A Study of the Effects of Inferiority Feelings on the Life and Works of Franz Kafka.

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF INFERIORITY FEELINGS
ON THE LIFE AND WORKS OF FRANZ KAFKA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of Foreign Languages

May, 1969

by

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The purpose of this study is to show that Franz Kafka suffered from an inferiority complex in excess of that which is considered normal and to prove that his psychological abnormality is displayed as a dominant character trait in the protagonists of his best known works. Although many studies exist dealing with, to a greater or lesser extent, the effect which the author's life had on his works, there is no detailed study which concludes that it was specifically his inferiority complex which motivated him and his major characters.

In the study of Kafka's life, it was found that his experiences in childhood and young adulthood, particularly those experiences involving his father, were, according to the principles of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, of the nature to induce an abnormal feeling of inferiority. The study proceeds by showing that there appeared ample evidence that such an inferiority complex did develop in his personality and is attested to by his timidity, withdrawal, oversensitivity, and anxiety. It then deals with the obvious compensatory devices which Kafka displayed, such as his overemphasis on athletic and intellectual
superiority, as well as his pessimism and self-reproach.

Further, the study shows that Kafka's second novel, Der Prozess, is a minutely detailed characterization of an individual who, much like Kafka himself, developed an agonizing feeling of inferiority. It shows that Joseph K.'s personality revealed substantially the same basic traits exhibited by Kafka and concludes that Der Prozess must be regarded as a novel in which the author confessed many of his personal fears and showed attitudes for which he himself was the model.

In addition to Joseph K., the protagonist of Der Prozess, the dissertation includes an examination of the abnormal personalities of Georg, the protagonist of "Das Urteil"; Gregor, the main character of "Die Verwandlung"; the officer of "In der Strafkolonie"; the doctor in "Ein Landarzt"; and the hunger artist, the protagonist of "Ein Hungerkünstler." The study demonstrates that the main character of each of the short stories selected for examination exhibited as dominant character traits exaggerated feelings of inferiority and employed resultant compensatory devices similar to those used by Kafka at the time the story was written.

The study concludes that Kafka used his writings as confessionals to compensate for his own inferiority complex by emphasizing the self-destructive tendencies of
individuals suffering from acute inferiority feelings or by portraying the withdrawal of individuals from society. Thus, the dissertation attempts to present a greater understanding of the problematic nature of Kafka's personality and a deeper insight into his works by studying them as expressions of his personality which itself was so greatly influenced by his inferiority complex.
INTRODUCTION

"Kafka's Biographie sei äusserst wichtig für das Verständnis seiner Weltanschauung und seines schöpferischen Schicksals."

--Dieter Hasselblatt
Franz Kafka was thirty-two years old when, in 1915, he was awarded the Fontane Prize for his short story "Der Verschollene," later to become the first chapter of the novel Amerika. This award was his first public recognition as a writer.

Kafka's life spanned the "fin de siècle," a time of great intellectual fermentation, and consequently, he was subjected to a variety of literary influences, movements, and trends. Because of the chaotic times in which he lived, one can discern in his writings the longings for normal bourgeois existence of Thomas Mann's early impressionism, and the call for brotherhood in Werfel's expressionism.

Since Kafka read voraciously, one might expect to find in his works undeniable similarities to the great writers he admired, and indeed one recognizes the dying embers of Goethe and Schiller's classicism, and the melancholic

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strains of Kleist's romanticism.\textsuperscript{4} Yet, even though his works reveal traits of various literary periods, it is difficult to classify them into any one school.\textsuperscript{5} The key to his creative genius is not to be found in the literary movements which more or less composed his aesthetic environment, but rather in forces which had their origin within Kafka's own being and which exerted the determining effect upon his personality and, therefore, upon his interpretation of life and its problems.

This dissertation therefore, concerns itself only with Kafka's writings as an expression of his personality and of those forces by which Kafka's personality was conditioned. Such a study is facilitated to a considerable degree by an examination of his novel, Der Prozess. Two important biographical sources also shed some light on his personality: \textit{Uber Franz Kafka}, written by Kafka's intimate friend, Max Brod, and his own \textit{Briefe an Milena}, edited by Willy Haas.

Although Kafka did not write an autobiography, all his works tend to be highly autobiographical. Of special interest is the \textit{Brief an den Vater}, in which Kafka attempted to explain how his father's conduct and attitude toward the

\textsuperscript{4} Strelka, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{5} Slochower, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 11.
family affected the development of his own personality. Perhaps one of the most important sources of meaningful material, however, is Kafka's diary, Die Tagebcher, which served a dual function, recording Kafka's daily activity and attitudes toward life, as well as providing him with a sketchbook for his creative writing. It affords the interested Kafka student an opportunity to observe Kafka's tendency to blend the reality of his life with the fancies of his imagination.

Of the several biographical works mentioned above, the Brief an den Vater, concerned as it is with the early years of Kafka's life, provides the best source for the study of the unresolved problems which arose from the faulty adjustment of the writer to his environment. It might be argued, since Kafka did not write Brief an den Vater until he had reached the age of thirty-six, that he no longer could remember the details of his youth, and that purposeful omissions and malicious exaggerations might have distorted the account of his early years, making it invalid as a document of his psychological development. It goes without saying that no man can remember the details of every incident in his life, but this very fact tends to give credence to the view that those incidents which Kafka does vividly recall from the past are the events which were of the greatest importance.
to him and the most significant in the development of his personality. If it is true that Kafka distorted the validity of his work with exaggerations as claimed by Brod, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that they tend in the direction of an overemphasis of those things which made the deepest impression on his mind. In reading Brief an den Vater, it would be well to remember that in relating events that had occurred years earlier, an older Franz Kafka was revealing some episodes that the much younger Franz would have concealed because they humiliated him, as for example, the comparison of physiques when he and his father changed into bathing suits in the same dressing hut.\(^7\)

Throughout Brief an den Vater, the insight which Kafka allows the reader into the feelings of his youth indicates great feelings of insecurity. His reactions to his problems are those typical of an individual suffering from an extreme inferiority complex. It follows, therefore, that a valuable insight into Kafka's life and work could be gained if it could be shown that the inferiority complex substantially influenced the author's writing.


Among the critics of Kafka's works there has been much difference of opinion concerning the extent to which his works were influenced by his personal life. This is especially true concerning his novel, *Der Prozess*. Jürgen Born maintains that in the novel the author has done little more than give creative expression to his own experiences and that it is the autobiographical element which makes it unique and significant. Peter Heller, Oskar Seidlin, and Joseph Margolis, as well as many other critics, support Born's statement concerning the original inspiration for Kafka's works. On the other hand, Edwin Muir denies that Kafka's own experiences provided the source for his creative efforts, and he contends that Kafka was striving to create works of a highly allegorical nature. He writes:

Kafka's most ordinary scenes have a fullness which gives them simultaneously several meanings, one beneath the other, until in a trivial situation we find


an image of some universal or mythical event such as the Fall. That is the way in which his allegory works.  

It is the opinion of this writer that a study of Kafka's major works tends to show that Muir's statement takes into account only those elements in Kafka's work which suited the critic's purpose. Kafka himself once expressed the serious desire to publish his collected works under the title The Attempt to Escape from Father, a statement which makes clear the fact that the author was aware of the extent to which his early experiences in life had influenced his writing. With the exception of Kafka's diary and Brief an den Vater, his first long prose work, Der Prozess, is perhaps more thoroughly autobiographical than any of his later ostensibly fictional works, and supplements the Brief an den Vater in establishing the presence of the inferiority complex in Kafka's personality and providing another perspective from which one may gain valuable insight into the author's other works.

The object of this study will be to examine in detail the biographical works, including Brief an den Vater, Briefe

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an Milena, and Brod's Über Franz Kafka and to demonstrate conclusively that Franz Kafka suffered from an inferiority complex in excess of that which is considered normal. It will point out those events in Kafka's life which would have tended to cause the author to develop a feeling of inferiority.

It will attempt to prove that in Der Prozess Kafka was presenting his own psychological dilemma: his failure to satisfactorily adjust to life. It will further attempt to prove that the main character, Joseph K., suffers from an abnormal feeling of inferiority, and that the events in his life which produce this feeling are similar to those in Kafka's life.

After establishing the fact that Kafka did suffer from an excessive feeling of inferiority and that this feeling influenced his novel Der Prozess, an attempt will be made to determine whether or not his psychological disability influenced any of his shorter works and, if so, whether it is possible to discern in them the form and manner in which the complex was expressed.

In order to provide a proper basis for the discussion of the inferiority complex in Kafka's life and its influence on his works, the first chapter of this study will be devoted to a brief description of the principles of Alfred Adler's theory of the inferiority complex, its origin, and some of the ways an individual might react to it.
CHAPTER I

THE INFERIORITY COMPLEX
I. THE INFERIORITY COMPLEX

It would be impossible in the limited space which can be devoted to it to give anything but a sketch of Alfred Adler's theory of individual psychology.\(^1\) However, in order that Kafka's psychological orientation in his life and works may be better understood, it is necessary to consider briefly Adler's concept of the personality and of the forces underlying it.

The basic concept underlying the theory of "individual psychology" is that of the teleological unity of the personality. In other words, a person can predict the type of response which an individual will make to a given stimulus and can interpret correctly the individual's attitude towards a particular problem only if he knows in advance the goals toward which the individual under observation is striving. Each additional assertion the observer wishes to integrate into a meaningful relationship to the observed

\(^1\)This sketch of Adler's theory of individual psychology is based on Josef Rattner's presentation of Adler's theory of the inferiority complex in Individualpsychologie: Eine Einführung in die tiefenpsychologische Lehre von Alfred Adler published by Ernest Reinhardt Verlag in 1963, and Alfred Adler's summary of his system in Psychologies of 1930 published by Clark University Press in 1930.
personality must contain this teleological factor. Any peculiar fashion in which an individual reacts to a situation can only be interpreted in the totality or finality or goal of the basic personality.

The theory of the "inferiority complex" was first advanced by Adler in his studies concerning the development of the human personality. He believed that the inferiority feeling in man is universal and is induced by a gap between the ability of an individual and the task which he is expected to perform. The members of the animal kingdom are by necessity required to use any newly acquired ability immediately. Young animals become self-sufficient at a relatively young age and no longer have the need to be dependent on their mothers. Man, however, develops a function far in advance of any need for it. From this premise, Adler concluded that with the advancement of culture, the interval of time between the beginning of the child's development and the completion of it constantly lengthens. Consequently, the child requires an increasingly longer period of development before he can take his place in his environment as a self-sufficient individual. Long before he is able to function as an individual unit in society, he has the ability to walk, speak, and think.

In the first few months of life, the child begins to perceive his own helplessness. As a reflex response to
external or internal stimuli, he cries and soon discovers that his crying may usually, but not always, bring about satisfaction of his hunger pangs. He also learns that some unpleasant physical sensations may be alleviated by the patting or rocking he attains if he cries loudly enough, but that a specific desired result is not always realized simply by crying. In other words, a child soon learns that the method at his disposal—crying—is not always sufficient to bring about the results which he seeks. At this point then, there arises a tension between a desired result and his ability to achieve it, and from this tension the child first begins to realize his helplessness.

The second phase in acquiring an inferiority complex occurs soon after the child has learned to identify himself with other members of his environment and to compare himself with others. He discovers that in the case of older individuals, for example, parents and older brothers and sisters, there exists a much more favorable relationship between goals in life and the means of attaining them than is true in his own case. Naturally, at such an early age he can not comprehend that adults are often just as helpless in trying to attain their goals as he is in attaining his own. This false interpretation on the part of the child arises because he simply can not comprehend the goals of the adult. The child sees only the enormous power of the adult as contrasted to his own limited power and relates
that gigantic strength of the adult to the goals of a child--that is, to his own goals. Consequently, the child begins to regard adults as all-powerful beings and himself, in comparison to an adult, as completely helpless.

A third step in the progression of childhood experience occurs at the same time: the child realizes that the adults in his world both care for him and feed him; therefore, he is totally dependent upon them. He also realizes that most of his desires are not directly attainable, but only indirectly achieved through the aid of those in the adult world. While crying was formerly only a reflex expression of a physical discomfort and a means by which uncomfortable physical stimuli could be alleviated, the act begins to lose its reflex character and begins to develop from a biological urge into a personal urge. The child now cries for a different reason. He has redirected his goal. The child's crying now indicates that he wants something, and this something is not necessarily biological in nature. From this point on, the child's crying loses its restricted significance and becomes more and more the expression of any sort of desire.

Dieses allmenschliche Minderwertigkeitsgefühl wird in jedem Säugling und Kleinkind neu erweckt und drängt zu Wachstum und Entwicklung. Schon infolge
Adler suggests that a child's interest in learning to walk, speak, read, and write, as well as his imitation of adults as a striving "from below upwards," is a desire to remove or at least to compensate for the "below" feeling. The motivating power which ultimately causes the individual to strive to attain his goal and which later finds expression in his character is the child's feeling of inferiority. Furthermore, Adler states that within the framework of the feeling of inferiority, certain factors become present which determine the degree and the character of an individual's inferiority feeling. In order to better facilitate the discussion of the factors which determine the degree and character of the inferiority feeling, Rattner divides them into five groups:

I. Organische Mängel
II. Die soziale und ökonomische Situation
III. Die Geschlechtszugehörigkeit
IV. Die Stellung innerhalb der Familie
V. Die Erziehung

The physical build of an individual is a condition to which the individual must make either a positive or a

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2Rattner, op. cit., p. 22.
3Ibid., pp. 23-25.
negative adjustment, and it is a condition with which he must deal throughout his entire life. In whatever endeavor the individual undertakes, the details of his physical stature must, by necessity, reveal themselves either as assets, which he can use, or as liabilities, for which he is forced to compensate. The need of a physically deficient person to compensate for his handicap is a well-established fact. Persons who, for one reason or another, lose their eyesight often compensate by developing to an extraordinarily high degree the sense of hearing. The increased efficiency of the human memory in individuals who have lost their ability to use their thoracic organs is another example of the manner in which nature, by favoring the overdevelopment of certain organs and functions, seeks to balance weaknesses and strengths in the human body. But man not only has the powers of physical and mental compensation, for Adler professes to have found a psychological compensation which occurs in what he calls the "psychic superstructure," and which is perpetrated by a mental awareness of the degenerate or inferior organ. In the case of an individual who has an inferior organ, it becomes the focus of the individual's attention, causing his life plan to orient itself either to protecting the inferior organ or, stimulated by his own conscious feeling of inferiority, to devoting his entire
mental energy to compensating for his deficiency. In such a case an overcompensation will result in the "psychic superstructure." Many men who were subnormal in stature became important political or military leaders, and many individuals have become important leaders in their chosen professions despite slight, or severe, physical handicaps. These individuals may well have been motivated by their tendencies to overcompensate for their deficiencies--whatever they may have been. In regard to physical inferiority, one should recognize the fact that the compensatory activity of the "psychic superstructure" does not depend on the inferiority itself, but rather on the importance assigned to it by the individual--that is to say, the extent to which it becomes a motivating factor in the individual's life.

The influence of an individual's social and economic level on the development of his personality is indeed very difficult to determine, for in many cases the indirect effects of a child's environment play the preeminent role in his development rather than direct reactions to his immediate environment. A child grows up, for example, under adverse conditions in which inadequate housing, lack of proper care and diet, and unclean conditions exist. Consequently, his physical and perhaps mental development are impaired. The child responds to
the adverse living conditions by various compensations of which the direct cause is physical and mental inferiority, but which, when closely examined, can be traced to the unfavorable social and economic conditions into which he was born. It is also possible that adverse social and economic conditions may cause the individual to develop attitudes similar to the sense of inferiority often felt in relation to physical stature. Such an inferiority feeling developed by unfavorable social and economic conditions may gain special importance in the individual's thinking, thus causing a need for adequate or excessive compensation to develop in the "psychic superstructure."

When one considers sex as one of the determining factors in the development of the personality, one must recognize that there is in our civilization a widespread acceptance of male superiority. In discussing the matter of male superiority Rattner states:

Die Individualpsychologie hat die Vorherrschaft des Mannes in der patriarchalischen Kultur als Ursache eines allgemein vorfindbaren 'weiblichen Minderwertigkeitsgefühls' namhaft gemacht. Die Frau kann nach Adler in der vom Manne bestimmten Welt sich nur schwerlich mit ihrer Frauenrolle abfinden. . . .

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Usually, the girl's reaction to experiencing the dual standard of evaluation of the sexes is accompanied by a feeling of having declined in value, which may develop in her a need for compensation. For the boy, however, the discovery that he is expected to be superior simply because of his sex means an additional responsibility of maintaining such superiority and thereby creates a situation in which he feels it necessary to prove himself worthy of his inherited position. For both sexes the term "man" connotes a sort of superiority. Oftentimes members of both sexes will seek to display their superiority by engaging in activities which give a masculine character to the manner in which they express themselves.

In the family constellation there are three factors that seem to be of greatest importance in the mental development of the child: the inner structure of the family, the character of the family, and the relation of the child to the family. All of these factors together determine the child's position in the family framework. The structure of families becomes evident in problems which present themselves in various forms: the child may be the only male child; the child may be the only female child; the child may be the oldest of a number of children; the child may be the youngest of a number of children. As one can readily see, the possibilities for placement in the family structure are almost
infinite. Another distinctive influence on the attitude of the child towards life is the personalities and characters of fellow members of the family if the family is composed of more than one child. Whether a child develops into a cowardly or courageous, an introverted or extroverted, a psychologically abnormal or normal individual often is the result of the influence that the other members of the family have had on his personality.

The three previously mentioned factors are usually present at the child's birth. That is to say, the child inherits certain relatively stable qualities which will ultimately determine his physical character. He is born into a certain socio-economic group and assumes his position in a certain family constellation. It is possible that some change in these factors will occur, but for the most part they remain rather permanent in nature. The remaining factor, even though it is closely related to the child's family, has a greater degree of flexibility than the other factors. Through proper training, a child may be encouraged to increase his capacity for courage and self-reliance; however, often there are circumstances which increase the child's dependence on his environment rather than prepare him to become a well-adjusted, independent functional unit of society. An example of training which tends to heighten the feeling of inferiority is
unnecessarily strict discipline, for it usually increases the natural gap between child and adult. Pampering, on the other hand, can cause undesired personality development in the child, for it generally causes him to become dependent upon others while at the same time developing egotistic and domineering traits. Consequently, such a child may display a dichotomy of personality in that he has a natural desire to rule and an inability to provide for himself. The result of this dual-natured personality is that pampered children accentuate their helplessness so that others, out of altruism will be forced to serve them. Of course, there are many types of training errors, but as Rattner states, there is one common basic error to be found in all of them:

Vor allem die Erziehungsmethoden der Verwöhnung sowie der Härte und Strenge sind für das Scheitern in der seelischen Entwicklung verantwortlich. In beiden Formen lernt das Kind nicht, auf Grund wachsender sozialer Bindungen seine Hilflosigkeit zu kompensieren; in beiden Erziehungssituationen muss ihm die Welt als feindlich erscheinen und seinen schöpferischen Elan drosseln.  

Since the science of psychology is relatively young, it is not unreasonable to assume that there are yet unexplored factors which underlie the inferiority feeling

in man. The sources of the inferiority feeling, however, whether they be physical deficiency, poverty, or a poor relationship between the child and the family unit, are essentially of no importance, for the effect upon the development of the personality remains the same. That is to say, a person who suffers from an abnormal feeling of inferiority will display a lack of courage, a lack of self-reliance, and an underdeveloped social consciousness. Of course, since each individual is unique in himself, the manner in which these basic traits are manifested will differ from one case to another.

In this study of Kafka's personality and the personalities of Joseph K. in Der Prozess and those of the protagonists of selected short stories, the author will attempt to show that the factors enumerated worked unfavorably on both Kafka's personality and the personalities of the protagonists of Der Prozess and the short stories and that such factors produced more than a normal feeling of inferiority. He will attempt to prove that an abnormally strong feeling of inferiority made itself manifest in the personalities of each of these men; he will attempt to show how this feeling of inferiority made itself manifest. The final concern is to show both Kafka's and Joseph K.'s attitude towards their environments and the problems which they encountered in life. An attempt will
be made to point out characteristic situations that tend to indicate to what extent Kafka's and Joseph K.'s personalities and attitudes towards life may have been determined by their abnormal inferiority complexes.
CHAPTER II

THE INFERIORITY FEELINGS IN FRANZ KAFKA
CHAPTER II

THE INFERIORITY FEELINGS IN FRANZ KAFKA

Access to the personality of any individual who exposes his innermost thoughts through creative writing is often comparatively easy. In the case of Franz Kafka, access should be greatly facilitated by such works as Brief an den Vater, the Tagebcher, and his Briefe because of their autobiographical nature. However, the enigmatic quality of Kafka's personality and the concomitant problems have elicited numerous views from recognized authorities, many of whom are in sharp disagreement with each other.

According to Wolfgang Peterson, Kafka's creative works, as the works of many great authors, tend to be highly confessional: "Kafka, dessen Dichtung wirklich in seltener Reinheit eine 'grosse Konfession' war. . . ."¹ In the Brief an den Vater, Kafka drafted a hundred page letter in which he discussed the effects of his early home life—specifically his relationship to his father—in his later life. This "letter," which has all the characteristics of

¹Wolfgang Peterson, "Franz Kafka," Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht, XXIX (December, 1937), 388.
a legal brief, is perhaps the best key to Kafka's personality and therefore warrants close examination. In that work, not only did Kafka reveal his father's conduct as the head of the family, but also the emotions and thoughts which he experienced in reaction to his father. In substance, he exposed the effect of the father's life on his own.

Through this work, the perceptive reader has an excellent opportunity to study Kafka's character, not only from his reaction to family situations, but also from his frank evaluation of his own personality as it absorbed and reflected the relationship that existed between him and his father. In this extensive description of the father's effect on the son, Kafka exposes the one aspect of his father's personality which became the primary causal factor of his inferiority complex. The frequent humiliations to which his father subjected him and the importance which the middle-aged Franz attached to them, specifically the references to the demoralization and degradation of his personality, had obviously resulted in an excessive feeling

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2Franz Kafka, Briefe an Milena, ed. by Willy Haas, (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1965), p. 80.
of inferiority. Accusations of the father occur frequently:

... in allem meinem Denken unter Deinem schweren Druck, auch in dem Denken, das nicht mit dem Deinen übereinstimmte und besonders in diesem. Alle diese von Dir scheinbar unabhängigen Gedanken waren von Anfang an belastet mit Deinem absprechenden Urteil; bis zur vollständigen und dauernden Ausführung des Gedankens das zu ertragen, war fast unmöglich. Ich rede hier nicht von irgendwelchen hohen Gedanken, sondern von jedem kleinen Unternehmen der Kinderzeit. Man musste nur über irgendeine Sache glücklich sein, von ihr erfüllt sein, nach Hause kommen und es aussprechen und die Antwort war ein ironisches Seufzen, ein Kopfschütteln, ein Fingerklopfen auf den Tisch: "Hab auch schon etwas Schöneres gesehen" oder "Mir gesagt Deine Sorgen" oder "Ich hab keinen so geruhten Kopf" oder "Kauf Dir was dafür!" oder "Auch ein Ereignis!"

Es genügte, dass ich an einem Menschen ein wenig Interesse hatte ... dass Du schon ohne jede Rücksicht auf mein Gefühl und ohne Achtung vor meinem Urteil mit Beschimpfung, Verleumdung, Entwürdigung dreinfuhrst.

... wie damals zu mir zu sagen: "Du bist ein grosses Schwein. ..."

Ich war immerfort in Schande, entweder befolgte ich Deine Befehle, das war Schande, denn sie galten ja nur für mich; oder ich war trotzig, das war auch Schande, denn wie durfte ich Dir gegenüber trotzig sein. ...
he could not live up to the expectations of the individual who should have been a guiding example in his early psychological development—his father. His awareness of the extent to which his feeling of inferiority had limited his life finds expression in the bitterness with which he recalls his father's role in the family unit.

