vile book be finished, I must get on some other element than earth. I have sat on earth's saddle till I am weary; I must now vault over to the other saddle awhile." (XXVI. 1)

Physically they go for a ride on a sailboat, but mentally Pierre is now ready to leave this earth's saddle forever. Both Lucy and Isabel have proved insufficient, for to follow either one exclusively has proved impossible, and to take one and leave the other had proved equally futile. Hence he calls out to the two when they come to visit him in prison at the end, "Away!--Good Angel and Bad Angel both!--for Pierre is neuter now" (XXVI. 6). He has no choice but to die, for life cannot sustain negation. Pierre has reached the state which Melville was to portray in "Bartleby the Scrivener" about a year later. Like Bartleby, Pierre simply comes to the point where he says, "I prefer not to," and thus, like Bartleby, he dies.

Pierre or; The Ambiguities, however, in some ways denies the possibility of death, but sees it as a fulfillment. In the vision of Enceladus which Pierre has near the end of the novel, the hero is compared to Moses who struck a rock in the wilderness to provide water for his thirsty people. Though he was prevented from going into the promised land because he had hit the rock instead of speaking to it, Moses was nevertheless taken up by God and his body was never found. Pierre too cannot enter the truth he seeks while alive, but the book he is attempting to write is one of those "mere immature freshman exercises, wholly worthless in themselves, except as initiatives for entering the great University of God after death" (XVIII. 1). At the beginning of the novel, when the narrator builds the background for Pierre's poetic nature by emphasizing his democratic heritage he hints that Pierre's drive toward a life which cannot exist on earth is also an introduction to another life, for the heritage of Pierre is in itself a life-in-death. Democracy is based on the premise that death but yields life;

For indeed the democratic element operates as a subtle acid among us; forever producing new things by corroding the old; as in the south of France verdigris, the primitive material of one kind of green paint, is produced by grape-vinegar poured upon copper plates. Now in general nothing can be more significant of decay than the idea of corrosion; yet on the other hand, nothing can more vividly suggest luxuriance of life, than the idea of green as a color; for green is the peculiar signet of all-fertile Nature herself. Herein by apt analogy we behold the marked anomalousness of America; whose character abroad, we need not be surprised, is misconceived, when we consider how strangely she contradicts all prior notions of human things; and how wonderfully to her Death itself becomes transmuted into Life. So that political institutions, which in other lands seem above all things intensely artificial, with

America seem to possess the divine virtue of a natural law; for the most mighty of nature's laws is this, that out of Death she brings Life. (I. 3)

In Call Me Ishmael Charles Olson writes of Melville,

Hawthorne was right, Melville could not rest without a belief, he had to have a god. In Moby-Dick he had one. I called him the Ancient of Days. The job was a giant's, to make a new god. To do it, it was necessary for Melville, because Christianity surrounded him as it surrounds us, to be as Anti-Christ as Ahab was. When he denied Ahab, he lost the Ancient. And Christianity closed in.¹²

This Christianity is a multiplied curse in Pierre. Its function in the novel is analogous to the function of religion in the life of Pierre's mother, where it serves to constrict rather than to expand reality. The chief tenet of Christianity is the resurrection from the dead, which is what Melville affirms in Pierre. However, he affirms it not as a truth of existence but as a dogma, which is denied by what really happens in the activity of the novel. It is part of a structure which is forced onto the novel rather than growing from within the novel, such as the open structure of Moby-Dick arises out of the activity of that novel. In Pierre the structure does not permit the open activity of forming the progressive revelation which carries Pierre to his doom. Melville seems to have had a defined idea of the significance of that revelation of Pierre prior to the metaphoric activity of its occurrence in the novel. In short, Melville is caught between rational and metaphoric modes of thought, a fault seen most clearly in the persistent duality which often does not arise out of the activity of the characters, but is forced onto that activity heavy-handedly by the narrator. In the first chapter already omens abound concerning Pierre's downfall. First Pierre's

relationship with his mother is set in question:

Thus freely and lightsomely for mother and son flowed on the pure joined current of life. But as yet the fair river had not borne its waves to those sideways repelling rocks, where it was thenceforth destined to be forever divided into two unmixing streams. (I. 2)

Three paragraphs later, Pierre is seen gliding toward maturity, "thoughtless of that period of remorseless insight, when all these delicate warmths should seem frigid to him, and he should madly demand more ardent fires." Two paragraphs later: "Pierre little foresaw that this world hath a secret deeper than beauty, and Life some burdens heavier than death." By this foreshadowing the movement of the novel from innocence to experience, already a very common theme, falters under the added weight of the foreknowledge of what must happen.

The consciousness of the narrator does serve to "alienate" the reader from the narrative and thus provide for the ambiguity which plays so large a role in the novel. Nevertheless, at times the ambiguity suffers, for the narrative comments destroy that which they are to create by emphasizing the double vision. The story tends to become rational rather than metaphoric as the narrator presents philosophy rather than dramatic activity. Melville had this problem in Mardi as well, but there it was not hemmed in by a closed structure like in Pierre, for there the plot is carried by the events of the voyage through the islands of Mardi. Furthermore, in Mardi Melville had not yet formed so defined a philosophy as he puts forward in Pierre, for the whole book is a voyage of discovery, as he points out in the chapter called "Sailing On"

Oh reader, list! I've chartless voyaged. With
 compass and the lead we had not found these
 Mardian Isles. Those who boldly launch, cast off
 all cables; and turning from the common breeze,
 that's fair for all, with their own breath fill
 their own sails. . . . But this new world
 here sought is stranger far than his who stretched
 his vans from Palos. It is the world of the mind.

In Pierre, however, Melville has a compass, and thus the
 "chartless voyages" in which he expounds his philosophy are
 extraneous and take the reader away from that which is meaning-
 ful by its very activity to that which is merely significant.

