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A RHETORIC OF MOTIVES

by

KENNETH BURKE

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transcendent “reverence” each drawing sustenance from the other (and with all the variants of these, even to the rebel snapping of the continuity).

The Caricature of Courtship: Kafka (The Castle)

With the dialectical symmetry of The Book of the Courtier in mind, consider Franz Kafka's grotesque novel, The Castle. Thomas Mann calls Kafka “a religious humorist.” A good formula, so good that it deserves a fuller explanation than the one its originator gives for it. Mann sees in Kafka the shift between love of the commonplace and desire “to be near to God, to live in God, to live aright and after God's will.” And as in Mann's Tonio Kröger an unresolved conflict between artistic and bourgeois motives leads to sentiment and humor, so Mann says that the motives responsible for The Castle “corresponded in the religious sphere to Tonio Kröger's isolation.”

But even in Tonio Kröger, as viewed from the standpoint of our concern with the magic of courtship, we should note that there is a pronounced concern with caste. Tonio's shy reverence for the bourgeois Ingeborg is but a localization, in sexual terms, of a nostalgic attitude towards the bourgeoisie as a class. True, as the returns have kept coming in, we have begun to see that the artistic “break-away,” the bourgeois-turned-Bohemian, was not so antithetical to the motives of his class as he usually felt himself to be. The young Bohemian's wandering is but the first stage of the old Bohemian's homecoming. The Bohemian is “substantially” back before he leaves; but as with the Boyg's instructions to Peer Gynt, he must get there roundabout. Still, however indistinguishable the father and the prodigal son may be as regards their underlying community of motives, they can feel themselves as opposite extremes, as different in kind—and Mann's story got much poignancy from the distinction between the practical-bourgeois and the esthetic-bourgeois, treated as alien classes, with Tonio vacillating between them, and the two women, Ingeborg and Lizaveta, being courted not merely for themselves alone, but for the contrasting orders of social motives which they represented. They were mysterious vessels, for they were sexual embodiments of two nonsexual principles, two different castes. And the ambiguous courting of them was a roundabout intercourse between the castes.
If you substitute the religious motive for the esthetic motive, you see that Mann is quite correct in noting a motivational analogy between The Castle and Tonio Kroger. But for our purposes, the significant element of the analogy was omitted from Mann’s account of his own story. Add this element, and if you then look at Kafka’s novel with the dialectic of The Courtier in mind, you will see exactly why and how Mann’s formula fits. Kafka is, if you will, “religious” in his concern with the ultimate mystery, the universal ground of human motives. But his account of the religious motive is “humorous” because he never forgets how the terms of the social order incongruously shape our idea of God, inviting men to conceive of communication with God after the analogy of their worldly embarrassments.

The principle of courtship is manifested in Expressionistically grotesque fragments. It is there, because the theme is bureaucracy, communication between higher and lower orders, involving the mysteries of “reverence.” And since the ultimate of such courtship would be communion between lowly beings and “the highest,” Kafka goes to the very essence of his subject, seeing through social mystery to divine mystery. But he never forgets, or lets us forget, the disproportion between social mystery and divine mystery. Thus, though the social mystery provides an imagery for figuring the divine mystery, this imagery is absurdly incommensurate with the hierarchic principle in its ultimate reaches.

In Kafka’s personal case, of course, the social mystery was experienced, and suffered, in the form of anti-Semitism. The Jew in liberal, pre-Hitlerite Austria was never quite blackballed, never quite admitted. Where much liberalism prevailed even while the movement towards Nazism was taking form, the Jew’s social status was unsettled. And this extraliterary situation had its analogue in the plot of The Castle, notably the uncertainty whether his principal character, “K.,” would strengthen or lose his contacts with the Castle. (Similarly, in The Trial, there was uncertainty whether K. would be pronounced innocent or guilty by a mysterious court that was nowhere and everywhere; indeed, he could not even learn what the charge against him was.)

