

An Interpretation of Paradox Literary Technique in Kafka's *The Trial*

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Abstract—*The Trial* is the most representative work that Kafka did not complete before his death. This paper interprets Kafka's "paradox" literary technique from the perspective of the relationship between readers and authors through the window of *The Trial*. The "paradox" transforms the relationship between the reader and the author from guiding and being guided to the dialogue and questioning between the author and the reader. When the reader is substituted into the "paradox" story plot and trapped in the conflicting dilemma of thinking, the reader's subjectivity is awakened by the mentality of being on the tenterhooks and striving to find relief; at the same time, the revival of the consciousness of the subject also means questioning and reflecting on the validity and legitimacy of the existing world, so that the artistic effect of breaking away from the old world and finding a new way is achieved. Although Kafka didn't eventually prescribe a solution to the "paradox", he did make efforts to explore new ways.

Keywords—Kafka; paradox; *The Trial*

I. INTRODUCTION

In general literary works, the author usually expresses his theme in two methods resonating with the readers, thus influencing the readers. The first is to show the righteousness or evil, nobleness or inferiority of the characters and to show the beauty and ugliness as well as the good and evil through the masked image of the characters. The second is to show the readers imperceptibly. That is, the author does not show the black or white faces of the characters but with the development of the plot of the works, the readers gradually find the good and evil as well as the beauty and ugliness that the author wants to express. In both of these ways, the author has prepared the answer, but the answer is directly reflected or hidden in the designed options. As long as the reader follows the author, the answer can be obtained by following a clue.

However, when reading Kafka's works, if the readers dissect them in the above mentioned two methods, they will always find empty gains, or even find that it is unintelligible. In his works, it is very difficult for the readers to find the answer by following a clue or it is impossible for them to agree on the answer itself. The reason for this lies in Kafka's extensive use of paradox literary technique which is the most distinguishing feature of his works.

Unlike the above mentioned two methods of expression in general literary works, there is no presupposed answer in Kafka's method or the presupposed answer is "continuous questioning". Kafka exposes his inner conflict to the readers through paradox, but does not provide them with any established answers. If the first two methods of literary expression tell the readers the answer and how to find hidden treasures by following up a clue given by the author, Kafka asks questions and gives the readers the compass of the road for the future.

Therefore, when the readers appreciate Kafka's works, they must adopt a third method, which requires the readers to stand on their own feet and shoulder their own responsibility, from followers who are eager to get the established answers to the subjects who lead their own way, from the desire for answers to serious questioning.

At present, there are two emphases in the study of Kafka's paradox literary technique in Chinese academic circles. First, taking paradox as the center and integrate many of Kafka's works to explain and demonstrate the same; Second, focusing on the author's life experience, historical environment and literary schools to explain and understand Kafka's works. However, the study of Kafka's paradox technique in the context of one single work is rare; at the same time, the reader-centered interpretation of Kafka's paradox literary technique is equally rare. "The novel *The Trial* can be the symbol of the formation of Kafka-style fiction which can best represent Kafka's creative ideas and artistic techniques." [1] Therefore, it is necessary to stand on the readers' point of view and use Kafka's paradox literary technique to interpret *The Trial*.

This paper attempts to interpret Kafka's paradox technique through the experience of the protagonist, Josef K, such as seeking the Law, being arrested, trial, conviction, death etc. It shows how Kafka awakens the reader's consciousness of the subject through the paradox technique.

In order to make the discussion clearer, the author needs to explain Kafka's paradox technique. What is a paradox? Some scholars believe that paradox, as a strange circle of logic, is often presented as the counteraction of two opposite logical lines in modern literary and artistic works. [2] Kafka's paradox is not only a self-contradiction in external form, but also "an important means to reveal the absurdity and tragedy