In an excellent analysis of Melville's refusal to keep
 from intruding into the story in Pierre, Charles Feidelson Jr.
 states that Melville had really dismissed his hero before he
 had even begun the book. He knew beforehand what Pierre was
 to find out in bitter agony. "If the Melville of Mardi is
 not yet sure what he means by "significance," though he
 strongly suspects what it will entail, the Melville of Pierre
 knows all too well."¹³ Knowing the significance entails losing
 the "meaning", for significance belongs to rational knowledge,
 which is static and forms a point of comparison or even an
 absolute standard. This is, of course, what Pierre seeks, but
 cannot find. He attempts to find it through introspection,
 which, rather than leading him to something that shall become
 a standard upon which he can come to base his life's activity,
 leads him to a bottomless continuum in which he loses himself
 rather than finding himself. In writing the story, Melville
 is but another Pierre, for he also cannot leave the introspection
 in which he buries his hero. The difference is that Melville

knows from the beginning that he will find nothing in Pierre, and he becomes contemptuous of him, and finally dismisses him just as Pierre dismisses his hero:

"Cast thy eye in there on Vivian; tell me why those four limbs should be clapped in a dismal jail--day out, and day in--week out, week in--month out, month in--and himself the voluntary jailer! Is this the end of Philosophy? This the larger, and spiritual life? This your boasted empyrean? Is it for this that a man should grow wise, and leave off his most excellent and calumniated folly?"

"Whence flow the panegyric melodies that precede the march of these heroes?" asks Pierre. "'From what but from a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbel'" (XXII. 3).

Feidelson points out that here Melville is not only contemptuous of his hero, but in writing of his hero the way he does, Melville shows that "he is really contemptuous of literary form in general."

He is not satisfied . . . to disappoint conventional expectations and thus to suggest the "creamy chaos" from which all form emerges; he must devise a preposterous story, so patently absurd that it casts doubt even on the serious use he would make of symbols. If the style of Pierre is grotesque--by turns mawkish, pretentious, and eccentric--it is the style of an author who suspects from the beginning what his hero discovers in the end, that all literature is meretricious.¹⁴

In Mardi Melville had been careless of form, but there he had been searching for that which would give form to his work. Here Melville is also careless, but now it is out of scorn for what that form will reveal. Melville is not interested in revealing--he just wants to tell. He points to two modes of revelation in literature, but then denies both:

Among the various conflicting modes of writing history, there would seem to be two grand

practical distinctions, under which all the rest must subordinately range. By the one mode, all contemporaneous circumstances, facts, and events must be set down contemporaneously; by the other, they are only to be set down as the general stream of the narrative shall dictate; for matters which are kindred in time, may be very irrelative, in themselves. I elect neither of these; I am careless of either; both are well enough in their way; I write precisely as I please. (XVII. 1)

As a consequence of Melville's carelessness we do not know that Pierre is a writer until after Melville can not carry the action of Pierre and Isabel any further, so that he is forced to shift the direction of the development drastically in order to continue to depict Pierre's drive toward disillusionment. It almost seems that Melville determines to cast Pierre as a writer only after Isabel fails as a centre for creative activity in the novel. It is also this attitude that causes him to renounce all compunctions about narrative style in parodying man's search for truth. Describing the inhabitants of the church of the Apostles he writes,

Often groping in vain in their pockets, they can not but give in to the Cartesian vortices: while the abundance of leisure in their attics (physical and figurative), unite with the leisure in their stomachs, to fit them in an eminent degree for that undivided attention indispensable to the proper digesting of the sublimated Categories of Kant; especially as Kant (can't) is the one great palpable fact in their pervadingly impalpable lives. (XIX. 1)

This carelessness also leads Melville to deny by his structure and tone what he affirms with his words discursively. At the very end of Pierre's tortured attempts to write, one day, in a semi-conscious state Pierre sees the myth of Enceladus' attempts to scale the Mount of Titans. In his explication of

the myth, the narrator points out that "whoso storms the sky gives best proof he came from thither" (XXV. 5), thus giving the promise of the truth of the defeat of death through endless striving. This, however, is undercut by the very manner in which the myth is recounted, for the myth only functions discursively--it has no import beyond its one-dimensional significance which states that Pierre will never achieve his task. The same holds true for the dream about the amaranth and the catnip. This becomes perfectly static, for Melville supplies the comparison which freezes metaphor into allegory. "The catnip and the amaranth!" says the narrator, "--man's earthly household peace, and the ever encroaching appetite for God" (XXV. 4).

As soon as Pierre has affirmed Isabel, she becomes a static sign as well. At the beginning of the novel Isabel is clearly presented as the congruence of Pierre's active, subjective conception and his affections, and as such she is part of the development of Pierre that is inherent in him from the beginning. However, when her role as object of development in Pierre's experience is finished, by Pierre's renouncing Saddle Meadows and affirming her, she becomes an individual entirely divorced from the activity of Pierre's search for truth. Though this may correspond to our normal, rational experience in which desired objects lose their attraction as they are attained, it is hardly consistent in the novel. In the narration of her past she tells Pierre that her actions are entirely spontaneous, governed by forces beyond her control:

I have had no training of any sort. All my thoughts well up in me; I know not whether they pertain to the old bewilderings or not; but as they are, they are, and I can not alter them, for I have nothing to do with putting them in my mind, and I never affect any thoughts, and I never adulterate any thoughts; but when I speak, think forth from the tongue, speech being sometimes before the thought; so, often, my own tongue teaches me new things. (VI. 5)

When Lucy appears at the Apostles, however, Isabel becomes a scheming, jealous shrew, intent on proving her superiority over Lucy by demanding Pierre's attentions. Again, though this may be realistic, the fault within the book is made obvious by a comparison of Lucy and Isabel. The roles of mythical and rational person are reversed. Though Lucy's appearance in the city is not rationally expected, yet it is true to metaphorical experience, for Lucy appears at a time when Pierre must find an alternative to the life he is leading. Lucy supplies this, by arriving to fill that need, first by providing an outlook for earning money, and secondly, by providing the possibility of a partial return to the physical world, thereby supplying one pole of that duality which pervades his experience. This, however, sets the shortcoming of Isabel's person within the novel into sharp contrast, and thus Isabel's loss of mythic power is fully revealed. As Isabel's activity becomes openly conscious, she falls to the level of overt allegory within the story, thereby also forcing Lucy into the same role. Melville goes so far as to call them good and bad angels.

