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The Bridging Motif in the Short Stories of Franz Kafka

Charlene Saber

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John’s University

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AN ANALYSIS OF BRIDGING MOTIF IN SELECTED STORIES
BY FRANZ KAFKA

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Char Saber
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BY FRANZ KAFKA

Dr. Wendy Sterba

[Signature]
Assistant Professor of Modern Classical Languages

Dr. Andreas Kiryakakis

[Signature]
Associate Professor of Modern Classical Languages

Dr. Karen Erickson

[Signature]
Assistant Professor of Modern Classical Languages

Dr. Otmar Drekqonja

[Signature]
Chair, Department of Modern Classical Languages

Dr. Margaret Cook

[Signature]
Director, Honors Program
Key to Abbreviations


_________. Sämtliche Erzählungen. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1970 = K.

_________. Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1986 = H.
I. INTRODUCTION

Many years ago I was once sitting, sadly enough of course, on the slope of St. Lawrence Hill. I was analyzing what my wishes in life were. The most important or most fascinating one turned out to be the wish to obtain a view of life (and, of course, necessarily bound up with that, to be able to convince others of my view through my writing) in which life preserved, to be sure, its natural hard to bear ups and downs, but at the same time was recognized just as clearly as Nothing, a dream, a state of suspension.¹

In this autobiographical confession, Franz Kafka admits the extremely personal nature of his writings. The "view of life" Kafka appears to be expressing in this journal entry as well as the three short stories, "Die Brücke", "Forschungen eines Hundes", and "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" is the idea complex of the human state of inbetweenness.² Furthermore, this problematic "state of suspension," to which Kafka believes life lends itself, is exemplified in the form of a bridge motif. A bridge by nature implies polarities. Moreover, it denotes the ability to connect and provide passage from one point to another. To a large extent, Kafka's work seems to question whether these bridge figures can "progress" by unchaining themselves from naturally occurring polarities and moving completely and decisively in one direction or the other.

A theme or motif stands as a traceable element; hence, words and phrases of the primary text can be followed and connected, which then eventually present a central idea. One might ask what makes this image a bridging motif, instead of a bridging theme. "There is no international consensus to regulate the vocabulary of thematics," states the literary critic Jean-Charles

Seigneur. Thus, it is possible for one critic to designate
as a motif what another calls a theme. "According to a growing
number of scholars, the motif is intellectual by nature; it
expresses a process of reasoning about men's conduct of serves
life...". A motif, as defined by Seigneur,
as the foundation of an entire work. Contrastingly, Seigneur
proposes a theme to be practical and concrete; a theme
represents "concepts by themselves, good and evil, virtue and
vice, ... we are in the realm of simple topics". Seigneur
defines a motif as abstract and reflective of the author's
thoughts. In essence, the bridge motif functions as an
intellectual figurative unit, which tends to lead the reader to a
better understanding of Kafka's works. By analyzing the
polarities, the linking of the polarities, and the placement of
characters within this system, a bridge-like motif becomes
discernable in the text.

Critics often try to tie Kafka's ideas in neat bundles and
categorize them. Unfortunately, his ideas are neither neat nor
easily categorizable. Rather than asserting a final, all

4. Seigneur, xviii.
5. Seigneur, xix.
7. In the case of "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie," Charles
Nieder calls the story "merely an exercise to satirize the
spiritual in man" (Nieder, 81). Heinz Politzer interprets
Rotpeter as a Jew that has forsaken his heritage (Politzer, Franz
Kafka; Vor dem Gesetz, 78). These interpretations are valid,
but are also blanket statements about a story that is not this
easily analyzed.
encompassing interpretation, might not the approach of studying a basic motif and its construction shed light on intent and perhaps even lead the reader to a multiplicity of interpretations? Indeed, Franz Kafka's search for a solution to the inbetweenness of human existence is an intellectual quest which I believe, when analyzed, will aid in deciphering Kafka's message with regard to this quality of inbetweenness. Additionally, I hope to prove that the bridging motif performs an essential role as a conceptual scheme in the short stories "Die Brücke", "Forschungen Eines Hundes", and "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie."

"A location," writes Martin Heidegger, "comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge".9 This idea of bridging two opposing loci and thereby constructing a third locus seems to underlie many of Kafka's stories10. Furthermore, the construction of bridges immediately implies the joining of two disparate locations. In analyzing Kafka's short stories, it becomes apparent that certain characters function as creators of new locations, through their mediation of extremes.

Siah Armajani, the architect of the Irene Hixon Whitney Pedestrian Bridge in Minneapolis, states that "by their very

8. The deluge of theories and the chaotic critical response attest to this (see bibliography for just a few).
10. At least three critics have discussed the bridging motif: Blake Lee Spahr, Ralf Nicolai, and Ruth Gross. Additionally, I see bridge motifs in other works by Kafka, including: Das Schloss, "Die Verwandlung," and "Ein Altes Blatt."
Unfortunately, the scope of my paper does not allow me to discuss them all.
nature, bridges link together opposite sides of a river, valley, or road, with the result that passage is possible from one side to the other". Kafka's characters may not be successful in their passage; however, their attempt to connect polarities remains clear. In "The Bridge," the title character exclaims, "Strecke dich, Brücke, setze dich in Stand, geländerloser Balken, halten den dir Anvertrauten!" The quintessence of a bridge is to grant transition from one area to the next. Consequently, the transitions or transformations of a character directly allude to his or her movement across the bridge.

Within Kafka's short works, certain hybrid characters function as bridge figures. He frequently depicts animals breaking the limitations nature has imposed upon them. This idea of metamorphosis or transformation is expressed or implied in many of Kafka's works; whether it be in Die Verwandlung, the famous story of a man who turns into a cockroach over night, "Ein Bericht für Eine Akademie" when an ape strives to become human, or "Forschungen eines Hundes", which tells of a dog who endeavors to become a scientist. It is difficult to define the threshold between humans and animals; however, qualities which undoubtedly adhere to the human realm are the wearing of clothing, use of complex language, and pursuit of knowledge. A few animal characters found in Kafka's works who have crossed over the

threshold are a jackal who speaks a language, an ape who wears
clothes and uses language, and a dog who performs scientific
investigations. The condition of humankind does appear somehow
intertwined in Kafka's portrayal of these metamorphosized
animals.13

This image from Kafka's diaries of a person bound to two
extremes is one commonly found in his other works.