of the world". [3] That is to say, Kafka's paradox literary technique is mainly aimed at showing the absurdity and tragedy of the world. Other scholars argue that Kafka's paradox is different from the paradox as traditionally defined. It does not end by reversing normal logic, but establishes a "special relationship" between the "poles" of two opposing logical lines, that is, not letting your mind slip away from the track at the end of the "poles" you expect and go in the opposite direction, moving back and forth endlessly. Any effort to explain can only lead to greater confusion, as if entering a maze and getting lost. This is called the "sliding paradox". [4] With respect to this issue, the readers can get confirmation from Kafka. He wrote in his diary after his visit to the Austrian philosopher Steiner: "Sometimes, in my opinion, I am in a state very close to the state of insight described by Dr. Steiner. In this state, I live in all kinds of sudden thoughts and can substantiate each and every thought. In this state, I can not only feel my limitations, but also feel the limitations of human beings." [5] It is worth pointing out that it is this very limitation of thinking that makes Kafka's paradox inexplicable, just as Politzer said: "Any attempt to reach a conclusion or explain the mystery must be in vain." [6] At the same time, some scholars believe that Kafka no longer looks at the world from the perspective of ordinary persons, but observes things from a unique perspective, that is, no longer follows the traditional "imitation" method, but advocates the use of pioneering "expression" method. As far as the function of art is concerned, it means focusing on enlightenment instead of teaching. This "other eye" may be referred to as "the third eye". Kafka acquired "the ability to see the Holy Spirit", as Spender called it, by virtue of the "eyes" that ordinary persons do not possess. He could often remove the cover of "lies" on the surface of the world and see the essence of things. [7] Thus, the author summarizes four characteristics of Kafka's paradox literary technique: first, the counteraction and contradiction of logical lines; second, revealing and expressing the absurdity and tragedy of the world; third, the inexplicability caused by the limitations of thinking; four, insight into the essence of things and emphasis on enlightenment rather than teaching.

Compared with the general paradox technique, Kafka's paradox literary technique embodies more the third and fourth characteristics. It is because of the inexplicability that the readers advance towards the essences of things. At the same time, this inexplicability reverses the relationship between the author and the readers, from teaching to an emphasis on questioning and enlightenment, which in turn supports the readers to the deep tapping of the essence of lies and the absurd world.

Some scholars believe that Kafka is engaged in creation with a strong mission. It is his "serious task to devote his life" to re-examine the reality through creation and fully express his true feelings about absurd existence. [8] It is worth emphasizing that behind Kafka's expression of absurdity of the real world, it is more important to use his paradox literary technique to enlighten the readers. Because, as the famous Swiss writer Dylan Matt said, "No ancient and modern celebrities should enjoy the unjust privilege of being imitated forever. They can only be our interlocutors and

inspirers." [9] Therefore, if the analysis of paradox is confined to techniques and method of expression and neglects the readers' experience of paradox, it would be like treating Kafka as an exhibition in the museum. Therefore, only the Kafka who inspires the readers' resonance is complete. It is the inspiration of this very paradox literary technique that reserves the relationship between the author and the readers. Therefrom, the readers acquire the consciousness of the subject and stand on their own feet on the basis of the author's text and its prompt, becoming explorers of their own destiny.

II. THE BACKGROUND OF PARADOX

Australian writer Franz Kafka is not a professional writer. Many of his works are completed in his spare time. Like other writers, his works also have a strong autobiographical colour. He once said, "My happiness, my abilities, and every possibility of being useful in any way have always been in the literary field." [10] The difference is that the identity of an amateur writer does not give him much peace and psychological balance. On the contrary, it makes him fall into conflicts. He said, "I cannot now devote myself completely to this literary field, as would be necessary and indeed for various reasons. Aside from my family relationships, I could not live by literature if only, to begin with, because of the slow maturing of my work and its special character; besides I am prevented also by my health and my character from devoting myself to what is, in the most favorable case, an uncertain life. I have therefore become an official in a social insurance agency." But these two professions "can never be reconciled with one another and admit a common fortune", so that "I fulfill my duties satisfactorily at the office, not my inner duties, however, and every unfulfilled inner duty becomes a misfortune that dwells in my heart and never leaves". [11]

Facing this conflict, Kafka survived in the crack and arranged his life and work with literature as the center, but this temporary relief only made him gasp for breath. As he said, "My lifestyle is just set up for writing. If it changes, it is all about being more suitable for writing. Because time is short, power is weak, the office is disastrous and the living place is so noisy. If a happy and smooth life cannot be realized, we must rely upon our ability to survive in a narrow area. I am satisfied that I am able to apply this skill successfully to the schedule of time. But this satisfaction is insignificant compared with eternal happiness." [12]

Facing the family, especially the relationship with his father, Kafka has extremely complex emotions. He tried to reconcile with his father in guilt, criticism, struggle, exoneration and going to independence. In *Letter to My Father*, Kafka described his father like this: "Your body alone has overwhelmed me at that time", "and your spiritual authority", "You sit in a chair to rule the world. Your opinion is correct, and any other opinion is pathogenic, extreme, insane and abnormal." [13] Faced with a powerful father, Kafka monologues, "I lost confidence in front of you, in return for a sense of endless guilt." [14] Kafka tried to get rid of his father's authority and strive for independence. Marriage was his life-saving straw. "In fact, the marriage

plan has become the greatest and most promising attempt to save himself," but "the attempt is thrilling, and its failure is certainly thrilling." [15]

Although the love of marriage is beautiful and desirable, Kafka hesitates all the time. In the anxiety resulting from his father's "shadow", he tried to choose a self-saving marriage in his efforts to rebel the authority of his father. After all, it is not a good relationship without impurities. Therefore, Kafka can only fail to live up to his lover's affection and live alone.