Dadurch wurde die Welt für mich in drei Teile geteilt, in einen, wo ich, der Sklave, lebte, unter Gesetzen, die nur für mich erfunden waren und denen ich überdies, ich wusste nicht warum, niemals völlig entsprechen konnte, dann in eine zweite Welt, die unendlich von meiner entfernt war, in der Du lebtest, beschäftigt mit der Regierung, mit dem Ausgeben der Befehle und mit dem Arger wegen deren Nichtbefolgung, und schliesslich in eine dritte Welt, wo die übrigen Leute glücklich und frei von Befehlen und Gehorchen lebten.7

Although Kafka wrote with such vehemence against his father, it would be absurd for the reader to agree with his proposition—that the father's oppression and humiliation of him was totally to blame for his inferiority feelings. It would be more reasonable to conclude that in spite of his condemnation of his father, Kafka knew there were more causes for his inferiority feelings than the single father-son relationship. There is much evidence to support this, for Kafka was surely a very keen observer of himself, and

it was his nature to analyze his personality carefully.\textsuperscript{8} When one examines all the evidence in an attempt to determine the reasons for Kafka's personality problems, it becomes clear that the formation of his basic character traits should be attributed to other causes, as well as to his feelings toward his father.

A. \textbf{Causes of the Inferiority Complex in Kafka}

Chapter I of this study discusses the five major factors which determine the intensity of an individual's inferiority feelings, and the forms of expression which arise from them, included in Rattner's \textit{Individualpsychologie}. These five include the physical development, the social and economic status, the sex, the family framework, and the training of the child. Furthermore, Rattner discusses how any one of these factors, given certain conditions, is capable of becoming the cause of the inferiority feeling and of the traits of character which are the results of this feeling. Of the five factors, all apply directly to Kafka; hence there is an abundance of factors contributing to his inferiority complex.

\textsuperscript{8}Born, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 391.
There is substantial evidence to support the belief that Kafka's physique was at least partially responsible for his inferiority complex, for Kafka's body was weak and sickly, not only as a child but also as an adult. In Brief an den Vater, Kafka recalled of his childhood, "Ich mager, schwach, schmal . . . ein kleines Gerippe, unsicher, blossfüssig auf den Planken, in Angst vor dem Wasser. . . ." 9 At the age of twenty-eight, he wrote in his diary:

Throughout his diaries and letters he constantly mentioned his headaches: "Solch ein Gefühl müsste eine Glasscheibe an der Stelle haben, wo sie zerspringt", 11 "Heute im Halbschlaf

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9 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 18.


11 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 70.

Friends, acquaintances and biographers of Kafka, as well as his family, noted his small, frail structure. His mother characterized him as a " . . schwaches zartes Kind, meist ernst, doch auch zu gelegentlichem Schabernack aufgelegt--ein Kind, das viel las und nicht turnen wollte. .. ."17

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12Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 323.
13Ibid., p. 170.
14Ibid., p. 249.
15Ibid., p. 303.
17Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 21.
Max Brod mentions: "Ein Kinderbild zeigt einen etwa fünfjährigen schlanken Jungen mit grossen fragenden Augen und einem däster verschlossenen, eigensinnigen Mund."  

Joachim Seyppel, says simply, "He was sick of mind and limb."  

In fact, it seems to be common knowledge that Kafka was preoccupied with the deficiencies of his body all his life. In Brief an den Vater, Kafka states,

Mich beschäftigte nur die Sorge um mich, diese aber in verschiedenster Weise. Etwa als Sorge um meine Gesundheit; es fing leicht an, hier und dort ergab sich eine kleine Befürchtung wegen der Verdaunung, des Haarausfalls, einer Rückgratsverkrümmung und so weiter, das steigerte sich in unzählbaren Abstufungen, schliesslich endete es mit einer wirklich Krankheit.

Charles Neider refers to Kafka's preoccupation with his illnesses as "his hypochondriacal perversity."  

Kafka's bodily frailty finally provided fertile ground for the tubercular infection which resulted in his early death. "Den Bluthusten, der im August zum ersten

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20 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 88.
Male auftrat, bezeichnete Franz als psychisch bedingt. . . .
Er nennt sie: seine endgültige Niederlage!" Willy Haas, a close friend of Kafka's, stated that his early death was as characteristic of Kafka as any of his writing, just as Peter Demetz, a generation later was to say of another writer "Rainer Maria Rilkes Leben zählt zu seinen bedeutendsten Arbeiten. . . ." 23

It would not be unreasonable to assume that this frequently repeated reference to his physical inferiority did much to induce in Kafka a constant feeling of his complete inadequacy.

In addition to the physical deficiencies which contributed so heavily to his inferiority feelings, Kafka was born into the Jewish minority group which had become extremely prominent in Prague. Quite naturally, the youthful Kafka detected the social stigma attached to his ancestral religion. Eisner Paval, in his book Franz Kafka and Prague, describes Kafka's childhood ostracisms:

Here on the streets of Prague Franz Kafka learned from his contemporaries that he was a stranger, unwelcomed and hated, that he was a creature outside the norm.

22 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 144.

In every Jew in the Dispersion there festers just such a childhood trauma, which is eradicated only in the grave.24

... the life of the German Jew in Prague became fundamentally pathological because he belonged to a sociologically abnormal minority which hung like a note in the air.25

Here the German Jew lived without a people and against the people; the compact majority stood against him; it really left him alone, but felt him to be foreign in a profound sense, to be unwanted in every respect, and to be the carrier and promoter of a hostile principle.26

Kafka's first reaction to Judaism was one associated with guilt because he felt he was not sufficiently religious to deserve the respect of other Jews, especially his father. He recalls:

Als Kind machte ich mir, in Übereinstimmung mit Dir, Vorwürfe deshalb, weil ich nicht genügend in den Tempel ging, nicht fastete und so weiter. Ich glaubte nicht mir, sondern Dir ein Unrecht damit zu tun und Schuld bewusstsein, das ja immer bereit war, durchlief mich.27

The youthful Kafka was also seized with the fear that he might one day be called to the Torah and bring disgrace to his family in front of the other members of the synagogue.28

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25Ibid., p. 44.
26Ibid., pp. 44-45.
27Brief an den Vater, op. cit., pp. 74-76.
28Ibid., p. 76.
However, Kafka's father regarded the rituals of the church so lightly that soon Franz, himself, denounced Judaism, and at the university he became a member of a students' union which did not allow professed Jews.

In 1906 Kafka received the doctorate of law degree and left the university. Even though he had completed his formal university training, he was now confronted with the burdens of full-time employment coupled with his writing, to which he devoted his spare moments. Needless to say, because of the demands of his work and his concentration on his physical and mental health, Kafka had little time during the next few years to concentrate on the problem of Jewishness. To say that he totally erased the fact of his Judaism from his mind would be unreasonable; however, from the materials available from this period there is no evidence that he voiced any notable opinions about the effects of his religion to his psychological well-being.

Later, however, during his extended illness, he became interested again in religion in general and in Judaism in particular. There followed a period of intense study of Hebrew, the Talmud, and the problems of the Jews, brought on by his intimate relationship with Milena Jenska.

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29 *Brief an den Vater*, *op. cit.*., p. 78.
30 *Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit.*., p. 44.
a young Christian Czech woman who translated Kafka's works into Czech. Milena herself was caught up in the Jewish question for she, against the will of her father, had married a Jew. When Milena's marriage began to fail through misunderstandings, she turned to Kafka for his interpretation of the problems of the Jew in society at the time. In reply Kafka commented in several letters over a period of time about his people.

Die unsichere Stellung der Juden, unsicher in sich, unsicher unter den Menschen, würde es über alles begreiflich machen, dass sie nur das zu besitzen glauben dürfen, was sie in der Hand oder zwischen den Zähnen halten, dass ferner nur handgreiflicher Besitz ihnen Recht auf das Leben gibt und dass sie, was sie einmal verloren haben, niemals wieder erwerben werden, sondern dass es glückselig für immer von ihnen fortswimmt. Von den unwahrscheinlichsten Seiten drohen den Juden Gefahren, oder lassen wir, um genauer zu sein, die Gefahren weg und sagen: "drohen ihnen Drohungen."  

And several days later the preoccupation with Jewishness was repeated.

... eher könnte ich Dir den Vorwurf machen, dass Du von den Juden, die Du kennst (mich eingeschlossen)---es gibt andere!---eine viel zu gute Meinung hast, manchmal möchte ich sie eben als Juden (mich eingeschlossen) alle etwa in die Schublade des Wäschekastens dort stopfen, dann warten, dann die Schublade ein wenig

31 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 191.

32 Briefe an Milena, op. cit., pp. 46-47.
Toward the end of the correspondence between the two, the question arose once again about the anxieties of Jews in general. Kafka answered:

Wir kennen doch beide ausgiebig charakteristische Exemplare von Westjuden, ich bin, soviel ich weiss, der westjüdischeste von ihnen, das bedeutet, übertrieben ausgedrückt, dass mir keine ruhige Sekunde geschenkt ist, nichts ist mir geschenkt, alles muss erworben werden, nicht nur die Gegenwart und Zukunft, auch noch die Vergangenheit, etwas das doch jeder Mensch vielleicht mitbekommen hat, auch das muss erworben werden, das ist vielleicht die schwerste Arbeit. . . .

In spite of the hostile comments Kafka made about the Jews, he still considered himself a member of the Jewish community. As George Woodcock stated, "Kafka was a Jew, and therefore came of a race with an ingrown feeling of isolation in a hostile world." His awareness of belonging to a minority group that was so intensely disliked by others and for which he himself found very little sympathy could do little more than heighten his feelings of inferiority.

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33Briefe an Milena, op. cit., p. 57.
34Ibid., p. 247.
There is also some evidence that indicates that Kafka's sex was in some way responsible for his feelings of inferiority. As was typical among Middle European Jewish families, the oldest son was expected to continue in the father's business and thus preserve and expand the achievements made by the head of the family. Since Kafka was the only surviving son, he developed an exaggerated sense of obligation which resulted in a feeling of inferiority because he doubted his ability to discharge such a great responsibility. The young Kafka did not show promise of being capable of continuing the family business, for, as already stated, he was a weak and sickly child who did not display signs of a personal constitution strong enough to allow him to manage the business. "Auch schien es mir für meine Fähigkeiten ganz unerschwinglich, da es, wie Du sagtest, selbst die Deinigen verbrauchte. Du suchtest dann . . . indem Du behauptetest, mir fehle der Geschäftssinn." 36 Although he was intensely relieved when his father did not make him go into business, it also caused within him a feeling of failure that he was not able to uphold the family traditions.

In direct relation to Kafka's development of inferiority feelings because of an exaggerated feeling of

36 *Brief an den Vater*, op. cit., pp. 56 & 58.
responsibility due to his sex is his sense of obligation to the other members of the family unit. Franz was not only the oldest son, but also the oldest child in a unit of four siblings.

He felt he should set a good example for his sisters. It was as if he were obligated to prove to them that he was not a good-for-nothing. A century before, Kleist, had felt the need to prove his worth to a family which regarded him as "ein ganz nichtsnutziges Glied der menschlichen Gemeinschaft." Perhaps Kafka's thorough study of Kleist's letters, especially the passages in which Kleist recalls his family's disapproval of poets, led him to become extremely sensitive to his own family's objections to his artistic inclinations. Kafka did undoubtedly influence his sisters somewhat, but, as he himself states, "... aber kaum aus eigenem Antrieb, sondern durch die

37Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 17.
38Ibid., p. 41.
39Ibid., p. 37.
40Ibid., p. 37.
blosse Tatsache meines Daseins. . . ."

41 His lack of self-confidence in the presence of his father prevented him from exerting his influence on his sisters. In fact, Brod points out: "Mit den Schwestern hat Franz wenig gespielt, der Altersunterschied war zu gross und scheint gelegentlich eher zu kleinen Feindseligkeiten unter den Kindern Anlass gegeben zu haben." 42

The last and perhaps the most important cause of inferiority feelings which Rattner discusses is the one dealing with the child's training. Beyond a doubt, Kafka's upbringing was the major contributing factor to his feelings of inferiority, for as Brod states, Kafka, like Kleist and Proust, never outgrew his childhood impressions and his family's bourgeois tradition. 43 The humiliations and discipline of the father were too harsh for him. Kafka, in Brief an den Vater, mentions some of the educational methods employed by his father:

Deine äusserst wirkungsvollen, wenigstens mir gegenüber niemals versagenden rednerischen Mittel bei der Erziehung waren: Schimpfen, Drohen, Ironie, böses Lachen und--merkwürdigerweise--Selbstbeklagung. 44

41 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 64.
42 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 21.
43 Ibid., p. 36.
44 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 34.
Das Schimpfen verstärktest Du mit Drohen, und das galt nun auch schon mir. Schrecklich war mir zum Beispiel dieses: "ich zerreisse Dich wie einen Fisch." .... Schrecklich war es auch, wenn Du schreiend um den Tisch herumliefst, um einen zu fassen. .... Wenn ich etwas zu tun anfing, was Dir nicht gefiel, und Du drohst mir mit dem Misserfolg, so war die Ehrfurcht vor Deiner Meinung so gross, dass damit der Misserfolg, wenn auch vielleicht erst für eine spätere Zeit, unaufhaltsam war. Ich verlor das Vertrauen zu eigenem Tun. Ich war unbeständig, zweifelhaft. Je älter ich wurde, desto grösser war das Material, das Du mir zum Beweis meiner Wertlosigkeit entgegenhalten konntest; allmählich bekamst Du in gewisser Hinsicht wirklich recht.45

Ein besonderes Vertrauen hattest Du zur Erziehung durch Ironie. .... "Kannst Du das nicht so und so machen? Das ist Dir wohl schon zu viel? Dazu hast Du natürlich keine Zeit?" und ähnlich.46

The unique nature of Kafka's home situation and education was a direct consequence of the almost diametrically opposed personalities of his parents. His father was

.... ein wirklicher Kafka an Stärke, Gesundheit, Appetit, Stimmkraft, Rede begabung, Selbstzufriedenheit, Weltüberlegenheit, Ausdauer, Geistesgegenwart, Menschenkenntnis, einer gewissen Grosszügigkeit. .... 47

On the other hand, Kafka's mother was a Löwy, a family characterized as "'odd, shy, quiet people,' obstinate, sensitive, restless, imbued with a sense of justice."48

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45Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 34-36.
46Ibid., p. 36.
47Ibid., p. 12.
48Ibid., p. 127.
It was his mother upon whom he relied when he needed help and understanding.

Kafka's father was a demanding, terrifying man and opposed Kafka's leaning toward the arts.

Upon a close reading of Kafka's Brief an den Vater, it becomes evident that there existed no close personal relationship between Kafka and his father. Like Proust, Kafka was completely neglected by his father, who relegated the child's training to his mother. A comparison of his writing concerning his mother and father indicates

49 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 60.
50 Ibid., p. 16.
51 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 36.
unquestionable differences in his feelings for them, and these differences remained, virtually unaltered, throughout his unhappy life. For the young Kafka, his father became the symbol of unsympathetic and self-centered strength.

In Deinem Lehnstuhl regieretest Du die Welt. Deine Meinung war richtig, jede andere war verrückt überspannt, meschugge, nicht normal. Dabei war Dein Selbstvertrauen so gross, dass Du gar nicht konsequent sein musstest und doch nicht aufhörtest recht zu haben.52

He was a man whom the boy, perhaps out of fear, respected and obeyed, but also a man for whom he had no warm feelings. Above all, he never felt near his father. Kafka says, that "... ich alles floh, was nur von der Ferne an Dich erinnerte."53 The man whom Kafka portrays here must certainly have been an intimate stranger to the youth, a man for whom the boy would have liked to have warm feelings but, because of circumstances, found it impossible.

Ich wäre wahrscheinlich doch ein schwächerer, ängstlicher, zögerner, unruhiger Mensch geworden. ... und wir hätten uns ausgezeichnet miteinander vertragen können. Ich wäre glücklich gewesen, Dich als Freund, als Chef, als Onkel, als Grossvater.

52 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 20.
53 Ibid., p. 52.
When Kafka speaks of his relationship with his mother, he describes the situation in completely different terms. Kafka here tells the reader of the warm, almost dependent relationship which existed between mother and son. He says, "... gewiss verwöhnte mich die Mutter auch. ..." and, "... fast interessierte mich mehr die Mutter, wie sie, zwar vollständig mit Dir einverstanden, immerhin etwas vom Tisch nahm und damit aus dem Zimmer ging." It is not beyond the realm of reason to suspect that the mother, in an effort to protect her child from such a harsh, unrelenting father, devoted an unusually large amount of love and attention to the child. Kafka himself says:

Es ist wahr, dass die Mutter grenzenlos gut zu mir war. ... so glich das die Mutter durch Gutsein, durch vernünftige Rede (sie war im Wirrwarr der Kindheit das Urbild der 'vernunft) durch Fürbitte wieder aus. ... dass die Mutter mich vor Dir bloss im Geheimen schützte, mir im Geheimen etwas gab, etwas erlaubte. ...

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54 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 10.
56 Ibid., p. 106.
57 Ibid., pp. 44 & 46.
Both the harsh discipline imposed by the father and the protectiveness of the mother are unhealthy situations and of course would adversely influence the development of the child's personality. The almost tyrannical policy by which the father ruled his family intimidated the son, thereby causing the gap between the child and the adult to widen; the special attention afforded the child by the mother naturally led to an excessive dependence upon her, preventing or at least hampering a normal development of self-reliance. An individual who suffers under such circumstances at home usually does not develop enough courage to face life's problems with a positive attitude. He will be thoroughly convinced of his own inferiority since he will weigh his own weaknesses against the strengths of individuals in his immediate surroundings. In Kafka's case, the young boy evaluated his own weaknesses in the light of his father's seemingly almighty powers. At the same time his self-confidence was also diminished by the unusually large measure of attention lavished upon him by his mother. Her excessive care probably did little more than convince him that his dependence upon his mother was an absolute necessity. All these influences worked to convince the boy that he was weak, helpless, and inferior.

It is indeed important that Kafka, even at a very early age, compared his childish weakness to the adult
strength of his father, for it is not an individual's physical inferiority, but his psychic inferiority—that is the extent to which the individual himself imagines himself to be inferior—which determines the extent of damage to the personality and therefore influences the individual's reactions to other persons in his environment. 58 Undoubtedly Kafka's extreme psychic inferiority, due to what seemed to him his father's colossal strength and unlimited energy, caused the child to strive for recognition in the intellectual world. At a very early age he began to write short plays which he also directed and produced for his parents' birthdays. In this way he revealed a striving upward and this striving upward would indicate a struggle for recognition, or an attempt to compensate for his inferior feelings. Other forms of this attempt to compensate differ in various individuals and Kafka's means of compensation will be discussed later.

B. Manifestations of Inferiority Feelings in Kafka's Personality

When one deals with an individual's life, it is often difficult to determine to what extent the individual's

personality has been affected by heredity and to what extent it is a result of environment. The question of personality is still today disputed. One may legitimately raise the question of whether the personality is at all inherited or whether it is not entirely dependent upon an individual's environment. For example, two children who grow up in the same family may show totally different traits of character. One should not assume, however, on the basis of such case studies, that the dissimilarities in personalities are wholly the result of heredity, since the relationship which exists between siblings of the same family must always be different, and influential experiences common in the case of one child need not exist at all in the case of another. Nevertheless, if one assumes that the environmental conditions prevalent in a certain family are identical for all the children of that family, the result would still be manifested differently in each child, not because each child had inherited a different personality, but because the physical, mental, and emotional factors, from which a given personality is developed under the influence of his environment, are different for each child. Thus, "Children of the same family and the same environment can develop in different ways." 59 It is conceivable that an individual could, 

under certain given circumstances, develop into a courageous, self-confident, friendly, and determined person while another individual reared under identical circumstances may become cowardly, dependent, seclusive, and passive. Furthermore, the same person could possibly develop in one environment entirely different character traits than if he had been exposed to a completely dissimilar set of influences. When one views the possibilities of personality development in this light, it becomes obvious that an individual's personality is not solely the result of his environment nor of his inheritance, but rather the product of the effect of both of these factors on the child.  

According to Adler, the child develops his basic personality during the first four or five years of his life, and the basic pattern according to which the individual reacts to life's problems will not vary extremely during adulthood unless the abnormal patterns are recognized by the individual and corrected, even though the outward expression of reactions to stimuli may change with the individual's age and experience. According to this principle an individual's basic character does not

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change from childhood. If this premise is correct, it seems important to investigate Kafka's childhood personality in order to understand the personality of the mature Kafka better. Only through this approach is it possible to gain valuable insight into his actions, his thinking, and his attitude toward life.

One of the references made by Kafka concerning his early personality development is found in Brief an den Vater. Here Kafka discusses the effects of his father's authoritarian methods of rearing his children:

ich verlerte das Reden.... Du hast mir aber schon früh das Wort verboten, Deine Drohung: "kein Wort der Widerrede!" und die dazu erhobene Hand begleiten mich schon seit jeher. Ich bekam vor Dir... eine stockende, stotternde Art des Sprechens, auch das war Dir noch zu viel, schliesslich schwieg ich, zuerst vielleicht aus Trotz, dann, weil ich vor Dir weder denken noch reden konnte. Und weil Du mein eigentlicher Erzieher warst, wirkte das überall in meinem Leben nach.61

From this one can easily deduce that Kafka's natural reaction to such a relationship with his father would be a subdued nature in the presence of others, which is shyness.

Kafka was timid or shy, and closely related to his shyness was his desire for seclusion, "... habe ich

61 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 32.
mich seit jeher vor Dir verkrochen, in mein Zimmer, zu Büchern . . . zu überspannten Ideen." Even in the description of the young boy given by his mother, there is evidence that Kafka at an early age retreated from society.

Another attribute of Kafka's personality to which he makes frequent reference is apprehensiveness. Even though Kafka was thirty-six years old when he wrote his Brief an den Vater, he remembered that his anxiety developed in his early childhood because of a traumatic experience with his father:

Ich winselte einmal in der Nacht immerfort um Wasser, gewiss nicht aus Durst, sondern wahrscheinlich teils um zu ärzern, teils um mich zu unterhalten. Nachdem einige starke Drohungen nicht geholfen hatten, nahmst Du mich aus dem Bett, trugst mich auf die Pawlatsche und liessest mich dort allein vor der geschlossenen Tür . . . . Ich war damals nachher wohl schon folgsam, aber ich hatte einen inneren Schaden davon.

This experience made such an impression on him, that even years later he imagined that this punishment meant he was a mere nothing to his father, who was to him the symbol of absolute authority. It led to a personal adjustment to a life centered around fear.

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62 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 6.
63 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 21
64 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 16.
Kafka's exaggerated sensitivity can be observed in his reaction to a parental threat that was not carried out.

Es ist auch wahr, dass Du mich kaum einmal wirklich geschlagen hast. Aber das Schreien, das Rotwerden Deines Gesichts, das eilige Losmachen der Hosenträger, ihr Bereitliegen auf der Stuhllehne, war für mich fast ärger. Es ist, wie wenn einer gehängt werden soll. Wird er wirklich gehenkt, dann ist er tot und es ist alles vorüber. Wenn er aber alle Vorbereitungen zum Gehenktwerden miterleben muss und erst wenn ihm die Schlinge vor dem Gesicht hängt, von seiner Begnadigung erfährt, so kann er sein Leben lang daran zu leiden haben.

The reaction of a normal child would be relief that the punishment was not carried out, but in Kafka's case the memory of the threat was worse than the punishment itself. Therefore, from Kafka's own words one can easily deduce that his predominant character traits were timidity, withdrawal, anxiety, and oversensitivity.