Er ist ein freier und gesicherter Bürger der Erde, denn
er ist an eine Kette gelegt, die lang genug ist, um ihm
alle irdischen Räume frei zu geben, und doch nur so
lang, dass nichts ihn über die Grenzen der Erde reissen
cann. Gleichzeitig aber ist er auch ein freier und
gesicherter Bürger des Himmels, denn er ist auch an
eine ähnlich berechnete Himmelskette gelegt. Will er
nun auf die Erde, drosselt ihn das Halsband des
Himmels, will er in den Himmel, jenes der Erde. Und
trotzdem hat er alle Möglichkeiten und fühlt es; ja,
er weigert sich sogar, das Ganze auf einen Fehler bei
der ersten Fesslung zurückzuführen.14

It is a striking expression of the notion that movement too far
in the direction of either one or the other pole can lead to
strangulation. This passage suggests that the collision of
conflicting desires, hopes, and obligations leaves human beings
"fettered" between a variety of goals such as social and

13. Politzer in Parables and Paradoxes contends that Kafka uses
animal images to illustrate the human sphere, 91.
14. W, 35. "He is a free and secure citizen of the world, for
he is fettered to a chain which is long enough to give him the
freedom of all earthly space, and yet only so long that nothing
can drag past the frontiers of the world. But simultaneously he
is a free and secure citizen of heaven as well, for he is also
fettered by a similarly designed heavenly chain. So that if he
heads, say, for the earth, his heavenly collar throttles him, and
if he heads for heaven, this earthly one does the same. And yet
all the possibilities are his, and he feels it; more, he
actually refuses to account for the deadlock by an error in the
original fettering" W, 174-5.
religious ideals versus earthly realities, cold rationality versus animal urges. Not only does Kafka present humankind's painful dilemmas, he also attempts to provide solutions.

According to the writings of Kafka, it seems that the act of bridging the poles is a miserable expediency, because there are much greater "possibilities" for human beings. Upon reflection of the state of humanity, he states that, although "the expulsion from paradise is final, and life in this world irrevocable," nevertheless it is possible to continuously live in Paradise.\textsuperscript{15} As the humanized ape explains in "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie," he did not seek freedom from his cage but only "a way out," an escape.\textsuperscript{16} Thereby, the ape mocks human freedom and exclaims it is nothing other than "self-controlled movement."\textsuperscript{17} The bridge location is a "state of suspension" juxtaposed between what seems to be life's extremities.

Kafka seems to admit that this bridge position is an option, though he does not appear to approve of it. In describing the human location as "Nothing, a dream, a state of suspension," as he did in his diary, Kafka not only expresses his dislike of the bridge position, he also hints at the transitional nature of humanity:

\textsuperscript{15.} \textit{W}, 174.
\textsuperscript{16.} \textit{P}, 177. The quote continues: "I fear that perhaps you do not quite understand what I mean by 'way out.' I use the expression in its fullest and most popular sense. I deliberately do not use the word 'freedom.' I do not mean the spacious feeling of freedom on all sides" \textit{P}, 177.
\textsuperscript{17.} \textit{P}, 177.
Es gibt nichts anderes als eine geistige Welt; was wir sinnliche Welt nennen, ist das Böse in der geistigen, und was wir böse nennen, ist nur eine Notwendigkeit eines Augenblicks unserer ewigen Entwicklung.

It is as if he believes humans should move beyond the earthly realm, beyond themselves, in the direction of one extreme or the other, even at the risk of strangulation. Thus, inherent to bridges, as the architect Armajani stated, is the idea of enabling transportation or "development" across an abyss.

Ralf Nicolai conceives of Kafka's world structure as a revelation of the transitional state of humans. Human beings are pulled toward opposites, and in order to exist, they believe they must stretch to reach both heaven and earth. Rather than revealing a unity of opposites, humans represent a vicious battle, due to human tendency to separate nature and intellect. Consequently, humans are disillusioned, explains Nicolai, into thinking that any freedom dangles precariously in the middle of the extremes.

There is a long tradition of dealing with polarities among German writers. The works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Kleist are particularly pertinent to the discussion of Kafka's bridge motif. Heinrich von Kleist, who some claim to be Kafka's favorite

18. H, 34. There is only a spiritual world; what we call the physical world is the evil in the spiritual one, and what we call evil is only a necessary moment in our endless development W, 172.
20. Nicolai, 551.
author, explains the schism of nature and knowledge as, "the loss of man's preconscious organic unity". A Freudian reading of Kleist's Über das Marionetten Theater grounds this dilemma in terms of human consciousness, which is comprised of the opposing poles. People set themselves up to be comfortably half-aware of their thoughts, desires, and needs. By allowing themselves to be ruled by their instincts, they would be breaking every social dogma. Society would condemn their hedonism, and fear their irrational actions. On the other hand, breaking away from sensual pleasures and animal desires appears a next to impossible, not to mention, painful task.

In Kafka's world, characters, who are portrayed in the likeness of humans, do not seem willing to take the risks involved in releasing themselves from their chains and obtaining true freedom. In "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie," the ape explains humankind's desire for freedom, or what they believe it to be:


23. K, 150. "In passing: may I say that all too often men are
Indeed, human beings attempt to deny the need for radical movement and change. They hang from heaven by the skin of their teeth, while the earth pulls at their heels. Friedrich Nietzsche, obviously a major source of Kafka's ideas, expresses a similar idea; "Each human acts as his own bridge, whereby he must travel to one side and go beyond his bridge-like self." Obviously, Nietzsche believes there to be an existence beyond the human "state of suspension." Bridging the gap between extremes is the nature of humanity, yet Nietzsche maintains that humankind can achieve a more valid existence in the Übermensch: "Man is something that shall be overcome." Humanity retains the abilities to go beyond the transitional stage and indeed they ought to utilize them.

betrayed by the word freedom. And as freedom is counted among the most sublime feelings, so the corresponding disillusionment can be also sublime. In variety theaters I have often watched...a couple of acrobats performing on trapezes high on the roof...One hung by the hair from the teeth of the other. 'And that too is human freedom,' I thought, 'self-controlled movement.' What a mockery of Holy Mother Nature! Were the apes to see such a spectacle, no theater walls could stand the shock of their laughter" P, 177.

24. There is a sizable amount of evidence which testifies to Kafka's familiarity with Nietzsche's writings. First and foremost, Selma Robitschek wrote letters to Max Brod contending that Kafka had often read Nietzsche to her (Nicolai, Ende Oder Anfang, 18). As a student at the Deustche Universität in Prague, Kafka frequently attended evening lectures in which students spoke about Nietzsche and other authors (Hayman, Ronald. Kafka; A Biography. New York: Oxford University Press; 1981, 50-51.) Judging from the several similarities between the two authors, it is difficult not to believe Kafka had thoroughly read Nietzsche's works.


In the article "Nietzschean Thought in 'A Report to An Academy,'" Ralf Nicolai succinctly addresses the relationship between Kafka's writings and another influential writer, Heinrich von Kleist. He discloses the similarities between Kleist's ideas and those which it seems Kafka is attempting to illustrate. Kleist expresses the hypothesis that "total lack of consciousness and consciousness in its highest form merge analogous to the intersection of the ends of a line when they have passed through the infinite, or as the image in a concave mirror that, 'after it moved off into infinity, suddenly re-appears closely before our eyes'." Thus, extremities may be both antithetical and simultaneously united. One can find such a paradox in religion, philosophy, psychology, and most types of literature. Kleist's triadic circular system seems to have exerted a good deal of influence on Kafka along with the previously mentioned writers. In order to discuss the polarities of Kafka's bridge paradigm, which are uniquely exemplified in "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie," "Forschungen eines Hundes," and naturally "Die Brücke," it is useful to apply the terms and concepts that concentrate on polar extremities from such authors as Nietzsche, Kleist, and even Sigmund Freud.