At the same time, the free choice of occupation and economic independence did not relieve Kafka of any expectation. "When I was a child, I had a clear premonition of school life and occupation. In this regard, I do not expect any savior, for which I have long given up the hope of being rescued." [16] The only route to write literature gives Kafka some comfort, but he cannot get rid of the authority of "father". He said, "I did leave you and walked a long way independently, although it is reminiscent of a worm, whose tail was trodden upon by the foot with the first half broke free, wriggling to one side. I have possessed some safety here and I can breathe a sign of relief." [17] These inner monologues of Kafka provide the readers with a key to recognize and understand him, as well as a kind of enlightenment for the readers to have a deeper understanding of his "paradox" literary technique.

Imagine that if Kafka had followed his father's instruction and authority all the time, and had no independent consciousness of the subject or rebellious spirit against his father's authority, then he would live in peace under his father's light and shadow, without looking for literary comfort in the uneasiness of guilt. Likewise, if the questioning and rebellion against his father's authority were confined to his own family, Kafka would be nothing more than a mediocre writer full of resentment and contradiction.

In fact, Kafka's rebellion against his father is a microcosm of the prevalent tension between "son and father". Here the readers can understand it as the contradiction between the Father and the Son in the Christian sense. For example, some scholars believe that the father in *The Judgment* can be seen as the image of a transformed God. [18] The readers can also understand it as the contradiction and conflict between the old and the new world, that is, the old and traditional world and authority represented by the "father" and the desire and pursuit for a new world as well as independence and autonomy by the "son". Kafka's "paradox" literary technique does not lie in the contradiction and conflict of logic, but in the contradiction between the old and the new world in the historical context. Paradox itself is only Kafka's reminder of the problems that he is aware of. In other words, it is the tool that Kafka uses to ask questions. The purpose of paradox is not to provide ready-made answers, but to arouse the reader's consciousness of the subject, to make the readers reflect on the existing world and to urge the readers to think and explore the way forward with their own minds.

As Simone De Beauvoir, a well-known scholar in the West, said, "We still don't fully understand why we feel that his work is a personal concern for the readers. Faulkner, and

all other writers, tell the readers distant stories; Kafka tells the readers our own stories. He reminds the readers of their own problems. In the face of a world without God, our salvation is at stake." [19] The "absurd world" that Kafka depicts through his paradox literary technique is his imitation of contradictions and conflicts in the real world. Kafka's humanity concern is to erect the "absurd world" in front of the readers, so that the readers cannot avoid. Since there is nowhere to escape, the readers must think about how to transform the world. What is valuable is that, after Kafka reminds the readers of the questions again, instead of presenting himself as a parent and a savior, he gives the readers the right and responsibility to prescribe the medication. Kafka brings the readers out of the old world which they depend on and trust. As for the next step, the readers' own consciousness of the subject is required to come into play.

III. THE PARADOX IN *BEFORE THE LAW*

The Trial is an unfinished work by Kafka, and he didn't intend to publish it in his lifetime. His favorite parable *Before the Law* is often intercepted from *The Trial* and published many times. Because the countryman in the parable story and Josef K in the novel have roughly the same fate trajectory, it is necessary to have an overview understanding of the novel through the analysis of the parable story.

Generally speaking, when interpreting *The Trial*, people tend to regard the parable as "the core of the whole novel". [20] If the readers look at the overall structure of the text, many aspects of the parable story correspond to the story of *The Trial*. For example, in the first instance trial section, it seems that there are many similarities with the cathedral (parable) section. Both talk about how to enter the Law as well as how to defend and struggle in front of the Law's servants. Jumping outside of this section, Josef K's engagement of lawyers, even his dependence on women, is just like farmer's contribution of valuable things. It is just "routine". Even the final outcome is that both the countryman and Josef K died because of the Law: one died because he didn't seek the Law, and the other died because he was sentenced to death in accordance with Law. Therefore, there is a corresponding relationship between the parable story and the story of *The Trial*.

