DIOGENES

*Diogenes* 204: 49–58
ISSN 0392-1921

# Paper Chains: Bureaucratic Despotism and Voluntary Servitude in Franz Kafka's *The Castle*

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This article is an attempt at a 'political' reading of Kafka's *The Castle*, as an ironical, radical critique – from a libertarian perspective – of the despotism of the modern bureaucratic apparatus.[1] This reading is not self-evident. Like all Kafka's unfinished novels, *Das Schloss* is a strange and fascinating literary document that creates perplexity and inspires various contradictory and/or dissonant interpretations. And like *The Trial* it has been the object of very many religious and theological readings. Some authors have followed Max Brod's apologetic interpretation: 'This "Castle" which Kafka does not obtain permission to enter and which he cannot even properly approach is precisely "Grace" in the theologians' sense, God's government that directs human destinies (the "Village") . . .'.[2] However, others acknowledge that, far from seeming to be the symbol of Grace, the Castle appears instead to belong to a hellish logic. Erich Heller correctly notes that we find in Kafka both a dream of absolute freedom and the knowledge of terrible servitude: from this insoluble contradiction there arises 'the conviction of damnation', which is 'all that is left of faith'. But Heller is wrong to think that we can discern in Kafka's work a Gnostic manicheism, such that the Castle of the novel would be something like 'the heavily fortified garrison of a company of Gnostic demons'.[3]

Nothing indicates that Kafka was a follower of Gnostic doctrines, and this kind of interpretation – like those referring to Kabbala – implies an allegorical, mystical and esoteric reading that is quite external to the text and has no connection with the author's knowledge or concerns (as we may discover them in his correspondence, journal, etc.). Kafka's spirituality is manifested less in an elaborated, occult system of symbolic figures than in a certain *Stimmung*, a subjective atmosphere, a feeling about the world and the modern human condition.

Martin Buber also talks about 'Gnostic demons', but he comes closer to the deep meaning of *The Castle*'s spiritual universe when he defines it as a hellish world suffering from non-redemption (*Unerlöstheit der Welt*).[4] Indeed Kafka seems to share

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DOI: 10.1177/0392192104047880

https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192104047880 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Strindberg's conviction (to be found in Walter Benjamin as well) that 'hell is this life'; in one of the Zürau aphorisms he writes: 'anything more diabolical than what is here does not exist'.[5]

In this fallen world any isolated attempt – like K.'s – to set truth against lies is bound to fail. According to Kafka 'in a world of lying a lie is not even eliminated by its opposite, it is eliminated only by a truthful world'[6] – in other words by abolishing the existing world and replacing it with a new one.

That said, the climate of *The Castle* does not resemble a pathetic descent to the Fifth Circle; rather it is sober and ironical. Lukacs' phrase from *The Theory of the Novel*, which Löwenthal adopted in his 1921 essay *Das Dämonische*, could be applied to it: 'The writer's irony is the negative mysticism of godless times.'

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As we know, the novel's architecture is built around three essential figures: the castle, the village and the land surveyor K. Let us begin with the first, that mythical Castle: when seen at close quarters, it turns out to be a 'rather miserable collection' of 'rustic houses, all apparently of stone'.[7] Given the avalanche of theological, symbolic and allegorical interpretations, we may need to be a bit more cautious: what if the Castle did not symbolize something else but was just a castle, that is to say the seat of an earthly human authority?[8]

In the novel the 'Castle' embodies Power, Authority, State, as against the common people, represented by the 'Village'. The castle's power is haughty, inaccessible, distant and arbitrary, and it rules the village through a network of bureaucrats whose behaviour is rude, inscrutable and totally meaningless.

This is not by any means, as is often supposed, a critique of archaic despotism – for instance, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. What interests Kafka is not the traditional, personal power figure: the Count Westwest (a minor character in the novel). What he is questioning is the despotic basis of all states, of the state in general (as anarchists do) and in particular the modern state with its bureaucratic, hierarchical apparatus, impersonal, authoritarian and alienating.