To an extent, the condition was like being blackballed, flatly excluded from participation in the mysteries of status. Yet to an extent it was like being hazed. For though hazing is a trial, the “guilty” defendant may hope for eventual admission to the holy of holies. The candidate who is an insider, even while he undergoes upon him his nature as a partial outsider like that of “exclusive” schools when imparting mystery to fraternities and important difference: usually, where recognized formally, so that, even with much “reverence” as the dingy insinuation knows where he is, knows what acts well one with the mystic substance. But in fixities, the situation is not recognized candidate is being hazed, neither he nor is going on. Hence, nobody is quite if is, or what kind of “trial” he must face.

Thus, a friend said: “After the final member, there was a great rush of liberal of political radicalism. Of a sudden, which had been struggling along the new converts. Whereas the old-timers laboriously attempting to increase they became reversed. Instead of a welcome tendency to prove that they were paid off so far that often, rather than back in the growth of their cause, the old-exclusive neighborhood who resented near-by.

“Years after, I understood what was old-timers feared for the loss of their station. It was the careless trampling on. The new men came in like a wave. There were no stages, there were no plan. At one moment, they weren’t there, sudden they were. And lacking any situation, the old-timers unbelievably of informal hazing process, or trial
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gy of holies. The candidate who is being hazed can hope to become
an insinader, even while he undergoes ritual punishments that impress
upon him his nature as a partial outsider. Or rather, the situation is
like that of "exclusive" schools where the upper classmen impose
menial duties upon the newcomers; or it is like hierarchic codes for
imparting mystery to fraternities and secret orders. No, there is one
important difference: usually, where such rituals prevail, they are
recognized formally, so that, even while the discomfitsures build up as
much "reverence" as the dingy institution can command, the candidate
knows where he is, knows what acts will finally permit him to become
one with the mystic substance. But where there are no such formal
ixities, the situation is not recognized for what it is. Though the
candidate is being hazed, neither he nor his persecutors recognize what
is going on. Hence, nobody is quite sure what the defendant's "guilt"
is, or what kind of "trial" he must face, or for what purpose.
Thus, a friend said: "After the financial crash of 1929, you will re-
member, there was a great rush of liberal intellectuals to join the cause
of political radicalism. Of a sudden, radical literary organizations
which had been struggling along for years were overwhelmed with
new converts. Whereas the old-timers in these organizations had been
laboriously attempting to increase the membership, the situation now
became reversed. Instead of a welcome for the new men, there was a
tendency to prove that they were poor material. And this tendency
went so far that often, rather than being propagandists who delighted
in the growth of their cause, the old-timers acted like residents of an
exclusive neighborhood who resented a new real-estate development
ear-by."
"Years after, I understood what was wrong. It was not just that the
old-timers feared for the loss of their former influence in the organiza-
tion. It was the careless trampling on the mystery that disturbed them.
The new men came in like a troop of boys entering a restaurant.
There were no stages, there were no punishments, there was no hazing.
At one moment, they weren't there, and at the next moment of a
sudden they were. And lacking any formal ritual designed for this
situation, the old-timers unbeknownst to themselves worked out a kind
of informal hazing process, or tried to, in seeking to freeze out the
very persons whom formerly they would have worked like demons to recruit.*

For the Jew Kafka, the hazing that would reaffirm the mystery was not formalized. Indeed, there was not even the assurance that he was being considered. As the novelist says of one ostracized character in The Castle, his superiors couldn't forgive him, because they hadn't accused him; and "before he could be forgiven he had to prove his guilt." Still further, there was no clear hint as to where the mystery was, or what it was. The nearest visible, formal signs of it were in the structure of bureaucracy. Giving it maximum resonance, one got to the connotations of "God," hence one was "religious"; but realizing how

* When an individual is being received into an alien social group, he may himself feel the need to be "hazed," just as the established members of the group may feel the need to haze him. The conditions of mystery may lead to apprehensions more or less clearly expressed, as the insiders feel that they are being silently judged, or that the newcomer threatens their ways, while he himself has the sense of protruding among the company like what Marcus Aurelius might have called an "abscess." But the embarrassments here go a step farther back, deriving in part from the fact that only a few of the rites necessary to such initiation are formally recognized; and insofar as the rites are uncertain, or are improvised, or are uncompleted, a magic propriety has been violated (the violation being felt on both sides, like an unpaid debt). Then the initiative ceremony is worked out piecemeal, in ways that are unacknowledged, or even unrecognized, except for vague embarrassments, subtle affronts, half-intentional oversights, and the like.