However, as mentioned above, *The Trial* is an unfinished work, and the story plot and the parable are not fully integrated. On the one hand, the extension of the plot is so rich that it cannot be completely condensed in the parable story. On the other hand, the profound connotation of the parable restricts the imagination of the readers and the tactics of the author. In any case, I believe that the parable and other story plots have their own unique meanings, and it can be said that this non-correspondence in this kind of logical conflict is nonetheless the embodiment of the beauty of incompleteness. [21]

In the parable story, the countryman seeks the Law and "pours out all his possessions, including many valuable things, to bribe the gatekeeper." [22] Such generosity is

nothing but the logic of money that everyone knows, which generally regulates all people. The countryman just follows the simple "rules" to get through all kinds of obstacles and tries his best to fulfil these seemingly obligatory "obligations". As said by the gatekeeper, "I am taking this only so that you do not think you have failed to do anything." [23] This understatement actually indicates that the money rules and logic common to the countryman and the gatekeeper are ineffective in seeking the Law. That is to say, the countryman just did what he had to do.

Josef K in the novel, as a middle-class white collar, "has been working in the bank for a long time and is familiar with worldly wisdom, and has a lot of experience in life." [24] He knows the rules of money in society, and of course has the financial resources to hire a well-known lawyer, Dr. Huld, to defend himself. Faced with the words and concerns of Titorelli, a beggar painter who paints a portrait of judges, he spares no pains to buy those silly paintings in return. The only purpose of such conduct is to achieve the goal of acquittal through the logic of "money".

In the parable, with the passage of time, the countryman begins by cursing this unfortunate and accidental event, and then becomes helpless and foolish enough to rely on the fleas in the gatekeeper's boots to change his mind. Eventually, he doesn't get into the entrance to the Law on the verge of death. Correspondingly, Josef K in the novel evolved from his youthful vigor, his arrest as a joke, to his involvement in the trial and could not extricate himself. In fact, he is as tightly bound to the gate of the Law as the countryman. Josef K went to court to defend himself, met his lawyer's mistress, Leni, and even dismissed his lawyer. This series of noise and toss could not help him escape the death penalty. Compared with the countryman bound to the gate of the Law, Josef K's arrest, which seems to have personal freedom, only adds to the twists and turns of his life experience, and is no different from the countryman who waited for death monotonously.

Although Josef K entered the court, he did not actually see the Law as he had hoped, just like the countryman in the parable. The countryman didn't enter the gate of the Law until death. Josef K only heard about the legend and description of the Law from lawyers, judges, beggar painters, gatekeepers and even businessmen facing similar trials. Here, both the countryman and Josef K struggled in their own social status but in different forms. Whether he is facing the situation alone or reliant on other people to some extent, once convicted of a crime, or once he wants to seek the Law, they face the same consequences.

Josef K and the countryman in the parable have done all they can. Whether it is precious material "money" or "emotional" catharsis attached to life, they have fully exposed all practicalities that can be expected in life in front of the Law, assuming that they can get the green light of the Law, but ultimately they are greeted by empty death. From this perspective, this is only the paradox tragedy of destiny of the two protagonists, as a "sacrifice" of the Law, but without the mercy of the "Law".

The countryman in the parable didn't see the Law until death, not because of the gatekeeper's obstruction. Rather

than treating the gatekeeper as a servant of the Law, it is a self-imposed obstacle of human beings. In the face of dying countryman, the gatekeeper shouted, "Here no one else can gain entry, since this entrance was assigned only to you. I'm going now to close it." [25] The gate of the Law is assigned only to the countryman who nonetheless will never be able to get in. For the countryman, this is the paradox of existence destiny — man set up the gate, the gate blocked the road, the gate was blocked for man, but man was refused to enter. For Law, the gate was assigned to man, but it is difficult for man to find out the true face of the Law, and it refused the furtive glance of everyone.

The gatekeeper is not at fault. He just faithfully fulfills his obligations, out of a kind of almost foolish loyalty. The countryman's lifelong pursuit is only the "faithful" response from the gatekeeper. As the priest in the novel said, "He is only a gatekeeper and, as a gatekeeper, he has fulfilled his duties." [26] In the eyes of the countryman, the gatekeeper is powerful, but the powerful gatekeeper himself has not seen the Law. "I am only the lowliest gatekeeper. But from room to room stand gatekeepers, each more powerful than the other. I can't endure even one glimpse of the third." [27] Therefore, the powerful gatekeeper only faithfully fulfills his obligations, and the countryman pursues the Law "whose gate is assigned only to you". [28] They each abide by their own responsibilities and no one is at fault.