How does power's administrative system operate? It is a structure that claims to be perfect and infallible: 'our administrative organization is faultless' (*lückenlose*) says the functionary Bürgel. It is just as perfectly irrational. In chapter 5 Kafka sketches a tragi-comic parody of the bureaucratic universe, of the 'official' confusion which his character K. sees as a 'ludicrous muddle' (*lächerliche Gewirre*) – but a muddle that nevertheless governs people's existence. The system's internal logic, circular and empty, is revealed in a speech from the mayor: 'Is there a monitoring department? Only a stranger could ask such a question. Everything at the Castle is a monitoring department! I don't mean the departments there are set up to find mistakes in the crude sense of the word, because mistakes don't happen, and even if one does, as in your case, who has the final say when it comes to deciding it is a mistake?'[9] Thus the mayor suggests that the whole bureaucratic machine is made up solely of monitoring departments which monitor each other. But he immediately adds that there is nothing to monitor since there are no real mistakes. Each sentence negates the previous one, and the end result is 'administrative' nonsense.



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In the meantime something is growing and spreading in the background, and swamping everything: official paper, the paper that Kafka believes is made into chains for tortured humanity.[10] An ocean of paper covers the mayor's parlour, a paper mountain rears up in Sortini's office.

The zenith of bureaucratic alienation is reached when the mayor describes the official apparatus as an autonomous machine that can get along without human intervention. 'It is as if the administrative apparatus had finally no longer been able to bear the tension and wear that for years had been imposed on it by the same case, in itself minor, and had taken upon itself to come to a decision without the officials' cooperation.'[11] So Kafka presents the bureaucratic system as a reified world where relations between individuals become a thing, an independent object, a blind machine. Here we are at the heart of modernity, of what is most impersonal and 'mechanical' about it, and the problem of reification, which has obvious affinities with the short story *In the Penal Colony* (1914).

If we compare the representation of the bureaucratic system in *Das Schloss* with the one offered by sociologists of the time, such as Max and Alfred Weber, we can probably detect certain analogies, but more especially noteworthy differences. As several commentators have observed, the bureaucracy of Kafka's castle and that described by Max Weber – an author whom Kafka probably never read – are similar in several respects: a functional hierarchy, strict allocation of spheres of competence, systematic written records, precise regulation. However, as acknowledged by José María González García, author of the most detailed study on the 'elective affinities' between Weber and Kafka, the differences are greater than the similarities: starting with the fact that the former, unlike the latter, was a nationalist, imperialist and supporter of a strong state (*Machtstaat*) in Germany. He was also convinced of the rationality and efficiency of the bureaucratic system, even though, in some of his more personal writings, he is concerned about the threat posed by total worldwide bureaucratization.[12] I would say the great difference between the two is that Weber looks at the workings of bureaucracy 'from above', that is, from the perspective of the state and its 'rational and efficient' management, whereas Kafka sees it 'from below' and from the outside, from the standpoint of its victims, the individuals who are up against the absurdity and irrationality of an authoritarian apparatus.

The situation of Alfred Weber (the younger brother of Max) is different, in that Kafka knew him personally: he had chaired the panel that examined him for his doctorate in law at Prague University in 1906. It is not impossible that the Prague writer might have read the article entitled 'The Clerk' which was published by the sociologist in 1910 in the periodical *Neue Rundschau* – which Kafka subscribed to. Indeed there is 'family likeness' between that article and Kafka's writing: for example, when Alfred Weber lambasts bureaucracy as 'a gigantic apparatus (*Apparat*) that rears up in our lives', a 'dead machine', monotonous and tedious, that takes away individuals' independence, has a limitless hunger for authority and is the object of a veritable idolatrous cult (*Götzedienst vor den Beamtentum*).[13] This last remark immediately reminds us of a character like Klamm, the Castle's senior official, whom some villagers treat with an almost religious veneration. However, there too the differences are striking: while Alfred Weber is above all concerned with the fate of the middle and upper classes of society, condemned to the position of functionary,



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Kafka is interested in the excluded and other pariahs, crushed by the gigantic bureaucratic machine.

So Kafka's method is original and unique, and his way of seeing the working of the 'machine' has more in common with the way it is seen by simple individuals, lost in the bureaucratic maze, than with sociologists' scholarly analyses, however critical. For K. the castle is as inaccessible as the court of *The Trial* was for Joseph K. To the surveyor, and most of the villagers, the officials are distant and unreachable. Their manner is cold and impersonal; Bürgel says the officials 'have no consideration for their clients', they just 'carry out their responsibilities inflexibly'. The only 'human' relationship they have with the common people 'down there' is a sexual one – in the basest sense – with the women from the village. This element, which recalls the aristocrats' old '*droit de cuissage*', is one of the novel's few 'pre-modern' aspects. Unless Kafka wished to suggest that the sexual exploitation of women is perfectly compatible with the most rational and modern administrative hierarchy . . .