The relationship that exists between timidity and withdrawal, or an inclination to withdraw from fellow individuals, is indeed a close one. Shyness is emotionally retreating from society while seclusiveness is the physical withdrawal which develops as a result of the shyness. A more objective view of shyness reveals that it is nothing more than a state of mind which arises

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65 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 46.
from an individual's belief that he is inferior to his fellow man or that he is not capable of coping with the problems which confront him. It is simply the individual's own belief that he is inferior which brings about uncertainty and fearfulness and induces shyness. Once the basis of shyness has been established, the relationship existing between shyness and seclusiveness becomes apparent, since seclusiveness, the actual bodily withdrawal, represents the natural reaction of one who has convinced himself that he is inferior to his fellow man. The individual withdraws in an attempt to protect his self-esteem by avoiding any situation which may place it in jeopardy.

It then becomes clear how anxiety, an ever-constant fear that the individual may seem inferior to his companions or that he will not be able to complete a given task without damaging his self-esteem, is also closely related to shyness and seclusiveness.

Hence, the individual who believes himself to be inferior and who is thereby compelled to protect his self-esteem, will exhibit an oversensitivity in direct proportion to his personal feelings of inferiority, for the

more inferior feeling has become a part of his mental experience, the more sensitive he will be to anything that threatens his ego. If the inferiority feeling of the individual becomes greater, so does his caution and distrust of anything that might threaten him, and because of his extreme caution, he senses danger in normal situations which the well-adjusted person would find trifling.

These traits—timidity, withdrawal, anxiety, and oversensitivity—are common symptoms exhibited by persons suffering from an abnormal feeling of inferiority, and the following section of this study will show how prominently they stand out in Kafka's personality. After the essential traits of his character have been carefully studied, it will be possible to understand his attitude toward his environment and his problems in life better and to show clearly the compensatory actions that are the result of his inferiority complex.

1. **Timidity**

The character trait of timidity becomes evident when a person who is predisposed to developing inferiority feelings is confronted with a chronic problem which is too
difficult for him. To protect himself from failure, he hesitates in the presence of others. As has already been shown, the father presented Kafka with numerous problems too early in his childhood for him to cope with them. As is to be expected, an attitude of shyness towards life developed as one of Kafka's character traits. The abundance of references to shyness in Brod's Über Franz Kafka and Kafka's Tagebücher supports this theory. Kafka himself admitted several times in Brief an den Vater that even as a child he exhibited the trait of shyness: "Ich war ein ängstliches Kind. . . ." He feels that even without the influence of his father he "... wäre wahrscheinlich doch ein schwächlicher, ängstlicher, zögernder, unruhiger Mensch geworden. . . ." His school days were affected by his shyness. He floated, he said "... ruhig und ängstlich durchs Gymnasium und durch das Jusstudium . . . bis ich beim Beamtenschreibtisch endgültig landete." He compared himself to his shy sister. "Die Elli. . . . war doch ein so schwerfälliges, müdes, furchtsames, verdrossenes, schuldbewusstes, überdehntiges . . . Kind, ich konnte sie kaum ansehen, gar nicht ansprechen, so sehr

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Later, in the diary of 1911, Kafka related an incident concerning a visit by his former governess, who wished to talk to him. Kafka, however, told his parents to inform the lady that he was in his room asleep and did not wish to be disturbed.

Mein gewesenes Kinderfräulein . . . war heute zum zweitenmal in kurzer Zeit bei uns, um mich zu sehn. Das erstemal war ich nicht zu Hause, diesmal wollte ich in Ruhe gelassen sein.71

Such an incident indicates that Kafka lacked the courage to discuss objectively small problems which arose between him and familiar individuals.

In a later entry, in his diary of 1913, Kafka described an incident which happened one morning while he was walking to work. Here he told of the enormous fear which gripped him when he saw a girl who resembled Felice Bauer, his fiancee: "Der Schrecken, als ich vormittag auf dem Weg ins Bureau das F. ähnliche Mädchen aus dem Seminar traf. . . ."72 Kafka's reaction to someone so intimate

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70 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 62.
72 Ibid., p. 344.
with him, shows that his shyness was much greater than that found in a well-adjusted personality.

As the years passed, Kafka's shyness seemed to intensify. In 1915, he stated that he no longer had anything to say to anyone, and that he even found himself incapable of speech. "Unfähig, mit Menschen zu leben, zu reden. Vollständiges Versinken in mich, Denken an mich. Stumpf, gedankenlos, ängstlich. Ich habe nichts mitzuteilen, niemals, niemandem." 73

Since he was a member of a close-knit patriarchal family, he was constantly reminded of the various members within the family and their accomplishments and shortcomings. He compared himself to Uncle Rudolf: "Die Ähnlichkeit mit O. R. ist aber noch darüber hinaus verblüffend: ... beide schüchtern, überbescheiden. ..." 74 "... der Kleinste und Ängstlichste. ..." 75

Brod describes his first impressions of Kafka at the university: "Für den ersten Anschein war Kafka ein gesunder junger Mensch, allerdings merkwürdig still, beobachtend, zurückhaltend." 76 He thought that Kafka was one "... der unterhaltendsten Menschen, denen ich je begegnet bin,--trotz

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73 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 468.
74 Ibid., p. 558.
75 Ibid., p. 564.
76 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 42.
seiner Bescheidenheit, trotz seiner Ruhe. Er sprach wenig, in grosser Gesellschaft nahm er oft stundenlang nicht das Wort."  

Brod says that because of his quietness, Kafka was seldom noticed.

Es wäre auch schwer gewesen, ihn zu bemerken, der so selten das Wort ergriff und dessen äusseres Wesen überhaupt eine tiefe Unauffälligkeit war,—sogar seine eleganten, meist dunkelblauen Anzüge waren unauffällig und zurückhaltend wie er.

When Kafka and his friends admit that he grew progressively more shy as he matured, they are, in essence, admitting that he avoided most personal contact with society because of his insufficiently developed contact-feeling with others. The natural sequel of such timidity is the conscious desire for isolation, or a complete withdrawal from society.

2. Withdrawal

A tendency toward withdrawal denotes in an individual the need to be alone. Whether he objectively expresses this desire in his actions or whether it remains in the subconscious mind, it ultimately has the

77Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 42.
78Ibid., p. 46.
same effect on the person. Loneliness seemed to have invaded Kafka's personality early in life, for as Max Brod states:

Die Kindheit Franzens aber müssen wir uns wohl nach allen Berichten als unsagbar einsam denken. Seine Erziehung blieb, da die Mutter den ganzen Tag über im Geschäft tätig und auch abends dem Vater als Gesellschafterin (vor allem im Kartenspiel) unentbehrlich war, im grossen ganzen Gouvernanten und der seelenlosen Schule überlassen. 79

With seclusion as a means of avoiding his father's criticisms easily available, the natural consequence would be that the child would resort to it more and more often until it became an habitual response. Kafka writes to his father: "... war aber für mich zu stark, ich war zu folgsam, ich verstummte gänzlich, verkroch mich vor Dir und wagte mich erst zu regen, wenn ich so weit von Dir entfernt war, dass Deine Macht, wenigstens direkt nicht mehr hinreichte." 80 When he compared his physique in bathing trunks to that of his father's he says: "Am wohlsten war mir noch, wenn Du Dich manchmal zuerst auszogst und ich allein in der Kabine bleiben ... konnte, bis Du endlich nachschauen kamst. ..." 81 A desire to be alone was

79 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 17.
80 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 34.
81 Ibid., p. 20.
accepted by Kafka as an aspect of his routine life even from childhood, and eventually, the pattern of escape grew to encompass everything concerning his father.

Actually, he tried various methods to escape from the dominance of his father. But the aversion of the father to Kafka's attempts defeated his cause and left him with a guilty feeling because of his defiance. He summed all his feelings up by saying:

Manchmal stelle ich mir die Erdkarte ausgespannt und Dich quer über sie hin ausgestreckt vor. Und es ist mir dann, als kämen für mein Leben nur die Gegenden in Betracht, die Du entweder nicht bedeckst oder die nicht in Deiner Reichweite liegen.

Gradually, Kafka withdrew more and more into himself. "Man wurde ein mürrisches, unaufmerksames, ungehorsames Kind, immer auf eine Flucht, meist eine innere, bedacht." He grew to enjoy being alone because being in the company of other individuals was unpleasant to him and because he sometimes found the fellowship of others painful, and as a natural reaction he sought to make his personal life as

82Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 52
83Ibid., p. 114.
84Ibid., pp. 38-40.
pleasant as possible by avoiding contact with other members of society.

But simply his desire to be alone by no means eliminates the possibility that he at times would have liked to share the experiences of others. And, as is usually the case with such individuals, one senses in Kafka's personality a struggle between his shyness, which secluded him from other individuals, and a desire for their company, which often resulted in a most unpleasant experience because of his sensitive nature. At times his fear of others became so intense that he found it unbearable to be in the presence of any other person. On the other hand, it is true that he attempted to seek refuge from his father in the warm relationship of playmates. His father discouraged even this method by his cruel remarks about the child's little friends: "... nenne mir einen in der Kinderzeit irgendwie für mich bedeutenden Menschen, den Du nicht wenigstens einmal bis in den Grund hinunterkritisierst hättest..." 85 His solution to this struggle was his effort to maintain special friendships. The lifelong friendship which he nurtured with Max Brod seems to support this assumption. In a letter to Brod he wrote: "Mein liebster Max, ich

85Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 72.
küsse Dich hier auf einer schmutzigen, aber meiner schönsten Ansichtskarte, also vor der ganzen Bevölkerung. Da ich Dir mehr glaube als mir. . . ."86

Perhaps the result of the proclivity in his personality—between his desire to mingle with society on the one hand and the urge to withdraw on the other—led to the development of his creative abilities. Only in his writing did he display any defiance of his father.

Richtiger trafst Du mit Deiner Abneigung mein Schreiben und was, Dir unbekannt, damit zusammenhing. Hier war ich tatsächlich ein Stück selbständig von Dir weggekommen. . . . 87

The two attempts at marriage, which Kafka never carried out, were originally efforts to escape the tyranny of his father—to become independent.

In Wirklichkeit aber wurden die Heiratsversuche der grossartigste und hoffnungsreichste Rettungsversuch, entsprechend grossartig war dann allerdings auch das Misslingen.88

Von meinen Rettungsversuchen in anderen Richtungen wusstest Du nichts, daher konntest Du auch von den Gedankengängen, die mich zu diesem Heiratsversuch geführt hatten. . . . Der Grundgedanke beider Heiratsversuche war ganz korrekt: einen Hausstand gründen, selbständig werden.89

86 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 68.
87 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 84.
88 Ibid., p. 96.
89 Ibid., p. 108.
However, Kafka soon realized that marrying would not have provided escape into solitude but would have limited his time for creative activity by destroying all hopes of ever being alone, as is evidenced by his list of arguments against it:


7. Allein könnte ich vielleicht einmal meinen Posten wirklich aufgeben. Verheiratet wird es nie möglich sein.90

Seclusiveness has now taken on an additional significance. In his early life, his urge to escape was simply a desire to avoid the mental suffering which resulted from his personal association with other individuals. This feeling continued to be expressed at intervals throughout his diary. "Der Wunsch nach besinnungsloser Einsamkeit. Nur mir gegenübergestellt sein."91 "Ich werde mich bis zur Besinnungslosigkeit von allen absperren. Mit allen mich verfeinden, mit niemandem reden."92 "Eigentlich müsste man sich fürchten, aus dem Haus zu treten."93 But in later

90Tagebücher, op. cit., pp. 311-312.
91Ibid., p. 306.
92Ibid., p. 317.
93Ibid., p. 338.
years his withdrawal stemmed from his belief that a
creative writer can only fully develop his talent in an
atmosphere which promotes absolute freedom. A close
examination of this "self-conviction" suggests that the
creative writer's need for solitude becomes the perfect
decause of fear and weakness, does not wish to face reality and provides a logical and
indisputable reason for withdrawal.

Despite his tendency to be pessimistic by nature
and his lack of self-confidence, Kafka eventually did, to
a certain degree, overcome his inclination to withdraw
from society. It seems, as the years passed, that he at
least in part overcame his extremely reserved attitude.
Brod praises the effect that Dora Dymant, a young Jewish
actress, had on Kafka.

Von der Sommerfrische kam Franz hohen Mutes zurück. 
Sein Entschluss, nunmehr alle Bindungen zu zerreissen, 
nach Berlin zu ziehen, mit Dora zu leben, stand fest—
und er führte ihn diesmal auch durch, unerschütterlich. 
Franz sprach von den Dämonen, die ihn endlich
freigelassen hätten. "Ich bin ihnen entwischt, diese 
Übersiedlung nach Berlin war grossartig, jetzt suchen
sie mich, finden mich aber nicht, wenigstens vorläufig
nicht." Das Ideal des selbständigen Lebens, des
eigenen Heims hatte er endlich erreicht, er war
nicht mehr Familiensohn, sondern gewissermassen
selbst pater familias.\footnote{Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 172.}
However, that he never completely overcame his natural fear of other individuals and of society as a functional institution is indicated in his hesitancy to marry and assume the role of husband, father, and head of a household. Underlying his tendency toward withdrawal was his hypersensitive nature, which is clearly understood if one considers that this was the reason for his seclusive inclinations. He feared that his abilities were not equal to the task which he would be called upon to perform. And in his belief that he could not perform on an equal basis with his fellow man lies the explanation for his discomfort in the presence of other individuals. He assiduously avoided any situation which he felt might bring him into competition with others, thus renewing his feeling of inferiority. If one considers closely Kafka's reserve and his preference for seclusion as major facets of his total personality, one begins to understand that they constitute within him a definite character trait prominent in persons who possess an abnormal feeling of inferiority.

3. Oversensitivity

The lack of self-confidence stemming from a series of failures will produce in an individual an anticipation
or expectation of other failures or insults so that he sees them in thoroughly innocent situations. Such misinterpretations of the intent of other individuals which adversely affects the development of a well adjusted personality is most commonly referred to as oversensitivity.

When Kafka compared himself to others—his father, for instance—he felt unsure of himself, and because of his lack of self-confidence, he became abnormally hypersensitive in any situation which faced him with the question of his position in relation to that of his fellow man. Evidence showing Kafka's lack of self-confidence in childhood can be seen in many of the previously cited remarks taken from Brief an den Vater—such as his inability to continue in his father's line of work, his hesitancy to carry on conversation with his father, and his shyness in the presence of strangers.

That this lack of confidence continued throughout his life is evident in various passages in his diaries: December 8, 1911. "Um mit jungen Mädch en reden zu können, brauche ich das Nahesein älterer Personen." February 95 quoted and cited on page 38 of this work. 96 quoted and cited on page 55 of this work. 97 quoted and cited on page 54 of this work. 98 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 183.
27, 1912. "Aus Vorsicht . . . leugne ich, Jurist zu sein, bin aber bereit, ihm einen Rat zu geben..."99

January 24, 1915. "Ich bin unfähig und öde wie immer und sollte eigentlich keine Zeit haben, um über etwas anderes nachzudenken als über die Frage, wie es kommt, dass jemand auch nur Lust hat, mit dem kleinen Finger nach mir zu tasten."100

The natural consequence of such a severe lack of self-confidence in Kafka would be the development of hypersensitivity. In his other writings concerning his childhood, he mentions several incidents in which his father berated various categories of peoples, such as the Germans, Czechs, and his factory workers, which Kafka misinterpreted as abusive remarks directed at himself:

... auch flogen im Gespräch zu Hause und besonders im Geschäft die Schimpfwörter rings um mich in solchen Mengen auf andere nieder, dass ich als kleiner Junge manchmal davon fast betäubt war und keinen Grund hatte, sie nicht auch auf mich zu beziehen, denn die Leute, die Du beschimpftest, waren gewiss nicht schlechter als ich, und Du warst gewiss mit ihnen nicht unzufriedener als mit mir.101

This type of erroneous parallel can be drawn by those who feel that they deserve such accusations because they feel

99 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 254.

100 Ibid., p. 460.

101 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 34.
they are inferior to the ones actually criticized.

Even the simple, good-natured, kindly act of an approving smile caused distress within the oversensitive Kafka.

Du hast auch eine besonders schöne, sehr selten zu sehende Art eines stillen, zufriedenen, gutheissenden Lächelns. . . . Übrigens haben auch solche freundliche Eindrücke auf die Dauer nichts anderes erzielt, als mein Schuldbewusstsein vergrößert und die Welt mir noch unverständlicher gemacht.102

Pre-sensitivity, the anticipation of defeat before it actually takes place, based on the experience of previous defeats, is recognizable in Kafka's personality.

Der Mut, die Entschlossenheit, die Zuversicht, die Freude an dem und jenem hielten nicht bis zum Ende aus, wenn Du dagegen warst oder schon wenn Deine Gegnerschaft bloss angenommen werden konnte; und angenommen konnte sie wohl bei fast allem werden, was ich tat.103

In school he presupposed his failure at every point.

Niemals würde ich durch die erste Volksschulklasse kommen, dachte ich, aber es gelang, ich bekam sogar eine Prämie; aber die Aufnahmeprüfung ins Gymnasium würde ich gewiss nicht bestehn, aber es gelang; aber nun falle ich in der ersten Gymnasialklasse bestimmt durch. . . .104

102 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 42.
103 Ibid., p. 22.
104 Ibid., p. 92.
Kafka was not capable of taking words or actions at face value but looked for a "geheime Absicht."  

Later in life this hypersensitivity manifested itself when Kafka became emotionally involved in trifling episodes to which a well-adjusted person probably would have attached no significance.

Manchmal konnte Franz selbst geringe Skrupel nicht überwinden, fürchtete, dies oder jenes falsch gemacht zu haben, bewunderte e contrario jeden Entschluss, vor allem Heiratsentschlüsse, in übertriebener Weise.

He could be moved to tears by a routine newspaper article.

Geschluchzt über dem Prozessbericht einer dreizwanzigjährigen Marie Abraham, die ihr fast dreiviertel Jahre altes Kind Barbara wegen Not und Hunger erwürgte, mit einer Männerrkrawatte, die ihr als Strumpfband diente und die sie abband. Ganz schematische Geschichte.

Milena describes his utter distress over the misunderstanding about a very small amount of money.

... bis er an den richtigen [window at the post office] gerät, und wenn er zahlt und Kleingeld zurückbekommt, zählt er nach, was er erhalten hat, findet, dass man ihm eine Krone zu viel herausgegeben hat, und gibt dem Fräulein hinter dem Fenster die Krone zurück. Dann geht er langsam weg, zählt nochmals nach und auf der letzten Stiege unten sieht er nun, dass die

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106 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 49.
Kafka's oversensitivity is directly related to his desire for seclusion, since the individual who exaggerates the importance of a small threat to his ego will try to escape from it and future larger threats by a complete withdrawal from the dangers.

4. Anxiety

The three previously discussed character traits—timidity, withdrawal, and oversensitivity—had as a foundation the anxiety which arose from the initial competition between father and son. The lack of success, with which Kafka was faced in his childhood experiences with his father, resulted in a hesitancy or fear to repeat the experiences and thereby to repeat the failure. The remarks found in his Brief an den Vater present more than sufficient evidence to establish the fact that even from early childhood, he was apprehensive about life.

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The letter, itself, was written in answer to his father's question, "... warum ich behaupte, ich hätte Furcht vor Dir."\textsuperscript{109} Kafka proceeded to state that his fear could not be completely explained for it began in his childhood before he could remember specific incidents.

Und wenn ich hier versuche, Dir schriftlich zu antworten, so wird es doch nur sehr unvollständig sein, weil auch im Schreiben die Furcht und ihre Folgen mich Dir gegenüber behindern und weil die Grösse des Stoffs über mein Gedächtnis und meinen Verstand weit hinausgeht.\textsuperscript{110}

His childhood fears were common ones—fear of the water: "... in Angst vor dem Wasser, unfähig Deine Schwimmbewegungen nachzumachen ... dann war ich sehr verzweifelt und alle meine schlimmen Erfahrungen auf allen Gebieten stimmten in solchen Augenblicken grossartig zusammen."\textsuperscript{111} Fear of the dark: "... litt ich unter der quälenden Vorstellung, dass ..., mein Vater ... mich in der Nacht aus dem Bett auf die Pawlatsche tragen. ..."\textsuperscript{112}; the fear of absolute authority in the form of his father: "... nach Jahren litt ich unter der ... Vorstellung, dass der riesige Mann, mein Vater, die letzte

\textsuperscript{109}Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., pp. 18-20.
\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., p. 16.
Instanz . . . kommen . . . konnte . . ."  

It was only the degree to which his mind overemphasized the magnitude of his anxieties that resulted in a concentration on the fear and not on the solution. Therefore, since the fear was not alleviated, it grew to be an anxiety in all situations of life. He became afraid to talk, to the extent that he developed a speech impediment, "eine stockende, stotternde Art des Sprechens. . . ."  

He began to fear that he would be incompetent in the field of business, "da Du allmählich von allen Seiten mich erschrecktest und Geschäft und Du sich mir deckten, war mir auch das Geschäft nicht mehr behaglich."  

His apprehensiveness encompassed his religious faith: "... habe ich dort auch viel Furcht gehabt . . . weil Du einmal nebenbei erwähntest, dass auch ich zur Thora aufgerufen werden könne";  

his intellectual ability: "... nun falle ich in der ersten Gymnasialklasse bestimmt durch";  

his physical health: "... wurde mir

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113 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 16.  
114 Ibid., p. 32.  
115 Ibid., p. 52.  
116 Ibid., p. 76.  
117 Ibid., p. 92.
natürlich auch das Nächste, der eigene Körper
unsicher";  and every phase of his life. His greatest
fear became the fear of marriage, "... Ehe für mich;
dieser bisher größte Schrecken meines Lebens. ..."  
His reasoning concerning this fear was that he would be
faced with the type of responsibilities which even his
ambitious and competent father executed with difficulty.

Die Ehe ist die Möglichkeit einer solchen Gefahr,
allerdings auch die Möglichkeit der größten
Förderung. ... Was würde ich dann anfangen, wenn
es doch eine Gefahr wäre!  

Das wichtigste Ehehindernis aber ist die schon
unausrottbare Überzeugung, dass zur Familienerhaltung
und gar zu ihrer Führung alles das notwendig gehört,
was ich an Dir erkannt habe. ... Von alledem hatte
ich vergleichsweise fast nichts oder nur sehr
wenig.

The intensity of the fear which possessed Kafka
can only be interpreted as an abnormal psychological
adjustment to everyday situations. Although the passing
of years seemed to influence the manner in which it
expressed itself, the anxiety remained virtually unchanged
in his adulthood.

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118 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 88.
119 Ibid., p. 96.
120 Ibid., p. 116.
121 Ibid., p. 118.
Kafka attempted to compensate for the disorders present in his personality because of his faulty adjustment to society in various ways. The most common reaction to feelings of inferiority is an attempt to diminish them by striving to become superior. The area in which this striving for superiority is expressed is, to a certain degree, determined by the objective and subjective experiences of the individual which, for the most part, shape his personality. Since an individual's compensatory reaction to his inferiority feeling is governed by his personality, it may assume a positive polarity in the form of attempts to impress his fellow man with his own superiority, or it may assume a negative polarity in the form of a partial or total self-condemnation.\textsuperscript{122}

In the case that an individual's compensation assumes a negative polarity, it is because he wishes to elicit from others sympathy or contradiction of his self-accusation. Whatever effect he achieves is non-consequential to the individual since either sympathy or contradiction increases his feeling of self-importance. If the inferiority-ridden individual is unsuccessful in achieving either sympathy or contradiction in others, he will withdraw into himself and

\textsuperscript{122}Adler, The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler, op. cit., p. 111.
allow his powers of imagination to transport him into a realm of phantasy where all actions transpire either at his command or with his approval.

C. Efforts to Compensate for Feelings of Inferiority Utilized by Kafka

It is essential before attempting an analysis of an individual's action and thought processes to consider at least briefly the most prevalent expressions of inferiority feelings. A basic premise which applies to the inferiority feelings is that an individual's need for compensation, that is an overt attempt to prove himself superior, is inversely proportionate to the degree that a given individual is conscious of his inferiority feelings. In other words, the more the individual believes himself to be inferior, the greater his need for proving himself superior.