No one is at fault — the countryman's behavior cannot be criticized, the gatekeeper's behavior cannot be criticized, but the poor countryman welcomed empty death in the judgment that no one is at fault and the atmosphere that everyone is innocent. In fact, the destiny of the countryman is so paradoxical, and the destiny of Josef K in the novel that the author is going to analyze in detail below is also so paradoxical. The difference is that one is natural death, whilst the other is executed to death.

Kafka puts the paradox of the destiny of the countryman and Josef K in front of every reader which, at least, has three meanings.

First, the readers are substituted into the paradoxical story plot, indulged in Kafka's paradox and trapped into the thinking dilemma, so that the readers are on the tenterhooks and strive to seek a way out to solve the problem and the reason that caused such paradox. This objectively transforms the relationship between the reader and the author from the parental relationship of guiding and being guided to that of the dialogue and questioning between friends, thus prompting the reader to stand on their own feet and reflect, awakening the reader's consciousness of the subject.

Second, Kafka revives the subject with the assistance of paradox, thus questioning the validity and legitimacy of the existing world. In the process of reading Kafka's paradoxical parable, when the reader was questioned dumbly by Kafka, and caught up in the anxiety at a loss, Kafka walked away. But this unique psychological experience of reading has increasingly whipped the readers to meditate — what is the problem? What is the decent society that the readers should expect? Kafka expressed this view in Franz Kafka, "This painting is both right and wrong. There is only one aspect

that is right, and it is wrong to declare a part as a panorama. The fat man in a hat rides around the neck of the poor. That is right. But fat men are capitalists, which is not entirely right. Fat men rule the poor within a certain system, but he is not the system himself, he is not even the ruler of the system. On the contrary, the fat man was also shackled with the shackles that were not painted. This picture is incomplete, so it's not a good one. Capitalism is a series of systems of dependency from inside to outside, from top to bottom, and from bottom to top. Everything is dependent and everything is restricted. Capitalism is a state of the world and the soul." [29] Thus, Kafka exposed his paradoxical personality in the deep structure of history. If it is purely about the superficial or partial repairs of the social management system, social management method, etc., it can be explained and resolved and Kafka's paradox will be dispelled in the existing society soon. It is because of the very reason that it is difficult to dispel the paradox; the readers are facing a deeper historical level and wider historical span.

Third, Kafka tried to break away from the old world by means of his unique paradox literary technique. Although he did not prescribe a medication to solve the paradox, he did make efforts to explore new way forward. The fact that the gate assigned only to one is inaccessible, no one is at fault coupled with the psychological experience of being on the tenterhooks, is the alienation and tearing of human beings. As the famous Kafka researcher Walter Sokel pointed out, "He has never chosen either side in his mind, so that the inner truth can never be revealed. One pulls him to surrender, giving meaning to his death; the other pulls him to resist, denying meaning to his death. These two contradictory forces tear the entire true self apart." [30] Facing the conflict and opposition between the gatekeeper of the Law and the countryman seeking the Law, Kafka just showed it coldly from the sidelines, highlighting the subject's anxiety for survival through the internal conflicts and opposition of the subject. The readers feel like they are like falling into the strong glue and want to escape but are trapped, and also want to integrate but feel suffocated. In the tragedy of an era that cannot be attributed to the fault of anyone and in a predicament that can't be fulfilled in any way, Josef K and the countryman's physical life is short and limited, but these conflicts and contradictions that they face continue to exist and last. It enlightens the readers to constantly ask, meditate on, recognize themselves, and to explore new possibilities and ways forward in the process of breaking away from the old world.

IV. THE PARADOX IN THE ARREST AND THE TRIAL

"Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K., he knew he had done nothing wrong but, one morning, he was arrested." [31] The "ignorance" of the reason for being arrested somehow already implies the destiny of Josef K, i.e. being sentenced to death.

On the morning of his arrest, Josef K asked, "I've been indicted, but can't think of the slightest offence for which I could be indicted. But even that is all beside the point, the main question is: Who is issuing the indictment? What office is conducting this affair?" [32] Faced with this question, the

official answered, "As to whether you're on a charge, I can't give you any sort of clear answer to that, because I don't even know whether you are or not. You're under arrest, you're quite right about that, but I don't know any more than that." [33] Thus, Josef K was declared to be arrested in "ignorance", and the executor also declared to arrest him in "ignorance".