These sexual practices are apparently in contradiction to the impersonality of administrative functions. In fact the officials' relations with the women are not strictly personal; they are treated like interchangeable ciphers and mere objects of sexual consumption. Between Klamm and Gardenia, the innkeeper, there is no suggestion of love or any personal bond: after summoning her to his bed three times, the official stops calling for her and forgets her completely. In some of the bureaucrats' dialogue sexuality is mentioned only as a factor that can ease or disrupt the smooth working of the administrative system. It is not Klamm who asks for his ex-mistress Frieda to return to his side, it is the secretary Erlanger, who is concerned about everything that might disturb this senior official in his work: 'The slightest change on his desk, the disappearance of a mark that has always been there, all that is likely to disturb him, and that includes a new serving-girl.' Reduced to the unenviable status of a 'mark on the desk' that must not be changed, Frieda 'has to come back to the bar at once' and K., her new lover, is told by Erlanger to bow to the objective demands of the administrative work: 'I've been told you live with her, so get her to come back straightaway. It's not possible to allow for personal feelings, that's obvious, which is why I'm not going into explanations.'[14]

Unlike *The Trial* we do not see any executioner in *The Castle* and no one is put to death. Nevertheless the castle maintains a seamless dominance over the village population and inspires fear and obedience. The village wisdom appears to be summed up in an observation made by the woman who runs the hotel about Momus, secretary to the official Klamm: 'He is merely an instrument in Klamm's hand and woe betide the person who doesn't obey him.'[15]

This misfortune befalls Amalia, because the girl has committed an irreparable misdeed: defying Authority by refusing the obscene advances of the official Sortini. As punishment for this crime of administrative *lèse-majesté* Amalia and all her family are ostracized not only by the castle but by the whole population of the village, who avoid them as if they were pariahs or plague infected. Her relatives try in vain to obtain a pardon from the authorities, but no entreaty, no humiliation, no proof of submission, no self-flagellation – Olga, the sister, sleeps with the officials' servants in the stables – causes the castle to bend. Indeed the bureaucrats' response to these humble, desperate pleas for forgiveness is a perfect example of administra-



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tive logic: there is nothing to forgive since 'for the moment there had been no charge, at least there was no trace of one yet in the records, or in any case in those records available to the barristers, so, as far as could be ascertained, no case had been brought'.[16] Analysing what he calls 'sordid aspects' in Kafka's novels, Adorno remarks – in one of those waspish phrases of which he was master – that they are the 'traces of muck that the authorities' fingers leave on the de luxe edition of the book of life'.[17]

Those seven chapters about Amalia and her family are among the most poignant in the novel. The 'cursed' family's servility is impressive, but that of the villagers, who shut them out like lepers – without the castle even needing to issue an order or decree – is far worse: it is utter ignominy. We are confronted with a striking example of voluntary servitude, in the strong political sense of the word, as used by Etienne de la Boétie.[18]

The theme of voluntary servitude appears in several other texts by Kafka. For instance, in the following story, published by Brod: 'People are ashamed to say how the imperial colonel governs our little mountain town. If we wanted to, we could rapidly disarm the handful of soldiers, and reinforcements – always supposing he could ask for them, but how? – would take days or even weeks to get here. So he relies entirely on our submission . . . Why then do we put up with his detested government? Without a doubt it is solely because of his glare.'[19] Like Etienne de la Boétie Kafka stresses submission as the only reason for the power of the 'one' over 'all'; a submission that arouses a feeling of shame, as in the conclusion to *The Trial*.

The Colonel, or his equivalent, crops up again in the story *The Refusal*: 'A few soldiers to keep order formed a semi-circle round the Colonel. Actually just one would have been enough, we were so frightened of them!' The Colonel always responds to the people's humble requests – respectfully brought by a delegation – by getting a lowly official to tell them: 'The request is refused and rejected. Move along!' What distinguishes this story from other similar ones is the presence of seeds of resistance: 'But there is, according to my observations, a generation that is not satisfied, this is the young lads between 17 and 20 years old or thereabouts, so quite young men who are thus very far from suspecting what risks the most insignificant thought entails, and a fortiori a revolutionary thought. And it is among them that discontent is creeping in.'[20]

In these two texts we are dealing with a tyrannical, personal power of a pre-modern type because it is based on tradition. In *The Castle*, on the other hand, it is, as we have seen, an 'administrative' power, bureaucratic, modern, impersonal. But the submissive behaviour of the people 'down there' is utterly identical in both cases.