Looking back at Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson in the light of these speculations, we wonder whether some such "savage" or "mystical" level of motives might be found operating there. True, the good people of the community are at first most effusive in their welcome of the two foreigners, Angelo and Luigi ("lovely names; and so grand and foreign"). But it doesn't take a very skilled reader to suspect very early in the story that the author is building up for a letdown. The subsequent harsh treatment of the twins results from misunderstandings caused by the villainous Tom, who puts the foreigners in a bad light in order to conceal his own guilt. But if you drop the explanations, what do you get? The plot then boils down to this: Two foreigners enter a community; despite their exceptional strangeness, they are heartily welcomed; but immediately after, there is a long period when they are subjected to the most severe coolness and suspicion, and undergo painful trials, before they are finally exonerated and admitted. Leaving out the roundabout rationalization, which attributes the villagers' standoffishness to the machinations of a villain, one finds that the newcomers went through a long period of what amounts to informal, improvised hazing. Split the neighbors into two groups, and although both groups treat the strangers badly, the dissociation rationalizes the bad treatment by attributing it to the evil persons alone, thereby concealing its collective nature. But omit the rationalization of intent, merely looking at the over-all result, and you find that
inadequate it was as a figuring of the divine, one treated it with grotesque “humor.” Thus, the mysterious official whose substance comes not from his intrinsic personality but solely from the dignity of his office here takes on a new dimension. He is a nonentity in the sense that he manifests no intrinsic properties fitting him to represent the religious motive; yet the mysteries of rank endow him with “reverence” anyhow. Indeed, his very unfitness as a vicar perversely suggests the dignifying effect of the office itself. (Thus a student wholly impressed with his college as a mystery would manifest this essence not through learning, but through a “college spirit” that would forgo learning. Or a man of means who distributed insults along with his funds, purchasing services solely through his money, beating his dogs with a bone, might more forcefully illustrate the power of money in its “purity” than if he also had appealing traits of character that engaged people’s loyalties.) So in The Castle the very singleness of the officialdom as persons absurdly suggests the omnipresence of the mystery that infuses their office.

Since, according to our view, The Castle is a fragmentary caricature of such an order, let us see to what extent the formal elements in Castiglione’s dialogue have their grotesque counterpart in Kafka’s novel.

The first concern of The Courtier is with the qualifications that make one presentable at court, and with the hopes of favor and advancement the citizens, with one notable exception who was himself unjustly in bad repute with the community, had subjected the foreigners to harsh treatment. But it doesn’t take a very skilled story that the author is building up for a treatment of the twins results from misunderstandings, who puts the foreigners in a bad light. But if you drop the explanations, what do this: Two foreigners enter a community; they are heartily welcomed; but immediately they are subjected to the most severe coolness trials, before they are finally exonerated and not rationalization, which attributes the violations of a villain, one finds that the newness of what amounts to informal, improvised groups, and although both groups treat the bad treatment by attributing it to where the mystery was, or half-intentional oversights, and

