

Absurdity and Injustice in Human Life in Franz Kafka's The Trial Directorate of the Federal Ministry of Education in Erbil

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ABSTRACT-- *This paper examines the absurdity of life and the impossibility of justice in Franz Kafka's The Trial (1924) which is a coherent philosophical novel, simulating the futility of human action in a futile world accusing the individual of sins, this individual has no choice in. The protagonist finds himself in a bitter struggle against very vague judicial procedures. This novel, seemingly absurd, has always continued to arouse very diverse interpretations. It could be a report of a bureaucratic inhumanity, a warning of totalitarianism, or a metaphorical expression of anti-Semitism. Between this and that, this novel is seen as a handle of the absurd and surreal mood.*

Keywords--*Injustice, absurdity, pain, frustration.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Franz Kafka (1883 - 1924) was a German-speaking middle-class Jew. When he entered school, he was sent by his father, Hermann who is a wealthy antiques- dealer, to the state school, and then to the German University in Prague to study law. Kafka lived most of his life in isolation, as the Czechs see him German, and the Germans see him as a Jew, and the fundamentalist Jews see him as secular. The highest sense of remoteness in Kafka was because of his always tense relationship with those around him, whether his father ; his mother or society as a whole. Franz Kafka has a special name among Arab readers and writers, and he is certainly one of the writers whose name is associated with German literature in the minds of many famous writers. Kafka left novels that have become widely- read in literature, such as "The Trial", "The Palace", "America", "The Country Doctor" and others. All of these works are dark, gloomy and pessimistic. Kafka was nicknamed 'Dante of the Twentieth Century'. He burned most of his works because he never expected that he would be famous as he is today.

Kafka, or as he is called "the pioneer of nightmare writing," a Czech writer and Jew of religion, lived a separate and isolated life. Nightmare writing is known as depicting unrealistic events in a way that looks very realistic as it does in a nightmare..

His novel *The Trial* (1925), released one year after Kafka's death by his friend Max Brodd who saved it from burning. It foreshadows the features of oppression, inequality, absurdity, and nihilism in human life.

. The novel begins with this phrase: "One of them must have fabricated lies against Joseph K. because without making any mistake, he was arrested on the morning of a sunny day." (Kafka's Trial 1925, p.1) The symbolic interpretation of such phrase leads the readers of the novel to the deep symbolic depths within the novel.

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The novel starts when the protagonist Joseph K is awakened one day to find at the door two men telling him that he is wanted for trial, but they have not clarified the case he is accused of. Joseph K. is right away perplexed by what they tell him, and particularly mystified by the fact of being arrested but he is not to be imprisoned. He is allowed to go on in his work and normal life as usual. Joseph K. thinks that, "[he] was living in a free country . . . [where] everywhere was at peace, [and] all laws were decent and were upheld . . . [these policemen] dared accost him in his own home" (Kafka's Trial 1925, p. 6). First, Kafka has deliberately set the timing of Joseph K.'s arrest on his thirtieth birthday, "Perhaps because today was his thirtieth birthday that was certainly possible" (Kafka's Trial 1925, p. 6). He wonders: "Who could these men be? What were they talking about? What authority could they represent? K. lived in a country with a legal constitution, there was universal peace, all the laws were in force; who dared seize him in his own dwelling?" (Kafka's Trial 1925, p. 4).

The Trial portrays Joseph K. as a victim of a nameless unreasonable government that attempts to be in charge of every aspect of his life. Joseph K realizes that he is trapped in a prison from which he cannot escape although he is still free to practice his daily routine.