In a comment on the villagers' attitude, the surveyor K. is quick to criticize this self-enslavement: 'Here you have an innate respect for the authorities; on every hand and in the most varied ways you are being indoctrinated throughout your lives, and you yourselves lend a hand as best you can.'[21]

So who is K., this would-be surveyor who arrives in the village one evening and takes the liberty of questioning the villagers' over-servile behaviour? No one defines it better than the woman who runs the hotel and does not exactly warm to him: 'You don't belong to the castle, you don't belong to the village; you're nothing. But alas!



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In spite of all that, you're something, a stranger out of place who gets in everyone's way, a person who continually bugs us . . .'[22] Is this stranger *par excellence* a Jew, that eternal troublemaker who is always 'out of place'? That is Hannah Arendt's interpretation: in her view *The Castle* is 'the only novel where Kafka discusses the Jewish question, and the only one where the hero is obviously a Jew'. It is true that K. has no typically Jewish characteristics, but he is plunged into situations and perplexities that are 'peculiar to Jewish life'. Without denying that the situation of Jews may have inspired the character's invention, I think it is indisputable that we are dealing with a universal figure: the foreigner, the immigrant, someone who does not belong anywhere, the *Aussenseiter*, the outsider, the person who is on the edge of established institutions and social structures. But not just any stranger: he is the person who dares to criticize and claims, supreme insolence, to have rights . . .

K. is in fact the one who refuses voluntary servitude. As soon he arrives in the village he does not hesitate to defy the authorities by dismissing the young and arrogant – 'I demand respect for the county authorities' – official Schwarzer. In a conversation with the innkeeper that same evening he expresses his existential stance in few words: 'I cherish my freedom.' Granted, the purpose of this sentence is to explain his refusal to live in the castle, but it has a more general scope: it could be said that it perfectly describes the character's behaviour. Of course he is not a rebel: he simply asks for recognition of his functions. But he does not by any means have the villagers' fearful, submissive attitude. This is how he describes to the innkeeper his manner towards the powerful: 'I am not timid and I can also express my opinion to a count; but it's much better to come to a friendly agreement with those gentlemen.'[23] What he wants from the castle authorities is the universal demand of all the excluded and pariahs in modern societies: 'I am not asking the castle for any favours (*Gnadengeschenke*), simply my right (*mein Recht*).'[24] Yet this is precisely what he is being refused for an interminable list of 'administrative' reasons, which arouse his indignation: 'my existence (is) threatened by a scandalous bureaucracy' (*schmachvolle amtliche Wirtschaft*).[25]

K. does not feel called to take up the villagers' cause or initiate collective action; 'he should not be welcomed like someone bringing happiness; . . . he was being called upon to take on tasks he could never devote himself to, if he was coerced like that; with the best will in the world he could not accept that role.'[26] His attitude is both defensive and combative, but strictly individual: 'these people are making fun of me, and maybe even of the laws. As far as I'm concerned I can defend myself.'[27] Alas, as will subsequently be demonstrated, the individual is powerless when faced with the opaque, omnipotent machinery of bureaucracy.

The surveyor sees his relationship with this machinery as 'a struggle', a difficult battle in which he is forced to admit that 'the power relations between him and the authorities' are 'disproportionate'. His defiant attitude towards the castle's representatives surprises and shocks the villagers, who try again and again to advise him to be careful and submissive. The innkeeper complains that he does not stop 'saying no and no', that he thinks only by himself – literally, 'by his head' (*auf seinem Kopf*) – and ignores the best-intentioned advice. As for the mayor, he is afraid K. will take 'a rash personal (*auf eigene Faust*) step' if the decision in his case is too long delayed.[28] The phrases *auf seinem Kopf* and *auf eigene Faust*, which have not been translated in



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the French version, indicate precisely that individualistic, independent, rebellious spirit that typifies the character of the surveyor.[29]