The thought suggests that we might profitably approach all of Mark Twain’s major books in such terms. For instance, we should look for magical and ritualistic motives (strongly infused with the principle of hierarchy), while he uses the figures of children (or of rogues like the king and the duke) to depict such motives realistically. Children and rogues may or not be as thoroughly formalists as he makes them out to be. But even if they aren’t, readers can readily accept the novelistic convention that says they are. Hence the element of social “divinity” in the life about us can be lightly and ingratiatingly symbolized, without the reader ever becoming quite aware that his interest is being held by such a motive.
at the hands of the sovereign. This is also the primary concern of
the land-surveyor, K. But whereas the courtier is concerned with the
procuring of advantage within the court, K. is wholly an outsider, with
a vast officialdom (the grotesque bureaucratic equivalent of the courtiers)
vaguely interposed between him and the mysterious sovereign.
K. is at several removes from the source of favor. He is a stranger
among the villagers. Though the villagers belong to the castle, there
is a gulf between them and the castle. There are messengers (the gro­
tesque counterpart of angels) who live in the village but have access
to outer offices in the castle. And there are the officials themselves,
who represent the castle in the village, but are so imbued with the
mystic standoffishness of hierarchy that throughout the entire novel K.
exhausts himself in unsuccessful attempts to get preparatory interviews
with them. Where the courtier can consider how one should conduct
oneself in the lord's secret chamber, K. must worry how to get beyond
the outer vestibule.

Frieda and Amalia are the main translations of the grotesque courtli­
ness into terms of woman. Of Frieda, we are told: "It was her nearness
to Klamm" (she had been his mistress before coming to live with K.)
"that had made her so irrationally seductive" to K.—and Klamm was
the official from the castle whom K. is constantly striving to meet in
behalf of his nightmarishly indeterminate cause. Amalia is the girl
whose life was ruined when she resented a letter from an official mak­
ing filthy proposals to her (a letter couched in the language of court­ship incongruously reversed). One character quotes a local saying,
"Official decisions are as shy as young girls"; the novelist here ingen­iously mixes the sexual and bureaucratic orders. And when Kafka is
contrasting "the power, merely formal until now, which Klamm exer­
cised over K.'s services" with "the very real power which Klamm pos­sessed in K.'s bedroom," he says: "Never yet had K. seen vocation and
life so interlaced as here. . . . One might think that they had ex­
changed places."

If we recall what we previously said on the relation between mys­
tery and class, this remark seems unusually resonant. Status and divi­sion of labor being but two aspects of the same thing, the reference to
"vocation" can be read as a roundabout reference to class. Indeed, in
areas manifesting the cultural tone set by Protestantism, the substan­tiality of status that arose with the division of labor is likely to be ex­
This is also the primary concern of the courtier is concerned with the court, K. is wholly an outsider, with the bureaucratic equivalent of the court, the source of favor. He is a stranger to the villagers belong to the castle, there is no exchange. There are messengers (the group who live in the village but have access and there are the officials themselves, the village, but are so imbued with the by that throughout the entire novel K. attempts to get preparatory interviews can consider how one should conduct one. K. must worry how to get beyond translations of the grotesque courtly, Amalia is the girl who represents the mystery of the courtly principle) pervades K.'s sexual relations with Frieda. And he is saying in effect that here the social motives of status ("vocation") become so interwoven with universal motives ("life") that they can exchange places. Recall the nature of the book, in which the castle fluctuates between the two kinds of "reverence" (the social and the "divine") in terms of sexual relations?

Since the religious motivation in Kafka is explicitly recognized by both such authorities as Thomas Mann and Kafka's friend, Max Brod, we shall not pause here to establish it. But perhaps the single sentence that most quickly conveys this quality is in the second paragraph of the eighth chapter:

When K. looked at the Castle, often it seemed to him as if he were observing someone who sat there quietly gazing in front of him, not lost in thought and so oblivious of everything, but free and untroubled, as if he were alone with nobody to observe him, and yet must notice that he was observed, and all the same remained with his calm not even slightly disturbed; and really—one did not know whether it was cause or effect—the gaze of the observer could not remain concentrated there, but slid away.