Ironically Lucy's heavenly influence is most closely associated with the very earthly influence which finally leads to Pierre's complete negation of everything earthly and heavenly

as well. "Lucy or God?" had been his question earlier. With the negation of God now though, Lucy is not the only factor to enter his life; with her come Glendinning Stanley and Frederic Tartan, and in them Pierre sees his final escape from the rocky prison of his dimensionless soul caught in the barrenness of the poles to which he has followed his inner compass.

When these things now swam before him; when he thought of all the ambiguities which hemmed him in; the stony walls all round that he could not overleap . . . the last lingering hope of happiness licked up from him as by flames of fire, and his one only prospect a black and bottomless gulf of guilt, upon whose verge he imminently teetered every hour;-- then the utmost hate of Glen and Frederic were jubilantly welcome to him. (XXV. 2)

Pierre has reached the end. "Murders are done by maniacs; but the earnest thoughts of murder, these are the collected desperadoes. Pierre was such; fate, or what you will, had made him such. But such he was" (XXV. 2). Pierre murders the two and then gives himself up to prison, where he takes his own life, along with that of the two women. The book ends in complete negation: "Nor book nor author of the book, hath any sequel" (XXVI. 6). Isabel's assertion "It is ambiguous still" is unconvincing because the ambiguity is only rational, not metaphoric. Melville has shown conclusively that life cannot abide the truth that he finds in his own soul--especially if that truth is that there is no truth. Pierre ends with nothing. Joseph K. in The Trial also ends with nothing, but he lifts up his hands because he has something to say at the moment of his death. Joseph K. is ready to "enter the great University of God." Pierre will never graduated from the rocky prison in which he dies.

CONCLUSION

Both Pierre or, The Ambiguities and The Trial end in similar situations of suicide-murder. As though Pierre realizes that he cannot live any longer, but that he also cannot take his own life, he determines to have himself killed by the law of the outer world with which his entire existence is now in conflict. By killing Frederic Tartan and Glen Stanley he acts out of a sense of desperation; the murder is his only way out of the dilemma. As Pierre goes to meet his death in the persons of Glen and Fred, he is met by people who affirm life. He passes "haughty-rolling carriages, and proud-rustling promenaders, both men and women" (XXVI. 5), but he is not attracted to any of these, for his experience tells him that the "streams of glossy, shawled, or broadcloth life" as they brush past each other in two opposing avenues are but "long, resplendent, drooping trains of rival peacocks." He has learned Solomon's lesson that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit," and he is not detracted from his destiny of death in a stony prison. Even in prison he looks forward to the judge's sentence, "Hung by the neck till thou be dead." When Isabel comes to visit him, she recognizes that the responsibility is not really her brother's, and that he does not really deserve to be hung, so she attempts to take the responsibility herself. "Not thou art the murderer," she says, "but thy sister hath murdered thee" (XXVI. 6). The cry, however, does not resolve the problem of whether Pierre or the world is

responsible for his inevitable death. But the cry does reveal to Lucy the true relationship of Pierre to Isabel. Her collapse does not solve the problem of responsibility, but it does force Pierre to see even more clearly his dilemma. Realizing that a solution is beyond all hope, he tears the drug from Isabel's breast.

Joseph K.'s death presents the same problem. Like Pierre, K. knows that he has no choice but to die, yet he is unable to take his life without the assistance of others. On the way to his execution he also meets the life which he has found invalid, but he also turns from it. "He followed the direction taken by the girl ahead of him," says Kafka, "not that he wanted to overtake her or to keep her in sight as long as possible, but only that he might not forget the lesson she had brought into his mind" (p. 282). The appearance of Fräulein Bürstner has the same effect on K. as the final collapse of Lucy has on Pierre, and thus he moves on toward his death within the stone quarry. The physical site of his death is as lifeless as is Pierre's. As he is held down in the quarry, the same questions about the responsibility of his death trouble him as those that appear in Pierre:

Once more the odious courtesies began, the first handed the knife across to the second, who handed it across K. back again to the first. K. now perceived clearly that he was supposed to seize the knife himself, as it traveled from hand to hand above him, and plunge it into his own breast. But he did not do so, he merely turned his head, which was still free to move, and gazed around him. He could not completely rise to the occasion, he could not relieve the officials of all their tasks; the responsibility for this last failure of his lay with

him who had not left him the remnant of strength necessary for the deed. (p. 285)

In the end, Pierre does kill himself. K. cannot. He leaves the final task to those who have made life within the physical body impossible.

Not only the end, but the whole progression of the two stories is somewhat similar. Melville's book begins with a very conventional setting, which is seconded by the pastoral tradition and the Christian values. As the work progresses, this convention is shown to be insufficient because it fails to meet the demands that are placed on it by the personal necessities of the hero. The conventions are gradually shown to be not only insufficient, but morally evil, for they deny the necessities of life to those who do not fit into the established patterns of society. Mrs. Glendinning and the reverend Falsgrave legislate against both Delly Ulver and Isabel in order to maintain that life which they have established for themselves. They live by excluding that which is foreign to their rational minds. Pierre's felicity with his mother is possible only as long as he does not affirm what she excludes. He must even hide the picture of his father which portrays a reality beyond that which Mrs. Glendinning has experienced in her marriage to him. In refusing the portrait, she already refuses Isabel the right of existence. Pierre attempts to affirm life as he finds it. If Isabel is his sister he recognizes a responsibility toward her which he must carry out regardless of the consequences. In thus giving the lie to the world he places himself outside the only possibility of human social existence, and thus he must finally die.