Thus it is not surprising that he reacts with indignation when he learns 'Amalia's secret' and the reasons for the ostracism she has suffered – an event her sister Olga describes, with a kind of sad resignation, as 'fate'. 'But what do you mean, fate?' cries the surveyor. 'In any case Amalia could not be accused of, and particularly not punished for, Sortini's criminal behaviour!' K.'s protest provokes a disillusioned remark from Olga: 'To you it seems unjust and monstrous, but that's an opinion nobody in the village shares . . .'[30] It would be impossible to point up better the abyss that separates the autonomous judgement of the surveyor – a person who swears only on his own head (*auf eigenem Kopf*) – from the general submissiveness. In a deleted passage Olga expresses her admiration for K., the stranger who does not share the villagers' fears: 'You are amazing . . . you master things at a glance . . . probably it is because you come from abroad. But we, the people from here, with our sad experiences and our ceaseless terrors, we cannot resist fear; we are afraid when a piece of wood makes the slightest crack . . . How lucky we are that you have come!'[31]

Faced with the castle and its officials, K. finds himself in a similar situation to the man from the country facing the guard at the gates of the law in the parable 'Before the law', which appears in chapter 9 of the novel *The Trial*. In a revealing passage it says: 'K. had spoken . . . as if he was outside Klamm's door talking to the guard.' However, unlike the character in the parable, the surveyor is not afraid to overstep prohibitions and obstacles: in the castle, he explains to Olga, 'there are doors that lead further on, barriers you can go through, if you're clever enough.'[32] Thus it is that, in the unfinished novel's last scene, he enters the officials' corridor without permission and severely disrupts the department: 'neither the innkeeper nor the hotelier could understand how he had dared do such a thing.'[33] From this point of view K. represents the diametric opposite of 'the man from the country' who waits fruitlessly all his life, patient and submissive, for someone to be kind enough to let him through the gates of the Law . . . On the other hand, there are in *The Castle* characters who are astonishingly similar to the anti-hero of the legend; this is so, for instance, of the person described by Olga, who tries to get accepted to work in the castle: 'after many years, grown old perhaps, he discovers he has been refused, all is lost and he has lived for nothing.'[34]

Why do the authorities not punish the surveyor? They simply play cat and mouse with him till he dies of 'exhaustion' – the likely end to the novel, according to a conversation with Kafka reported by Max Brod. It is a question that is not dealt with directly in the novel. It might be assumed that the castle authorities see the surveyor's individual rebellion as impotent and harmless, unable to have any influence at all on the submissive, obedient village population.

According to Marthe Robert, K. the surveyor represents a new stage (compared with *The Trial*'s Joseph K.) in the 'slow voyage of the hero towards a reconquest of his Self from the tyranny of the "administrative"': he dies exhausted but at least he has 'dismantled piece by piece, symbol by symbol, sign by sign, the all-powerful edifice that only remains standing because of its masters' arbitrary conduct, duly supported by the lazy minds and the credulity of the blind'.[35] The surveyor is the foreigner who is external to the relationship of domination/subordination between



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the castle and the village. As a foreigner he is capable of astonishment – in the sense of the Greek *taumasein*, the start of all philosophical knowledge – when faced with the bureaucratic absurdity embodied by the Castle's officials.

So is the stranger the only person not to bow the knee before the powerful? This is the view of many commentators, including the most lucid, such as Hannah Arendt: 'Because he stresses human rights, the stranger turns out to be the only one who so far has any idea what a simple human life is in the world.'[36] K. the surveyor would thus be the sole exception, the only critical, protesting, rebellious voice in *Das Schloss*. However, this is not what is revealed by a careful reading of the novel.

For example, the little serving-girl Pepi, who replaced Frieda for a few days at the Gentlemen's Inn (*Herrenhof*), confides in K. and describes her dearest dream, a genuine dream of anarchic revolt: 'the man who had the strength to set fire to the Gentlemen's Inn and reduce it to ashes, utterly, so that not a single trace was left, reduce it to ashes like a piece of paper thrown on the stove, he is the one among them all that Pepi would choose today.'[37] This sentence should be compared with one that Kafka himself uttered, according to Max Brod, expressing surprise that workers faced with the manoeuvres of the Social Assurance Office did not attack the building and wreck it . . .