And in Chapter IX, the discussion of things done "in the name of Klamm," of things "filled by his spirit," or of a person who is but an instrument in the hand of Klamm," adds a transcendent dimension to the purely bureaucratic mystery. Images of storm and eagle figure here too. Indeed, there is no trouble isolating the traditional theological motive in this work. The problem, rather, as both the Mann and Brod statements in the English translation indicate, is to keep one reminded of the important role played here by the motives of social class.

What of the other two major themes of The Courtier: Laughter and education (the themes gorgeously, almost hysterically, brought to-
order together in the Rabelaisian rhetoric? In The Castle, the social rhetoric of laughter and education (two forms of “pure persuasion” this side of the religious) is not a subject of discussion, but is rather the essence of the work itself. The laughter, in its grotesque modification, is embedded in the very conception and method of the book, the oddly “humorous” treatment of reverence. The social bid in such expression is perhaps best revealed today in the mixture of grotesqueness and humor that distinguishes the “smartness” of the New Yorker sort (the “hierarchic” appeal of which is indicated in turn by the commercial advertisements that accompany it, advertisements obviously addressed to suburban, middle-class “elegance”).

At one point, K. is told that the messenger Barnabas had cried when receiving his first commission. As a comment on the mystery, this incident is exceptionally telling. For Barnabas’ first commission had been to communicate with K. And previously we had seen the mystery of Barnabas, as he looked to K. This sudden glimpse around the corner, with A mysterious to B and B mysterious to A, all because of their different participation in the mystery of C, does not merely dispel the illusion. For everyone goes on acting as though there were a mystery; and since acts are images, the mystery continues to be strong in our imagination. Indeed, once you learn the rules, once you are at home in its grotesque laughter, the very lack of motives for the mystery adds to the sense of mystery.

In a broken, grotesque version of courtship, we are not required to find counterparts for each of the elements in the symmetrical, classical version. Yet there do happen to be analogies for the educational principle. Judged as imagery, K.’s very role as land-surveyor, or rather, his attempt to get himself formally accredited in this role, involves the principle of education. For interpreted symbolically, a land-surveyor is surely one who would specify positions and elevations. And since this half-admitted, half-rejected K. so clearly represents the author, whose account of K.’s quandaries in confronting social hierarchy is itself a precise novelization of the hierarchic motive, it would hardly be exorbitant to say that Kafka here writes as a Jewish “intellectual.” (He is “in” to the extent that an intellectual spontaneously considers himself superior to manual workers, as with K.’s attitude towards the peasants and workers of the village; he is “out” to the extent that an unnamed and even unnamable curse is upon him, a curse that keeps him permanently “guilty.”) Kafka spontaneously considers his status classes, though he may “pastorally” be a Leftist wag (he has since broken suggestive gallantry, thus: “The intelligentsia.” Kafka was “out” insofar as what suspect (though we will say for pure intellectuals), and because in addition he was then preparing himself to become a professional.

Also, there is at least the image of much of his uncertainty, K. lives with supposed to be janitor, and where excuses as living quarters is overrun by the weaving of education with the theme of belong rather under “grammar” and where noted the Grammatical resource be stated narratively in terms of temporality, the essence of the hierarchic prafied with the conditions of childhood “first,” and childhood is a narrative for the story, we are told that, at the first recollection” of the town which described as children, likewise the child commented on several times. When receiver gave out a buzz that was like voices—but yet not a hum, the echo of infinite distance.” In the schoolroom, a constant invasion of his privacy seems entire situation.

Again, the German word for externality not present in the English, in the idea of enclosure, being related to schliessen. Klaann, as an adjective, other word for the act of enclosing, hortus conclusus of medieval thought duplicated the protectiveness of the are the words for “advertising” and "So much for the Grammar of
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Also, there is at least the image of education in the fact that, during much of his uncertainty, K. lives with Frieda in a school where he is supposed to be janitor, and where expressionistically the classroom he uses as living quarters is overrun by the schoolchildren. But the interweaving of education with the theme of childhood involves factors that belong rather under "grammar" and "symbolic." We have elsewhere noted the Grammatical resources that permit logical priority to be stated narratively in terms of temporal priority. By such convertibility, the essence of the hierarchic principle (the castle) can be identified with the conditions of childhood, since an essence is a logical "first," and childhood is a narrative first. Thus, near the beginning of the story, we are told that, at the first sight of the castle, "K. had a fleeting recollection" of the town in which he was born. The peasants are described as children, likewise the childish element in his assistants is commented on several times. When K. tries to phone the castle, the receiver gave out a buzz that "was like the hum of countless children's voices—but yet not a hum, the echo rather of voices singing at an infinite distance." In the schoolroom where he lives with Frieda, their constant invasion of his privacy sets the mark of childhood upon the entire situation.