These extremities are easily discernable in Kafka's short stories. He presents for example the unusual figures of a dog who practices science, an ape who has evolved, and a human-like

27. Nicolai, 551.
suspension bridge. Each story portrays a character who synthesizes two seemingly irreconcilable extremes. I have labeled one of these extremities the nature pole. This realm reveals the animalistic instincts that linger within the main character's body. Kafka defines the instinctual pole in such terms as food, teeth, bellies, darkness, youth, and pleasure. In contrast to the realm connected with nature is that of knowledge, which is characterized by radiance, silence, power, art, and truth.

Essentially, both poles within Kafka's writings represent a certain universality. The nature pole represents a universal state of total "Being," in which truly natural inclinations are obeyed without doubt or guilt. The self, the inexplicably pure and simple id within every creature, reigns in a state of nature. Contrastingly, the knowledge pole will be designated as a sphere representing universal or indivisible truth. It is an indestructible form of peaceful existence that appears beyond all earthly reality. Thus, the realm of knowledge is often forgotten or goes unseen by the "normal" world. Universal truth connotes the all-knowing, god-like superego that creates everything: law, order, and life.

28. Nicolai, 556. This is their Achille's heel--representing the vulnerability toward pleasure. Nicolai expresses the viewpoint that the tickling sensation on everyone's heel is the "last manifestation of the once unbridled pleasure principle."

29. Emrich, 61. Kafka's use of "Being" as that which is incomprehensible comes "closer in meaning to prerational, half-mythical times."
II. NATURE POLE

Clearly evident within "Forschungen eines Hundes" and "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" is the nature pole. In the first story for example, the Forscher describes the essence typical of Dogdom (to which he no longer belongs) as flesh, blood, knowledge, and the key to knowledge. He goes on to explain that the key to this knowledge remains unused. Although dogs have the potential for complete knowledge, it seems locked within them at an unconscious level. Thus, this state I have termed the realm of nature implies a preconscious state, wherein there is no need for knowledge despite the inherent ability to obtain it. Additionally, it appears impossible for those characters who reside in the sphere of nature to communicate the knowledge hidden within them.30 The majority of these "bulwarks of silence"31 are depicted as living by a few unavoidable and sometimes irrational demands of nature or of the self: the communal impulse, watering of the ground, and the necessity of food. In conclusion, the these instinctual drives exemplify the dogs' biological oneness with their environment.

Man darf doch wohl sagen, dass wir alle förmlich in einem einzigen Haufen leben. . .Es drängt uns zueinander und nichts kann uns hindern, diesem Drängen genugzutun. . . .32

30. Emrich, 47. He suggests that Kafka believes knowledge to be uncommunicable, due to the fallacious nature of speech.

13
The dogs are drawn together in a heap, which the Forscher later describes as a warm comfort. This emphasizes the unity of nature or the oneness of nature, and expresses the pleasure derived from physical contact. Similarly, in "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie," the Affe Rotpeter points out that, at the time of his capture, he was traveling with a group of apes: "... als ich am Abend inmitten eines Rudels zur Tränke lief". The apes satisfy their biological need to drink together. On a practical level, in order for the species to survive and fight off predators, it seems essential that the animals remain united. Furthermore, because nature provides a communal instinct, the apes and dogs simply live in a heap without realizing they could live any other way. The Forscher compares Dogdom with a group of creatures, whom he says dogs pity and attempt to help, that join together only when it serves their interests. Consequently, a wild communal quality appears an important element within the sphere of nature.

One of the strongest drives experienced by dogs is the procurement of food, which is a twofold instinct. First of all, it is necessary that dogs "water the ground as much as they can". This, according to our narrator, aids in the nourishment of the earth and in turn helps the growth of food.

32. K, 325. "One can safely say that we all live together in a literal heap. ... We are drawn to each other and nothing can prevent us from satisfying that communal impulse" W, 3.
34. W, 11.
In addition, the Forscher explains that it is not a virtue of Dogdom to share food with others. Most animals are revealed as not being able to resist their desire to eat. In "Schakale und Araber," for example, despite the discipline of the whip, the jackals cannot pull themselves away from a camel carcass.\textsuperscript{35} Similarly, the Forscher at one point explains that "he naturally forgot everything else in the fury of his hunger." Furthermore, in "Ein altes Blatt," the nomads' horses are distinguished as more animalistic by their devouring the flesh of a live ox.\textsuperscript{36} Essentially, above all else, animals attached to the nature pole will obey their bellies. It is from the "Bauch" that all thought and actions derive, states the Affe in "Ein Bericht für eines Akademie": "Ein klarer, schöner Gedankengang, den ich irgendein dem Bauch ausgeheckt haben muss, denn Affen denken mit dem Bauch".\textsuperscript{37} The thought process generated by the ape's instincts is described as clear and beautiful; in contrast, that of the bridge character is confused and dreamy.\textsuperscript{38}

Another characteristic of the nature pole found within Kafka's works is a soothing darkness that envelopes certain characters. The darkness could have several meanings, each of

\textsuperscript{35} K, 133.
\textsuperscript{36} K, 131.
\textsuperscript{37} K, 150. "A fine, clear train of thought, which I must have constructed somehow with my belly, since apes think with their bellies" P, 177.
\textsuperscript{38} This is discussed later on pages 31-35. The Forscher, who I believe to be a bridge character, tells of the investigative method he and his colleagues use, which is like "forgetting a dream that has been dreamt a thousand times" W, 26.
which however, in one way or another, still points toward the animalistic realm. Ralf Nicolai believes it is significant that Rotpeter locates his origins as the "Gold Coast," due to the allusion it makes to the Golden Age.\(^3\)\(^9\) The Golden Age speaks of a past or a time-gone-by in which life was simpler and better. In addition, it is important to note that German historians have often referred to the Middle Ages as the Golden Age of the Germanic people. Interestingly enough, medieval times have also been called the Dark Ages. Moreover, the Affe originates from the "Gold Coast," otherwise known as the Dark Continent of Africa. Thus, it appears that these supposedly opposite terms of "golden" and "dark" allude to similar ideas. They both reflect the notion of life and its beginning. Gold is a pure and precious metal, which one extracts it from the earth's black dirt. This connects with Rotpeter's use of the verb "stammen," which is a derivative of Stamm, meaning family or tribe, and relates directly to his birth. Consequently, the darkness of the womb adheres to the nature sphere in that it exemplifies a truly preconscious state of existence.