But there is another character who does not submit, a character who does not merely dream like Pepi and whose rebellion is far more dramatic than K. the surveyor's; unlike the other villagers this person 'knows no fear' and turns out to be capable of 'heroic acts' against the authorities. She is a woman of the people whose sad eyes, proud and sincere – as well as her words that are 'full of a kind of nobility' – have not failed to impress K. That character is Amalia. It is in chapter 17 that we learn 'Amalia's secret': receiving from the arrogant, vulgar official Sortini a message that is 'extremely crude' and even 'revolting' – in short, obscene – summoning her to him at the Gentlemen's Inn, she does not hesitate to rip it up and throw the pieces in the face of the messenger sent by the man from the Castle. It is a seemingly anodyne action, but in fact one of unprecedented bravery: she has rejected the vile Sortini 'probably more violently than any official has ever been repulsed'. That is enough to bring down on her and all her family the curse of those above, condemning them to final and irrevocable exclusion . . .[38]

The figure of Amalia is one of the few characters in Kafka's novels who irreducibly embodies the refusal to submit, disobedience, in short, human dignity – and she pays a heavy price. She shows that, within the village, among the 'common people' – and not only in the stranger – there can be found resources of courage, pride and resistance. It is true that she is an exceptional character who stands out clearly from the sheep-like mass of the villagers, but nevertheless she exists. Is it a coincidence that this character is a woman?[39] We may wonder whether the model for this literary figure was not Kafka's favourite sister Ottla, whom he describes in the 'Letter to His Father' as possessing 'the Löwys' stubbornness, their sensitivity, their sense of injustice, their concern', and whom he admired enormously for 'what she has in addition to me as regards assurance, self-confidence, health and spontaneity'.[40]

Strangely most commentators, whose eyes are focused on the character of the surveyor, have neglected that of Amalia, probably one of the most impressive female



https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192104047880 Published online by Cambridge University Press

figures in Kafka's work. Here we find ourselves at the heart of the libertarian individualism of the Prague writer.

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## Notes

1. On Kafka's libertarian sympathies and his links with anarchist circles in Prague, see my article 'Kafka et le socialisme libertaire', *Réfractions*, no. 3, Winter 1998–9.
2. Brod, Max (1972), Postscript to the first edition, in Kafka, *Le Château*, Paris, Gallimard, pp. 518–21.
3. Heller, E. (1982), *Franz Kafka*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 105.
4. Buber, Martin (1962), *Zwei Glaubenweisen, Werke*, Vol. I, Heidelberg, Lambert Schneider, p. 778.
5. Kafka (1957), *Préparatifs de noce*, Paris, Gallimard, p. 49. (This is a French translation of *Hochszeitsvorbereitungen in dem Lande*, translated into English as *Wedding Preparations in the Country*. Translator's note.)
6. Kafka, *ibid*., p. 97.
7. Kafka, *Le Château* (French translation of *Das Schloss*), p. 1155. (Page references are to the French translation in trans. Vergne-Cain, B. et al. (2000), *Récits, romans, journaux*, Paris, La Pochothèque. For an English translation see trans. Muir, W. and Muir, E. (1992), *The Castle*, Everyman's Library. Translator's note.)
8. This is the position argued by Alfred Döblin, 'Die Romane von Franz Kafka', *Die Literarische Welt*, 4 March 1927.
9. Kafka, *Le Château*, *op. cit*., pp. 558–9.
10. 'The chains of tortured humanity are made of ministerial papers.' Janouch, G. (1952), *Kafka m'a dit*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, p. 141.
11. Kafka, *Le Château*, *op. cit*., p. 1215.
12. González García, José María (1989), *La máquina burocrática. Afinidades electivas entre Max Weber y Kafka*, Madrid, Visor, pp. 42–3, 161–7. On the same topic see also Traverso, Enzo (1997), *L'Histoire déchirée. Essai sur Auschwitz et les intellectuels*, Paris, Cerf, pp. 45–57.
13. Weber, Alfred (1910), 'Der Beamte', *Neue Rundschau*, October, pp. 1321, 1322, 1323. It is interesting to note that, according to A. Weber, Jews escape this enslavement because they are rejected and excluded by the bureaucratic apparatus, which forces them to lead an individual existence that is richer in subjectivity. We think of K. the surveyor . . . That said, Astride Lange-Kirchheim's attempt to find analogies, sentence by sentence and word by word, between Alfred Weber's articles and Kafka's short story *In the Penal Colony* seems to me forced and, in the final analysis, unconvincing. It leads the author into obvious absurdities, like the parallel between bureaucracy's upper and lower levels mentioned by the sociologist, and the upper and lower structures of the killing machine described by the writer . . . See Lange-Kirchheim, A. (1986), 'Alfred Weber und Franz Kafka', in Demm, Eberhard (ed.), *Alfred Weber als Politiker und Gelehrter*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, pp. 113–49. The analogies with *Das Schloss* in the last part of the article are more relevant.
14. *Ibid*., p. 1419.
15. *Ibid*., p. 1262.
16. *Ibid*., p. 1358.
17. Adorno, T. W., *Prismes*, p. 226.
18. The libertarian socialist Gustav Landauer had published a German translation of De la Boétie's *De la servitude volontaire* in his journal *Der Sozialist* in 1910 and 1911. There is no indication that Kafka knew the text, but it is not impossible that it was known to the Prague anarchists among whom he moved.
19. Kafka, p. 288. References are to the French translation *Préparatifs de noce à la campagne*, *op. cit*.