He believes in his innocence but his only guilt is that he is ignorant of the law. The narrator describes him: "He had always been inclined to take things easily, to believe in the worst only when the worst happened, to take no care for the morrow even when the outlook was threatening" (Kafka's Trial 1925, p. 4). One of the men ridicules Joseph K. for his ignorance as he views his belief in his own innocence contradicting his ignorance of the law: "See, Willem, he admits that he doesn't know the law and yet he claims he's innocent" (Kafka's Trial 1925, p. 7). The warder tells Joseph K. that the law does not hunt criminals, but it hunts the guilty. K. replies, "I don't know this law", to which the warder who has arrested him replies, "All the worse for you" (Kafka's Trial 1925, p. 16). Joseph K. believes that this law does not exist. He tells the warder: "And it probably exists nowhere but in your head", but the warder answers: "you'll come up against it yet" (Kafka's Trial 1925, p. 16). He decides not to care for the ambiguous case. But the warder advises him: "Think less about us and of what is going to happen to you, think more about yourself instead" (Kafka's Trial 1925, p. 19). Joseph K decides to obey the law he does not fully understand. When he goes to his first interrogation session, he makes a point of arriving late and does not listen at all to anyone else might have to say. He speaks with an arrogant tone of superiority that presumes knowledge of the Court that he cannot have: "Behind all the actions of this court of justice...there is a great organization at work...And the significance of this great organization gentlemen? It consists in this, that innocent persons are accused of guilt, and senseless proceedings are put in motion against them, mostly without effect, it is true, as in my own case". (Kafka's Trial 1925, p. 57)

II. RESULTS

Even after the first day of the trial he cannot understand the reasons behind his arrest. The novel introduces a baffling tangle of lawyers, judges, and witnesses. But none of their actions make sense. It is the perfect picture of an absurd, irrational world. He is questioned many times but not told what his crime is. Neither he nor his lawyer can prove his innocence as long as he does not know what he committed in life.

It is not that there is no law or process in Joseph K.'s case; it is simply that all relevant discussions are taking place out of his presence and earshot; in a sense, always in the room next door. He is further mystified when he

sees an amazing number of individuals who seem to be aware of the charge and nature of the case against him, from his cousin and uncle, to the tradesman, the manufacturer, the employees at the bank, and the painter. Joseph K. seems to be the only uninformed individual in all of *The Trial*.

The withdrawal of the lawyer and his inability to save Joseph K. makes the latter feel lonely and frustrated in front of an overwhelming judicial system that does not tell him why it is trying him and for how long the situation will continue to be so, until the spirit of depression creeps into him. After he was an honest man who headed one of the big banks, the judicial system turned him into a manipulative man trying to free himself by resorting to illegal methods, as if the novel says that a corrupt life is what makes us corrupt, and it is not we who are corrupt from the very beginning. This novel indicates the difficulties that the individual faces in front of the sterile bureaucratic system that affects human life, which gives the work features of depression and constant anxiety, especially as it mimics the 'school of nothingness' in the difficulties that a person faces in life. Joseph K. is a person who is changed after this trial from a person full of life to a person who has nothing in life but a body without a soul. He is frustrated and depressed as a result to the wickedness of what confronts him in his bitter life.

Kafka could probably mean that a person is a prisoner of the life he lives, sometimes against his will, and he must continue and complete the existing conflict, whether between him and himself or between him and the surrounding world. Kafka indicated the suffering of the human being and his diving into existential problems. Their trial and execution is a mirror Kafka held out to the ugly dark world which is meaningless and in which we all inhabit and cannot escape.

Kafka called his hero Joseph K., and sometimes he refers to him as K. only in many chapters in the novel. He deprives him of a name; which is a sign of anonymity. This K could refer to any individual faces the same situations. K. waits for the truth that never appears and remains locked in proving the opposite of what they claim; until matters ended in surrender after a resistance that lasted with hope, but it left with frustration and belief in the inability to prove innocence. Kafka depicts life as it destroys a person who becomes frustrated and depressed and loses his faith of what happens.

For both the reader and the author the fate remains mysterious. It is sad that one is wronged trying to prove one's innocence. When K. finds two persons around his bed demanding him to follow them to the court, he appears like Gregor Samsa in *Metamorphoses* who woke up and found himself an insect. But Joseph K. will not simply accept his destiny as Gregor, but rather tries to understand the reasons behind his condemnation. He does everything to understand his case and the reason for his arrest. But he fails to understand despite all his attempts.

This case is limited to the mystery of human existence in this absurd world, and that the charge against him (which the hero Joseph does not know what it is specifically!) K. represents a model of the aspiring rebellious human being and the effective human mind who is often stigmatized within his absurd and unjust world.