A widely accepted view of a healthy society maintains that individuals of the society must cooperate in an harmonious fashion in order to promote the common welfare, and since any single individual's striving to prove himself superior to other members of the community opposes this principle, Adler states that an individual's social awareness
is inversely proportionate to his feeling of inferiority. If this is correct, one can assume that an individual's inability to cooperate with his fellow man corresponds to the intensity of his inferiority feelings. In people who find it difficult to work in harmony with their fellow men, one usually finds a tendency to retire from community living, as was the case with Franz Kafka.

The inability to cooperate with others is a negative character trait of personality and may sometimes, under proper conditions, be replaced by behavior which is hostile to society. It may be taken for granted that such extremely negative reactions are not common, for they are usually found in criminal personalities, i.e., in individuals who strive to prove themselves superior by committing illegal or immoral acts which are detrimental to the established plan of society.

Although the reaction to feelings of inferiority remains essentially a striving upward, it is influenced in each individual case by innumerable factors. For example, the areas in which an individual who suffers from abnormally strong feelings of inferiority will attempt to assert himself are restricted by the individual's own personal experiences. In a similar manner, the particular method which the person adopts to achieve his superiority is determined by his reaction to personal experiences. Adler
states that once an individual has devised a pattern or technique which produces satisfactory results in his handling of life's problems, he will use this same pattern or technique in all situations. In dealing with the analysis of personality, Adler approaches the problem in the following manner. He first attempts to determine the type of response which the individual gives in early childhood, and second, to establish the method or technique of response devised and employed by the same individual in adulthood. If one can establish the fundamental principles of behavior common in both childhood and adulthood, he will be able to determine the individual's responses to parallel situations which occur between these two periods of life.

1. Positive Reactions to the Inferiority Feelings.

Adler says that normal people attempt to prove themselves superior in ways that are socially acceptable. It is only the individual who is abnormally withdrawn from society whose attempts result in overcompensation because he has lost contact with what is demanded of normal people and does not possess the knowledge of what is socially acceptable. Such individuals choose extreme methods to prove their superiority, thus isolating themselves even
further from the normal. In Kafka's case, one should notice first that he made a conscious effort to achieve that which would enable him to prove himself superior to those in whose eyes he thought himself to be physically inferior. Secondly, one finds a strong tendency in him to boast about his intellectual superiority to his fellow man.

a. **Emphasis on Physical Superiority**

Kafka in his adult life attempted to convince himself and others that there was a basic fallacy in his own belief that he could not withstand the rigors required of a normal healthy body. To convince all concerned that he possessed physical aptitude, Kafka sometimes attempted feats that even a normal body could not withstand, and the subsequent failures drained extra strength from his already weak body.

Kafka remembered his father's reports of childhood discomforts—hunger, too few clothes in winter—as well as stories of his grandfather Kafka who "konnte einen Sack Mehl mit den Zähnen von der Erde aufheben."\(^{123}\) His mother's grandfather showed tremendous physical endurance

when he "... badete jeden Tag im Fluss, auch im Winter, dann hackte er sich zum Baden ein Loch ins Eis." With these examples constantly in his memory, Kafka became notorious with his friends for his efforts in winter to prove himself equal to his ancestors.

It was in winter, and frightfully cold. Kafka was wearing a light overcoat. Werfel began to attack him for wearing such light clothes. Kafka told us he took cold baths in winter too. ... Kafka drew up his trouser-leg and, in the frosty night, showed us his naked calves.125

Kafka criticized his father's swimming abilities to compensate for his embarrassing attempts to swim when his father tried to teach him as a child:

Als kleiner Junge, als ich noch nicht schwimmen konnte, ging ich manchmal mit dem Vater, der auch nicht schwimmen kann, in die Nichtschwimmerabteilung. . . . Du musst dir das richtig vorstellen . . . wie er mir dann sein angebliches Schwimmen beibringen wollte und so weiter.126

But he swam often, and Brod mentions that he practiced until he excelled at it.

124Brod, Uber Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 12.


Ungezählte schöne Stunden verbrachten wir auf den Brettern der Prager Badeanstalten. . . . Ich bewunderte Franzens Schwimm- und Ruderkünste, besonders geschickt lenkte er einen sogenannten 'Seelentränker.'

Kafka rowed exceptionally well, as he bragged to Milena, and one day as he was standing around at a swimming school, the instructor hired him to row an important man to the island.


He practiced gymnastics to build up his weak body: "Heute früh: Waschen, Müllern, gemeinsames Turnen. . . ."
In 1911 Kafka met the industrialist Schnitzer who convinced him of the benefits of vegetarianism and natural health cures and the harmful effects of doctors and artificial medicines. In the notes to Kafka's diaries, Brod explains the trip to Jungborn in 1912 as a "Naturheilanstalt Jungborn im Harz." Brod continues to explain:


Kafka was convinced that only through his own methods could his weak body be improved. His distrust of doctors and hospitals lasted even through his final illness.

Das sind ausschliessliche Lungenheilanstalten, Häuser, die in ihrer Gänze Tag und Nacht husten und fiebern, wo man Fleisch essen muss, wo einem gewesene Henker die Arme auskegeln, wenn man sich gegen Injektionen wehrt, und wo bartstreichegende jüdische Ärzte zusehn, hart gegen Jud wie Christ.

\[130\] Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 97.
\[131\] Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 720.
\[132\] Ibid., p. 720.
\[133\] Briefe an Milena, op. cit., p. 157.
Kafka's bodily weaknesses were a constant source of embarrassment and distress to him. He attempted by various methods to maintain what strength he had and to increase his abilities beyond the normal in order to attract the admiration of others. When his few athletic feats failed to impress others, as was often the case, Kafka was forced to rely on his intellectuality as a means to compensate for his feelings of inferiority.

b. Emphasis on Intellectual Superiority

For the individual who is burdened with excessive inferiority feelings, his own physical achievements alone are oftentimes not enough to satisfy his need for recognition as a superior member of his peer group. This was the case with Kafka, who in spite of his athletic accomplishments, felt it necessary to prove his intellectual superiority. Even as a school boy Kafka kept himself well informed of the intellectual questions of his times and took issue with those who were willing to engage him in debate. Concerning this urge to excel over his fellow students, Kafka wrote in his diary that he and his friend, Bergmann, often disputed the existence of God based on the Christian argument that since the world existed, there must be a God who created it. Kafka believed—at least for a time—that
his intellectual powers surpassed those of his friend and expressed pleasure in his successful refutation of Bergmann's arguments.

Das konnte ich meiner Meinung nach sehr gut Bergmann gegenüber widerlegen. . . . Eine solche Widerlegung fand einmal statt. . . . Während ich mich aber darin auszuzeichnen glaubte—anderes als das Verlangen, mich auszuzeichnen, und die Freude am Wirken und an der Wirkung brachte mich nicht dazu. . . .

But the satisfaction which Kafka experienced by keeping himself abreast of the intellectual problems of his times and by being able to refute the arguments of his schoolmate was not sufficient to alleviate his need for an inner feeling of superiority. He began to evaluate his intellectual growth while he attended the Gymnasium and to condemn his studies as rather routine and not challenging to his superior intelligence. Even his university studies he recalled as being rather dull and commonplace experiences which thousands of people had completed before him. In his Brief an den Vater he described his educational experiences and the intellectual foresight he had pertaining to them.

Ich studierte also Jus. Dass bedeutete, dass ich mich in den paar Monaten vor den Prüfungen. . . . geistig förmlich von Holzmehl nährte, das mir überdies schon von tausenden Mäulern vorgekaut war. Aber in gewissem

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Later in life Kafka recalled in a rather sarcastic passage, the mental powers and capacity for learning which he possessed as a youth of "einem mittleren Gedächtnis, bei nicht allerschlechtesten Auffassungskraft..."\textsuperscript{136}

But for Kafka the ability to refute his schoolmate's arguments and the possession of superior mental faculties were not enough to satisfy his need for recognition by others. He once sketched a novel and intentionally worked on it while visiting his grandparents so that he might be commended for his exceptional talent as a writer. He later recorded the incident in his diary.

Es ist schon möglich, dass ich es zum größten Teil aus Eitelkeit machte und durch Verschieben des Papiers auf dem Tischtuch, Klopfen mit dem Bleistift, Herumschauen in der Runde unter der Lampe durch, jemanden verlocken wollte, das Geschriebene mir wegzunehmen, es anzuschauen und mich zu bewundern... um den runden Tisch im bekannten Zimmer sass und nicht vergessen konnte, dass ich jung und aus dieser gegenwärtigen Ungestörtetheit zu Grossem berufen war.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{135} Brief an den Vater, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{137} Tagebücher, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 40.
Kafka's attempts to show his intellectual superiority did not cease with the failure which he experienced at the home of his grandparents. His writing continued and when on the morning of September 23, 1912, he completed the story "Das Urteil," he was overjoyed with the beauty of his achievement and wrote,

Viele während des Schreibens mitgeführte Gefühle, zum Beispiel die Freude, dass ich etwas Schönes für Maxens Arkadia haben werde... 138

Although he admired Dicken's ability to delineate characters with great detail, he felt that the characterizations in his own "Der Heizer" far surpassed those of Dickens.

Dickens Copperfield ("Der Heizer" glatte Dickensonahmung, noch mehr der geplante Roman)... Meine Absicht war, wie ich jetzt sehe, einen Dickens-Roman zu schreiben, nur bereichert um die schärferen Lichter, die ich der Zeit entnommen, und die materne, die ich aus mir selbst aufgesteckt hätte. Dickens' Reichtum und bedenkenloses mächtiges Hinströmen... Barbarisch der Eindruck des unsinnigen Ganzen, ein Barbarentum, das allerdings ich... vermieden habe. 139

Kafka's wish to achieve recognition as being intellectually superior was not limited to his writing. He was proud of the dramatic quality of his reading and

138 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 294.
139 Ibid., pp. 535-536.
often read in the presence of his sisters. Perhaps he recognized his own superiority to his sisters and was, therefore, able to inflate his ego by the favorable impression that his reading made on them. He, himself, recognized his vanity and gave the following explanation for his action.


From the comments which Kafka made concerning his early school experiences, his capacity for learning, his writing, and his reading abilities, one easily discerns that he had an intense need to recognize himself as an intellectually superior individual. Perhaps this need was greatly exaggerated by the fact that he recognized himself as an individual of meager physical attributes. Whatever the case may have been, Kafka's intense feelings of inferiority seemed to be the origin of his compensatory actions to convince himself and others that he was indeed superior both physically and mentally.

2. Negative Reactions to the Inferiority Feelings

It now becomes necessary to consider the various negative approaches Kafka utilized in his effort to protect his self-esteem or to convince himself that he was a superior individual. An individual whose entire childhood has been dependent on the support of his activities by others, in Kafka's case by his mother, will continue this dependency in maturity. To attract the attention of society, and thus to increase the feeling of superiority, he will not hesitate to hint at his own inferiority in the attempt to force others to sympathize with his pitiful state or contradict his statements by compliments to convince him that he truly is not inferior. The blame for the inadequacies is usually assumed by the individual himself, thus providing even more grounds for self-condemnation. The degrees of self-deprecation range from lack of self-confidence and indecision, despair and pessimism, self-accusation and self-reproach to thoughts of masochism and suicide. Occasionally a person resorts to criticizing others to advance his own superiority, and this results in the desire to punish others, or sadism.\textsuperscript{141} It is true, however, that the inferiority feeling in some individuals is so great

\textsuperscript{141}Alfred Adler, \textit{The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 319.
that it is not within the realm of possibility to devise a method of compensation that can bring the necessary emotional tranquillity. In these extreme cases, an individual usually finds himself compelled to create a phantasy world into which he can escape in order to fulfill the needs which are unsatisfied in real-life situations. Similar situations often arise in individuals whose need for compensation does not exceed the limits of human possibility, but who find it impossible to derive satisfaction from their everyday existence in the real world.

In Kafka's case, the powers of imagination were extremely highly developed because the positive reactions to his inferiority feelings did not fulfill the requirements of preserving his self-esteem, while the negative attempts were often misunderstood by others.

Kafka's childhood experiences provide the necessary insight into his need for compensation, and might help one find the explanation of his negative responses to the inferiority feeling in his personality. Since all his basic character traits were non-aggressive—timidity, withdrawal, oversensitivity, and anxiety—it is not surprising to find that the methods he used to alleviate his inferiority feelings were of a non-aggressive nature.
a. **Lack of Self-Confidence and Indecision**

In order to pursue a completely non-aggressive attitude towards the problems of life, an individual is compelled to withdraw from life's problems. This approach usually results from a fear that he is not capable of finding a satisfactory solution to the problems which confront him. Because of his lack of self-confidence and fear of defeat, he tends to put off as long as possible any action that will make necessary a positive response to the situation. For an individual to admit to himself that he is afraid of taking positive steps in response to a given situation would be damaging to his own self-image. As a result, the refusal to take steps leading to action is managed by various pretexts which will protect the self-esteem from any danger of defeat and which will remove the need of having to admit that a fear of defeat exists.

In his choice of a profession, Kafka showed his indecisive nature. Brod states:

> Das Jusstudium, als die unbestimmteste, kein Ziel oder die grösste Anzahl verschiedenartiger Ziele (Advokatie, Beamtenstellen) umfassende, also die Entscheidung noch hinausschiebende und jedenfalls keine besondere Vorliebe verlangende Laufbahn, wurde seufzend in Angriff genommen.\(^{142}\)

\(^{142}\)Brod, *Über Franz Kafka*, op. cit., p. 43.
Kafka often could not make up his mind on more simple matters. It seemed that if he made a decision, and if it should be wrong, he would once again show his incapacity. For instance, his inability to make a definite commitment was revealed in an incident in which he wanted to invest his money in government bonds; his only problem was in the amount he wanted to buy. This decision caused him great distress, and finally, after struggling to reach a decision he delegated the actual purchasing to his mother.

Ging zweimal zum Geschäft hin, um den nötigen Auftrag zu geben und zweimal zurück, ohne eingetreten zu sein. Berechnete fieberhaft die Zinsen. Bat dann die Mutter, für tausend Kronen Anleihe zu kaufen, erhöhte aber den Betrag auf zweitausend Kronen. 143

Kafka reached the point where he could not decide whether his works were worthless or whether with a little work, they could be improved.

Nun habe ich bei dieser Überprüfung weder gefunden, dass das bisher Geschriebene besonders wertvoll sei, noch dass es geradezu weggeworfen werden müsse. Mein Urteil liegt zwischen beiden und näher der ersten Meinung, doch ist es nicht derartig, dass ich mich nach dem Wert des Geschriebenen trotz meiner Schwäche für erschöpft ansehen müsste. 144

143 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 486.
144 Ibid., p. 221.
His hesitancy to give a definite answer encompassed his choice of materials to have printed. In a letter to Rowohlt publishers, Kafka states: "Gewiss habe ich mich nicht immer ganz rein entschieden."\(^{145}\)

Kafka made no commitments unless they were absolutely necessary. The decision, once made, was still frequently subject to change, as in the case of his two decisions to marry. Kafka's similarity to Kierkegaard in regard to marriage has been noted: Kierkegaard also broke his engagement because he lacked confidence in achieving a happy marriage.\(^{146}\) In fact, Kafka was reading passages from Kierkegaard and making the comparison himself during the decisive days of his engagement crisis.\(^{147}\) Decisions carry with them the responsibility of the choice; such responsibility Kafka was unwilling to assume because of his lack of confidence in himself and therefore in his choices. When he confessed his perplexity to friends or relatives, they usually sympathized with Kafka's distress enough to undertake the responsibility themselves. Thus Kafka not only avoided the problem, but reinforced his dependency on others and achieved the attention which he so desperately sought.

\(^{145}\)Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 283.

\(^{146}\)Slochower, op. cit., p. 10.

\(^{147}\)Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 318.
b. Despair and Pessimism

Kafka realized, in comparing his life and attitudes to those of other individuals, that he was different from most people. His problems arose to a large extent from his inability to decide whether he should live the normal married life of an unassuming official, or whether he should remain aloof and isolated, dedicated to his writing. His family did not realize his predicament; hence the notation in his diary that his mother misunderstood the importance of his despair.


Kafka felt he owed it to himself and to literature to devote himself to his art, but he could never overcome the Jewish tradition which held that a man is happy only after he has been united in marriage with a woman. He felt the life of a bachelor was a disgrace to the family, and it caused him many hours of despondency.

\[\text{148}^{\text{Tagebücher, op. cit.}, \text{ pp. 198-199.}}\]
Ein ungücklicher Mensch, der kein Kind haben soll, ist in sein Unglück schrecklich eingeschlossen. Nirgends eine Hoffnung auf Erneuerung, auf eine Hilfe durch glücklichere Sterne. Er muss mit dem Unglück behaftet seinen Weg machen, wenn sein Kreis beendet ist, sich zufrieden geben. . . .

His decision to marry Felice Bauer only increased his agitation, for he states "... dass ich von dem Augenblick an, in dem ich mich entschliesse zu heiraten, nicht mehr schlafen kann, der Kopf glüht bei Tag und Nacht, es ist kein Leben mehr, ich schwanke verzweifelt herum."  

His situation, hopeless until he could reconcile himself to one life or another, led to deep fits of pessimism. Kafka himself contrasted the self-assurance of Balzac, who carried a stick with the motto, "Ich breche jedes Hindernis," to his own pessimistic outlook on life, for he felt his motto should be "Mich bricht jedes Hindernis." 

A primary reason for Kafka's despondency was his future. His eyesight plagued him, for he feared "... ob mein Augenlicht für mein ganzes Leben genügen wird."  

His desire for reassurance of his existence by his friends

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149 *Tagebücher*, op. cit., p. 216.  
151 *Brod, Über Franz Kafka*, op. cit., p. 53.  
152 Ibid., p. 53.  
153 *Tagebücher*, op. cit., p. 35.
caused him to comment adversely about his life expectancy. He states: "Vierzig Jahre alt werde ich aber kaum werden. . . ." and, ". . . ich weiss . . . dass ich allein bleibe (wenn ich überhaupt bleibe, was gar nicht bestimmt ist)." Some of his letters to Milena cry out for help in his despair.

Although her letters to Kafka have never been published, his letters to Milena reveal that she attempted to send him the comfort he begged for, to allay some of the doubts and pessimism.

Kafka was so intensely oppressed by his own problems that he contributed little to the betterment of his friends; yet they were constantly trying to alleviate his doubts and depressions. His cries for help present themselves as

154 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 89.
155 Ibid., p. 438.
156 Briefe an Milena, op. cit., p. 50.
157 Ibid., p. 56.
devices to achieve superiority by attaining the sympathy of others.

c. **Self-Accusations and Self-Reproaches**

The individual who is subject to great periods of depression, especially depression concerning his own welfare rather than the welfare of society, usually resorts to accusations against himself of many kinds of inferiority and takes upon himself the blame for all failures and errors. He has convinced himself that if he were not so inferior he could have accomplished a great deal more. He hopes that if he professes his own inferiority, others will not depend on his contributions to society or that because he is obviously weak, he will not have to assume responsibilities.

Kafka's expressions of self-contempt, self-accusations, and self-reproach are abundant. In *Brief an den Vater* are recorded the beginnings of guilt. Here Kafka stated that many occurrences led to an assumption of his guilt. His father's smile caused him to feel guilty. His mother's defending him from his father's wrath did little more than intensify his feelings of guilt.
He felt that his reprieve from a deserved punishment was worse than the punishment.

Most of all Kafka generously assumed the guilt his father should have felt when he was indignant to his shop workers.

In later life, Kafka accused himself of most of the vices he abhorred. He professed that he was indolent in

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158 *Brief an den Vater*, op. cit., p. 46.
Brief an den Vater since, "ich bei voller Gesundheit mehr Zeit auf dem Kanapee verfaulenzt habe, als Du in Deinem ganzen Leben, alle Krankheiten eingerechnet."161 And in his diaries: "Ich habe vieles in diesen Tagen über mich nicht aufgeschrieben, teils aus Faulheit. . . ."162 Although at times he is proud of his reading aloud, he castigates himself for reading badly: "Wie schlecht ich auch lese."163 In his diary he says he is unfit for friendship, "... hindert mich die Vorstellung, dass ich Max am Nachmittag vorlesen soll, vollständig. Es zeigt dies auch, wie unfähig ich zur Freundschaft bin. . . ."164 "Die Zerstreutheit, die Gedächtnisschwäche, die Dummheit!"165

However, his most constant topic of reproach is his writing, itself. At various times he calls it "Unnütze,"166 "widerliche,"167 "Konstruktion,"168 and "Schreibereien."169

161 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 90.
162 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 37.
163 Ibid., p. 458.
164 Ibid., p. 221.
165 Ibid., p. 478.
166 Ibid., p. 254.
167 Ibid., p. 268.
168 Ibid., p. 329.
169 Ibid., p. 277.
Once he tears a work apart by saying,

Die ungeordneten Sätze dieser Geschichte mit Lücken, dass man beide Hände dazwischen stecken könnte; ein Satz klingt hoch, ein Satz klingt tief, wie es kommt; ein Satz reibt sich am andern wie die Zunge an einem hohlen oder falschen Zahn; ein Satz kommt mit einem so rohen Anfang ammarschiert, dass die ganze Geschichte in ein verdriessliches Staunen gerät. . . .

Through all these complaints that his talent was seeping away, Max Brod comforted him and offered to have his works published to prove to him that the creations were not worthless but beautiful.

. . . wollte ich ihm nun handgreiflich zeigen, wie man sich zusammenraffen müsse, wollte ihm beweisen, dass seine literarischen Unfruchtbarkeits-Befürchtungen keinen Grund hätten, dass es nur eines gewissen Willens bedürfe, einer Konzentration, um seine Begabung wieder auf den rechten Weg zu bringen.171

Brod spent much time encouraging Kafka to write.

Manchmal war ich wie eine Zuchtrute über ihm, trieb und drängte, natürlich nicht direkt, sondern immer wieder durch neue Mittel und auf Schleichwegen, jedenfalls liess ich seine Begabung nun nicht wieder ins Stocken kommen.172

Of course, the compliments of Brod and other friends with literary aspirations, Oskar Baum, Franz Werfel, Felix

170_Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 142._
171_Brod, _Über Franz Kafka_, op. cit., pp. 93-94._
172_Ibid., p. 94._
Waitsch, Ernest Weiss, and Willy Haas,\textsuperscript{173} were the ego-building substance that Kafka thrived on. His self-debasement was a cry for approval from his colleagues which worked well in the early stages of their friendship, and he began to rely on it more and more as his self-esteem needed even greater assurance that he was superior.

d. Masochism and Suicide

The relationship between self-accusation and self-torture is simply a matter of degree. When complaints about inadequacies and health bring encouragement from contemporaries, the individual reasons that more intense statements will bring a higher degree of concern. The first phase of masochistic tendencies is the imagining of illnesses.
Kafka admits that his original fears about his health were exaggerated.

\ldots Sorge um meine Gesundheit; es fing leicht an, hier und dort ergab sich eine kleine Befürchtung wegen der Verdauung, des Haarausfalls, einer Rückgratsverkrümmung und so weiter, das steigerte sich in unzählbaren Abstufungen. \ldots \textsuperscript{174}

If the symptoms of hypochondria persist, the second phase occurs, in which the individual actually causes real

\textsuperscript{173}Strelka, op. cit., p. 8.
\textsuperscript{174}Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 88.
illnesses to occur. Kafka refers to his neurasthenia in his diaries. He also infected others with his neurasthenic sensitivity to sound. Brod states: "Seine ausserordentliche Lärmempfindlichkeit, mit der er zuzeiten (zum Beispiel während unserer Reisen) auch mich suggestiv ansteckte, machte die Wahl schwer." Kafka had for so long imagined that his ears were extremely sensitive to sound that eventually he could no longer tolerate loud noises.