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20. Kafka, pp. 110–13. (References are to the 1950 French edition *La Muraille de Chine et d'autres récits*, Paris, Gallimard. This is a translation of *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mur*, which has also been translated into English as *The Great Wall of China*. Translator's note.)
21. *Le Château.*, p. 1328. Of course K. is by no means a revolutionary. He immediately adds: 'But at bottom I have no complaint; if an administration is good, why not obey it?' But the conditional 'if' introduces doubt: is the castle administration really that 'good'?
22. *Ibid.*, p. 1195.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 1152.
24. Here the French translation is unsatisfactory. See (1994) *Das Schloss*, Frankfurt am Main, Fischer Verlag, p. 93.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
26. This is a passage deleted by Kafka and reported by Max Brod in a 1946 postscript in (1984) *Le Château*, Paris, Gallimard, p. 531.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 1216.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 1198, 1237. Here too the French translation is faulty; see *Das Schloss*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
29. As Hannah Arendt so pertinently writes, 'he is discovering that the normal world and society are in fact abnormal, that opinions which everyone accepts as sane are in fact completely insane and that actions obeying the rules of this game are ruinous', Arendt, Hannah (1944), 'Franz Kafka', in (1987) *La Tradition cachée*, Paris, Christian Bourgois, p. 113.
30. *Le Château*, *op. cit.*, p. 1340.
31. This passage is quoted by Max Brod in his postscript to the third edition of the book (1946) in *Le Château*, *op. cit.*, p. 530. I have mentioned earlier (see note 26) K.'s negative reply to the suggestion that he has come to 'bring happiness'.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 1268, 1329.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 1428.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 1369. The book's translator/editor also notes this similarity.
35. Robert, Marthe, *Seul comme Franz Kafka*, pp. 230–1.
36. Arendt, H., *op. cit.*, p. 105.
37. Kafka, *Le Château*, *op. cit.*, p. 1437. The critic David Suchoff calls Pepi's incendiary dream 'anarchic' and a liberation by fire from the domination of the *Herren* (Gentlemen, Masters, Lords). See Suchoff, D. (1994), *Critical Theory and the Novel, Mass Society and Cultural Criticism in Dickens, Melville and Kafka*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, p. 156.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 1338–9, 1343. Quite different is the behaviour of her little brother Barnabas, who tries desperately to get himself accepted to work at the castle: as soon as he finds himself 'up there', 'he loses all the courage he had as a young boy' and 'shakes with fear' before the officials' (pp. 1329, 1373).
39. We can see what a grave error the eminent specialist and philologist Bert Nagel makes when he writes: 'In Kafka women appear not only always as marginal figures or even simply in walk-on parts, but also as beings of a lower moral rank. This is true to such an extent that in the whole of his work there is practically no sympathetic female figure or even any honest woman.' Nagel, Bert (1983), *Kafka und die Weltliteratur*, Munich, Winkler Verlag, p. 237. Which raises the question as to whether the commentator has in fact read *Das Schloss* . . . Kafka's sympathy for brave, non-conforming women ready to break with convention to follow the demands of their conscience is confirmed, among others, by his admiration, fascination even, for the socialist and feminist Lily Braun whose *Memorien einer Sozialisten* (1909) he used to distribute to all his friends. (See Kafka, *Correspondance 1902–1924*, Paris, Gallimard, p. 334.)
40. Kafka, 'Lettre au père' ('Letter to His Father'), in *Préparatifs de noce à la campagne, op. cit.*, p. 183. Translation slightly altered following the original 'Brief an den Vater', in *Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande*, p. 141. Kafka's mother was Julia Löwy. According to Kafka her daughter most resembled her mother's family.



https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192104047880 Published online by Cambridge University Press