K. after the first day of the investigation ,returns to his room and apologizes to his neighbor in the room, then sleeps and ends his first day after the accusation, and on the next day he wakes up and goes to work and receives a call to determine the trial and the second session and the location of the court but the call ends without a specific hour of trial which is what surprised him! As he wakes up on the promised day and goes to court, he does not know the timing of the trial. He goes to the address which is built in the poorest neighborhoods of the city; it is full of poor people! He asks where the carpenter is. He tries not to attract people's attention to the case. Then, one of the residents replied that the carpenter is on the next floor. Going there and knocking on the door. A woman,

washing clothes, asks him to enter the room inside, and K. suddenly finds himself in the courtroom, so the trial begins as soon as he enters, and he marvels at that noise to start defending himself with contempt for the case and the court, so that his argument ends suddenly as it started and he goes back perplexed and still unable to prove his innocence. He goes back to his room after a day without goal or gain!

During the second session of the case he finds the place of the court changed. It is a suffocating place. He starts thinking of the strange case and the motives behind his mysterious arrest but always find no answers to the questions that revolve in his head. K. wakes up as usual to go to work, but the case affects the course of his life, so his performance in the bank weakens, and he narrows himself, until a guest (his uncle) comes and worries about family affairs, so he takes his friend's lawyer on a sudden and immediate visit. His uncle is surprised by the illness of the lawyer, and despite this they talk about the case and happen to be the director of the court's office.

The third day of the trial he goes to the appointed place as usual. Noise occurs and voices rise in the discussion, K. comes out and does not listen to that discussion, so it ends without his presence. Then, he sees a nurse Liny taking care of the sick lawyer. Time passes and Joseph K. tries to take care of his work again and overcome his anxiety because his performance becomes poor and his behavior is not suitable for his position. The trial impedes him from that, and he does not feel any progress in dealing with this lawyer. He does not feel that his lawyer is interested in his case from the beginning, therefore; he decides that he will appoint another lawyer! He goes to the lawyer to inform him of his decision, but the lawyer becomes angry, and he resorted to a trick when he gives him a good treatment.

III. DISCUSSION

One day, Joseph K. wakes up and goes to work early because he was informed of the presence of a special Italian agent who needs a visit to the city church, therefore; he spoke with the client and his manager and the meeting was determined in the church, then he arrives at the appointed time in a very cloudy, very rainy and cold atmosphere.

Waiting for the delayed customer! He tries to find him around the other doors of the church, but he has not come yet. He is forced to sit in one of the chairs and contemplate the church's drawings. Suddenly, one of the pastors comes up to give a sermon, so he tries to get up to leave and hear the priest's voice calling him. He tries not to pay attention, but the priest tells him to come close! The priest asks him about the case. "K." is surprised of the priest's knowledge of his case. Then, they talk about it for a while, and the priest comes down from his place and wanders with Joseph K. in the church. Darkness covers the pace and he does not see anything.

Nevertheless, readers see the strongest evidence in the chapter called "In the Cathedral," the priest narrates the story of the unknown man who tries to get through the doorkeeper who separates him from the law. The man is finally doomed, but before he dies the doorkeeper tells him: "No one else could gain admittance here, because this entrance was meant solely for you. I'm going to go and shut it now" (Kafka's Trial, 1925, p. 217). This story is meant to be similar to Joseph K.'s story as both men try to find an escape from their final doom but no escape is possible even though both Joseph K. and the man the priest speaks about are better than the doorkeeper because both of them have free will but the doorkeeper is bounded by the unseen force behind him: "But it is equally clear, according to this opinion, that he is in fact subordinate to him. First of all, the free man is superior to the bound

man. Now, the man is in fact free: he can go wherever he wishes, the entrance to the Law alone is denied to him, and this only by one person, the doorkeeper" (Kafka's Trial, 1925, p. 221). The priest finally tells Joseph K. that he is free to go when he wishes: "Why should I want something from you. The court wants nothing from you. It receives you when you come and dismisses you when you go" (Kafka's Trial, 1925, p. 224). This point suggests that K.'s destiny is not prearranged by anyone but his own choices. As soon as he loses the will to live, K. is executed: "With failing sight K. saw how the men drew near his face, leaning cheek-to-cheek to observe the verdict. 'Like a dog!' he said; it seemed as though the shame was to outlive him" (Kafka's Trial, 1925, p. 231).