The third phase in the degrees of self-torture progresses from the fear of pain, to the development of pain, to the actual desire to inflict pain upon oneself in order to bring about more of the sympathy of others than

175 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 303.
176 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 139.
177 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 141.
has been extracted by the lesser illnesses. However, since Kafka had basically a passive personality, he could never bring himself to carry out his masochistic tendencies. Instead, he made many entries in his diaries which expressed his desire to injure himself. They begin rather innocently as, "... auch ich liesse mich lieber im Kreis prügeln, als ausserhalb selbst zu prügeln..." and progress to: "Heute früh zum erstenmal seit langer Zeit wieder die Freude an der Vorstellung eines in meinem Herzen gedrehten Messers." Once Kafka's mind saw a method to punish himself for his imagined guilt, he conceived more terrible bodily tortures for himself.

Die langen Schwarten von Rippenfleisch stoss ich ungebissen in den Mund und ziehe sie dann von hinten, den Magen und die Därme durchreissend, wieder heraus. ... Ich geniesse dadurch nicht nur meinen gesunden Zustand, sondern auch ein Leiden, das ohne Schmerzen ist und gleich vorbeigehn kann. 

And again.

Durch das Parterrefenster eines Hauses an einem um den Hals gelegten Strick hineingesogen und ohne Rücksicht, wie von einem, der nicht acht gibt, blutend und zerfetzt durch alle Zimmerdecken, Möbel, Mauern und Dachböden hinaufgerissen werden, bis oben auf dem Dach die leere Schlinge erscheint, die auch meine Reste erst beim Durchbrechen der Dachziegel verloren hat. 

178Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 13.
179Ibid., p. 137.
180Ibid., pp. 128-129.
181Ibid., p. 310.
Such tortures result in the professing of suicidal tendencies. Adler states that one of the main reasons for suicide threats is the hope of attracting attention, thus achieving a heightened feeling of superiority over life and death. This tendency is noted in a letter of Kafka's to Brod when he confessed that he had calmly contemplated suicide so that he would not have to work at the factory and thereby interrupt his writing.

. . . sah ich vollkommen klar ein, dass es für mich jetzt nur zwei Möglichkeiten gab, entweder nach dem allgemeinen Schlafengeh'n aus dem Fenster zu springen oder in den nächsten vierzehn Tagen täglich in die Fabrik und in das Bureau des X. zu gehn.\textsuperscript{182}  

The letter produced exactly the effect Kafka desired: Brod was horrified and notified Kafka's mother, who became upset enough to protect Kafka from his father who wanted him to go. Thus, with a simple threat against his own life, Kafka was relieved of responsibility and at the same time was the center of much concerned attention, proving that he was highly esteemed by others. Similar passages in his diary demonstrate his utilization of a successful technique to achieve the submission of others.

\textsuperscript{182}Brod, \textit{Über Franz Kafka}, op. cit., p. 85.
Vorgestern Vorwürfe wegen der Fabrik bekommen. Eine Stunde dann auf dem Kanapee über Aus-dem-Fenster-Springen nachgedacht.\textsuperscript{183}

Wenn ich mich töten sollte, hat ganz gewiss niemand Schuld, selbst wenn zum Beispiel die offensichtliche nächste Veranlassung F.s Verhalten sein sollte. Ich ... in ihre Wohnung käme, als Freier abgewiesen würde, den Brief auf den Tisch legte, zum Balkon ginge, von allen, die hinzueilen, gehalten, mich losreissen und die Balkonbrüstung, während eine Hand nach der andern ablassen muss, überspringen würde.\textsuperscript{184}

Since the ultimate goal of an individual suffering from an abnormal feeling of inferiority is to prove his worthiness to himself and to others, the masochistic and suicidal thought of Kafka can be interpreted as nothing more than attempts to bolster his own self-esteem and to enhance his value to others.

e. Criticism of Others and Sadism.

In those prone to self-accusations and self-destruction, one often finds, coupled with these traits, a tendency to degrade others occasionally to enhance his own superiority. There are many degrees of degradation of others which include criticisms of persons who are more successful and senseless and cruel punishment of others for no discernable reason.

\textsuperscript{183}Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 266.
\textsuperscript{184}Ibid., p. 360.
Kafka's personal reaction to the mild success of his friend Oskar Baum, was evident in his diary entry: "Neid über einen angeblichen Erfolg Baums, den ich doch so liebe." Such criticism appeared frequently, and Kafka's feelings of inferiority became apparent when he compared his own situation to that of Franz Werfel, a one-time close friend.

I hate Werfel, not because I envy him, but I envy him too. He is healthy, young and rich, everything that I am not. Besides, gifted with a sense of music, he has done very good work early and easily, he has the happiest life behind him and before him, I work with weights I cannot get rid of, and I am entirely shut off from music.

Such criticisms of others demonstrate on the part of Kafka a jealousy of the success of others which points out that there lay within him the desire to equal and surpass their achievements.

Kafka's hostilities towards others did not cease with unjust criticisms of those whose fame excelled his, but extended into the realm of maliciousness. Even though his malicious inclinations are never objectified, in his writings one finds many descriptions of sadistic tendencies. A dream describes a scene of torture.

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185 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 139.
186 Diaries, 1910-13, op. cit., p. 182. [Not in German text.]

He also imagined the most bloody scenes possible to satisfy his desire to punish those who opposed him.

Die ergiebigste Stelle zum Hineinstechen scheint zwischen Hals und Kinn zu sein. Man hebe das Kinn und steche das Messer in die gestrafften Muskeln. Die Stelle ist aber wahrscheinlich nur in der Vorstellung ergiebig. Man erwartet dort ein grossartiges Ausströmen des Blutes zu sehn und ein Flechtwerk von Sehnen und Knöchelchen zu zerreissen, wie man es ähnlich in den gebratenen Schenkeln von Truthähnen findet.188

Even a letter to Milena contained a sketch and a description of a torture rack which rips victims apart while the inventor observes with great satisfaction.

Es sind vier Pfähle, durch die zwei mittleren werden Stangen geschoben, an denen die Hände des "Delinquenten" befestigt werden; durch die zwei äussern schiebt man Stangen für die Füsse. Ist der Mann so befestigt,

187Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 493.
188Ibid., p. 479.
werden die Stangen langsam weiter hinausgeschoben, bis der Mann in der Mitte zerreisst. An der Säule lehnt der Erfinder und tut mit übereinandergeschlagenen Armen und Beinen sehr gross. . . .

Although Kafka consciously expressed a desire to inflict bodily harm on others, the wishes did not materialize because of the passive nature of his personality. Kafka's vivid imagination allowed him to enjoy a sense of superiority in his sadistic impulses since he is always the inflictor of the pain.

f. Phantasy

When an individual finds that his compensatory efforts of threatened self-annihilation and attempted self-exhaltation have not produced the desired effects of sympathy or recognition, he may resort to yet another method of compensation. This was the case with Kafka who found it necessary, even in early childhood, to lose himself in the world of reverie and phantasy. While he was attending the Gymnasium, he often had dreams of someday becoming a rich and powerful man who would return to the ghetto to save damsals in distress from unjust treatment.

189 Briefe an Milena, op. cit., p. 230.
This dream, or variations of it, must have reoccurred frequently enough during his youth for him to remember it. In 1911, after having seen a play by Lateiner, Kafka commented that the plot of the drama was similar to his childhood dream.

Kafka’s dreams of grandeur did not cease with his childhood but continued on even into his thirties. In 1914, he made reference in his diary to a dream in which he stood in the presence of the emperor Kaiser Wilhelm and met with important people.


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190 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 225.
191 Ibid., p. 196.
192 Ibid., p. 445.
Such dreams in which one sees himself as a rich or powerful person who associates with highly influential persons are usually dispelled as idle passing fancies which do little to injure a person's psychological adjustment unless the phantasy is extended to other areas of life. This was the case with Kafka who sought to lessen the burden of his imperfections by resorting to his well-developed imagination.

My imperfection is, as I said, not congenital, not earned, nevertheless I bear it better than others by means of great labor of the imagination and sought-out expedients, bear much smaller misfortunes.193

As the years passed, Kafka's tendency to depend upon his imagination to compensate for his own personal inadequacies became more and more prominent. In 1921, just three years before his death he stated that his entire world had dissolved into an aura of phantasy.

Alles ist Phantasie, die Familie, das Bureau, die Freunde, die Strasse, alles Phantasie, fernere oder nähere. . . .194

For an individual who suffers from an abnormal inferiority feeling, it does not suffice simply to avoid situations which would seem to be threats to his self-pride.

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194 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 546.
It is in line with Kafka's passive nature that he does not seek compensation through aggressive means or through direct competition with rivals. His acute lack of self-confidence, stemming from his inferiority feelings, makes this direct approach seem too dangerous to his ego. Instead of facing reality, Kafka distorted and misinterpreted the events of his daily life in such a manner that he could believe himself to be superior to his companions. His superiority is not a recognized fact by his associates, but he seems to have succeeded in convincing himself of it through his misrepresentation of reality.

In this chapter an effort has been made to point out that Franz Kafka's life not only provided the basic factors conducive to the development of abnormal inferiority feelings—his physical weakness, his sex, his position in the family unit, his belonging to a religious minority group, and his contradictory parental training—but that he also exhibited four of the major character traits of an individual suffering from inferiority feelings—timidity, withdrawal, oversensitivity, and anxiety. Furthermore, the study has attempted to show that his psychological make-up was determined to a great extent by many of the common compensatory devices—both positive and negative—which are prevalent in those individuals whose behavior is governed
by extreme feelings of inferiority. From the evidence presented, it should be clear that Kafka, throughout his entire life, suffered from an abnormally great inferiority complex. Based upon this conclusion, the next chapter will attempt to show how Kafka's inferiority feelings are reflected in his most significant novel, Der Prozess.
CHAPTER III

THE INFERIORITY FEELINGS IN JOSEPH K.
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In Kafka's work the major concern is the study of his own alienation from society. The autobiographical nature of his creative works, however symbolic or allegorical, is a recognized fact by most Kafka authorities. Jürgen Born, Peter Heller, Heinz Politzer, and Charles Neider all concur that Kafka relied almost exclusively on his psychic conflicts for the source of his complex, probing works. Jürgen Born wrote that: "There is no doubt as to the high degree of Kafka's self-projection into his 'heroes.'" Peter Heller acknowledged: "Whatever he perceives, Kafka transforms into an unmistakable image of his own tortured self." Even though Brod claimed that Kafka's tales are outstanding because of their universality, he admitted that

1Born, op. cit., p. 392.
4Neider, op. cit., pp. 30, 87, 89.
5Born, op. cit., p. 392.

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Kafka wrote principally about himself when he wrote: "Doch die berichteten Geschehnisse bedeuten bei Kafka wohl zunächst sich selbst. . . ." 7 Kafka himself confessed that ". . . könnte sich auch die Geschichte niemals endgültig von mir loslösen." 8 In Brief an den Vater, he blamed his father not only for his desperate need to excel in writing, but also said that the works themselves were about his basic lack of a relationship with his father. "Mein Schreiben handelte von Dir, ich klagte dort ja nur, was ich an Deiner Brust nicht klagen konnte." 9 In his later diary, Kafka was pessimistic about his fate because his introspection, his absorption with his need to purify himself of accumulated inferiority feelings by writing about them, strained his weak physical frame. "Der Sinn für die Darstellung meines traumhaften innern Lebens hat alles andere ins Nebensächliche gerückt. . . ." 10

Specific examples of his use of his own problems in his writings are as numerous as his fictional pieces, and the ambiguous, problematical nature of the works provides ample room for various interpretations. Many critics have used Kafka's life as a basis for seeking the meaning of the

7 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 171.
8 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 142.
9 Brief an den Vater, op. cit., p. 86.
10 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 420.
stories, believing that the stories are understandable only when one perceives the relationship between the mind of the creator and the creation as it exists in Kafka's works.

Rene Dauvin maintains that "The Trial is a plunge into . . . the darkest regions of Kafka's ego." Dauvin suggested that Der Prozess was a psychological study of the "individual who stands apart from the rest therefore feels guilty over his apartness." In his recently published study, Vernon W. Grant, a practicing clinical psychologist, noted: "The prolonged anxiety of Joseph K. begins to look, finally, like a projection of something central in the emotional life of its creator." Grant suggests that Der Prozess is solely psychological in content and that Kafka was somewhat unaware of the psychological implication of the symbols he used.

But the peculiar motivations, the unstable identities, the curious alterations of appearance, and especially the notion of "secret markings" of guilt and the concept of the forewarnings of fate to be read from facial lines or gestures, will not be overlooked by anyone familiar with the disordered perceptual and thought processes of the psychotic. . . . I suggest that these vagaries of

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12Ibid., p. 148.

the disordered mind were inherent in his own thought structures and that he wrote them into his novels without awareness of their pathological character.14

At the time Der Prozess was begun, Kafka was having a sporadic relationship with Felice Bauer. Max Brod and Heinz Politzer15 both link the origin of the novel with Kafka's mental anguish about the question of marriage. Brod states,

Ich glaube nicht fehlzugehen, wenn ich in diesen furchtbaren Erschütterungen, in denen Kafka immer wieder die Gewissensfrage an sich selbst stellt ..., den Ursprung zweier neuer grosser Werke suche, die bald nach der Entlobung entstanden. Im September las er mir das erste Kapitel des Romans 'Der Prozess' und im November 'Aus einer Strafkolonie' vor. Dokumente dichterischer Selbstbestrafung, imaginierte Sühnehandlungen.16

Indeed during his engagements and disengagements the diaries of Kafka began to refer more and more to events in his life in terms of "arrests," "trials," and "executions." Immediately after the first engagement announcement in May, Kafka had hallucinations that he was being arrested.

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14Grant, op. cit., p. 59.
15Politzer, op. cit., p. 163.
16Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 130.
Es war um Mitternacht. Fünf Männer hielten mich, über sie hinweg hob ein sechster seine Hand, um mich zu fassen. "Los", rief ich und drehte mich im Kreis, dass alle abfielen. Ich fühlte irgendwelche Gesetze herrschen. . . . 17

A month later the crucial meeting with Felice, during which a decision was made to break the engagement, was called "Der Gerichtshof im Hotel." 18 The farewell letter to her parents was aptly referred to as the "Ansprache vom Richtplatz." 19 It is significant to note that only one day later, a sketch was entered in the diary which was the first reference to Joseph K.. To whatever extent critics claim Der Prozess to be autobiographical, the most convincing evidence of the author's intent to record his own inner struggle, however, was in the manuscript itself. Perhaps in the haste of writing, Kafka mistakenly wrote the next to the last paragraph in the first person rather than in the third person that he had used throughout the novel. "Wo war das Hohe Gericht? Ich habe zu reden. Ich hebe die Hände." 20 Max Brod, in his postscript to the first edition of Der Prozess published in 1925, wrote: "Ich habe nur die

17 Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 400.
18 Ibid., p. 407.
19 Ibid., p. 409.
zahlreichen Abkürzungen transkribiert und einige kleine Versehen berichtigt, die offensichtlich nur deshalb in dem Manuskript stehengeblieben sind, weil es der Dichter einer definitiven Durchsicht nicht unterworfen hat. 21 One of the changes Brod made was the references to "I" on the last page. The sentences then read: "Wo war das hohe Gericht, bis zu dem er nie gekommen war? Er hob die Hände und spreizte alle Finger. 22

Since Kafka used his own personal problems as a basis for Der Prozess, and since his major problem was his feelings of being different from and therefore inferior to others, one can approach the analysis of Joseph K., the protagonist of Der Prozess, as a character study of a person similar to Kafka whose intense feelings of inferiority and guilt, because of his isolation from society, cause the rapid disintegration of his personality.

a. The Inferiority Feelings in the Personality of Joseph K.

Kafka's opening sentence of Der Prozess, "Jemand musste Josef K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne dass er etwas

21 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 323.
22 Ibid., p. 272.
Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet," was the signal for a change in the life of Joseph K. The change was complete, rapid, and fatal.

In the fragmentary chapter "Staatsanwalt" which Brod would have placed after Chapter Seven, but which Uyttersproyt argues should perhaps be a prologue to the novel, Kafka allows us an insight into the childhood of Joseph K. He notes that K. did not know how to react to men in general, for his father died when K. was very young. The natural consequences of a boy without a father would have been an unhealthy dependence on his mother, but K. had "... die Zärtlichkeit der Mutter, ... immer eher abgelehnt als hervorgelockt." From these two facts, the absence of a father figure and a rejection of the mother, one can trace the beginnings of K.'s isolation, one of the first symptoms discussed in Kafka's own inferiority feelings, and one of the major reasons for K.'s trial.

23 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 9.
24 Refer to Max Brod's footnote p. 282 of Der Prozess.
26 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 289.
1. Withdrawal

The self-imposed, not quite complete, isolation of Joseph K. from childhood to the time of his arrest was mentioned several times in "Staatsanwalt" and in flashbacks after the arrest. First of all Joseph K., like all of Kafka's heroes, was a bachelor, which in itself was indicative of the lonely state in which he lived. Obviously he had never even considered marriage for his only female companion before the arrest was Elsa, a prostitute, for whom he would never sacrifice himself and who, in return, would never be capable of sacrificing herself for him.

Even love, then, which is an indissoluble mixture of wrong-doing and blindly-offered sacrifice, runs its course for K. in a functional, unbinding, and correct relationship, which places no burden either on the freedom of his afternoon-off, or on his conscience.27

To K., women were only a means of attaining access to the judges, and there seemed to be no permanence in his affections. His embraces were surrounded by an aura of impatience much like those of the characters in Strindberg whose works were favorite readings of Kafka.28

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28 Slochower, op. cit., p. 18.
isolation from half of the population, that is the feminine half, is almost complete.

However, the Joseph K. of before the trial does have a number of friends who are men. He was a member of a dining club which met once a week and which esteemed him highly because of his practicality, "... seine praktischen Erfahrungen behielten meistens Recht, da sie so unmittelbar gewonnen waren." The club was primarily composed of lawyers and judges who were interested in "... mit dem gewöhnlichen Leben nur entfernt zusammenhängende Fragen. ..." "Here, in this juristic dogmatizing, far removed from real life, K. finds himself at his highest level of self-appreciation." His special friendship with one member of the group, Hasterer, was marred only once, and significantly, by a woman who moved into Hasterer's apartment.

Before the trial, K.'s days were usually repetitious and routine. He worked in his office until nine, went for a walk, usually alone, then joined his dining club at a beer hall. Once a week he visited Elsa, and occasionally he went for a drive or to dinner with the Manager of the Bank. K.

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29 *Der Prozess, op. cit.*, p. 284.
lived in a boarding house owned by Frau Grubach. That he took little interest in the affairs of the house was evident from the facts that he did not know Captain Lanz had moved in and that Fräulein Montag felt it necessary to introduce herself even though she had been staying there for quite some time. The room next to K.'s was occupied by Fräulein Bürstner "... mit der K. nicht viel mehr als die Grussworte gewechselt hatte." In other words, K. is a Mann ohne Eigenschaften, to use Robert Musil's phrase, a man lacking in distinctive characteristics.

The solitary existence of Joseph K. before the arrest was, however, insignificant when compared with the gradually complete withdrawal which developed parallel to his increased involvement in his trial, as he ultimately realized the statement of the warders that "... wir Ihnen jetzt wahrscheinlich von allen Ihren Mitmenschen am nächsten stehen..." was true.

On the day of his arrest, he became alienated from Frau Grubach, who considered him an asset in her house, by taking offense at a statement made by the older woman

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32 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 98.
33 Ibid., p. 19.
34 Politzer, Parable and Paradox, op. cit., p. 166.
concerning the morals of Fräulein Bürstner, whose social habits were practically unknown to K.. Frau Grubach also inadvertently refused to shake K.'s hand, which he interpreted as her disapproving of him. Although he eventually spoke to Frau Grubach again, he "keeps her at arm's length by his hysterical rejection of any long talk." Also on the day of his arrest he met Fräulein Bürstner to apologize for the use made of her room by the inspector. After a short time during which K.'s shout called the attention of Captain Lanz to his presence in her room so late at night, Fräulein Bürstner asked K. to leave. He never spoke to her again, only to an emissary she sent to explain that their friendship was ended. In a dream late in the proceedings of the trial, K. recognized the boarders at Frau Grubach's with many unfamiliar faces for "... K. kümmerte sich schon seit langem um die Angelegenheiten der Pension nicht im geringsten." But the presence of Fräulein Bürstner in the group made him avoid them all, running down dark, remote halls. On the way to his execution, K. saw a girl resembling Fräulein Bürstner, but he never attempted to speak to her nor to catch up with her.

36 Tauber, op. cit., p. 80.
37 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 292.
After the initial arrest, the inspector informed Joseph K. that he was free to go to the bank. "Sie sind verhaftet, gewiss, aber das soll Sie nicht hindern, Ihren Beruf zu erfüllen. Sie sollen auch in Ihrer gewöhnlichen Lebensweise nicht gehindert sein." And yet, the trial did disrupt K.'s ordered life immeasurably, alienating him from his business associates, as well as from his few acquaintances at the boarding house. Three minor bank officials were witnesses to the arrest and kept K. forever on guard at work. On the day of the first interrogation, K. was forced to turn down an important invitation from the assistant manager of the bank so that he might attend the court proceedings. The scene in which the two warders were whipped occurred at the bank, making K. ashamed to face the clerks on duty. His preoccupation with his trial caused his work at the bank to suffer to such an extent that his clients preferred to go to the assistant manager rather than the confused chief clerk.

K.'s relationship with the assistant manager also deteriorated a great deal. In the competition for promotion, K. and the assistant manager had been on equal footing before the trial. Then K.'s daydreaming in conferences with the assistant caused several conversations between the two to end abruptly.

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38 Der Prozess, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
Finally the assistant disregarded K.'s existence by devoting his entire attention to repairing K.'s desk rather than listening to K.'s report.

The acting-Manager is K.'s competitor in the Bank and a hidden rivalry prevails between the two; in their mutual struggle, K. is fulfilling the unquestioned commandment of self-preservation. The trial, that brings to task the business-like, problem-free, straight-forward attitude toward existence, weakens him in this struggle.

Joseph K.'s relations with his family were strained by the trial to the point that he became entirely withdrawn from them, too. Upon hearing of K.'s trial, his uncle rushed into town to offer help by hiring a lawyer to defend K.. At first K. accepted his uncle's help. But when he dismissed the lawyer, he dismissed his uncle, too. Even K.'s old mother, who before the arrest urgently requested him to come to her, no longer asked to see him.

39 Der Prozess, op. cit., pp. 296-297.
40 Tauber, op. cit., pp. 80-81.
At the first interrogation, the courtroom was crowded with people whom K. assumed to be on trial, too. During his speech, K. noticed the effect he had on the people on the left side of the hall and was convinced that he began "... in ihrem Sinne zu sprechen." But too soon he realized that they were all officials of the mysterious organization which indicted him. He, alone, was the accused.

Many people offered help to K. for a quick acquittal from his indictment. But each was systematically eliminated through K.'s own withdrawal into himself. The washerwoman was snatched away and never seen again; the lawyer was dismissed; Leni was openly complained about to the lawyer; Block, the tradesman, was insulted; Titorelli, the painter, was taunted; the priest was misunderstood. Finally there was no one to whom K. could turn for help. In one year, K. had severed all relations with society because of his concern about his trial and had withdrawn into himself. And this isolation convinced him of his own guilt. The only way he could withdraw further, even from himself, was by death, which he accepted with resignation.

Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 55.
2. **Anxiety**

The vicious circle of the inferiority feelings of Joseph K. was accentuated by anxiety. In part, his fear of the outcome of his trial caused him to withdraw from those who could help him but might also equally hinder his cause. And his isolation from society increased his fear that only through his associations would he be able to win his case. The psychologist Grant observes: "The fact that Joseph, though moved by subjective guilt, does not know his offense, parallels a feature . . . of the anxiety neurotic who cannot tell what he is afraid of."\(^{42}\) Harry Slochower states: "Everywhere, the little man is threatened by dark forces as in a nightmare. The feeling of oppression never leaves one, and is intensified by the very fact that the dreaded blow is not struck, but continues to hover about."\(^{43}\)

The arrest by the two warders as soon as he awakened in the morning and for no obvious reason thoroughly confused K.. He contemplated boldly leaving the boarding house assuming his warders would not hinder him, but the fear haunted him that "... vielleicht würden sie ihn doch packen..."\(^{44}\) He decided to remain in his room. When

\(^{42}\text{Grant, op. cit., p. 12.}\)

\(^{43}\text{Slochower, op. cit., p. 18.}\)

\(^{44}\text{Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 16.}\)
called before the inspector, the exchange of words resulted in a speech by the official about the severity of his unknown crime which obviously frightened K.. "Er geriet in eine gewisse Aufregung, ging auf und ab, woran ihn niemand hinderte, schob seine Manschetten zurück, befühlte die Brust, strich sein Haar..."45

K.'s apprehension haunted him at the bank that day, for he called in the three young officials from time to time "... um sie zu beobachten; immer hatte er sie befriedigt entlassen können."46 When he reached the boarding house that night, he confessed to Frau Grubach that because of the suddenness of the arrest he had lost his composure. He assured her: "In der Bank zum Beispiel bin ich vorbereitet, dort könnte mir etwas Derartiges unmöglich geschehen..."47 But when he was phoned at the bank, he was so unprepared that he forgot to ask the time of the hearing and stood in reverie for a long time.

During the first interrogation, K. showed his fearlessness by deliberately berating the authorities. Not until he tried to descend from the platform and was stopped

45Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 22.
46Ibid., p. 28.
47Ibid., p. 31.
did it occur to him that the obstruction was "... als werde seine Freiheit eingeschränkt, als mache man mit der Verhaftung ernst. ..." However, he maintained his collected air and left triumphantly.

When K. returned the next Sunday without being summoned, he received his first defeat at the hands of the court: the washerwoman was carried off to the judge against his wishes. His fear of defeat now began to grow at a fantastic rate for he realized that he no longer controlled the conspiracy against him. When he was next shown the offices of the law courts, the endless corridors increased his awareness of his inevitable defeat so that the fear and the atmosphere oppressed him causing a complete physical collapse: "... je weiter er kam, desto ärger musste es werden." When he revived in fresh air, he feared that his body would now begin to trouble him along with his trial.

The scene in which the whipper appeared illustrated how completely the anxiety could overcome K. even in his business life. The beating occurred in a storeroom of the bank, and K.'s main concern was that the clerks not discover the men and connect K. with the matter. When the entire scene was repeated the next night his agitation was

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48 *Der Prozess*, op. cit., p. 62.
49 Ibid., p. 87.
obvious for K. slammed the door, "und schlug noch mit den Fäusten gegen sie, als sei sie dann fester verschlossen. Fast weinend lief er zu den Dienern..." \(^{50}\)

Seizures of fear which caused the collapse in the court offices and the incident with the whipper, were, however, still unusual occurrences in the normal, calm, analytic world in which K. existed. K. reassured his uncle that he was doing everything possible for his own defense. He was still in complete control of his emotions and his position. According to Uyttersprot's placement of the section, the uncle appeared in Chapter Six which takes place in the summer, four or five months after K.'s arrest, and K.'s position with the bank was still basically unaffected by the trial. \(^{51}\) However in Chapter Seven, K. was a "shattered, tortured, self-torturing individual, one who is irresolute, apathetic, wholly unable to think." \(^{52}\) The fear that his case was already virtually lost haunted him constantly. His lawyer was secretive about the successes or failures of his inquiries, and therefore K. assumed the worst and was led to believe that the legal process was still in its initial stages.

\(^{50}\)Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 110.

\(^{51}\)Uyttersprot, op. cit., p. 132.

\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 135.
... was natürlich sehr geeignet war, den Angeklagten einzuschlafen und hilflos zu erhalten, um ihn dann plötzlich mit der Entscheidung zu überfallen oder wenigstens mit der Bekanntmachung, dass die zu seinen Ungunsten abgeschlossene Untersuchung an die höheren Behörden weitergegeben werde.53

Consideration of the shame brought on his family had entered his consciousness, and many of his friends and acquaintances knew of his trial. He had reason to fear that he was too deeply involved. "... er hatte kaum mehr die Wahl, den Prozess anzunehmen oder abzulehnen, er stand mitten darin und musste sich wehren. War er müde, dann war es schlimm."54 K. believed that he had to dismiss his lawyer even though "... die Schwierigkeit der Abfassung der Eingabe war überwältigend."55 When the manufacturer suggested that he call on Titorelli and pointed out the obvious danger of his wanting to write to the painter, K.

... war er über sich sehr erschrocken; ... Konnte er sich auf seinen eigenen Verstand tatsächlich schon so wenig verlassen? ... war es dann nicht möglich und sogar sehr wahrscheinlich, dass er auch andere Gefahren übersah oder in sie hineinrannte?56

53 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 151.
54 Ibid., p. 152.
55 Ibid., pp. 153.
56 Ibid., pp. 165-166.
In the discussion with Titorelli as K. became increasingly aware that "... der Angeklagte niemals frei ist..." the feeling of fear concerning the outcome of his case oppressed him just as "Das Gefühl, hier von der Luft vollständig abgesperrt zu sein..." His discovery that the painter's door led into the law court offices startled him because of "... seine Unwissenheit in Gerichtssachen."59

In Chapter Eight, K. went to Huld's home to dismiss him. There he met Block, the tradesman, who gave K. further cause for anxiety when he spoke about the uselessness of all hope and the superstitions which had grown up among the accused. K. frantically spoke to the lawyer about his case, hoping for some consolation.

Niemals früher hatte ich so grosse Sorgen wegen des Prozesses wie seit der Zeit, seitdem Sie mich vertreten. Als ich allein war, unternahm ich nichts in meiner Sache, aber ich fühlte es kaum, jetzt dagegen hatte ich einen Vertreter, alles war dafür eingerichtet, dass etwas geschehe, unaufhörlich und immer gespannter erwartete ich Ihr Eingreifen, aber es blieb aus... Aber das kann mir nicht genügen, wenn mir jetzt der Prozess, förmlich im geheimen, immer näher an den Leib rückt.60

57 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 194.
58 Ibid., p. 187.
59 Ibid., p. 198.
60 Ibid., p. 224.
By Chapter Nine K. admitted his anguish openly; his disintegration was almost complete. His prestige at the bank was threatened by his preoccupation with his case for he suspected that there was a plot to get him away while his work was investigated\(^{61}\) because he realized his work was threatened by the many mistakes which he could no longer avoid.\(^{62}\) He was afraid not to accept the business trips his work required of him; yet he hesitated about being away for even one day because he feared he would not be allowed to return.\(^{63}\) His anxiety now encompassed not only the outcome of his trial but also the success of his business endeavors. That K. had succumbed to his fears is evident in the cathedral when he said: "Früher dachte ich, es müsse gut enden . . . jetzt zweifle ich daran manchmal selbst."\(^{64}\) Later he confessed, ". . . alle anderen aber, die an dem Verfahren beteiligt sind, haben ein Vorurteil gegen mich. Sie flüssen es auch den Unbeteiligten ein. Meine Stellung wird immer schwieriger."\(^{65}\)

His last desperate hope for salvation was expressed by his visit to his mother. One fear after another about

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\(^{61}\) Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 238.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., p. 237.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p. 238.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., p. 252.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., p. 253.
his trip caused him to go into a deep trance: Suppose he should miss a chance to intervene on his own behalf? Suppose he should be rejected by his mother? Suppose his mother could not save him at all? "Fuhr er aber in irgendeiner Hoffnung seinetwegen hin, dann war er ein vollkommener Narr. . . ." Although the chapter was never finished, it is evident that K. found no solace at his home. So the door of hope was closed, and K. accepted his approaching execution and resolved to keep "... den ruhig einteilenden Verstand. . . ."  

3. Oversensitivity  

It has been noted that parallel with Kafka's withdrawal and anxiety as symptoms of his inferiority feelings, there existed in his personality a distinct tendency toward oversensitivity to the actions of others toward himself. When an individual comes to believe in his own inferiority, the intense preoccupation with self-analysis is automatically followed by the reasoning that if the individual himself recognizes his mistakes, then surely they are obvious to others and open to ridicule. Hence, the

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66 *Der Prozess*, op. cit., p. 279.
67 Ibid., p. 269.
individual misinterprets the banal remarks and actions of others as a direct attack on his ego. Throughout the entirety of Der Prozess, Joseph K. examined his own thoughts and actions, always convinced that his associates would attack each one for the purpose of ridiculing him. He also misinterpreted the actions of his friends as being antagonistic to him in nature. As his guilt and inferiority feelings increased, he became more and more sensitive.

On the morning of his arrest, Joseph K. was confronted by two strange men instead of his breakfast. In his anxiety he shouted: "Ich will doch sehen, was für Leute im Nebenzimmer sind und wie Frau Grubach diese Störung mir gegenüber verantworten wird." However, he immediately analyzed his outburst and regretted it, for he felt that even such a simple statement jeopardized his superior position over the warders and indicated that he was inferior to them. He assumed that these crude men would seize this chance statement to demonstrate their power. "Es fiel ihm zwar gleich ein, dass er das nicht hätte laut sagen müssen und dass er dadurch gewissermassen ein Beaufsichtungsrecht des Fremden anerkannte. . . ." 

In his defensive state of mind K. imagined that court officials now surrounded him constantly. He suspected that

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68 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 10.
69 Ibid., p. 10.
even the innocent house-porter's son might be a powerful figure in the court sent to spy on him. Even after he was informed of the boy's true identity, K. mistrusted everyone and he turned around for another look.

K., from the beginning, consciously assumed that everyone was determined to insult him for his guilt. He felt rejected when Frau Grubach, whom K. considered to be regular and sensible, forgot to shake his hand because of her embarrassment. "Her avoidance of his hand convinces him more than ever that he is a pariah." Because of this unintentional slight to which he attached undue importance, ". . . er hatte sogar den Verdacht gegen sich, dass er darauf ausging, die Wohnung wegen der Vorfälle am Morgen zu wechseln."

An example of K.'s inclination to take offense at the slightest setback is recognized in his reaction to Fräulein Bürstner's refusal to allow him to move her night table to reenact the court of inquiry. It must be taken into account that it was very late at night, that Fräulein Bürstner was tired, that K. was almost a stranger, and that

70 Neider, op. cit., p. 109.
71 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 29.
72 Neider, op. cit., p. 113.
73 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 34.
Fräulein Bürstner was not in the least interested in the proceedings. Nevertheless, K. intensely resented her refusal: "Dann kann ich es Ihnen nicht zeigen, sagte K. aufgeregt, als füge man ihm dadurch einen unermesslichen Schaden zu."  

K.'s analysis of his puzzling actions and reactions was always logical to himself. He became so preoccupied with his own difficulties that he could never recognize his irrationality in simple matters. For instance, he walked to the first interrogation because

... er hatte Abscheu vor jeder, selbst der geringsten fremden Hilfe in dieser seiner Sache, auch wollte er niemanden in Anspruch nehmen und dadurch selbst nur im allerentferntesten einweihen. ...  

Like Kafka himself, K. became intensely sensitive to noise, as demonstrated by his irritation with the commotion created when Fräulein Montag moved in with Fräulein Bürstner. "Sie scheinen mich wohl für überempfindlich zu halten, weil ich diese Wanderungen des Fräulein Montag—jetzt geht sie wieder zurück—nicht vertragen kann," he complained to Frau Grubach.

Even though K. constantly asserted his innocence of any crime, his actions with Fräulein Montag and Captain Lanz

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74 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 39.
75 Ibid., p. 47.
76 Ibid., pp. 96-97.
took on the characteristics of a criminal who is suspicious of every human contact, "... der Handkuss hatte sie für ihn zu einer Gruppe verbunden, die ihn unter dem Anschein äußerster Harmlosigkeit und Uneigennützigkeit von Fräulein Bürstner abhalten wollte."77 When K. surreptitiously tried to contact Fräulein Bürstner anyway, he turned to find Captain Lanz and Fräulein Montag observing his act and made a guilty escape.

When people around K. smiled, he thought they were ridiculing his attempts to solve his case.

. . . als er gerade mit Arbeit überhöht war, plötzlich alles zur Seite geschoben und den Schreibblock vorgenommen hatte, um versuchsweise den Gedankengang einer derartigen Eingabe zu entwerfen . . . und wie gerade in diesem Augenblick die Tür des Direktionszimmers sich öffnete und der Direktor-Stellvertreter mit grossem Gelächter eintrat. Es war für K. damals sehr peinlich gewesen, obwohl der Direktor-Stellvertreter natürlich nicht über die Eingabe gelacht hatte, von der er nichts wusste, sondern über einen Börsenwitz, den er eben gehört hatte. . . . 79

77 *Der Prozess*, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

78 Ibid., p. 102.

79 Ibid., p. 154.

Sie standen dort vielleicht schon, seitdem K. die Tür geöffnet hatte, sie vermieden jeden Anschein, als ob sie K. etwa beobachteten, sie unterhielten sich leise und verfolgten K.'s Bewegungen mit den Blicken nur so, wie man während eines Gespräches zerstreut umherblickt. Aber auf K. lagen diese Blicke doch schwer, er beeilte sich, an der Wand entlang in sein Zimmer zu kommen.78

When people around K. smiled, he thought they were...
He felt outcast when people jokingly discussed him in his presence as though he were not there. "Wie schlimm er heute ist, nicht?" fragte Leni den Kaufmann. Jetzt bin ich der Abwesende, dachte K. und wurde fast sogar auf den Kaufmann böse. . . ."  

He imagined that he was spied upon by the assistant manager, who he knew had heard nothing of the case.

Er glaubte dann zu sehen, wie der Direktor-Stellvertreter, der ja immer auf der Lauer gewesen war, von Zeit zu Zeit in sein Büro kam, sich an seinen Schreibtisch setzte, seine Schriftstücke durchsuchte . . . ja vielleicht sogar Fehler aufdeckte. . . .

K.'s sensitivity followed him to his execution. From the moment the executioners came into his room, K. was preoccupied with irrelevant details precisely when he should have been concentrating on the important matter of his impending death.  

"Alte, untergeordnete Schauspieler schickt man um mich, sagte sich K. und sah sich um, um sich nochmals davon zu überzeugen. Man sucht auf billige Weise mit mir fertig zu werden."  

His slanted perception observed the most minute

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80 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 217.
81 Ibid., p. 237.
82 Neider, op. cit., p. 93.
83 Der Prozess, op. cit., pp. 266-267.
detail concerning his executioners. "Er ekelte sich vor der Reinlichkeit ihrer Gesichter."\textsuperscript{84}

The hypersensitivity characteristic of the inferiority feelings in Kafka was clearly evident in the personality of Joseph K. An oversensitivity, coupled with anxiety because of his feelings of inadequacy to the task required of him and a final withdrawal from the responsibilities of society, describes the basic personality traits of Joseph K.. Adler states that one can observe that an individual who possesses symptoms of this nature will prove in his actions that he has a feeling of inferiority for which he must compensate to establish his superiority. Because K.'s tendency is toward withdrawal, it would be natural that he would react passively to the situations in his life. It is significant to note that although Adler lists scores of compensatory actions, only those employed by Kafka himself appear in the personality of Joseph K.

4. \textbf{Superiority and Innocence}

Adler states that one expression of a person's inferiority is the constant basic need to proclaim his superiority in order to conceal from others his personal

\textsuperscript{84}\textit{Der Prozess, op. cit.,} p. 267.
dissatisfaction with himself. If K. could have convinced others of his superiority over the court officials and of his innocence by his claims, then he would have defeated a highly esteemed and authoritative organization and thereby enhanced his own ego.

Before the arrest, K., although rather withdrawn and quiet, occupied a prominent position in society. His association with the lawyers' dining club confirmed his belief that even men in the legal profession held him in high esteem. "Als geschäftlicher Fachmann war er bald anerkannt und seine Meinung in solchen Dingen galt . . . als etwas Unumstößliches." He was also well liked by the manager of the Bank, "... der seine Arbeitskraft und Vertrauenswürdigkeit sehr schätzte." His position at Frau Grubach's boarding house was also unquestionably high, for K. said, "er wisse sehr gut, dass er ihr bester und liebster Mieter sei."

When the arrest came, his confidence in himself was shaken, and he continually had to reassure himself and others around him that he occupied the same superior position as before the trial began. His first encounter

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85 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 283.
86 Ibid., p. 27.
87 Ibid., p. 29.
with the warders convinced him of their "Dummheit" and their "geistige Beschränktheit" as compared to his own abilities. And yet they dominated him and ordered him around. As he waited for the inspector, he was preoccupied with the thought that, "Ein paar Worte, die ich mit einem mir ebenbürtigen Menschen sprechen werde, werden alles unvergleichlich klarer machen als die längsten Reden mit diesen." K.'s feeling of superiority over the court officials was increased when he was introduced to the inspector. His first impression was one of relief and "... Wohlgefühl, endlich einem vernünftigen Menschen gegenüberzustehen..." and he declared confidently that the official "... nicht die geringste Schuld auffinden kann," of which he could be accused. But the inspector's attack on him unnerved K.'s confidence in himself, and he struck back by proclaiming his superiority again: "Sie wollen einen Sinn und führen das Sinnloseste auf, das es gibt?" Obviously K.'s self-possession was disturbed by the

88 Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 15.
89 Ibid., p. 17.
90 Ibid., pp. 15-16.
91 Ibid., p. 20.
92 Ibid., p. 21.
93 Ibid., p. 22.
arrest, but he assured himself and Frau Grubach that it was a matter over which he had complete control. He insinuated his innocence to Frau Grubach and later to Fräulein Bürstner. Nevertheless, he chose to attend the court as directed to prove his innocence to the superior officers. There, once more he dominated the proceedings by his prolixity, forcefulness, and boasting in the speech challenging the magistrate. But his ultimate realization was that the audience had remained unimpressed by his importance.

Joseph K. was flattered by the washerwoman's compliments and her proposals of aid. He considered the magnificent effect which would be produced if "... der Untersuchungsrichter ... in später Nacht das Bett der Frau leer fand. Und leer deshalb, weil sie K. gehörte. . . ." When the washerwoman was snatched away from him and did not protest leaving, he consoled himself with the thought that:

... er erhielt die Niederlage nur deshalb, weil er den Kampf aufsuchte. Wenn er zu Hause bliebe und sein gewohntes Leben führte; war er jedem dieser Leute tausendfach überlegen und konnte jeden mit einem Fusstritt von seinem Wege räumen.¹⁶

¹⁴ Neider, op. cit., p. 114.
¹⁵ Der Prozess, op. cit., pp. 72-73.
¹⁶ Ibid., p. 75.
He observed that the girl was taken to the Magistrate's room in the attic, which convinced him that his office was far superior.

In welcher Stellung befand sich doch K. gegenüber dem Richter, der auf dem Dachboden sass, während er selbst in der Bank ein grosses Zimmer mit einem Vorzimmer hatte und durch eine riesige Fensterscheibe auf den belebten Stadtplatz hinuntersehen konnte?97

The above four illustrations of the actions of Joseph K. in relation to the court show a striking pattern emerging. Each time K. approached the court or its officials with confidence of his own superiority over them; he verbally or mentally reassured himself that he was above them while trying to convince them of his innocence; but his defeat on each occasion further undermined his self-confidence, and he gradually developed a feeling of incompetence in his dealings with the court.

The pattern of asserting his superiority was repeated in his first visit to the law offices when he confidently approached one of the accused men, who trembled in K.'s presence.

... glaubte man ihm nicht, dass er angeklagt war, so war es desto besser; vielleicht hielt er ihn sogar für einen Richter. Und er fasste ihn nun zum Abschied wirklich fester, stiess ihn auf die Bank zurück und ging weiter.98

97Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 77.
98Ibid., p. 82.
But K. returned through the lobby a man as broken as the other defendants.

K. went to the painter, Titorelli, to gain further insight into the court proceedings. He was encouraged when Titorelli asked

'Sie sind unschuldig?' fragte er. 'Ja,' sagte K. Die Beantwortung dieser Frage machte ihm geradezu Freude, besonders da sie gegenüber einem Privatmann, also ohne jede Verantwortung erfolgte. Noch niemand hatte ihn so offen gefragt.\textsuperscript{99}

But the interview ended with his humiliating entrance into the law court offices.

K. decided to dismiss his lawyer for he was convinced that he could handle his own case better than any other person, for "... das Gericht sollte einmal auf einen Angeklagten stossen, der sein Recht zu wahren verstand."\textsuperscript{100}

While he was at Huld's house, he intimidated the tradesman and showed arrogance as he compared his own appearance to Block's: "Schon durch den Besitz eines starken Überrocks fühlte er sich dem mageren Kleinen sehr überlegen."\textsuperscript{101}

K. disdainfully refused to discuss his business in the presence of Block but he considered "... seine Sache doch für zu wichtig, als dass dieser kleine Kaufmann vielleicht

\textsuperscript{99}Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 179.
\textsuperscript{100}Ibid., p. 153.
\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., p. 202.
entscheidend eingreifen sollte. . ."\textsuperscript{102} Yet K. was berated by Block and remained silent.

Throughout the novel Joseph K. attempted to prove his superiority and innocence without success until gradually, almost without knowing, he succumbed to the belief that if he could not defeat such a corrupt institution, then he, himself, must be more inferior than they.

5. Guilt

Even though Joseph K. constantly proclaimed his innocence, his actions were more like those of a guilty person. This, too, in its own strange way was a compensation for his feelings of inferiority. He felt that his pitiful actions would attract the attention of supporters who would contradict his guilt and acknowledge his innocence. The greater the number of sympathizers with his position, the greater would be the bolstering of his ego.

At first, K. wished to discuss the trial with no one, but the doubt of his own innocence which the inspector instilled in his mind caused him to speak with Frau Grubach to reaffirm his self-esteem. In failing to shake his hand, she deflated his ego rather than re-enforced it. His shout,

\textsuperscript{102}Der Prozess, op. cit., p. 205.
"... wenn Sie die Pension rein erhalten wollen, müssen Sie zuerst mir kündigen,"¹⁰³ was a plea by K, for Frau Grubach to contradict his self-accusation and comfort him. Since K. got no consolation from Frau Grubach, who did nothing to alleviate his doubts, he confessed the entire proceedings to Fräulein Bürstner, still hoping for a restoration of his twice damaged ego. But she refused to commit herself and say that she thought him innocent, and his own doubts increased.

K.'s act of appearing for the interrogation was in essence admitting his guilt so that the audience would contradict him by proclaiming that he was indeed an exemplary citizen who had been unjustly accused. However, the opposite happened, for his appearance at the court served only to increase his self-doubt, and at the end of his appeal the judge informed him that he had further jeopardized the chance that his case would come to a favorable conclusion.

In allowing his uncle to hire a lawyer, K. admitted that he needed someone to side with him and to prove his innocence to others. However, the lawyer assumed that K. was guilty, not innocent, and that the case would be extremely difficult.

¹⁰³Per Prozess, op. cit., p. 33.
More and more people found out about the trial. K. deliberately told some about it; many learned about it through other channels. But no one gave him the kind of support that he needed to restore his self-confidence since they all assumed that he was guilty. And yet, strangely, he enjoyed attracting the attention of so many strangers to his ignominious situation. The arrest marked the beginning of K.'s freedom from obscurity. In fact, his circumstance is much like that of Nietzsche's Zarathustra or the inferiority ridden characters of Thomas Mann's early short stories.

Apparently Joseph K. liked being on trial, for it gave him a sense that he was important because of his problem. He revelled in the notoriety, for it offered him a relief from his dull, routine life. "He prefers the distinction of being accused--only the mediocre are never put on trial." K. admitted "... denn es ist ja nur ein Verfahren, wenn ich es als solches anerkenne." But he did recognize it as a trial because he needed confirmation of his own worth.