The same progression takes place in The Trial. Joseph K. is a normal administrator in a normal bank in a normal city. He leads a quiet life, which he has carefully ordered between his business and his private affairs. Suddenly he experiences a reality which exists outside the comfortable security which he has enjoyed. Like Mrs. Glendinning he attempts to deny the truth of that reality by simply excluding it from his consciousness. When this proves impossible, he attempts to fight it openly, just as Pierre is tempted to do time after time. As the case progresses, Kafka gradually reveals that it has social implications, just as does Pierre's case. Joseph K. is living his life at the expense of others, just like Mrs. Glendinning, Falsgrave, and Glen Stanley. The conflict that exists between Pierre and his social environment is the conflict that exists between the Court and Joseph K.'s social environment as it is revealed in K. himself. K. constantly wants to maintain control over others, to keep his "advantage," just as Mrs. Glendinning wants to maintain her superiority over Lucy and Pierre. Just as Joseph K. threatens to have Kullich, Rabensteiner, and Kaminer dismissed from the bank for his own advantage, so Pierre's mother warns him, "Beware of me, Pierre. There lives not that being in the world of whom thou hast more reason to beware, so you continue but a little longer with me" (VII. 2). Gradually, however, the Court wins, just as Pierre triumphs over his mother. But the more K. is won over by the Court, the more difficult becomes his physical existence. Like Pierre, the wiser he grows, the less are his chances for bread; the more time he spends on

his first defense, the further his mind is drawn away from the financial intricacies of the Bank. And finally, like Pierre, he realizes that the true life of the Court is so far removed from the false life of the physical existence which he must live if he is to continue to exist, that he has no choice but to die.

The ambiguity of both books is based partially in the fact that the authors realize that the position of their protagonists is false. Melville knows that Pierre is a fool, and Kafka knows that the demands of the Court are impossible. Both authors stand back and secretly laugh that anyone can be so naive as to even enter into situations within which Pierre and K. find themselves. Speaking of more than merely the necessity of experience as well as imagination, the context in which the following paragraph appears, Melville says, "There is an infinite nonsense in the world on all of these matters; hence blame me not if I contribute my mite. . . . Still, it is pleasant to chat; for it passes the time ere we go to our beds" (XVIII: 1). Actually Pierre is rather vain and slow-witted, for, as a youthful author, he considers seriously having his works published by such eminent editors as "Wonder and Wen", "Peter Pence" and "Donald Dundonald," not realizing that their very names connote their mediocrity. One reviewer senses the depth of Pierre's writing well, and he assures readers that Pierre is "blameless in morals and harmless throughout." When Pierre shows reviews like this to an elderly literary friend, the friend tells him "Pierre, this is very high praise, I grant, and you are a surprisingly young author to receive it; but I do not see any crit-

icisms as yet,'" Pierre naively answers in amazement, "'Criticisms? . . . why, sir, they are all criticisms! I am the idol of the critics!'" (XVII. 1).

Considered as the life of nothing but a conceited youth, Pierre certainly does show part of the dark sense of humor that runs through all of Melville's works. The same is true of Kafka. Brod, for example, draws attention to this aspect of Kafka in his biography. "When Kafka read aloud himself, this humor became particularly clear. Thus, for example, we friends of his laughed quite immoderately when he first let us hear the first chapter of The Trial. And he himself laughed so much that there were moments when he couldn't read any further."¹ The fact is that Joseph K. is so naive, so stupid, that he is funny. This is pointed out in the novel by Franz: "'See, Willem, he admits that he doesn't know the Law and yet he claims he is innocent!'" (p. 10). In the same sense the Court is funny too--it takes itself very seriously when it is really something of no consequence. "'And shall I be punished for not having come to my own accord?'" Joseph K. asks the official who telephones him one day when he has made up his mind to see Elsa. K. smiles in anticipation of the answer, which turns out to be negative, just as he had expected. "'Splendid,'" he says, "'Then what motive could I have for complying with this summons?'" (p. 290). The situations of Joseph K. and Pierre Glendinning are indeed so utterly impossible of ever being solved that they are nothing short of ludicrous.

And therein lies the seriousness of Melville and Kafka.

The ludicrous situations of Pierre and Joseph K. ~~are no different~~ from the ludicrous situation of modern man who has moved his centre of reality from the heart to the head. Once the problem has been discovered there is no way out; "All hope abandon, ye who enter here!" Melville quotes from Dante (IX. 2). Man has constructed a world in which it is impossible to live; that world exists, for he can improve it rationally, and he has a conception of it in his mind--yet his experience forces him to question it. Once the country doctor gets to his patient, there is no longer any problem:

I confirmed what I already knew; the boy was quite sound, something a little wrong with his circulation, saturated with coffee by his solicitous mother, but sound and best turned out of bed with a shove. (My emphasis)

When, however, the doctor re-examines the patient, this time with the assistance of the whinnying of the unearthly horses to assist him, he discovers the truth.

In his right side, near the hip, was an open wound as big as the palm of my hand. Rose-red, in many variations of shade, dark in the hollows, lighter at the edges, softly granulated, with irregular clots of blood, open as a surface mine to the daylight. That was how it looked from a distance. But on a closer inspection there was another complication. . . . Poor boy, you were past helping. I had discovered your great wound; this blossom in your side was destroying you.

When the doctor is willing to forgo what he already knows and to examine the case as it stands in its physical reality, and in detail, then his previously constructed reality collapses.