In addition to sacrificing his origin, Rotpeter explains that he could not have evolved without the loss of all his youthful remembrances.\(^4\)\(^0\) Essentially, youth is also an element of the sphere of nature because it represents a lack of knowledge or unconscious thought. Kafka frequently illustrates young

\(^3\)\(^9\) Nicolai, 556.
\(^4\)\(^0\) K, 147.
characters as living in a happy state of darkness. The Forscher, for example, describes himself, "Ich war damals lange durch die Finsternis gelaufen. . .kreuz und quer, blind und taub für alles, geführt von nichts bestimmten Verlangen. . .".\textsuperscript{41} As a puppy or rather until he discovers the seven dancing dogs, the main character acts out of instinct. Once he recognizes the morning's bright light and witnesses the musicians' "sinful actions,"\textsuperscript{42} however, the puppy then becomes enthralled with scientific questions and experiments. The Forscher, reflecting back on these events, laments the end of his "blissful state"\textsuperscript{43} of childhood. Further in the text, the life of a child is described as "intoxicatingly beautiful."\textsuperscript{44} This description stresses the uninhibited behavior inherent to youth. Inexperience and the unconscious self are revealed as inextricable characteristics of nature which are mirrored in childhood.

Lastly, Kafka seems to place physical and, more specifically, sexual pleasure on the nature axis. Rotpeter, who is attempting to develop beyond apehood, cannot endure the insane stare of his chimpanzee-lover. Only at night, under the veil of darkness, does he allow himself to use the Chimpanzee to fulfill his apish needs.\textsuperscript{45} The irrational physical pleasure he

\textsuperscript{41} K, 326. "I had run in darkness for a long time, up and down, blind and deaf to everything, led by nothing but a vague desire" W, 4.
\textsuperscript{42} They are sinning by walking on their hind legs and subsequently revealing their nakedness.
\textsuperscript{43} W, 3.
\textsuperscript{44} W, 26.
\textsuperscript{45} Weinstein, Leo. "Kafka's Ape: Heel or Hero?," Modern
experiences directly conflicts with his successful professional career, consequently making his lover's presence painful for him. Within the story, darkness functions as a metaphysical barrier between the conscious and unconscious areas of Rotpeter's mind. Thus, his nocturnal impulses remain hidden from the cognitive thought process, which Kafka associates with light.46 The sexual overtones expressed in Kafka's writings are repeatedly connected with darkness.47 Hence not surprisingly, the destruction of the main character in "The Bridge" occurs in the evening. In an analysis of this short story, Ruth V. Gross postulates that the bridge character works as a metaphor for a woman who has a violent sexual experience.48 She explains that the bridge calls to the man like a siren saying, "Zu mir, zu mir."49 The final paragraph removes any doubt about intended sexual message of the story:

Er kam, mit der Eisenspitze seines Stockes beklopfte er mich, dann hob er mit ihr meine Röckschösse...In mein buschiges Haar fuhr er mit der Spitz und liess sie, warscheinlich wild umherblickend, lange drin liegen.50

Language Quarterly. VIII Dec. 1962, 78. He also says that Rotpeter must renounce the cherished earthly passion of sex, in order to become completely human. Nicolai also discusses this in "Nietzschean Thought. . .".
46. I discuss this association in full on page 20-21.
47. Another example of this connection (or alter ego) can be found in Der Prozess when Fräulein Bürstner goes out with a different man every evening, yet during the day she seems to be represented by Fräuleine Montag, the school teacher.
50. K, 284. "He came, he tapped me with the iron point of his stick, then he lifted my coattails with it. . .He plunged the
Similar to the insane stare of Rotpeter's Chimpanzee is the wild
gaze of the bridge's "Anvertrauten." The irrational biological
demands and instincts which constitute sexuality stem directly
from the id. In summary, physical desire is a result of natural
impulses and not conscious thought; hence, sexual pleasure can
be associated with the nature pole.

These images of food, bellies, darkness, youth, and pleasure
form a sphere which consists of the instinctual and unconscious
qualities of nature. They, subsequently, designate an extreme
existence, wherein a character completely obeys his inner
desires. Accordingly, the opposite of this totality of nature is
profound, all-knowingness which Kafka seems to present in terms
of light, noise, art, power, and truth. The knowledge pole is
connected with those phenomena that transcend an empirical
existence.

point of his stick into my bushy hair and let it lie there for a
long time, forgetting me no doubt while he wildly gazed around
him" W, 131.
51. "Passenger", which means the person traveling over her.
Travel or traffic is "Verkehr" in German, which also can mean
sex, Gross, 577.
III. KNOWLEDGE POLE

There are several attributes which distinguish the realm of knowledge from the nature sphere. One distinct characteristic is the use of radiance to represent a pull toward knowledge. After the Forscher had been running along in the darkness, he suddenly looks up into a bright light. The morning light acts as a metaphor for his enlightenment which takes the form of seven musical dogs. Similarly, the musicians step out of the oblique background into the sunshine. Further along in the text, when the dancing canines vanish, the narrator says that "sie verschwanden mit allem Lärm und allem Licht in der Finsternis, aus der sie gekommen waren."52 This statement indicates that the illumination and the noise were not natural occurrences, but rather mysterious emanations produced by the musical dogs. Although the Forscher attempts to excuse the dancing dogs episode as his own misperception, he still resolves to continue his investigation until he finds an answer. Therein he begins his search for knowledge. Further illustrations of the connection between light and knowledge can be found in Der Prozess; for instance, as Joseph K. moves closer to the magistrate who will answer all his questions, light pours in from a huge window. Not

52. K, 328. "...the dogs vanished with all their music [sic] and all their radiance into the darkness from which they had emerged" W, 8. "Lärm" is better translated as noise.
only does light connote enlightenment, it also refers to clarity and understanding. Ironically, neither Joseph K. nor the Forscher obtain clarity and knowledge from the light and noise; they are too overwhelmed by the phenomena to comprehend it.

When the main character in "Forschungen eines Hundes" is released for a moment from the power of the musical dogs, he is horrified by the musicians' violations of dog law, which include ignoring his questions and walking erect. The determined refusal to respond exhibited by the dancing dogs reveals the intensity of their focus. Through the perfect patterns and evolutions of their dance, they elicit an overwhelmingly powerful music out of the air:

. . . aber während man noch in solchen Überlegungen befangen war, nahm allmählich die Musik überhand, fasste einen förmlich, zog einen hinweg von diesen wirklichen kleinen Hunden und, ganz wider Willen, sich sträubend mit durfte man sich mit nichts anderem beschäftigen, . . . den Zuhörer in die Mitte nehmenden, überschüttenen, erdöckenden. . . .

In order to create this forceful sound, the musicians must defy the rules of society. Their disciplined and shameless defiance grants them god-like powers of control. Furthermore, the dancing dogs' unwillingness to answer illustrates tremendous strength by

53. The dancing dogs had "Sie entblößen sich und trugen ihre Blöse protzig zur Schau" K, 328. "They were uncovering their nakedness, blatantly making a show of their nakedness" W, 7.
54. K, 327. " . . . while I was still reflecting the music gradually got the upper hand, literally knocked the breath out of me and swept me far away from those actual little dogs, and quite against my will, while I howled as if some pain were being inflicted upon me, my mind could attend to nothing but this blast of music. . . . surrounding the listener, overwhelming him, crushing him. . . ." W, 5-6.
way of their rendering void dog law. Another example of the power of noise is the existence of those Lufthunde who live separate from the nourishing earth in a floating state that cannot be fathomed by the mind. Indeed the narrator admits to never having seen one at all. Oddly, after saying that the soaring dogs have a "Schweigepflicht," the Forscher then describes how they are perpetually talking. The Lufthunde, due to their "erhöhten Standort," are omniscient, yet are not allowed to share their knowledge. Having completely renounced bodily exertion, they occupy themselves with philosophizing. In conclusion, the incomprehensible sound of the Lufthunde chattering and the musicians dancing appears to represent an incommunicable totality of knowledge.