If the ignorance of the executor can be forgiven, the ignorance of the trial judge is ironic. In the first trial, the trial judge is also "ignorant". "The trial judge reached for a little notebook and said to Josef K with the tone of someone who knows his facts: 'You are a house painter?' 'No,' Josef K said, 'I am the chief clerk of a large bank.' This reply was followed by laughter among the right hand faction down in the hall; it was so hearty that Josef K. couldn't stop himself joining in with it." [34] However, a trick was played on the destiny of Josef K in this "ignorance" and he was convicted and sentenced to death.

In fact, in the court of first instance, Josef K has realized the uselessness of his plea. "Everyone is in a group, apparently divided into the right and the left." [35] In this regard, Josef K can only call out "So!" "All of you are working for this organization. I see now that you are all the very bunch of cheats and liars I've just been speaking about. You've all pressed yourselves in here in order to listen in and snoop on me. You gave the impression of having formed into factions. One of you even applauded me to test me out, and you wanted to learn how to trap an innocent man!" [36] Josef K followed the judicial system to defend himself, but it had no effect on either the left-wing's shrewdness or the right-wing's radicalism. In the end, he could only leave two shouts: "You bunch of louts" and "You can keep all your hearings as a present from me". [37] Thus, this whole structural corruption and tragedy has already invaded into all aspects of the society which is hopeless and needs thorough reform.

In this preliminary trial, Josef K did not know what crime he has committed, or who charged him. The only thing he knew was that he had been arrested and would be involved in a pestering lawsuit. The fact that K is ignorant of what crime he has committed and was executed to death, in fact, indicates that he committed the crime of "ignorance".

So, since ignorance can be convicted, how can the general public know whether they are ignorant? Or how can the general public obtain knowledge when they know that they are ignorant? Further, how can the general public survive and avoid conviction?

First, Josef K or Kafka did not point out what the solution to the dilemma was. In their view, they just told the readers what is impossible. They just told the readers that "ignorance" could be arrested and tried. But there is no way to understand and explain all this. Like Prometheus in Kafka's works, "he betrayed the gods for mankind" and, finally, everything was tired and forgotten, "leaving behind the inexplicable cliffs". [38] Ultimately, it came to an end by being inexplicable. [39]

Second, in the face of the organ of violence both on and off the screen, Josef K chose to dismiss his lawyer and resist the slowly invading locking rope with a "no guilt" self and finally regarded the vote of life and death as a digital game. This is like the countryman in the parable. Although he does not know what the Law is and has never seen anyone ask to enter the gate of the Law, he persists in meeting the Law and eventually comes to the end of his short life with ignorance of the Law.

Finally, from his arrest to trial, Josef K was indicted on some charges, or even sentenced to death on some charges. Apart from revealing what he saw and experienced, Josef K's argument was "ignorant". It can be said that Josef K was arrested and tried for ignorance, and faced death with ignorance, and finally because of ignorance, he became the "thorn" which is difficult to integrate with and must be removed from the social body.

The incomprehensibility and inexplicability of arrest and trial that Kafka set up through his paradox literary technique make readers deeply feel the structural corruption and absurdity of the judicial system. As some scholars said, in Kafka's literary works, the authority of determining human destiny is highly concentrated everywhere, the decision-making process is extremely mysterious, people cannot control their own destiny and thus they have to imagine and speculate in the dark the image of authority at the top of the society. It may be God, bureaucracy, power, parents, lover, etc., or it may be any external or internal pressure. [40]

V. THE PARADOX OF CRIME AND NON-CRIME

"Is ignorance a crime"? If Josef K's ignorance in the trial is guilty, then his death will be a punishment that everyone may face, because no one can guarantee that he will not be subject to "ignorant arrest" or "ignorant trial" one morning. Therefore, this guilty judgment will make everybody be judged to be alive and dead in the "game of ignorance". Ultimately, everyone lives nothing more than in the world according to existing life trajectory, but always lingers between deferment of trial, apparent acquittal and death. However, "how is it even possible for someone to be guilty? We're all human beings here, one like the other." [41] Everyone is guilty of "ignorance", but who, except God, knows all and does not commit a crime?

Thus, Kafka seems to tell the readers that as long as the readers are human beings, then their "ignorance is innocent".