Heinz Politzer begins his critical-autobiographical study² of Kafka's work with a one-paragraph sketch found in

Kafka's papers after his death. It reads as follows:

It was very early in the morning, the streets clean and deserted, I was on my way to the railroad station. As I compared the tower clock with my watch I realized it was already much later than I had thought, I had to hurry, the shock of this discovery made me feel uncertain of the way, I was not very well acquainted with the town as yet, fortunately there was a policeman nearby, I ran to him and breathlessly asked him the way. He smiled and said: "From me you want to learn the way?" "Yes," I said, "since I cannot find it myself." "Give it up, give it up," said he, and turned away with a great sweep, like someone who wants to be alone with his laughter."³

Given the situation where the "time is out of joint," one may not attempt to reconcile the two clocks as Plinlimmon's pamphlet on horologicals and chronometricals shows. Plinlimmon draws this conclusion from his study:

"By inference it follows, also, that he who finding in himself a chronometrical soul, seeks practically to force that heavenly time upon the earth; in such an attempt he can never succeed, with an absolute and an essential success. (XIV. 3)

A casual study of Melville and Kafka could not arrive at a greater similarity in these two authors than this--there is no solution to this dichotomy between that which one's mind tells one to be true, and that which one experiences to be true.⁴ The solution, if any, must lie outside the realm of physical possibility, for none of either Kafka's or Melville's stories which broach the problem end with a solution. Though Taji is urged to settle on the island of Serenia in Mardi, he refuses, because for him Yillah still lies ahead. In Moby-Dick Ishmael does not solve the problem, he only lives to tell the tale of Ahab's defeat in attempting to vanquish that which gives

meaning to his life. The Pequod sinks. Pierre dies through a murder-suicide. And at the end of his life Melville writes one final story, Billy Budd, where the innocent victim is hanged from a ship's mast. The stories of Kafka end in the same way. Georg Bendemann jumps from a bridge in "The Judgment"; Gregor Samsa gradually fades to nothing but his shell in "The Metamorphosis"; a great iron spike from the torture machine drives through the head of the officer in "The Penal Colony"; the Hunger Artist starves to death.

The obvious comparison would therefore be the death of Bartleby as he is caught in the Law Offices of Kafka's Court. Bartleby's sense of alienation is apparently just as extreme as Joseph K.'s. The narrator feels that the scrivener is "absolutely alone in the universe,"⁵ and no communication seems possible in order to break this isolation. It is not only that Bartleby withdraws from the world, but the world also withdraws from him. When he refuses to vacate the lawyer's premises, the lawyer moves, causing Bartleby to be evicted. However, even here there is ambiguity, for Bartleby chooses not to take part in the activity of the Law Offices: "I prefer not to," he keeps repeating. The lawyer's attitude itself is ambivalent. Bruce Franklin's interesting study of "Bartleby" shows how the lawyer's actions are laudable and blameworthy simultaneously. Franklin introduces his study by an excerpt from Matthew 25 in which Christ states that the good that men do to the lowest man, that is done to him. This is Franklin's interpretation:

As the story of Bartleby unfolds, it becomes increasingly apparent that it is in part a testing of this message of Christ. The narrator's soul depends from

his actions toward Bartleby, a mysterious, poor, lonely, sick stranger who ends his life in prison. Can the narrator, the man of our world, act in terms of Christ's ethics? The answer is yes and no. The narrator fulfills the letter of Christ's injunction point by point; he offers money to the stranger so that he may eat and drink; he takes him in, finally offering him not only his office but also his home; when he sees that he is sick, he attempts to minister to him; he, alone of all mankind, visits and befriends the stranger in prison. But he hardly fulfills the spirit of Christ's message.⁶

Indeed, he does not, for he is the cause of Bartleby's death.

So again things are not as they appear. In The Trial the Court is finally Joseph K.'s salvation, for it frees him from his existence as a bank clerk, which is analogous to the position of the lawyer in "Bartleby," for both positions demand the exploitation of those beneath them. In the stories, however, the analogy is much closer, for both Joseph K. and the lawyer are confronted with the inexplicable which they attempt to overcome by rational means. As the stories progress, the situations of Bartleby and Joseph K. become analogous as K. is drawn to the Court and Bartleby is taken to prison. In both cases they gain their freedom through imprisonment, for as Franklin shows in his study, the scrivener is modeled after a Hindu "Saniassi" whose asceticism frees him from the cares of the world.⁷

The situation again is metaphorical rather than factually static. The inherent meaning of the objects is known functionally rather than through their denotation. And this constant activity is brought about by the shaping of the activity by the narrator. In other words, the story gains life through the revelatory form it is given, as the narrator attempts to explain the inexplicable. Thus "Bartleby" approaches the form of Moby-Dick, where Ishmael

initially attempts to explain the appalling attraction of the white whale, but then is himself caught up in the larger attempt of Ahab to kill the whale. In each case the pure activity of the content of the story, as it exists in the constant shifting through which meaning is made, takes the story out of the range of rational systematization and consequent fixation. In Kafka, the narrator is identical with the protagonist, so that Joseph K. himself shapes his own story, thereby revealing his whole world of activity. In the end he not only gains freedom from the confining physical world of the bank, but he also gains freedom through the transcendence of factual knowledge, which is static, by entering the ongoing activity of metaphorical knowledge which constantly generates meaning.

Kafka and Melville both achieve what Babbalanja's mentor, Lombardo, finds through the progression of his own book:

When Lombardo set about his work, he knew not what it would become. He did not build himself in with plans; he wrote right on; and so doing, got deeper and deeper into himself; and like a resolute traveler, plunging through baffling woods, at last was rewarded for his toils. "In good time," saith he, in his autobiography, "I came out into a serene, sunny ravishing region; full of sweet scents, singing birds, wild plaints, roguish laughs, prophetic voices. Here we are at last, the," he cried; "I have created the creative."⁸

By setting up the constant battle of opposites they go through the turbulence of the conflict and reach the calm where the antagonistic forces create the stillness by cancelling each other out. It is as if the full weight of meaning is held aloft by these forces working against each other. In Melville the constant tension between opposites is emphasized time after

time, especially with references to the contraries of land and sea, which are basic to Moby-Dick. The theme appears as the basis of Melville's theory at the end of Pierre, where it is forced into the context of the narrower imagery of this more overt novel:

Oh, seems to me, there should be two ceaseless
steeds for a bold man to ride,--the Land and the
Sea; and like circus-men we should never dismount,
but only be steadied and rested by leaping from one
to the other, while still, side by side, they both
race round the sun. (XXVI. 1)

Melville propounds this as his aesthetic theory in a poem, "Art."