The description of the musical dogs parallels Kleist's dancer in Über das Marionetten Theater, who imitates the movement of the puppets in order to attain an unexplainable state of grace. Within his works, Kafka depicts a number of situations in which the perfection of a talent endows the artist with supernatural powers, such as the ability to completely captivate

55. Wilhelm Emrich in Franz Kafka suggests that because the music-makers contain the totality of all answers, it makes it impossible for them to give a single answer, p. 182.
56. K, 338. "Soaring Dogs" W, 19. Fredrick Karl in Franz Kafka: Representative Man interprets the soaring dogs to be lap dogs, but since the Forscher is unwilling to recognize the existence of human beings, so they appear to be floating. 57. W, 19.
an audience. In "Ein Hungerkünstler," for example, the Hungerkünstler's performance does not just stimulate casual interest; instead "it inflames hypnotic voyeurism."60 Most often "art" reflects nothing else but the actions unconsciously committed by the rest of the characters.61 The musical creation of the dancing dogs is an art form that dogs have unknowingly always made. At the time of the Forscher's experience of the musical canines, he states, "Damals wusste ich noch fast nichts von der nur dem Hundegeschlecht verliehenen schöpferischen Musikalität,. . .die Musik schon seit meiner Säuglingszeit umgeben als ein mir selbstverständlich, unentbehrliches Lebenselement. . .".62 Thus, the musicians' perfection of this "natural" art form lends them their influence over other dogs. The effect of the artist on his or her audience is paralleled in "Bericht für eine Akademie." Rotpeter's imitation of humankind produces two main consequences: his own humanization and the dehumanization of his teachers.63 Rotpeter's mimicry has become so faultless that it causes those humans near him to digress. The squeaking of Josephine in "Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse," which her "people helplessly marvel

61. Emrich, 204.
62. K, 326. "I still hardly knew anything of the creative gift for music with which the canine race alone is endowed. . .for the music had surrounded me as a perfectly natural and indispensable element of my existence since I was a suckling. . ." W, 4.
63. This relates to the pasage where Rotpeter explains that his teacher went ape, so to speak, after being near him for too long.
at," is also a portrayal of the determinant force of art.\textsuperscript{64} Art functions as a perfected reflection of society which, as a result, may exude a certain influence over others. Conversely, artists who have mastered their medium become somehow connected with the divine.

The elements of light, sound, and artistry together construct phenomena that are incomprehensible and astounding to the bridge figures. Furthermore, these attributes represent a realm of knowledge or truth that is removed from earthly existence and not easily accessible. The Lufthunde exemplify this sphere by their denial of the most basic of dog instincts, that of procuring their own food. Thus, they float above the ground without anyone knowing just how they came into being. The celestial and inaccessible quality of truth is reinforced in Kafka's short story "Vor dem Gesetz," which tells of a man who expends his whole life waiting for admittance to the Law.\textsuperscript{65} Through the guarded gateway of the Law, the man sees "einen Glanz, der unverlöslich aus der Türe des Gesetzes bricht."\textsuperscript{66} Here, Kafka creates an association between light and knowledge that parallels the religious depiction of heaven. Tragically, the man dies without ever gaining entrance into the Law; therefore, he never acquires or learns divine truth. The unintelligible nature of truth is also exemplified in Der

\textsuperscript{64} P, 270.
\textsuperscript{65} K, 131. "Before the Law" P, 148.
\textsuperscript{66} K, 132. "...a radiance that streams inextinguishably from the gateway of the Law" P, 149.
Prozess, when Josef K. finds himself incapable of focusing intellectually as he approaches the all-knowing official of that court and eventually, he becomes so overwhelmed that he faints. Analogous to Josef K.'s experience is the effect the dancing dog's music has on the Forscher. The music crushes him to the ground, robbing him of all thought, and nearly annihilates him. Thus, those wonderous and incomprehensible events within Kafka's works commonly seem to personify an inaccessability to the realm of knowledge.
IV. BRIDGE LOCATION

The stories "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie," "Forschungen eines Hundes," and "Die Brücke" depict an area suspended between the knowledge and nature pole. Kafka portrays characters who synthesize elements of each sphere. These unusual figures create a distinct location via their combination of seemingly rebellious elements. Kafka attributes to this area objects like whips, schnapps, and fire, and feelings of alienation, shame and confusion. After analyzing the characteristics of the bridge-like state of the Forscher, Rotpeter, and the main character of "Die Brücke," I shall attempt to discern whether the hybrids successfully mediate the antitheses of existence. Finally, the bridging characters seem to be paradigmatic reflections of the human position within Kafka's scheme.

It is important to note that the transformed figures did not will their change into a bridge character, rather in each case it was a "desperate remedy."67 In Kafka's short stories, this forced metamorphosis is often symbolized by a cage. Hence, in order to escape their imprisoned state, both the Forscher and Rotpeter sacrifice their blissfully unconscious existence. Rotpeter emphasizes that his cage was built with the intent to break his will:

Das Ganze war zu niedrig zum Aufrechtstehen und zu schmal zum Niedersitzen. Ich hockte deshalb mit eingebogenen, ewig zitternden Knien, und zwar, da ich zunächst wahrscheinlich niemanden sehen und immer nur im Dunkel sein wollte, zur Kiste gewendet, während sich mir hinten die Gitterstäbe ins Fleisch geschnitten. Man hält eine solche Verwahrung wilder Tiere in der allerersten Zeit für vorteilhaft, und ich kann heute nach meiner Erfahrung nicht leugnen, dass dies im menschlichen Sinn tatsächlich der Fall ist.68

The structure of the cage literally retains him in an agonizing state of inbetweeness, because it does not allow him to stand like a human or sit like an ape. By imprisoning the animal, his keepers hope to repress and destroy the memories and instincts intrinsic to his primitive existence.69 In the Forscher's case, it is the overwhelming power of the music which suddenly creates a cage and leaves him no choice but to listen: "...ihre Musik. ..rettete mich schliesslich vor ihrer eigenen Gewalt, indem sie mich in ein Gewirr von Hölzern drückte, das in jener Gegend ringsum sich erhob, ohne dass ich es bisher bemerkt hatte, mich jetzt fest umfing, den Kopf mir niedergedrückt und mir, mochte dort im Freien die Musik noch donnern..."70 Consequently, the