But "is ignorance innocent"? The prison priest in the cathedral, standing under the canopy of God's pulpit, told Josef K that no one had any prejudice against him, whether or not they had participated in his case, and that "the judgement was not made at once, and the proceedings gradually proceeded to the judgment." [42] And the priest who preached the sermons is just faithfully fulfilling his duties. "Just now I had to talk to you at a certain distance first. Otherwise, I will be too vulnerable to be influenced and will forget my duties." [43] In the parable of *Before the Law*, the gatekeeper is bound to the gate of the Law, waiting faithfully until the countryman finally dies. The gatekeeper also just undertakes "necessary" responsibilities and

obligations. In the trial, Josef K's guilt is the judgment of the God and the secular court, and it is the declaration of guilt. If such a guilty verdict is meaningless, then a court trial may not be necessary.

From the Kafka's own point of view, his "strong and deep sense of guilt" [44] is not an individual phenomenon in his would outlook, but a common human situation. He believes that he "lives in an era of evil", "the root of human beings has been uprooted" and "we should all be blamed, because we are all involved in this action." [45] In this regard, Josef K's "ignorance" seems to be guilty.

Josef K's "ignorance" is not particularly different because of his name. In other words, he is just one of hundreds of millions of "ignorant" people. If guilty for ignorance, then everyone will face a guilty verdict and be sentenced to death. If innocent for ignorance, then the earthly guilty verdict will lose its validity. In fact, this is precisely the manifestation of Kafka's paradox.

Josef K's guilty verdict is a tragedy, but all the persons who caused the tragedy just followed the "necessary" procedure and did the "necessary" work required by their duties. The reason why these jobs and responsibilities are "necessary" and become "criteria" is that everyone is in the "top-down", "bottom-up", "from inside to outside" plight and encirclement that cannot be attributed to the fault of anyone. As the priest said, "People do not have to think everything is true, people just think it is necessary", [46] that is, "lies become the norm." [47]

Furthermore, guilt and non-guilt of ignorance is only the appearance, while what are hidden internally are the helpless living conditions that no one can escape. In the plight that lies become the social norm, Josef K can only choose to die like a dog. At the same time, if a society treats "ignorance" as a crime and sentences its citizens to death, then it will not recognize the limitations and ignorance of human beings, consider itself as having mastered all the truth of the world and possess absolute and undoubted legitimacy, which is extremely terrible, whereas maintaining modesty and ignorance of human beings in such a society is clearly not fit for survival.

VI. THE PARADOX IN DEATH

Josef K's destiny of death, like that of the countryman who suffers from a magic spell that the gate of the Law is assigned only to you but you cannot enter it until death, cannot be escaped at all events. Under Kafka's description that "guilt attracts the jurisdiction of the court", [48] no matter how Josef K chooses, the interrogation room is "on this staircase", [49] which is selected by chance but in fact inevitable. Josef K asked Lanz the joiner, and looked for the pre-trial court. After walking through the floors, he entered the first trial court that "I will have to close the door after you, no-one else will be allowed in." [50] In a mixture of truth and falsehood, he entered his destiny.

Although Josef K was arrested, his personal freedom was not restricted. He seemed to work and live freely as usual. In fact, his destiny in life could only wander between "absolute

acquittal, apparent acquittal and deferment" [51] and "death". Fantasy of "absolute acquittal is of course the best" [52], but actually "there is no absolute acquittal case." [53] If the readers want to save our lives, they can only defer the trial and obtain temporary and false freedom in addition to the absolute acquittal. In the parable, the countryman insists on dying for the sake of the Law; the gatekeeper seems to be free, but can only be bound in front of the guard's porch "scrupulously performing his duty". In the novel, Josef K is eager to face the case which is approaching him secretly, but he can not see the progress of the lawyer's work at all. He is "determined to withdraw his defence from the lawyer" in his doubts. [54] It was like falling into a quagmire, suffocating in a headache-provoking trial and eager to find a way out, which ultimately leads to a death sentence.

Josef K was eventually sentenced to death for not knowing what crime he had committed. The consequence of death is the shining point and ultimate sublimation of *The Trial*. It is death that enables readers to stand in a deeper historical context and meditate. Some scholars believe that "in Kafka's works, death is often the only way to achieve ultimate compromise and reconciliation. The son in *The Judgment*, Josef K in *The Trial*, K in *The Castle* (approaching death) and Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* all end up with death, and their death makes their relationship with the family and the world return to harmony. Death here symbolizes the defeat and despair of the resistance and the ultimate confirmation of loneliness." [55]

However, it should be pointed out that the harmony brought about by Josef K's death does not dispel the paradox of the existing world; on the contrary, through this harmony the readers see the struggle at the cost of death; death does not mean failure and despair, but means hope and rebirth of nirvana. Kafka's setting of the death consequence of the protagonist, Josef K, is a complete liberation from the old world, as well as the ultimate awakening of the readers' consciousness of the subject.