In placid hours well pleased we dream
Of many a brave unbodied scheme.
But form to lend, pulsed life create,
What unlike things must meet and mate.
A flame to melt--a wind to freeze;
Sad patience--joyous energies;
Humility--yet pride and scorn;
Instinct and study; love and hate;
Audacity--reverence. These must mate,
And fuse with Jacob's mystic heart,
To wrestle with the angel--Art.

This balancing of contraries is also a chief concern in Kafka's art; it is his way of "breaking the frozen sea." His goal is to ascend to an arbitrating position over the antagonistic forces, as he describes in a small sketch which is quoted by Emrich.

He has two opponents. The first one harries him from the rear and has been doing so ever since the very beginning. The second blocks his passage forward. He battles with both. Actually the first one assists him in his battle with the second one, for he wants to push him forward; and, likewise, the second one assists him in his battle with the first one, for he, of course, is thrusting him back. But it is only theoretically that way. For, after all, not only the two opponents are there, but he himself is there too; and who really knows what his intentions are? Yet, all the same, it is his dream that at some time, at

an unguarded moment--that of course requires a blacker night than has ever yet existed--he will leap forth out of the fighting line and because of his combat experience will be elevated to the position of judge over his opponents who are battling with one another.¹⁰

The artist is this arbitrator, he judges over the life forces which hold man in thrall. Thus Titorelli is presented as the redeemer of Joseph K. in the deleted vision from the unfinished chapter, "The House." Art is the harnessing, through form, of the contraries in order to "created the creative."

And art which achieves this union is metaphoric, for where objects are static in their denotation, there can be no force which generates meaning out of a shifting reality which is constantly being created anew. Hence the concern with death in Melville and Kafka. Death itself becomes a necessity for affirmation, for where nothing dissolves there can be no life. This is Melville's argument against the old world aristocracy at the beginning of Pierre. In contrast to the old houses of Europe, families in America's democracy correspond to the truth of nature, "for the most mighty of nature's laws is this, that out of Death she brings life." This is true in art as well as in nature. Repeating the assertions made in the first chapter of this essay, we see that in metaphorical writing words lose their denotative meaning as they fall into relationships with other words in order to create a meaning which is formed by the total congruence which is larger than the sum of the parts and which cannot be analysed by examining the denotations of the individual words.

In the works of Kafka and Melville then, the basic

metaphorical structure provides for the conception of meaning through a process that extends from individual words right through to the content of experience that transcends the individual works. Thus the sinking of the Pequod is an affirmation of life, a truth presented by the image of the coffin of Queequeg shooting up to become Ishmael's salvation. Similarly the death of Joseph K. in the fragment "A Dream" permits his transcendence as the artist is freed to transcribe his name onto the stone with flourishing strokes.

This is the affirmation that Melville makes at the conclusion of Clarel, the long poem in which he attempts to reveal the wisdom that he has gained in life. Here he affirms the heart over the head once again, for it is the heart which enters the experience of the indestructibility of man, as opposed to the head which circumscribes man's existence in the fixed systems of rational thought.

Then keep thy heart, though yet but ill-resigned--
 Clarel, thy heart, the issues there but mind;
 That like the crocus budding through the snow--
 That like a swimmer rising from the deep--
 That like a burning secret which doth go
 Even from the bosom that would hoard and keep;
 Emerge thou mayst from the last whelming sea,
 And prove that death but routs life into victory.¹¹

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Literary Symbolism: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Literature, ed., Maurice Beebe (Belmont, 1960).

²Margaret Church, "Kafka's 'A Country Doctor'," Literary Symbolism, pp. 138-139.

³Stanley Cooperman, from "Kafka's 'A Country Doctor'; Microcosm of Symbolism," Literary Symbolism, pp. 140-142.

⁴Basil Busacca, from "A Country Doctor," Literary Symbolism, pp. 135-138.

⁵Franz Kafka, "Ein Landarzt," Erzählungen und kleine Prosa, ed., Max Brod (New York, 1946), pp. 134-140. I shall generally use the translation of Willa and Edwin Muir, Selected Short Stories of Franz Kafka (New York, 1952). Where this excellent translation proves inadequate for any special emphasis, however, I shall translate the portions myself, indicating when I do so. The passage just cited is my translation.

⁶"Gespräch mit dem Betrunkenen," Erzählungen, pp. 20-24.

⁷See below, pp. 20-24ff.; also footnote 72.

⁸Scepticism and Poetry: An Essay on the Poetic Imagination (New York, 1937), pp. 18-19.

⁹Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 22-23.

¹¹Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning, 2nd ed. (London, 1952), p. 35.

¹²Ibid., p. 87. Quoted from An Essay on Human Understanding, III.vi.46.

¹³Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, 2nd ed., (1951; paperback ed., New York, n.d.), p. 132.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁷Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. Susanne Langer (New York, 1946), pp. 9-10.

¹⁸Barfield, p. 102.

¹⁹H. Usener, Götternamen. Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung (Bonn, 1896), pp. 279-281ff.

²⁰Cassirer, pp. 17-18.

²¹Ibid., p. 57.

²²Ibid., p. 14

²³Ibid., p. 33.

²⁴Barfield restricts "true" metaphor to the conscious reflective and creative process of man overcoming rational reality. Since the primitive "metaphor" arose out of an unconscious process, it cannot be termed "metaphor."

²⁵Cassirer, pp. 95-96.

²⁶Cassirer, p. 91.

²⁷Ibid., p. 85.

²⁸Ibid., p. 97.

²⁹Untersuchungen über die Grundfragen des Sprachlebens (1885).

³⁰Langer, p. 125.

³¹Ibid., p. 123

³²Ibid., p. 124.

³³Martin Foss, Symbol and Metaphor in Human Experience (Lincoln, Neb., 1949), p. 7.