68. K, 149. "The whole construction was too low for me to stand up and too narrow to sit down in. So I had to squat with my knees bent and trembling all the time, and also, since probably for a time I wished to see no one, and to stay in the dark, my face was turned towards the locker while the bars of the cage cut into my flesh behind. Such a method of confining wild beasts is supposed to have its advantages during the first days of captivity, and out of my own experience I cannot deny that from the human point of view this is really the case" P, 176.
69. Weinstein, 76.
70. K, 327. "...the music. ..rescued me finally from its own violence by driving me into a labyrinth of wooden bars which rose around that place, though I had not noticed it before, but which firmly caught me, kept my head pressed to the ground, and thought the music still resounded in the open space behind me..." W, 6.
music forces the young dog to witness and recognize the musicians' sinfulness. As a result, his consciousness drives him toward questioning and investigating this and life's other phenomena. The Forscher explains that he can only hope to gain a bit of childlike happiness through a life of hard work. In "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie," Rotpeter admits that he could squeeze himself through the "Tor" leading to his unconscious, primitive past; however, "...um dorthin zurückzulaufen, das Fell vom Leib mir schinden muss, um durchzukommen." Clearly, an attempt to move through the "Tor" would only further underscore his alienation from nature, since it would result in the loss of his fur. Not being able to return to the nature sphere, these characters are relegated to a bridging position between unconscious and conscious thought. Rotpeter has a strong aversion to "der Menschenwelt," which entails spitting, drinking, and smoking, but unfortunately his choices were limited to humanity or the deep blue sea. In conclusion, the cage acts as the coercive factor which causes the animals to break their natural limitations.

The main characters of "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" and "Forschungen eines Hundes" move into a state of inbetweenness,

71. K, 147. "Archway" P, 174. 72. K, 148 "...to get back to it, I should have to scrape the very skin from my body to crawl through" P, 173-4.
73. K, 148. Although it is translated as "the world of men," I believe "the human world" is a more accurate translation.
74. The sailors are described as continually chewing tobacco, drinking schnapps, and smoking pipes. Rotpeter says that he could have jumped overboard and drown.
wherein substitutes are used to replace both the id and the superego. Despite Rotpeter's initial disgust, he vigorously begins to denigrate his true self by simulating the actions of his jailors. The chewing tobacco, schnapps, and pipes act as social replacements for the self's raw desires and impluses. Likewise, the disciplinary function of the whip attempts to subrogate the superego. When he is first placed in his cruelly constructed cage, Rotpeter spends his time, "Dumpfes Schluchzen, schmerzhaftes Flöhesuchen, müdes Lecken einer Kokosnuss, Beklopfen der Kistenwand mit dem Schadel, Zungen-Blecken, wenn mir jemand nahekam." These instinctual actions are not socially acceptable, consequently the sailors take it upon themselves to become his instructors. The very first human gesture the Affe describes learning is how to shake hands—a handshake is a time-honored social grace which implies civility. Having failed to act correctly, his teacher would burn him with his pipe. The teacher did not punish out of anger, comments Rotpeter, instead he perceives that "wir auf der gleichen Seite gegen die Affennatur kämpften ...." Through a series of

75. Pipes allude to the human ownership of fire, which differentiates them from all other creatures.
76. K, 149. "Hopelessly sobbing, painfully hunting for fleas, apathetically licking a cocoanut, beating my skull against the locker, sticking out my tongue at anyone who came near me" P, 176.
78. K, 153. "we were both fighting on the same side against the nature of apes. ..." P, 182.

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rewards and punishments, the Affe learns to supplant the artificial pleasures of smoking and drinking for the true yearnings of the id, which include the freedom to act irrational and impulsive.

Another symbol frequently found in Kafka's writings that connotes the repression of desire, is that of the whip. The physically punitive act of whipping functions as a self-imposed superego. In other words, the person is attempting to become one's own superego, which is a Freudian term implying parental or god-like authority. Rotpeter explains that he had to learn at all costs, even if it meant standing over himself with a whip, and flaying himself at his slightest opposition.79 Similarly, the Forscher uses this image to explain the plight of the investigator:

Man umschleicht den Mithund, man schäumt vor Begierde, man prügelt sich selbst mit dem eigenen Schwanz, man fragt, man bittet, man heult, man beisst und erreicht—und erreicht das, was man auch ohne jede Anstrengung erreichen würde: liebevolles Anhören, freundliche Berührungen, ehrenvolle Beschnupperungen, innige Umarmungen, mein und dein Heulen mischt sich in eines, alles ist darauf gerichtet, ein Entzücken, Vergessen und Finden, aber das eine, was man vor allem erreichen wollte: Eingeständnis des Wissens, das bleibt versagt.80

80. K, 333. "Trembling with desire, whipping yourself with your tail, you steal cautiously upon your fellow dog, you ask, you beg, you howl, you bite, and achieve—and achieve what you could have achieved just as well with out any effort: amiable embraces, friendly contiguity, honest acceptance, ardent embraces, barks that mingle as one: everything is directed towards achieving an ecstasy, a forgetting and finding again; but the one thing that you long to win above all, the admission of knowledge, remains denied to you" W, 14.
The Forscher claims that the use of the whip will not result in any progress toward the acquisition of knowledge. Furthermore, he explains that the other dogs act with the purpose of achieving "an ecstasy"; thus, his investigations often only lure him closer to the nature pole. This image of an individual standing over oneself with a whip pervades much of Kafka's works. Rotpeter's humanization, states Nicolai, identifies the whip as the symbol of the human will.\textsuperscript{81} The whip, however, is a human-crafted tool and as a result, its ability to control is limited. Instances in which this tool fails to restrain are illustrated in "Schakale und Araber," when the jackals keep eating the camel carcass, and "Ein Altes Blatt," when the horses act like carnivores, all despite the flagellation inflicted by the whip. In addition, torture, whether it be self-imposed or not, may be able to suppress the beast in the Forscher and in Rotpeter, but it cannot bring them to the realm of knowledge. The knowledge pole consists of unworldly elements and occurrences that reside beyond the reach of human-made tools.

Unable to return to a state of natural grace and thwarted in their attempts to obtain total knowledge, the main characters in "Forschungen eines Hundes," "Die Brücke," and "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" remain suspended amid the two extremes. Accompanying this bridge position appears to be the three distinct feelings of alienation, confusion, and shame. These

\textsuperscript{81} Nicolai, 555.
emotions alone demonstrate the miserable essence of inbetweenness, which is usually connected with humanity. Rotpeter alludes to the discontented state of humans in his description of the sailors as lazy, coarse creatures who grunt, spit, smoke, and drink; 83 "Wäre ich ein Anhänger jener erwähnten Freiheit, ich hätte gewiss das Weltmeer dem Ausweg vorgezogen, der sich mir im trüben Blick dieser Menschen zeigte." 84 Thus, the sailors' "heavy faces" exemplify the unhappy condition of humankind and all other creatures caught betwixt extremities.