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104Slochower, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
107*Der Prozess*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
Since K.'s personality was basically passive, he found it impossible to release his hostilities toward the court by acts of violence on the officials. Instead, his aggression was oriented toward himself, causing his attention to be focused on his own sufferings and incompetence. The greater his need for proof of his superiority became and the more the corresponding rejection of him increased, the more his tortured mind dwelt on his problems to the point that his total lack of confidence destroyed his will to live.

The process of self-destruction was a gradual one, beginning with his self-accusation to Frau Grubach when he proclaimed that he was not worthy of living in her boarding house. The scene involving the whipper was an excellent example of masochistic tendencies that K. displayed and employed to torture himself. His self-directed aggression is illustrated by the fact that when the warders were to be beaten, he considered offering himself in their place.

The parallel to his desire to be punished was his equal desire to be rescued and comforted by someone. K. subjected himself to greater and greater dangers hoping to be saved; but he was satisfied with the resultant defeat, which allowed him to concentrate on his sufferings. He
finally convinced himself that because of his inferiority, defeat was inevitable, and hope of salvation from death was gone.

Even though he brought ruin upon himself by insisting that his case be brought up, his death was not one of a personality completely destroyed to the point of total self-annihilation. K. could not plunge the knife into his own heart, for one flicker of hope glimmered in the symbol of the figure at the lighted window.

The description of the development of the character of Joseph K. was essentially the description of the conception and growth of the feeling of inferiority with its resultant destructive powers. The personality of Joseph K. reflected exactly, and in detail, the traits found in the personality of Franz Kafka. They both epitomized the withdrawn, over-anxious, humiliated, thus defeated, individual who constantly sought reassurance of his value but whose entire life was ruined by the monopolizing thoughts of his exaggerated feelings of insecurity, guilt, and incompetence.

b. Comparison of Franz Kafka and Joseph K.

It is clear that the similarities between the personalities of Franz Kafka and Joseph K. were striking. Both
possessed anxiety-filled, withdrawn natures. Both were preoccupied with their problems rather than intent upon a solution, because inferiority feelings hampered their objectivity. But the parallel between the two extended beyond the psychic affinity. It is not by chance that Joseph K. was a bank official employed in an analytical position, for Kafka's job as an official of the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute was to analyze and draw up statistical data concerning the accidents reported. Based on his office experiences, were the bureaucratic practices of senseless red tape which Kafka created and K. had to cut through to reach the court. Brod stated:

Ganze Kapitel der Romane Der Prozess und Das Schloss nehmen ihre Schale, ihre realistischen Deckblätter aus dem in der Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherung erlebten Milieu.108

The unnecessary secretaries, the mountains of paper work, sometimes lost or useless, under which K. suffered were parts of Kafka's official life which he hated. In this sense, K. can be compared to Georg Kaiser's cashier in the drama Von Morgens bis Mitternacht who also hated the routine, humdrum existence of petty officialdom.109

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108 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 78.

Just as K. wished that his official life allowed him more time to devote to his defense in the trial, Kafka felt that the hours spent in his place of employment wasted precious time in which he could have developed his creative work. What was for Kafka the true-to-life situation of the conflict between business and art had been previously used only as a symptomatic and a symbolic problem by writers such as Thomas Mann. Although K. was in competition with the assistant manager of the bank, the manager of the bank held him in high esteem. There is evidence that Kafka's superiors respected and admired his professional aptitude. Kafka admitted in a letter to Milena that for days he spent his hours at work in reverie rather than at his assigned tasks, a condition which is reflected in K.'s increasing inability to keep his mind on his bank duties.

Besides the resemblance between Kafka and K. in their psychological structures and in their official natures, the similarity is most striking in their personal lives. Joseph's last name was significantly Kafka's own last initial, K., which Kafka used in the names of the protagonists in all three of his unfinished novels. The fact that Kafka, himself, considered "... die "K"

110 Brod, Uber Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 76.
110 Briefe an Milena, op. cit., p. 115.
and yet used it in Der Prozess for the name of a defeated man seems to indicate that Kafka's parallel between himself and Joseph K. was deliberate. Then, too, "K., as every one of Kafka's major characters, is a bachelor [and] Kafka himself did not marry. Here lie . . . Kafka's guilt roots."  

In fact, Kafka incorporated references to his fiancee, Felice Bauer, into Der Prozess in the character of Fräulein Bürstner. The initials are identical, and Brod observes that "... im Manuskript bezeichnet Kafka diese Gestalt meist abgekürzt als Frl. B. oder F. B., und da wird der Zusammenhang wohl ganz klar."  

The story of Der Prozess opened on Joseph K.'s thirtieth birthday and his execution took place one year later on his thirty-first birthday. Kafka, himself, was thirty-one in 1914 when he began work on the novel.  

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112 Tagesbücher, op. cit., p. 375.  
113 Slochower, op. cit., p. 18.  
115 Ibid., p. 130.
C. The Effect of the Inferiority Feelings of Franz Kafka on the Personality of Joseph K.

In May, 1914, shortly before his thirty-first birthday, Kafka became engaged to Felice Bauer. Marriage, to Kafka, traditionally represented the ultimate happiness a person could achieve on earth. But his engagement seemed to intensify rather than alleviate his feelings of inferiority because it focused the attention of many people on his acceptance of responsibility. One of the many inner struggles which Kafka faced in the succeeding months was his inability to adjust to his exaggerated idea of his father's authority and success in marriage. Kafka felt that since he was inferior to his father in every other way, that his relationship with a wife would also be inferior to the harmony that existed between his mother and father, and therefore he could not marry. Also, sharing life with another person would mean that at night and on Sundays he would be sacrificing hours of freedom for writing—already too few because Kafka had to work at the office. But since marriage was the ultimate goal in the life of a Jew, Kafka felt he was a complete failure as a human unless he married. With all these problems confronting him at once, he knew he would cross the brink into insanity unless he could share with someone his preoccupation with his suffering. Kafka could not find a meaningful escape in the Jewish religion.
He did not recognize a savior who was sent to earth to assume the burden of sin from people; he did not have a father confessor, so he had to bear his guilt feelings alone. The only way Kafka found to relieve his inner struggles was to confess them disguised as K., the main character in his novel.

The court, then, takes on the aspect of Kafka's inability to face responsibility—to his father, to his family, to his religion, to a wife, and to authority in general—a situation with which Kafka was unable to cope. For K., the symbol of absolute authority was the court. He could not understand his inferiority to it (since the court was corrupt), any more than Kafka could understand his own feelings of his inferiority to his father (who did not obey his own rules). The trial interfered with K.'s private life at night and on Sundays just as marriage would have interfered with Kafka's life as a writer. As Kafka could not find solace from his problems in other people or in religion, so K. could not be helped by an advocate or anyone else. Kafka's ultimate conclusion, that he was a failure in life because he was afraid to marry, found its parallel in K.'s feeling that he was inferior to the demands of the court and not worthy of living.

The fact that the novel was never finished or revised only serves as further evidence of the confessional
nature of *Der Prozess*. Once the inner struggles of the more mature Kafka focussed on another problem, the problems of K. were no longer meaningful enough to recapture his attention. Thus the struggles of K. to win a victory over the court are, in effect, the same as the struggles of Kafka to overcome his intense feelings of inferiority—and both failed.
CHAPTER IV

THE INFERIORITY FEELINGS IN THE PROTAGONISTS

OF SELECTED SHORT STORIES
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Although Der Prozess is perhaps Kafka's most complete study of an individual who developed a fatal inferiority complex, it was not his first work in which a maladjusted personality appeared. His first writings available to us are his travel diaries and a description of an airplane flight which he observed in Brescia. However, these works were merely descriptions and reports. The venture into creative literature came in 1912, when he turned inward and began to write about the problems of his own life. Each one of the major stories which appeared after that time contained at least one character modeled after Kafka's own personality.

Of course, one does not find as many traits of a complex personality presented in the short stories as he finds in the novel Der Prozess, for the form of the short story limits the character development to one incident. However, one does find adequate evidence in the personalities presented to determine that the characters of Kafka's short stories suffered from exaggerated feelings of inferiority.
Since the major themes of Kafka's writings were so closely related to his own problematic personality and since his personal problems fluctuated in importance, Kafka's creative ability was limited, to a certain extent, to works he could complete in a short time. For this reason, many of his most meaningful works took the form of the short story. Of the short stories which Kafka himself considered complete enough to be published in his lifetime, five are considered to be of the greatest significance for the purpose of this study. The five stories to be considered are: "Das Urteil," 1912; "Die Verwandlung," 1912; "In der Strafkolonie," 1914; "Ein Landarzt," 1916; and "Ein Hungerkünstler," 1923.

A. "Das Urteil"

On the night of September 22, 1912, scarcely more than five weeks after Franz Kafka met his future fiancee in the home of Max Brod, he wrote in one sitting the highly autobiographical short story, "Das Urteil," which was later to become recognized as his first great creative work.¹ Heinz Politzer, in evaluating the effect which this story had on the literary career of Kafka, states that Kafka

¹Politzer, op. cit., p. 48.
"succeeded in breaking through the disjointed style of his early works and created for the first time a coherent tale distinguished by concentrated imagery."\(^2\) Kafka himself considered "Das Urteil" to have passed the test of his fanatical perfectionism when he allowed it to be published in 1913.

Two factors in Kafka's life precipitated the writing of "Das Urteil"; one had dominated his existence for twenty-nine years, the other only a few weeks. The second intensified his preoccupation with the first. The first and major problem under which Kafka suffered at the time of his most productive period of writing was his exaggerated conception of his father's domination and his corresponding feeling of inferiority. "Kafka felt . . . that his own father was always judging him—and finding him wanting. And, certainly, on one level, The Judgment indicates that feeling."\(^3\) The second problem of Kafka's, which compounded the first, was his courtship of Felice Bauer. Suddenly he was faced with the possibility of ending his bachelorhood and with it his creative opportunities. Since "Das Urteil" centers around three men living in the condition of

\(^2\)Politzer, op. cit., p. 52.

bachelorhood--Georg, the father, and the friend--the question of to marry or not to marry is certainly a central theme.4

That Georg Bendemann is in essence Franz Kafka is reflected in an excerpt from Kafka's diary concerning the story.

Georg hat so viel Buchstaben wie Franz. In Bendemann ist 'mann' nur eine für alle noch unbekannten Möglichkeiten der Geschichte vorgenommene Verstärkung von 'Bende'. Bende aber hat ebenso viele Buchstaben wie Kafka und der Vokal e wiederholt sich an den gleichen Stellen wie der Vokal a in Kafka.5

It is significant to note also that Bende resembles Binde or "bonds"6 which seems to indicate that Georg is a "bonds man" from birth--bound to his father's will.

Kafka also included in his discussion of "Das Urteil" an additional relationship between himself and Georg in the image of the fiancee: "Frieda hat ebensoviel Buchstaben wie F. [Felice] und den gleichen Anfangsbuchstaben, Brandenfeld hat den gleichen Anfangsbuchstaben wie B. [Bauer]." Also, he noted the connection between the word "feld" or "field" and "Bauer" or "peasant."8 He says

4Politzer, op. cit., p. 56.
5Tagebücher, op. cit., p. 297.
6Politzer, op. cit., p. 64.
7Tagebücher, 1910-13, op. cit., p. 297.
8Politzer, op. cit., p. 64.
that Felice's home town, Berlin, may have influenced him as well as the Brandenburg province. Since Georg Bendemann is Franz Kafka by his own admission, it would be safe to assume that the personality defects of the latter would appear in the character of the former.

In the short story "Das Urteil," just as in all of his works, Kafka attempted to alleviate his anxieties by writing about his inner conflicts. The discord inherent in his personality was expressed by two facets of the same personality. 9 Georg, on the one hand, was the epitome of the deceitful businessman which Kafka feared he might become if he devoted his time entirely to his office work. In short, Georg was the successful individual who would take over the father's business and achieve success by unethical practices. The friend in St. Petersburg, on the other hand, expressed Kafka's undisguised, withdrawn, sensitive personality which he developed as a result of his father's

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severe discipline. This inferiority-ridden facet of existence Kafka rarely displayed to even his closest friends, but reserved for his creative works. In that light, the friend in Russia represented the traits of personality which Georg wished to suppress. Although the character of the friend is synonymous with that of Georg, his existence is known only through Georg's telling of him which seems to indicate that Kafka was aware of his own dichotomy. Thus, the life of the friend in Russia is arranged for him, and he exists in the story only as another facet of Georg, himself.

The fact that Georg, like Kafka, recognized every trait of his personality and found it necessary to suppress certain ones gives rise to the belief that he must have been a young man who was completely submissive to the desires of his father and extremely sensitive to be able to detect those desires. Yet Georg, just as Franz Kafka himself, felt "that his own father was always judging him—and finding him wanting."\(^\text{10}\) If this is true, and the evidence seems to substantiate this statement, then Georg's constant adjustment of his personality to suit his father obviously resulted in an oversensitivity to every situation, just as did that in Kafka. Georg, like his creator, attached undue

\(^{10}\) Steinberg, op. cit., p. 29.
regard to the written word. He felt that his letter to the friend was the total commitment to his marriage and the final denial of his author personality; hence he hesitated for a long time before he made the decision to mail the letter. "Mit diesem Brief in der Hand war Georg lange, das Gesicht dem Fenster zugekehrt, an seinem Schreibtisch gesessen."\(^1\) In the midst of his father's tirade, Georg showed his detachment when he could not concentrate on the importance of his father's words but rather on the possibility of his father's falling. "Jetzt wird er sich vor­beugen, dachte Georg, wenn er fiele und zerschmetterte!"\(^2\)

When the father mentioned that he had Georg's customers in his pocket, Georg's mind concentrated, not on the loss of the customers, but on the pocket image. "'Sogar im Hemd hat er Taschen!' sagte sich Georg und glaubte, er könne ihn mit dieser Bemerkung in der ganzen Welt unmöglich machen."\(^3\)

Even in the final suicide scene, Georg's last thoughts inconceivably fasten onto a bus which he thought would cover the sound of his fall. "Noch hielt er sich mit schwächer werdenden Händen fest, erspähte zwischen den Geländerstangen einen Autoomnibus, der mit Leichtigkeit


\(^2\) "Das Urteil," *op. cit.*, p. 16.

seinen Fall übertönen würde. . . ."\textsuperscript{14}

However great Georg's desire may have been to suppress his personality traits, reflected in his friend in St. Petersburg, he was not successful in accomplishing this, for he "showed that he did feel the need for this friend, since he never ceased to write to him."\textsuperscript{15} Georg did not live in total isolation, but the peculiar nature of his correspondence with his friend in Russia tends to indicate that he felt guilty about his success and satisfaction as a businessman while his creative personality failed because he "hatte keine Lust gehabt, dem Freund von seinen geschäftlichen Erfolgen zu schreiben. . . ."\textsuperscript{16} Georg and his fiancee both realized that if his friend, or Kafka's writing personality, came into prominence before the wedding, Georg would be sorely tempted to give up his business and marriage to choose the ascetic life of the mind. His fiancee argued that if Georg were having so much difficulty deciding between her and the friend, perhaps he should have chosen the friend. This passage gives insight into the crisis which Kafka was facing: to choose writing or marriage. Consequently, when the father asserted himself by deriding the marriage and claiming the friend as his own,

\textsuperscript{14}"Das Urteil," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{15}White, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 224.
\textsuperscript{16}"Das Urteil," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 9.
Georg was entirely alienated from the three people who might have aided his attempt at independence—the father, the fiancee, and the friend. Because his character was not strong enough to withstand the isolation, the only alternative was death, and the verdict became a command.

In reading "Das Urteil," one becomes increasingly aware of the striking similarities between it and the Brief an den Vater. In both, the author emphasized the strength of the father and the inability of the son to act independently. In "Das Urteil" Georg, through his impending marriage to Frieda Brandenfeld, attempts to escape the sphere of his father's domination. If he had been able to establish a family of his own, his commitment to his father would have been lessened. But because of his lack of self-confidence, he was compelled to give up any plans of an independent life and to obey the father's command, which destroyed not only any hope he might have had for independence but also his life. The story then is, at least in part, the unveiling of hidden personality traits, one of which is Georg's inability to establish himself as an independent member of society because of his lack of confidence in himself. Even before the accusation came, Georg sensed that his father was still the stronger of the two. "Mein

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Vater ist noch immer ein Riese', sagte Georg sich." In the scene when the father on the bed towered above the son, the father uncannily destroyed the little self-confidence the son had had in himself so that "Georg stand in einem Winkel, möglichst weit vom Vater." The father exposed the immature, parasitic nature of Georg who was too pre-occupied with his own problems to consider the welfare of others. Georg Bendemann was a man so seriously lacking in confidence in his ability to shape the future according to his own desires that he neglected his duties to his friend, to his fiancee, and to his father, until it was too late to reconcile his alienation from them.

Closely related to Georg's lack of self-confidence is his lack of responsibility. Because he had a lack of confidence in his ability to execute those plans which he himself considered most important to his own well-being, it is understandable that he would feel that he was inadequate to perform the tasks assigned to him by others. Georg had, in fact, become so involved in his own personal problems that he was unable to carry out the responsibilities which society demanded of him. His passive, dependent nature would not allow him to defy his father to achieve independence and accept responsibility. Because his father's

18 "Das Urteil," op. cit., p. 11.
19 Ibid., p. 16.
tirade made him realize his exaggerated feeling of incompetence, he could no longer accept the responsibility of even his own life.

Although Georg had been aware of the dualistic nature of his own personality from the beginning of the story, the sudden knowledge that his father knew of it, too, must have come as an enormous shock. The reaction of Georg's outer self to the uncovering of his inner self exhibited the strong masochistic tendencies which had been dormant within him. His own recognition of his lack of responsibility, his oversensitivity, tendency to withdraw, and lack of self-confidence only heightened his self-disparagement and convinced him of his worthlessness, thus causing him to execute the judgment which his father pronounced upon him.

For Georg, the artificial life of a successful businessman was not enough to overcome the undesirable personality traits which Kafka so skillfully portrayed in the friend in Russia. Kafka's own desire to become a better person than Georg conflicted with his own inferiority-ridden personality and caused such inner torment that the endless self-preoccupation threatened his reconciliation with society. In "Das Urteil" Kafka reiterated the theme originated by Thomas Mann in "Tonio Kröger," for it was

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20Kate Flores, op. cit., p. 18.
Mann who first combined devotion and suspicion in the personality of the creative genius who is subsequently examined, evaluated, and judged.21

B. "Die Verwandlung"

"Die Verwandlung," the story of Gregor Samsa's transformation into an ungeheueres Ungeziefer, was written at about the same time as "Das Urteil," and under identical influences. The characters of "Die Verwandlung" resemble those of "Das Urteil": a down-trodden father renewed with strength and a strange son striving for independence suddenly helpless.22 "Die Verwandlung" is the story of a young man so beset by extreme feelings of inferiority that he feels himself incapable of carrying out the necessary duties of an individual in the society in which he lives. Kafka's use of the cockroach image exhibits his inexhaustible supply of repulsive symbols to represent the self-secluded individuals in society; Werfel and Mann had depicted similar individuals as having more acceptable social attributes.23

21Eisner, op. cit., p. 10.
22Tauber, op. cit., p. 18.
23Eisner, op. cit., p. 9.
The reason for Gregor Samsa's inferiority complex, is of course, the same as Kafka's himself, for Gregor is a veritable reflection of the inner existence of Franz Kafka.

The key to the identification of Gregor lies in a cryptogram presented by his last name, Samsa. If one were to substitute a "k" for the letter "s", he would produce "Kamka", a name strikingly similar to "Kafka." There is also the additional evidence that the names Samsa and Kafka have the same number of letters and the identical placement and distribution of the vowel "a." Other biographical evidence in the story is the conflict which arises between Gregor, the insect, and the father. As has previously been mentioned, Kafka, throughout his entire lifetime was not able to reconcile the father-son conflict in his own life.

Peter A. Martin, a practicing psychiatrist, discussed the possible effects of Kafka's poor relationship with his father. He related the case studies of two individuals, a librarian and an engineer, who, like Kafka developed an identification with a cockroach because they had the impression that they were unloved and rejected by a parent figure. However important the factor of rejection may be, it is not this factor alone which is decisive in the

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final development of an individual's character and stability. Adler states that it is not the actual condition in which the individual exists that determines his self-image, but what he, himself, considers to be his own value and worth that is crucial in the formation of the personality. In Kafka's case, his own illimitably low opinion of himself was derived from the low opinion which he believed his parents held of him. Instead of developing a mature self-reliance, Kafka developed a dependency on others to provide him with a self-image. Consequently, when left alone he, because of a lack of positive self-image, reduced himself to the status of an insect. In his own evaluations, he became a human being only when his ego was sufficiently bolstered by the approval of his peers.  

Kafka appears in "Die Verwandlung" to be one of the individuals who never overcame the sense of shame and degradation which he attached to the childhood experiences associated with his father. Kafka, disguised as Gregor Samsa, was convinced that his value as an individual was no better than that of vermin. He had developed deep-seated feelings of inferiority which affected his entire existence.

26 Martin, op. cit., p. 69.
27 Ibid., p. 70.
For the individual who suffers from excessive feelings of inferiority, it is often difficult to make decisions. This appears also to be one of the motivating factors in Gregor's metamorphosis into an insect. Because Gregor had taken over the role of bread-winner in the family, there arose a dilemma in his life which had to be resolved. He had to choose between his responsibility to his parents and his inner desire to be free and independent. As long as Gregor retained his human form he was confronted with this dilemma; however, upon undergoing the metamorphosis, he no longer was confronted with the problem. His insect body no longer required him to be responsible for the well-being of the family and therefore, "glaubte er, die endgültige Besserung alles Leidens stehe unmittelbar bevor.".

Of course, Gregor's indecision also manifested itself in another trait which often accompanies the feeling of inferiority. Since Gregor could not make a decision and actively pursue it as an insect, he had no driving force in life which could give him a will to live. In the form of an insect, he could easily be done away with without causing


30 Franz Kafka, "Die Verwandlung," Das Urteil, op. cit., p. 34.

31 Gibian, op. cit., p. 29.
any grief to the members of his family or bringing shame to the firm which employed him.

The individual who is unable to make a decision is often not called upon to carry out important tasks since he shows signs of being irresponsible. This seems to be the case with Gregor, for when his body began to feel the strain of his work and his consciousness found the responsibility too hard to bear, the metamorphosis occurred, freeing him from any further responsibility. 32 "Würden sie erschrecken, dann hatte Gregor keine Verantwortung mehr und konnte ruhig sein." 33 It was Gregor's great misfortune to find himself suddenly in a position of responsibility for the welfare of the family; and not being able to accept it caused him to encounter his fatal disaster. Those individuals who find themselves in a moral universe but who cannot discharge the duties imparted by the morality of which they are a part must end in disaster. 34

Gregor's recognition of his inability to face life because of his indecision and lack of responsibility caused him to react in an extreme fashion. The only solution, and it was only a partial one at best, was to withdraw from society completely. The act of withdrawing—metamorphosizing—"was not a misfortune imposed by fate, but a flight

32 Sokel, op. cit., p. 206.
33 "Die Verwandlung," op. cit., p. 28.
34 Landsberg, op. cit., p. 232.
that was too perfectly accomplished."³⁵ Gregor Samsa deserted humanity of his own free will, not because society had ostracized him. Suddenly there existed a great abyss between Gregor and his peers, an abyss that isolated Gregor, an abyss which exemplified "a radical separation based on misunderstanding."³⁶ This misunderstanding was brought about in part by the business world which Gregor could not fathom, much less justify. And since the business seemed to control Gregor's destiny, he wished to escape it.³⁷ Through isolation Gregor was able to escape the world, and when he lost his ability to speak, the one faculty remaining which united him with others, his withdrawal from humanity became complete.³⁸

Even though Gregor's physical body was changed into that of an insect—he grew nearsighted, began to walk on the ceilings, and refused to clean himself—his personality remained basically unchanged. He continued to think, feel, react and reason as a human being, although he had assumed the form of an insect. Perhaps Gregor's tragedy lay in the fact "that he feels and thinks as a human being while unable

³⁵Landsberg, op. cit., p. 231.
³⁶Ibid., p. 235.
³⁷Sokel, op. cit., p. 207.
³⁸Ibid., p. 211.
to make his humanity felt and known." His voluntary withdrawal had separated him by his form, but he remained human enough to regret his condition, "denn da er nicht verstanden wurde, dachte niemand daran, auch die Schwester nicht, dass er die anderen verstehen könne. . . ."40 It is Gregor's lack of rapport with his environment, his lack of dialogue with his fellow man, indeed, his timidity caused by his lack of self-confidence which at least in part is responsible for the dehumanization of his physical appearance.