Again, the German word for castle, Schloss, has connotations of internality not present in the English equivalent. For it clearly suggests the idea of enclosure, being related to the verb for closing or locking, schliessen. Klamm, as an adjective, means tight or close, related to another word for the act of enclosing, klemmen. We might recall the hortus conclusus of medieval thought, the ideal "closed garden" that duplicated the protectiveness of the walled town. And in the offing are the words for "advertising" and "calamity," Reklam, Kalamität.

So much for the Grammar of "regression." From the standpoint of
“Symbolic” note also that the imagery of childish sexuality is well suited to express the mystery of social courtship in one important respect: since social intercourse is not essentially sexual at all, such courtship is more nearly analogous to the “polymorphous-perverse” nature of infantile sexuality than to mature sexual mating. (See Shirley Jackson’s novel, The Road Through the Wall, for a subtle and sensitive representation of the ways whereby the unspeakable mysteries of social discrimination become interwoven, in childhood, with the unspeakable mysteries of the sexually unclean.) Since K.’s union with Frieda is but a roundabout approach to Klamm (who represents the mystery of the order headed in the castle), there is a grotesque appropriateness in the fact that K. and Frieda are under the observation of others, even in the most intimate moments of love-making. Here are perhaps the strongest suggestions of the infantile, since children’s experiments with sex lack intimacy, privacy, and purpose, quite as with the casual and almost absent-minded sexuality of Frieda and K.

The two major themes that complicate the analysis of The Castle in terms of grotesque courtliness are Kafka’s illness and his personal conflicts with his father. Recalling Freud’s suggestion that children are often figured in dreams as insects, we should probably find the clearest representation of the mysterious, troubled communication between father and son as different “kinds of being” expressed most directly in the story, Metamorphosis, about a son who was a monster cockroach. Rhetorically, we may note that, in this very disgrace of the offspring, there is a desperate vengeance against the parent from which it was descended.

Though the references to weariness in The Castle show signs of the author’s personal illness, it is perhaps figured most clearly in the story of the Hunger-Artist, where the wastage of consumption has its analogue in the fantastic account of the performer who starved by profession. Anyone with a feeling for the grotesque might have hit upon the plot of this story as a conceit; but unless a writer were almost prodigiously imaginative, only by actually experiencing tuberculosis could he have developed this fictive counterpart of it with such gruesome thoroughness.

The disease here is also esthetically redeemed, as with much of Mann’s work (Tristan, for instance) in becoming interwoven with the theme of art. (For a discussion of the story from this point of view, see R. W. Stallman’s essay, “Kafka’s Castle.”

There are rhetorical implications especially received is again considered, a rhetorical element that can arise even if figures is discernible in the identity when Kafka writes: “Illness and wear of refinement.” Thus such obsession well with the imagery of disease, but such literary attenuations of mental di

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In his remarks on Kafka, Max Bro

The connection between the “Cod and the women, this connection has by K., may appear obscure, and even

in the official (Heaven) to obviously immoral and obscene, a gaard’s Fear and Trembling may be loved much, read often, and profess

ters. The Sortini episode is long book, which starts from the fact that what was really a crime, the sacrifice this paradox to establish triumphing

gories of morality and religion and commensurability of earthly and rel

nto the heart of Kafka’s novel.