³⁴Cassirer, pp. 25-26.

³⁵Barfield, p. 144.

³⁶Ibid., p. 101.

³⁷Pp. 98-99. My emphasis. This is a central concern in my thesis. For Kafka's and Melville's protagonists this world of metaphorical conception is not an illusion; it is the hard reality of their lives. And that reality which modern man dismisses as "illusion and fantasy" was also concretely present in the lives of the authors themselves.

³⁸Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form (New York, 1953), p. 188.

³⁹Ibid., p. 206.

⁴⁰Philosophy in a New Key, p. 113.

⁴¹Barfield, p. 143.

⁴²Charles Feidelson Jr., Symbolism and American Literature (1953; paperback ed., Chicago, 1959), p. 55.

⁴³Ibid., p. 42.

⁴⁴And in so far as science is based on creative hypotheses, it holds to the truth of the conceptual symbol as well. Perhaps nothing illustrates the validity of Shelley's dictum that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" as well as the modern scientist, who, in conceiving a certain reality, is truly a poet--and even more truly a legislator of the world, for he literally does create the world of the layman's perception.

⁴⁵A reading of four of Martin Heidegger's essays on Hölderlin's poetry in Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung (Frankfurt/Main, 1951), shows conclusively how earnestly Hölderlin took the reality of his poetry.

⁴⁶Feeling and Form, p. 253. My emphasis.

⁴⁷James, p. 15.

⁴⁸Feidelson, p. 58.

⁴⁹Foss, p. 56.

⁵⁰A. N. Whitehead, Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect (1927; paperback ed., New York, 1959), p. 26.

⁵¹Feidelson, p. 57.

⁵²Foss, pp. 61-62.

⁵³Feidelson, p. 53. Quoted from R. M. Eaton, Symbolism and Truth: An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge (Cambridge, 1925), p. 287.

⁵⁴Foss, p. 71.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 72.

⁵⁶Barfield, p. 102.

⁵⁷Foss, pp. 74-75.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 75.

⁶⁰The use of "ego" here follows Foss. This differs from the sense in which Barfield uses the word (cf. p. 18). For Barfield "ego" is the awareness of the self as a vital being, actively relating with the world. "Ego" for him is metaphorical, not

rational. For both Foss and Barfield that which is the product of reason and self-consciousness, rather than the active, non-reflective assertion of life, is a denial of man's humanity.

⁶⁰Foss, p. 116.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 112.

⁶²Barfield, p. 37.

⁶³Ibid., p. 30.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 103.

⁶⁵Feidelson, p. 71.

⁶⁶Foss, p. 146.

⁶⁷Loc. cit.

⁶⁸Feidelson, p. 63. This statement points to Feidelson's thesis that reality consists wholly in language: "To consider the literary work as a piece of language is to regard it as a symbol, autonomous in the sense that it is quite distinct both from the personality of its author and from any world of pure objects, and creative in the sense that it brings into existence its own meaning" (p. 49). Though this conflicts with the view that is basic to this thesis, namely that literature is a means of conceiving as reality that which the author experiences unconsciously (the view held by Melville), Feidelson's book has been a great help to me.

⁶⁹Above, pp. 26-27.

⁷⁰"What is this then, that you are doing, as if you were real? Do you want to make me believe that I am unreal?"

⁷¹"It is true," he says, "you still have an advantage over me, but only then, when I leave you alone."

⁷²"It really seems now that it does you little good if one reflects upon you; you decrease in courage and health."

Kafka's interchanging of überlegen with nachdenken is significant. Überlegen denotes both "to reflect" and "to have an advantage over," or "to be superior". As long as the narrator leaves the objects at rest/alone, i.e., as long as he does not reflect upon them, they retain their superiority--they are überlegen over their object. As soon as he begins to reflect (nachdenken/überlegen) he gains the superiority. This shows Kafka's consciousness of language-- and it may also show how the development of language reflects the growth of rational thought. The progression of the anecdote then would follow the growth of language from mythical conception to rational perception.

73 James, pp. 77-78.

74 Quoted by Cassirer, An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture (New Haven, 1944). The quotation is from Dewey's Experience and Nature (Chicago, 1925), p. 96.

75 Foss, p. 62.

76 Dec. 17, 1910. Tagebücher, 1910-1923, ed., Max Brod (Frankfurt/Main, 1967), p. 23.

77 Foss, pp. 61-62.

78 Ibid., p. 130.

79 Ibid., p. 131.

80 Ibid., p. 133.

81 Ibid., pp. 137-138.

82 Dearest Father: Stories and Other Writings, tr. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York, 1954), p. 39.

83 Walter H. Sokel, Franz Kafka: Tragik und Ironie (München, 1964), p. 20.

84 Radio Talk on Deutschlandfunk at the anniversary of Kafka's eightieth birthday. Reprinted in Akzente V (1963), 78. "The unknowledgable person attempts more."

85 Wilhelm Emrich, "Franz Kafka: Portrait," Geist und Wiedergeist, ed., Emrich (Frankfurt/Main, 1965), p. 287.

86 Briefe, ed., Max Brod (New York, 1958), Jan. 27, 1904.

I believe that one should finally read only such books as bite and prick one. If the book that we are reading does not awaken us with the thud of a fist on our brain, why do we read the book? So it will make us happy, as you write: My God, we would be happy as well if we had no books, and such books as make us happy we could write ourselves in a pinch. But we need those books which affect us like a tragedy which pains us deeply, like the death of one whom we prefer to ourselves, as if we were cast away into forests, removed from all men, like a suicide, a book must be the axe which breaks the frozen sea in us. This I believe.

CHAPTER II

¹Franz Kafka: A Critical Study of His Writings, trans., Sheema Zeben Buehne (New York, 1968), p. 20.

²Ernst Haeckel, author of the radical, materialistic Riddles of the Universe.

³Emrich, pp. 26-27.

⁴Martin Greenberg, The Terror of Art: Franz Kafka and Modern Literature (New York, 1965), p. 36

⁵Emrich, p. 27.