The transformation of the bridge figure seems congruent in many ways with the Biblical story of original sin. In "Forschungen eines Hundes," the most obvious similarity to the tale from the Bible is Kafka's use of nakedness to express the absence of shame; conversely, the Forscher recognizes the Musicians' nudity as sinful and indecent. It is this recognition of a mistake, a sin, in Dogdom which the Forscher witnesses in the performance of the dancing dogs, and which acts as the catalyst of his metamorphosis; "Wenn ich jetzt zurückdenke und die Zeiten mir zurückrufe, da ich noch imitten der Hundenschaft lebt... finde ich bei näherem Zusehen doch, dass hier seit jeher etwas nicht stimmte, eine kleine Bruchstelle vorhanden war... ." 85

83. P, 178.
84. K, 152. "Had I been devoted to the aforementioned idea of freedom, I should certainly have preferred the deep sea to the way out that suggested itself in the heavy faces of these men" P, 180.
85. K, 324. "When I think back and recall the time when I was still a member of the canine community... .I find on closer examination that from the very beginning I sensed some
Inadvertently, through his acknowledgement of the inherent flaw in dogs, the Forscher is forced to realize his own sinfulness. This parallels Adam's and Eve's eternal banishment from paradise, due to their attainment of knowledge and consequent development of shame. No longer are they unified with nature. Congruently, the Forscher's "eingeborenes Wesen" has made it almost impossible for him to resume his place in the "Haufen." 86 The Forscher confesses, ". . . ja manchmal selbst im vertrauten Kreise, nein, nicht manchmal, sondern sehr oft, der blosse Anblick eines mir lieben Mithundes, der blosse Anblicke, irgendwie neu gesehen, mich verlegen, erschrocken, ja mich verzweifelte machte." 87 The newly obtained knowledge fills the main character with embarassment, fear, and confusion, and leads to his alienation from the dog community.

In his isolated state, the Forscher is able to find some degree of solace by continuing his investigations; "Zurückgezogen, einsam, nur mit meinen hoffnungslosen, aber mir unentbehrlich kleinen Untersuchungen beschäftigt, so lebe ich. . . ." 88 Though he feels somewhat content, he is aware that the purpose of his life centers upon senseless questions. Hence, discrepancy, some little maladjustment. . . " W, 1.

87. K, 324. ". . . more, that sometimes, no, not sometimes, but very often, the mere look of some fellow dog of my own circle that I was fond of, the mere look of him, as if I had just caught it for the first time, would fill me with helpless embarassment and fear, even with despair" W, 1.
88. K, 324. "Solitary and withdrawn, with nothing to occupy me save my hopeless but, as far as I am concerned, indispensible little investigations, that is how I live. . . ." W, 2.
the Forscher's existence seems meaningless or, as Kafka states in his journal, a "Nothing."\textsuperscript{89} Only after having starved himself does the Forscher approach the realm of knowledge through a divine revelation. With his head lying in his own vomitory blood, he beholds a "Lufthund."\textsuperscript{90} The floating dog creates a melody that "sprengt fast das Gehör,"\textsuperscript{91} yet it also strengthens the dying Forscher. "Aus der Hungerzeit," he exclaims, "Ich in diese Welt herübergerettet habe, . . .wie weit Ausser-sich-sein wir gelangen können."\textsuperscript{92} Self-induced starvation, in essence, negates the fundamental instinct of all earthly creatures, that being the desire to live. Consequently, this death-defying task requires a tremendous degree of discipline. Kafka does, however, indicate the main character's extreme exercise in will power to be fairly successful in its endeavor to reach total knowledge and meaning. Through the dominance of his will over the id, the Forscher moves along his bridging position toward the pole of knowledge.

The humanization of the ape in "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" also adheres to the Biblical story of original sin. Nicolai explains that both of the wounds inflicted upon Rotpeter "testify to the human condition,"\textsuperscript{93} which consists of the

\textsuperscript{89} See footnote \# 1.
\textsuperscript{90} See footnote \# 56.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{K}, 353. "Almost burst my eardrums" \textit{W}, 41.
\textsuperscript{92} \textit{K}, 352. "From my period of fasting, . . .I have carried over into this world. . .how far we can go. . .beyond ourselves" \textit{W}, 41.
\textsuperscript{93} Nicolai, 557-8.
emotions shame, confusion, and isolation. The first of the two shots that hit the ape causes a red scar to form on his cheek. Nicolai theorizes that Kafka received this idea from Nietzsche, who writes in Also Sprach Zarathustra that "man is the animal with red cheeks" due to his intrinsic sense of shame.\textsuperscript{94} Moreover, red refers to the color of the forbidden fruit (apple) eaten by Adam and Eve. The scar also seems to suggest that humans are mutated animals set apart from the rest of nature, for example, despite his having been accompanied by coaches, teachers, and huge audiences, Rotpeter remarks that he has and is completely alone.\textsuperscript{95} Likewise portrayed in "Die Brücke," the main character, a mortal bridge, has yet to be crossed. In fact, "die Brücke war in den Karten noch nicht eingezeichnet."\textsuperscript{96} The depiction of these bridge figures as banished to isolation stresses the difference between them and those characters belonging to the wild, communal realm of nature.

Another substantial variance in the attributes of the nature and bridge location is the confusion experienced by the bridge character. This is best exemplified in "Die Brücke," when the humanlike bridge describes the nature of her thoughts; "Meine Gedanken gingen immer in einem Wirrwarr und immer in der Runde."\textsuperscript{97} Conscious thoughts and decisions judge the positives

\textsuperscript{94} Nicolai, 557.  
\textsuperscript{95} P, 173.  
\textsuperscript{96} K, 284. "...The bridge was not yet traced on any map" W, 131.  
\textsuperscript{97} K, 284. "My thoughts were always in confusion and perpetually moving in a circle" W, 131.
and negatives, or right and wrong aspects of an event or choice. Thus paradoxically the ability to reason only causes the main character to become perplexed, and hinders her from moving to one extreme or the other. The figures in the sphere of nature are rarely confused, as a result of their obedience to their bellies. In a pre-reflective state, the distinctions between good and evil do not exist. Humans, like Kafka's bridge characters, become enmeshed in social norms which attempt to dictate right and wrong and subsequently keep them "moving in a circle."

V. COMPLEXITY OF THE BRIDGE MOTIF

The notion of humanity as a rope or a bridge is strongly represented and discussed in Friedrich Nietzsche's writings. Nietzsche moves away from Kleist's focus on "consciousness," and stresses the will of humankind: "...this I teach men: no longer bury one's head in the sand of heavenly things, but to bear it freely, an earthy head...to will his way..."97 Clearly, Nietzsche believes that any "meaning" or knowledge of life can not be based on a religious or supernatural purpose. Instead, it is the responsibility of humanity to provide their existence with purpose and truth. Nietzsche's notion of the human predicament is most clearly exemplified in the passage in

which Zarathustra, Nietzsche's prophet in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, likens humans to ropes:

Man is a rope, tied between beast and Übermensch—a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping.\(^98\)

Although movement across the bridge toward the nature or knowledge pole involves great peril, as was illustrated by the Forscher's starvation tactic, humankind must develop beyond the nature pole and the bridge location. The connotations of Nietzsche's term "Allzumenschlich"\(^99\) allude in many ways to the bridging position in Kafka's works. By using the term Allzumenschlich, Nietzsche appears to be addressing the unwitting gravitation of humanity toward cultural conditioning and social conventions. The very nature of humanity causes the downfall of human beings, because it is drawn to social norms and ethics. Thus, according to this interpretation of the Allzumenschlich, the human disposition must be overcome in order to achieve a completely all-knowing state of grace. Zarathustra names the individual capable of succeeding at such an arduous task an Übermensch.