Absurdist worldwide know that there perhaps was never a solution for the protagonist but to accept the truth as forced down his throat by the unfeeling system. No matter how Joseph tries to free himself and prove his innocence but all his attempts fail. Death is inescapable. As Swander says, he is: "Such a model of a utilitarian world that he rebels against the world of authentic being and in his struggle has recourse to all operations of an all-too-human logic" (1962, p. 151).

According to Camus the features of the absurd life are revolt, freedom and passion. Camus, in his conclusion of definition of the absurd life, says: "But what does life mean in such a universe? Nothing else for the moment but it suggests indifference to the future and a desire to use up everything that is given. Belief in the meaning of life always implies a scale of values, a choice, and our preferences". He adds: "Belief in the absurd, according to our definitions, teaches the contrary. But this is worth examining" (1955, p. 60). Camus suggests that man does not have hope in the absurd life. Man waits for his destiny and he accepts it when it comes. Man is neither depressed nor tragic but he lives an absurdist life which is meaningless (1955, p. 61). Maurice Friedman in his book *Problematic Rebel* explains: "If one feels that one recognizes reality in Kafka, one always feels at the same time that it is a reality that is somehow caricatured" (1970, p. 287).

Martin Buber suggests that K.'s guilt is "guilt that a person has taken on himself as a person and in a personal situation" (1957, p. 123). It is not merely guilty feelings but an objective reality. Joseph K. is guilty in the sense that he does not well understand the law and that he refuses to understand it. He does not listen to himself because he is always busy between the empty routine of his work at the bank, where he is the person in charge, and the empty routine of his bachelor pleasures. This is the case with his life before his arrest: K. is used to pass his evenings in this way: When he finishes his work he sometimes walks alone or with some colleagues. Then he used to go to a beer hall and spends some time with elderly men. (Kafka's Trial, 1925, p. 23). It is also the case after his arrest when he cannot bring himself to take the time needed for recalling his past life in detail. The narrator says: "But now, when K. should be devoting his mind entirely to work, when every hour was hurried and crowded – for he was still in full career and rapidly becoming a rival even to the Assistant Manager – when his evenings and nights were all too short for the pleasures of bachelor life, this was the time when he must sit down to such a task!" (Kafka's Trial, 1925, p. 46) Hubben says, "Everything that compromises the security of the average man is relegated to the subconscious and he lives in authentically" (1997, p.143). Joseph K, according to Hubben is "obsessed by the material world he wishes to master, concerned only with the practical problems, he no longer sees the totality of his soul and interprets himself only in the light of categories he has created to make his environment sub serve his needs"(1997, p. 145). When he realizes that all people in the court are against him he becomes frustrated: "So! cried K., flinging his arms in the air, his sudden enlightenment had to break out, every,

man jack of you is an official, I see, you are yourselves the corrupt agents of whom I have been speaking"(Kafka's Trial, 1925, p. 59).

Finally, Joseph K. would eventually find himself "walking strictly among his executioners and the three of them formed a single entity, an entity that could only be formed in his death" (Kafka's Trial, 1925, p. 223). The court clients stitch the dagger into his chest and he dies. Joseph K. was never tried. He did not know his crime. One of his two companions had decided to implement the death sentence against him and plant his knife in his heart and before he died he would say": "Here I am dying like a vile dog! As if he wanted to perpetuate the shame of humanity" (Kafka's Trial, 1925, p. 234).

IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper, it is clear that personal relations are largely affected by the pressure of social judgment. This novel deals with a subject of great importance to the courts and contemporary cases that devour society. We read the grim story of Joseph K. who was arrested one morning without explaining the reasons, to find himself in a bitter struggle against very vague judicial procedures. It is tossed from a confusing confrontation to the next, and then feelings of frustration grow within it to prove his innocence in a confrontation with unknown matters.

In *The Trial*, Joseph K., the convicted, is sentenced to death. . This would seem a brutal and irrational death. Nevertheless, to Kafka, his death might have been better than a long-lasting, unreasonable punishment. Kafka explores what it means for an individual who lives in an absurd world which does not support confirmation or personal meaning to this individual.

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