Gregor's total withdrawal allows him to exist in a world of one: he the only individual. But he found it impossible to pursue a normal, happy life even when he was confronted only by himself. His association with the members of the family was a voluntary one, for he could remain isolated in his room and no one would bother him.

. . . aber Gregor verzichtete ganz leicht auf das Öffnen der Tür, hatte er doch schon manche Abende, an denen sie geöffnet war, nicht ausgenützt, sondern war, ohne dass es die Familie merkte, im dunkelsten Winkel seines Zimmers gelegen.41

39Sokel, op. cit., p. 211.
41Ibid., p. 61.
But his desires were somewhat different. Once alone unto himself, a "curious masochistic desire to be denied" developed in his personality. He refused the food offered by his sister.

Gregor ass nun fast gar nichts mehr. Nur wenn er zufällig an der vorbereiteten Speise vorüberkam, nahm er zum Spiel einen Bissen in den Mund, hielt ihn dort stundenlang und spie ihn dann meist wieder aus.

Finally he achieved his desire for death.

The fact that in Kafka's story, "Die Verwandlung," he imagined an individual's identification with an insect showed "a feeling of being extremely weak, inferior, and unworthy. The cockroach is a symbol of inadequacy."  

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43"Die Verwandlung," op. cit., p. 60.

44Ibid., pp. 68-69.

45Martin, op. cit., p. 67.
C. "In der Strafkolonie"

The longest of the five works under discussion in this chapter, other than "Die Verwandlung," a novelle, is the story "In der Strafkolonie" which Kafka wrote in 1914. Just as in many of his other writings, the theme of "In der Strafkolonie" is centered around the injustice which the authority figure inflicts on the characters who represent Kafka. "In der Strafkolonie" resembles "Das Urteil" in that it portrays the explorer as the symbol of authority who caused the Kafkian personality to destroy himself. In both stories, the punishment is self-inflicted because the character cannot face the world alone. "In der Strafkolonie" and "Die Verwandlung" are closely related by the inherent conflict between the two forces: Gregor and the officer are opposed to the father and the explorer.\(^{46}\) Perhaps the closest parallel in themes lies between "In der Strafkolonie" and Der Prozess, written simultaneously. The injustice of the severe punishment inflicted on the guilty individuals in both seems to indicate that Kafka was preoccupied at that time with the unfair evaluations of him made by the society which isolated him. In contrast to the characters previously discussed, none of the characters in "In der Strafkolonie"

\(^{46}\) Tauber, op. cit., p. 59.
is designated by a formal name; all are given general
titles. Kafka had developed by the time "In der
Strafkolonie" was written, his writing skill to the point
that names were superfluous; the Kafkian character needed
no cryptogram to be recognized.

During this most prolific period of writing, Kafka
became aware of the trend which his creative expression was
to take. His tendency to scrutinize himself and everything
that affected his being caused him to subject his works to
a thorough examination with a view to determining the effect
that it was having upon himself and others. In the story
"In der Strafkolonie" one can readily see the effects that
Kafka's evaluation of his own writing had upon his mal-
adjustment to life. The execution machine in the story may
be seen as an image of Kafka's writing and the effect it had
upon his life. Further resemblances of Kafka's real-life
situations are revealed if the reader delegates the role of
the explorer to Kafka's father and the role of the women and
the new commandant to Felice Bauer, Kafka's betrothed.

If one examines the relationship that existed between
the officer and the execution machine, he will find a situ-
ation similar to Kafka's relationship to his writing.47 Both
the execution machine and Kafka's writing were objects that
eventually imposed self-inflicted torture upon the

47Politzer, op. cit., p. 104.
individual who cared most about them. In this light, one can readily see the masochistic tendencies that developed from Kafka's deep-seated feeling of inferiority. Just as the machine was an instrument that inflicted pain and even death on the officer, so Kafka's drive to write was the cause of endless hours of torment and pain for him. In addition, it should be kept in mind that the machine's torture and the creative writing were both masochistically undertaken by the respective individuals with full knowledge of the consequences.

By undergoing the torment and pain, Kafka hoped that his writing would produce in him an insight into human nature just as the machine produced a "Verstand [that] geht dem Blödesten auf."48 However, the officer failed to realize that the insight gained by the ordinary criminal who was forced to undergo the tortures of the machine always came too late for him to make profitable use of it—he was already dying. In spite of the fact that the machine caused the torture and death of individuals in affording them an almost divine insight, the officer was drawn to the machine and became its victim. During the process in which the machine destroyed the officer, Kafka masochistically denied the officer the longed-for insight allowed to ...

48Franz Kafka, "In der Strafkolonie," Das Urteil, op. cit., p. 108.
kein Zeichen der versprochenen Erlösung war zu entdecken.

"In der Strafkolonie," op. cit., p. 125.
However, the officer displayed more than one of the traits of Kafka, the writer. As was Gregor in "Die Verwandlung," the officer was dependent on the opinion of others for the retention of the machine. The explorer was an outsider who, like Kafka's father and other people in positions of authority, passed an unfavorable judgment on the machine because they were oblivious to its benefits. Since the officer stood alone in judging the machine as a valuable object, he felt that the explorer had not appreciated the necessity of the machine, hence his statement: "Das Verfahren hat Sie also nicht überzeugt. . . ."\(^{50}\) The officer also felt that he was being persecuted, not only by the explorer but by the new commandant and his ladies who sent the explorer to evaluate the machine. To this persecution by the explorer and the ladies the officer offered no defense because he was not strong enough to defy everyone. Consequently, his support of the machine was ineffectual. Because his personality was too weak to allow him to make his own decisions, he unwittingly assumed that the explorer's judgment was authoritative and accepted it as his own. From this predicament, he recognized only one way out: he had to destroy himself. In this case the occurrence of death is similar to Gregor's in that both individuals thought so little of their own convictions and

\(^{50}\)"In der Strafkolonie," op. cit., p. 119.
abilities that when they were confronted by seemingly insoluble problems, they both put themselves to death. Kafka took this same course of action when he felt so little confidence in his ability to excel as a writer. He destroyed his own manuscripts and with them a part of himself, for he considered his literary creations to be his children. 51

The turn of events at the penal colony may be compared to the turn of events in Kafka's life in 1914. In that year, Felice Bauer changed the course of Kafka's life, just as the new commandant changed the course of the penal colony. In the story, the ladies who side with the new commandant may be considered his equals and both factions, at least in part, may well represent Felice. The ladies, however, are never introduced to the reader. They appear only in the background since the destruction of Kafka's talent was no longer directly threatened by marriage to Felice Bauer. The ladies merely represent the distaff aspect of humanity, no longer specifically Felice but those who prefer the normalcy of family life to irreparable suffering.

The reaction of the explorer was the same as that of Kafka's father—he disavowed the responsibility by fleeing his decision. On the other hand, the decision of

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51 Brod, Über Franz Kafka, op. cit., p. 122.
the officer was final because it was fatal, therefore unchangeable.

5. "Ein Landarzt"

With the writing of "Ein Landarzt" in 1916, Franz Kafka created a story whose theme centered around pessimism, despair, and hopelessness arising from his situation of extreme anxiety. Kafka, at this time, suffered from two major problems. He was once again on the verge of becoming engaged to Felice Bauer, and the old problem of the restrictions which marriage would place on his now flourishing literary career grew more intense. In addition, he was now faced with a major decision about his health, which was continuing to decline, a condition ultimately to be diagnosed as tuberculosis in 1917. His preoccupation with his physical condition caused him to focus his attention on the inability of the medical profession to better humanity. Since Kafka saw all professions as manifestations of his bureaucratic society, which could not remedy its problems, his own choice of writing seemed to promise him little more success than that of a country doctor. It was from this

logic that Kafka saw fit to express the futility of the writer in the image of a country doctor.

As was the case with much of Kafka's other writing, the inspiration for the imagery was drawn from personal experience. The cold, barren landscape was reminiscent of the poverty stricken conditions which confronted Kafka's father as a young boy, and which were deeply impressed upon the young Franz. Politzer reasons that "Ein Landarzt" was dedicated to Kafka's father because the settings in the creative works were similar to that of the father's childhood experience. Furthermore, "The fatal misunderstanding between the doctor and his patient may have been meant to reflect the equally hopeless relationship that existed between the two Kafka's."

Kafka's extreme pessimism concerning the value of his writing was struck in the opening note of "Ein Landarzt." Like Kafka, the doctor had foregone his worldly possessions, his spiritual contentment, and his hope for happiness to pursue his profession. He sent his servant girl into the village to borrow a horse, but even before she returned, the doctor's pessimism and loss of faith in mankind had convinced him that society would not offer him necessities

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53 Politzer, op. cit., p. 89.
54 Ibid., p. 89.
55 Ibid., p. 89.
so that he could continue to help the needy. In this passage, one realizes that Kafka felt that his dedication as a writer had been rewarded only by inconsideration of the populace. The doctor, in his contemplation of the situation had to admit that "... ich fand keine Möglichkeit. ..."56

When the groom attacked Rose, the doctor realized that he had been so preoccupied with his own profession that he had never considered her welfare and the happiness he could have brought to her. In reconsidering his engagement to Felice Bauer, Kafka also realized how he had sacrificed her well-being for his own selfish reasons.

The doctor rationalized his refusal to punish the groom for the assault in three ways. First, the doctor did not have a will strong enough to strike at a stranger to protect his charges—something a normally adjusted individual would not have hesitated to do if he were in a similar situation. Secondly, he remembered that the groom had, after all, been the only means of assistance in his time of great need. Thirdly, the doctor had such a low opinion of his own value, that he unconsciously considered his associate, Rose, to be equally valueless. In these three ways, Kafka expressed his sense of extreme inferiority when opposed by a person of forceful nature.

Upon arriving at the patient’s house, the doctor found himself in an equally hopeless situation. Kafka, disguised as the doctor curing the ill, believed that his writings might cure the ills of society. But both were attending to patients whose needs they not only could not meet, but also who did not even want their help. It is significant to note at this time that even though the patient in "Ein Landarzt" seems to represent society, he also expresses the dichotomy in Kafka himself, for although the doctor pronounced the boy well, he persisted in a hypochondriacal desire to die. When the doctor's incompetent diagnosis was pointed out, significantly by a woman, he was once again unable to fulfill the boy’s impossible request, "'Wirst du mich retten?’" "In der Strafkolonie," Kafka was the executioner and the executed, while in "Ein Landarzt", he was the healer and the patient in need of healing. Yet, the hopelessness of the entire case was intensified by the fact that he could not heal nor be healed.

Like the ill person's faith in the omnipotence of the doctor, "Immer das Unmögliche . . . verlangen," Kafka

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57 Margaret Church, "Kafka's 'A Country Doctor,'" Explicator, XVI (May, 1958), item 45.
58 "Ein Landarzt," op. cit., p. 78.
59 Ibid., p. 78.
felt that the uninformed masses depended upon the writer to point out the diseases of society. Just as the doctor found that "Rezepte schreiben ist leicht, aber im übrigen sich mit den Leuten verständigen, ist schwer," Kafka felt that to diagnose society's ills was easy, but to hope to have it obey the message of such an insignificant physician was futile. The doctor and Kafka found themselves isolated from the people whom they were compelled to serve.

Society has inherent in its structure a beautiful wound which is its sole endowment. Kafka, too, was born with the fatal penchant for writing; neither disease could he cure. Kafka resigned himself to his fate that he could not heal himself, much less society, for "Ich bin kein Weltverbesserer. . . ." Both society and Kafka, himself, were like the poor boy who was beyond help.

From this state, one might easily assume that the doctor and Kafka had lost all faith and hope in their ability to bring about change among people and in their professions as institutions which serve mankind. This lack

60"Ein Landarzt," op. cit., p. 77.


63Ibid., p. 76.

64Ibid., p. 77.
of self confidence stems from their maladjusted personalities burdened with feelings of inferiority.

The pessimism and despair which had become a part of the doctor's (and Kafka's) personality so engrossed him that when he realized the true state of his visit, he resigned himself to the only way out—he masochistically says: "... auch ich will sterben." The world had become too complex for the doctor's ability to cope with it, and so, like Rilke in *Duino Elegies*, he seems to ask: What is real in the world?

The doctor was beginning, like Kafka, to understand what he had to show for the services he had rendered as a healer devoted to his profession. Kafka, too, had suffered immeasurably for the sake of his art. He had sacrificed marital bliss because of his pursuit of his profession. He was ill-paid and had lost his earthly possessions as the doctor had lost his horse and his clothes. Whatever happiness he might have attained in this world had been sacrificed to his art, a profession that in itself was not able to change man in any way.

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65 "Ein Landarzt," op. cit., p. 76.

The doctor found himself at the mercy of the people, for like Kafka he had not the strength of personality to resist. When the people began to use him for "sacred ends" he let them, for he recognized that he, in his own profession, was incompetent to render aid to the people. At this point, the doctor had been called upon to do a task which was too much to expect of him. He should not be both doctor and priest. Yet he accepted the call of duty only to find himself even more unable to complete a task which had been assigned to him. His feelings of inferiority were deepened by this inability to carry out a duty which should not have been expected of him at all.

As the story closed, the doctor, as Kafka, admitted that his experiences in life had brought him no satisfaction, comfort or pleasure. He was completely isolated from everyone without any hope of reaching a reconciliation or even reaching home again. His practice had been stolen away by his successor, Rose had been stolen away by the groom, the doctor himself had lost all earthly comforts and necessities, no one had offered to help him out of his situation, and he was unable to help himself or his patient. "Betrogen! Betrogen!" he exclaimed. But the betrayal had

67 "Ein Landarzt," op. cit., p. 79.
come, like Kafka's, because of his maladjusted personality. 68

E. "Ein Hungerkünstler"

One of the most problematic of all Kafka's creations is his "Ein Hungerkünstler." It is arbitrarily dated 1923, for it is known that Kafka was correcting the proofs for its publication on his deathbed. Some scholars, however, speculate that the story may have been written as early as 1920. 69 Whatever the date of the actual writing may be, it is generally conceded that during the time of the writing of this story, Kafka had become overly concerned with the critical condition of his health, which resulted in his concentrating on the fate of the artist in society. His ideal would have been full participation in life, but he had resigned himself to the irreversible isolation which he thought necessary for the creative artist. 70

Again, as in all of Kafka's creative works, he relied heavily on autobiographical situations to provide

69 Tauber, op. cit., p. 188.
him with the necessary source material. For instance, during his entire life he was preoccupied with the deficiencies of his bodily structure. "Throughout the tale of the hunger artist we recognize, though it is presented in grotesque exaggeration, his own Körpergefühl."  

Preceding the writing of "Ein Hungerkünstler," Kafka had written about his "... plan for autobiographical investigations. Not biography but investigations and detection of the smallest possible component parts." One of the most revealing of these investigations was the title story of his last volume, "Ein Hungerkünstler."

"Ein Hungerkünstler" is Kafka's best exemplary work attesting to the resolution of his own personal dilemma concerning his social maladjustment. The development of the story is dependent upon the gradual revelation of the starvation artist's uncompromising predicament and withdrawn personality. As Kafka, the starvation artist at the height of his success was lonely and melancholic but was no

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72 Spann, "Franz Kafka's Leopard," op. cit., p. 94.


longer afraid, for he had come to terms with his own unique existence. He had been successful in detaching himself from the world. He no longer sought material advantages for his own comfort or solace in human society for his own well-being. He had, at last, through isolation and self-denial, changed his life into an ascetic quest, the reward of which was to be found only in an inner feeling of satisfaction. With the expression of such a theme Kafka exhibits, much like Nietzsche, a desire to overcome his nihilistic tendencies, for both men were searching for a strength within their own souls which was strong enough to sustain their existence.

However, the degree of success which the hunger artist attained was only partial, for although his work necessitated his exclusion from society, he was still dependent upon the admiration and approval of others if he was to attain complete happiness. Kafka's masochistic self-denial remained a prominent facet of his personality for his character was so dominated by his inferiority complex that he still needed the sympathy of others in order to maintain his ego. The hunger artist, too, made a

77Waidson, op. cit., pp. 263-264.
display of his self-denial, for he admitted, "... entzückt hatte er der sich heranwälzenden Menge entgegen-gesehen. ..." But, like Kafka, before he could prove to the crowds his absolute devotion to his profession, he realized that he was unappreciated when he "... von der vergnügungssüchtigen Menge verlassen. ..." Once the starvation artist was no longer the center of attraction and had been reduced to an insignificant side attraction, he had time to evaluate his own situation. Could he rationalize the justification of his own chosen profession, or was it possible that his attitude toward life had been in error from its very inception? Kafka sensed that his problem was similar to Flaubert's, for he often quoted Flaubert's statement, "Ils [people who marry and pursue the normal life of rearing a family] sont dans le vrai." This remark and Kafka's preoccupation with it seems to indicate that both he and Flaubert regretted abandoning a comfortable bourgeois existence to write. Kafka, at this stage in life, had not only reached the same crossroad as

80 Spann, "Franz Kafka's Leopard," op. cit., p. 95.
81 Brod, op. cit., p. 89.
82 Ibid., p. 89.
the hunger artist and Flaubert, but had made the same decision that his sacrifices for the sake of his art had not been as rewarding as he had hoped. He, just as the hunger artist, could not find the right food to bring about a satisfactory personal adjustment to a rewarding life.  

Kafka's previous writings concerned the search of an individual to be both the withdrawn creative artist and a normal productive member of society. The inner conflict which resulted ultimately destroyed both protagonists because, like Kafka, they were too weak to face the responsibilities of reality, yet they felt guilty about their withdrawn artistic temperament. The dying Kafka, however, resigned himself, as the hunger artist did, to the existence of the artist outside the normal pattern of life because he realized that his lifelong inferiority feelings could never have allowed him to be the extrovert anyway.

It was the tragic irony of Kafka's last year that he, life's hunger artist, was beginning to discover the food he liked in the real and in the metaphorical sense.

In the story "Das Urteil," which has been described as Kafka's breakthrough into the world of the creative

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artist, Kafka relied exclusively on his personal life for his source. In the beginning, in his writing, one is able to relate the characters in the story, as well as the situation, directly to the life of Kafka, since the author at this time had not yet developed his style enough to camouflage his characters. Concerning the story, "Die Verwandlung," which was written approximately six weeks after "Das Urteil," one could draw a similar conclusion. "Die Verwandlung" is still centered around a young man who, because of the pressing demands of his family, found it impossible to make a proper adjustment to life. As time passed and Kafka gained skill and subtlety as a creative writer, his characters became more and more symbolically depersonalized.

The third of the five stories examined in this study, "In der Strafkolonie," was written some two years after "Das Urteil" and "Die Verwandlung," and carried the same theme as the other stories. But the setting and characterization had been radically altered in an effort to disguise the autobiographical elements in his writings. Even though the writer succeeded in camouflaging the aspects taken from his everyday life, the story faithfully reflected the problematic nature of Kafka's existence.

By the year 1916, Kafka had been so involved in observing himself and writing about his own pathological
state of existence that he came to the conclusion in his work "Ein Landarzt" that it was futile for an individual to sacrifice his entire life for an unappreciative and misunderstanding populace. This story expressed the feeling of pessimism, despair, and hopelessness which affected every aspect of Kafka's life.

In Kafka's waning years, he wrote "Ein Hungerkünstler," again a highly autobiographical story which showed a great deal of skill on the part of the artist in concealing his personal relationship to his work. It is a story of Kafka, the artist, who sought desperately to achieve a satisfactory adjustment to life but fully realized that he never succeeded because of his own short-comings. Again Kafka succeeded in writing a story of pessimism, despair, and hopelessness which arose from his own inferiority-ridden personality.
CONCLUSION
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In this study, which was an endeavor to gain a broader understanding of Franz Kafka and his creative achievement, an attempt has been made to show that Kafka's writings were essentially the product of highly subjective experiences from his life. Although his early works in many ways reflect the influence of such writers as Mann, Werfel, Kleist, and Rilke, it has been pointed out that the predominant theme which gives unity to Kafka's works is not one which developed from social, political, or literary currents of the period, but one which is found rather in deep-seated feelings of inferiority which tormented the artist throughout his entire life.

The study of Kafka's life revealed that his experiences in childhood and young adulthood were of the nature to induce an abnormal feeling of inferiority, and, what is of even greater significance for this study, there appeared ample evidence of such an inferiority complex in his personality and general attitude toward life and its problems. Kafka exhibited such non-aggressive character traits as timidity, withdrawal, oversensitivity, and anxiety; consequently, it is not surprising that his creative imagination, as a non-aggressive means of obtaining compensation, played
a predominant role in his personal reaction to his perplexing feeling of inferiority. It was also found that Kafka placed at one time in his life particular emphasis, in his attempts at compensation, upon athletic and intellectual achievements. There is also conclusive evidence to support the belief that Kafka displayed such obvious compensatory devices as self-disparagement and pessimism to attract the sympathy of others and, therefore, to reassure himself of his own superiority.

Furthermore, the attempt has been made to prove that Kafka's second novel, Der Prozess, is more than a prose narrative relating the tragic fate of an unfortunate bank clerk caught up in the web of governmental bureaucracy. A thorough psychological analysis tends to indicate that it is a minutely detailed and authentic characterization of an individual who, much like Kafka himself, developed an agonizing feeling of inferiority. It was further shown that Joseph K.'s personality revealed substantially the same basic traits exhibited by Kafka's personality. The conclusion, that Der Prozess must be regarded as a novel in which the author confessed many of his personal fears and showed attitudes for which the author himself was the model, seems to be justified.

In addition to Joseph K., the protagonist of Der Prozess, it was discovered that the protagonists of the
short stories selected for this study displayed as dominant character traits exaggerated feelings of inferiority. In these works, Kafka's feeling of inferiority developed into his predominant attitude toward life and society.

Two aspects of personal adjustment seemed to have exerted an unusually strong influence on Kafka's life and attitudes toward life's problems. Both aspects tended to be in accord with and attributable to his sense of insecurity arising from his inferiority complex. The first was his highly developed sensitivity to responsibilities imposed upon him by authority other than his own personality. This attitude best expressed itself in an ability to adjust to what Kafka thought was the injustice of society and social conventions. The second aspect was Kafka's tendency to overcompensate for the social injustices by his own cathartic writing. Throughout Kafka's works, at least one of the two above mentioned themes can be found. The author attempted in some of his works to emphasize the self-destructive tendencies of individuals suffering from acute inferiority feelings, while in other works he portrayed the withdrawal of an individual from society.

In all of Kafka's works examined in this study, one encounters face to face Kafka's opposition to the accepted conventions of society. It is in such works that Kafka
expressed his theory of the relationship that exists between the artistic personality and the expected social conduct. In this theory, Kafka expounded his notion that the person who wishes to maintain the personal and intellectual freedom conducive to the creative personality must be willing to remain outside the accepted social norms. The theme, freedom of the individual and personality, is presented either tacitly or literally in most of Kafka's works.

It would be impossible in a study of this nature, and within such a limited scope, to deal with each of Kafka's works in as detailed a fashion as Der Prozess and the five selected short stories. It is the hope of the author however that the study has realized both aspects of its goal in affording a greater understanding of the problematic nature of Kafka's personality and a deeper insight into his works by studying them as the expression of his personality which of itself was so greatly influenced by his inferiority complex.
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Major Field: German

Title of Thesis: A Study of the Effects of Inferiority Feelings on the Life and Works of Franz Kafka

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Major Professor and Chairman

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Date of Examination:

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