Despite the difficulty involved in reaching the knowledge pole, in his writings, Nietzsche heralds the human potential:

What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an overture and a going under.\(^100\)

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98. Nietzsche, 126.
100. Nietzsche, 127.
Every human being retains the possibility of development beyond the socially invented categories of good and evil; and this notion of the Übermensch also occurs in Kafka's writings:

> Seit dem Sündenfall sind wir in der Fähigkeit zur Erkenntnis des Guten und Bösen im Wesentlichen gleich; trotzdem suchen wir gerade heir unsere besonderen Vorzüge. Aber erst jenseits dieser Erkenntnis beginnen die wahren Verschiedenheiten.\textsuperscript{101}

Humans commonly judge one another in their endeavor to act in accordance with communal rules and regulations of right and wrong. However Kafka admits that there exists a realm, wherein humans truly attain purpose and "worth."

Kafka then develops this image a bit further, when he says; "Der wahre Weg geht über ein Seil, das nicht in der Höhe gespannt ist, sondern knapp über dem Boden. Es scheint mehr bestimmt stolpern zu machen, als begangen zu werden."\textsuperscript{102} In spite of his belief in the knowledge pole, Kafka appears pessimistic as to whether mortals could actually ever reach it. The standards of society trip individuals into complacency and keep them in a stagnant state of being. Although Rotpeter claims he is not satisfied with his evolution, the way in which he describes himself leads the reader to think otherwise: "Die Hände in den Hosentaschen, die Weinflasche auf dem Tisch, liege ich halb, halb

\textsuperscript{101} H, 37. "Since the Fall we have been essentially equal in our capacity to recognize good and evil; nonetheless it is just here that we seek to show our individual superiority. But the real differences of worth begin beyond that knowledge" W, 178.

\textsuperscript{102} H, 30. "The true way goes over a rope which is not stretched at any great height but just above the ground. It seems more designed to make one stumble than be walked upon" K, 162.
sitze ich im Schaukelstuhl und schaue aus dem Fenster."¹⁰³ Rotpeter's leisurely posture gives the impression that he is indeed content, and has no intention of evolving any further. Ironically, his half sitting, half standing position is a reminder of bridge position forced upon him in the cage.

Not only could the bridge characters' inclinations trip them into complacency, it could also cause their total downfall. In "Die Brücke," Kafka writes of a bridge in the shape of a human being, that collapses out of its desire to "know."¹⁰⁴ It attempts to turn around and see who has painfully jumped on its back. In the beginning, the bridge wishes she could be "ein Berggott"¹⁰⁵ capable of transporting any faltering traveler to the other side. Her desire to be divine merely results in her destruction by the rocks below. Thus, unlike Nietzsche, Kafka appears to despair in the bridge character's or rather humanity's ability to obtain total knowledge. Nonetheless, due to the suspended quality of a bridge, human beings can not escape their attachment to the knowledge pole. Bridge figures, therefore, are not able to relinquish their desire to attain complete knowledge, despite the inconceivability of success.

The Forscher blames his inability to achieve knowledge on his "instinct," which places the desire for freedom above all.

¹⁰⁴. Gross, 582.
Within Kafka's works, freedom appears to be an inherent element of the nature pole. This is clearly evident in "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie," when Rotpeter says, "Als Affe kannte ich . . . dieses grosse Gefühl der Freiheit nach allen Seiten." He no longer yearns for freedom, however, and he laughs at those humans who do; "Mit Freiheit betrügt man sich unter Menschen allzuoft." By saying that humans should not be disillusioned by freedom, Rotpeter implies that freedom is not that desirable of a characteristic or, at least, that humans should not be duped into striving for it. Consequently, when the Forscher abandons his investigations because of feelings of inadequacy, it becomes apparent that he has failed to raise himself above the "half-educated" individuals of Dogdom. Thus, his submission to his desire for freedom is a resignation of the desire for knowledge:

Es war der Instinkt, der mich vielleicht gerade um der Wissenschaft als sie heute geübt wird, einer allerletzten Wissenschaft, die Freiheit höher schätzen liess als alles andere. Die Freiheit! Freilich, die Freiheit, wie sie heute möglich ist, ist ein kümmerliches Gewächs. Aber immerhin Freiheit, immerhin ein Besitz.

106. *K*, 354. "Prize freedom higher than everything else*  *W*, 43.
107. *K*, 150. "As an ape, I knew that. . . spacious feeling of freedom on all sides*  *P*, 177.
108. *K*, 150. "All too often men are betrayed by the word freedom*  *P*, 177.
109. In addition, it is nearly impossible for the bridge character to (re)merge with nature.
111. *K*, 354. "It was instinct that made me--and perhaps for the sake of science itself, but a different science from that of today, an ultimate [sic] science--prize freedom higher than everything else. Freedom! Certainly such freedom as is possible
This negative description of freedom as the "very last" science and "a wretched business" further testifies to the Forscher's failure. Indeed, it is nearly impossible for him to squeeze through the archway to the realm of nature. Hence, by yielding to the pull of his instincts, he has resigned himself to the bridging position.

In conclusion, the main characters of Kafka's "Die Brücke," "Forschungen eines Hundes," and "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" all meet pathetic or even tragic ends. The bridging motif integrated within Kafka's short stories illustrates a philosophical cul-de-sac, in which no definite answers to the duality of human existence appear. His works seem to lead the reader into a discussion of the conflict between the id-centered, unreflective state of nature and the radiant, divine sphere of knowledge. The gap or "abyss" amid these extremes finds expression in the reappearance of a bridge character, who embodies antithetical qualities. As a result of a character's embodiment of opposing attributes, a new location or a bridging position is constructed. This location offers transportation to either pole; however, the crossing is precarious and ridden with obstacles.

The works of Nietzsche and Kleist eagerly support the human potential to move beyond its bridge-like condition, whereas Kafka, it seems, cannot bring himself to such a positive today is a wretched business. But nevertheless freedom, nevertheless a possession" W, 43.
conclusion. This is evident in the protagonists' inability to become omniscient beings and the expressed inappropriateness of their total alliance with nature. Thus, Kafka's writings reveal the confused, alienated, and shame-centered predicament of humanity. The bridging motif in the short stories "Bericht für eine Akademie," "Forschungen eines Hundes," and "Die Brücke" echo the words of Blaise Pascal: "What a chimera, then, is man! What a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! A judge of all things, feeble worm of the earth, depository of the truth, cloaca of uncertainty and error, the glory and shame of the universe!"112

BIBLIOGRAPHY of PRIMARY SOURCES


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