We might distinguish two important problem of the sacrifice (involving Genesis 22) and the problem of the “incommensurability” between religi

so closely interwoven that we cannot implicating the other. Yet they re

purposes, since a cult of irrationality from many other sources than this e
Imagery of childish sexuality is well received by the "polymorphous-perverse" nature of childhood. Social courtship in one important respect is essentially sexual at all, such courtship being "polymorphous-perverse" from the outset, with the unspeakable mysteries of socialization in childhood, with the unspeakability of the "unspeakable". Since K.'s union with Frieda is but a grotesque appropriateness in the observation of others, even in love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making. Here are perhaps the first fantasies, since children's experiments with love-making.

Kafka's study of law leads directly into rhetorical motives. The paper work, and the strongly hierarchic nature of legal administration could provide much material for the imagery of officialdom that is the basis of the courtliness. And behind positive law there always loom the questions of theologic law, as the castle looms above the village.

In his remarks on Kafka, Max Brod writes:

The connection between the "Castle"—that is Divine Guidance—and the women, this connection half-discovered and half-suspected by K., may appear obscure, and even inexplicable, in the Sortini episode where the official (Heaven) requires the girl to do something obviously immoral and obscene; and here a reference to Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling may be of value—a work which Kafka loved much, read often, and profoundly commented on in many letters. The Sortini episode is literally a parallel to Kierkegaard's book, which starts from the fact that God required of Abraham what was really a crime, the sacrifice of his child; and which uses this paradox to establish triumphantly the conclusion that the categories of morality and religion are by no means identical. The incommensurability of earthly and religious aims; this takes one right into the heart of Kafka's novel.

We might distinguish two important elements in this statement: the problem of the sacrifice (involving the interpretation of a story in Genesis 22) and the problem of the absurd (involving a doctrine of "incommensurability" between religious and social motives). They are so closely intertwined that we cannot discuss one intelligibly without implicating the other. Yet they might be separated for systematic purposes, since a cult of irrationality, or "the absurd," can be derived from many other sources than this chapter in Genesis, and a theory of...
sacrifice need not lay such stress upon the “kill” as marks Kierkegaard’s interpretation of the Biblical story.

_A “Dialectical Lyric” (Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling)_

In the department stores of some decades ago, there were little carriages running in tracks between the cashier and the individual sales booths. (You still see them occasionally, but they have mostly been replaced by pneumatic tubes.) They would spurt forth, making quick jerks (like Kierkegaardian leaps) at each right-angled turn—darting in zigzags across the ceiling, and then suddenly disappearing on the way up to some unseen chamber where they would be received, checked, and after appropriate operations would be sent racing back to the counter from which they had come. Their forthright rectangular urgency fascinated—and a pious child, watching them, could feel that they were like messengers bearing communications to Heaven, and returning with prompt answers. Somewhat the same idea crosses the mind now, when we see the capsules being put into pneumatic tubes, or hear them come plumping out again—except that now the communications seem rather to be with a counting house in hell.

Anyhow, we are reminded of those little messengers, communicating between a central terminus and a peripheral terminus, when we think of the Kierkegaardian dialectic, for changing finite species into the currency of the infinite. For the dialectician sends up one thing, something is abstracted from it, and it returns as another thing. However, the change that comes back is not merely something subtracted, or abstracted from the original sum; a notable element has been added as well. This sort of change is a rebirth, a transformation.

What, then, went up, and what came back, as per the “movements” treated in Kierkegaard’s “dialectical lyric,” _Fear and Trembling_? At first, reducing to shearly behavioristic terms, we know that Kierkegaard had jilted a girl. When he announced that he had given up his intention of marrying her, she grew importunate. Then (we quote Mr. Walter Lowrie’s introduction to the English translation): “In order to liberate Regina from her attachment and to ‘set her afloat,’ S. K. felt obliged to be cruel enough to make her believe he was a scoundrel who had merely been trifling with her affections.” Onlookers might get the same impression. And Kierkegaard seems to have been threat-