⁶Erzählungen, pp. 48-49.

"You are going away again, you rascal?" he asked, resting upon his legs spread wide over two steps.

"What am I to do?" I said, "Now I have had a ghost in my room."

"You mention that with the same irritation as if you had found a hair in your soup."

"You're joking. But note this yourself, a ghost is a ghost."

"Very true. But how about if one doesn't even believe in ghosts?"

"Well, then do you think I believe in ghosts? But what does the refusal to believe help me?"

⁷Emrich, p. 31.

⁸Ibid., p. 36.

⁹Max Brod, Franz Kafka: A Biography, 2nd ed., trans., G. Humphrey Roberts and Richard Winston (New York, 1960), p. 230.

¹⁰Reprinted in Akzente V (1963), 78.

Franz Kafka is the only writer of our century who has critically recognized and presented in a clear picture the immanent laws of our social and personal reality. Thus he is the most problematic and shocking writer for all those who are more or less unconsciously or non-critically enmeshed in these laws, or even identify themselves with them. These people must experience the unavoidable shock that Franz Kafka reveals the truth of reality, the truth that is nevertheless so unbearable that their consciousness must bar itself against it and crowd it into the dungeon of the forbidden, the ghastly, the horrible, the irrational or even the perversely decadent.

¹¹Emrich, p. 81.

¹²Erich Heller, The Disinherited Mind (New York, 1957), p. 206.

¹³Franz Kafka, The Trial, trans., Willa and Edwin Muir (New York, 1956), p. 3. Unless stated, all quotations will be taken from this edition.

¹⁴Above, p. 27.

¹⁵Der Prozess, ed., Max Brod (1958; paperback, Frankfurt/Main, 1960), p. 11. My translation ("Sie werden es zu fühlen bekommen").

¹⁶The connotation is even more pronounced in the German where the word Gurgel is used. In the final scene of the book, one of K.'s executioners grasps K.'s Gurgel while the other stabs him.

¹⁷Dearest Father: Stories and Other Writings, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York, 1954), p. 45. Reflection 92.

¹⁸p. 57.

¹⁹"Yes, but that is the fear that is beside the point. The actual fear is the fear of the cause of the appearance. And this fear remains. Exactly this fear fills me most awfully."

²⁰Der Prozess, pp. 132-133. My translation.

²¹Dearest Father, p. 39. Reflection 54*

²²Emrich, p. 362.

²³Ibid., p. 363.

²⁴Dearest Father, p. 39. Reflection 54.

²⁵Foss, p. 56.

²⁶Language and Myth, pp. 91-92.

²⁷Foss, pp. 85-86.

²⁸Ibid., p. 87.

²⁹Brod, p. 234.

CHAPTER III

¹Jay Leyda, The Melville Log, II (New York, 1951), 529.

²Herman Melville, Pierre or, The Ambiguities, ed., Henry A. Murray (New York, 1949), p. 399. Since most of Melville's well-known novels are available in many editions I will provide Book and Section notation rather than the pagination of any single edition.

³The Letters of Herman Melville, eds., Merrel R. Davis and William H. Gilman (New Haven, 1960), p. 146.

⁴Herman Melville, Selected Tales and Poems, ed., Richard Chase (paperback, New York, 1950), p. 213.

⁵Moby-Dick, ch. xcvi.

⁶Above, p. 27ff.

⁷The Wake of the Gods: Melville's Mythology (Stanford, 1963), pp. 118-119.

⁸The radical shifts from extreme to extreme in Pierre follow the pattern of mythical thought, which operates in totalities of experience, as Cassirer shows (Language and Myth, pp. 57-58).

When Kant defined "reality" as any content of empirical intuition which follows general laws and thus takes its place in the "context of experience," he gave an exhaustive definition of the concept of reality in the canons of discursive thought. But mythic ideation and primitive verbal conception recognized no such "context of experience." . . . The process of apprehension aims not at an expansion, extension, universalizing of the content, but rather at its highest intensification . . . All other things are lost to a mind thus enthralled; all bridges between the concrete datum and the systematized totality of experience are broken; only the present reality, as mythic or linguistic conception stresses and shapes it, fills the entire subjective realm. So this one content of experience must reign over practically the whole experiential world. There is nothing beside or beyond it whereby it could be measured or to which it could be compared; its mere presence is the sum of all Being.

⁹"Isabel" is a variant of "Jezebel," the wicked, idolatrous wife of King Ahab in the Bible

¹⁰The story appeared as a re-publication in the May, 1851 edition of The Dollar Magazine. Melville wrote Hawthorne at the beginning of June, "By the way, in the last 'Dollar Magazine' I read 'The Unpardonable Sin.' He was a sad fellow that Ethan Brand. I have no doubt you are by this time responsible for many a shake and tremor of the tribe of general readers." The Melville Log, I, 411-412.

¹¹Nathaniel Hawthorne, Selected Tales and Sketches (paperback, New York, 1950), pp. 313-314.

¹²Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (San Francisco, 1947), p. 102.

¹³Symbolism and American Literature, p. 185

¹⁴Ibid., p. 201.

CONCLUSION

¹Franz Kafka: A Biography, p. 178.

²Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox, 2nd. ed., (Ithaca, 1966), p. 1.

³Printed in Description of a Struggle, p. 201.

⁴It should now be clear that this is not the same as the difference between "ideal" and "real", for here both aspects are real. The problem is much deeper, and all I have been able to do in this paper is to present part of it, hoping that it may lead to further study.

⁵"Bartleby the Scrivener," Selected Tales and Poems, p. 116.

⁶The Wake of the Gods, pp. 127-128.

⁷Ibid., pp. 135-136.

⁸Mardi: and a Voyage Thither, ch. clxxx.

⁹Selected Tales and Poems, p. 411.

¹⁰Franz Kafka, p. 74.

¹¹Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land, ed., Walter E. Bezanson (New York, 1960), IV, xxxv.

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