For Josef K, death is both farewell and liberation. When the extinction of the body is of great significance to exonerate Josef K, who was sentenced to death, the death penalty has lost its legitimacy and validity. At the same time, this means that the legitimacy and validity of the society supported by the death penalty has collapsed. This collapse not only refers to arrest, trial and conviction, but also points to the overall validity and legitimacy of the society. Imagine that if Josef K's being arrested, tried, and even executed of punishment can make the readers gasp for breath and save the protagonist from death then. For Josef K, it is only an adventure in the plot twists and turns and the society is still tolerant; at the same time, the readers will not fundamentally question the effectiveness and legitimacy of the existing world. However, the consequence of "death sentence" is that even gasp for breath is no longer allowed. The setup of such consequence by the author makes the readers realize that in this society where "ignorant" persons are killed, nobody can escape the consequence of being sentenced to death. It also makes the readers realize that the horrible society which brought death to Josef K needs to be fundamentally denied.

If the consequence of being sentenced to death is the complete disintegration of the relationship between Josef K and the old world, as well as the ultimate disintegration of the relationship between human beings and the society, then the death which has the implication that a case involving human life is to be treated with the utmost care is not only the negation of Josef K by the society, but also the despair and abandonment of the society by Josef K. This is a two-way selection. In this case, Josef K chose to die, but this does not mean that human dignity can be discarded. On the contrary, the questioning of the legitimacy and justification of the society also prompts the readers to pursue a decent society unremittingly. Josef K's death is not so much a failure as a heroic justification or martyrdom. Before the pestering trial, Josef K, as a bank's chief clerk, who was content with temporary ease and comfort in the world, was actually already bound in the invisible rope of the society and familiar with the rules of the society. If the lawyer was not dismissed, the "death sentence" is impossible to come. In fact, there is still a kind expectation of the survival society by fighting against the physical shackles that are approaching slowly, even the death trial in the court with the force of an ignorant self. However, after a variety of experiences, Josef K despaired, so he chose to be "sentenced to death" and sacrifice for the struggle. This martyrdom and sacrifice means the failure of improvement and minor repairs. It also suggests that only thorough changes deep in the historical context can save people from the society that kills ignorant persons.

Finally, as far as Josef K is concerned, the readers don't know his crime, nor can the readers prove the justification of crime and non-crime, nor can the readers know how to extricate themselves of the crime. With the assistance of his helpless predicament and the fatal outcome and unfortunate encounter which are hard to escape and avoid at all events, the readers have questioned the validity of the real world, and their consciousness of the subject have been awakened accordingly. In other words, only the consequence of "death sentence" can make the readers be aware of the seriousness of the situation, and only the death that pushed the protagonist into a desperate situation can completely awaken people from indifference and apathy.

VII. KAFKA'S EXPLORATION

Kafka should have lived a life of ordinary people, a small clerk's life, or struggled for life as a backbone of the family, but it is always difficult for him to adapt to such life style, he never knew where the problem was, and had to face the confrontation with the world. Like Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, there is always a morning when he "was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug." [56] This seems absurd but is actually consequent and inevitable destiny. This "metamorphosis" is difficult to approach and understand, and even annoying, but the plot setting itself is a question of the legitimacy of the existing old world.

Kafka most incisively expresses the homelessness, lack of access to the Law and pathlessness of the human beings

through literary and artistic forms. Facing the predicament, Kafka chose to explore in the struggle. In *The Judgment*, Kafka failed to reach reconciliation with his father who furthermore condemned him to "death by drowning". [57] His early belief of Judaism did not give him sufficient resources for salvation. In this sense, he is a homeless person spiritually.

What is the picture of a decent society that is worth the readers' expectation? Kafka didn't provide much answer. However, Kafka didn't escape from the bleak and bloody society, nor did he fold his hands for capture, but actively and tenaciously resisted and explored. As he said, "There is no timetable for the path to truth. What is needed here is the courage to take risks with patience and dedication. The prescription itself is a kind of retrogression, a kind of suspicion, and thus the beginning of a divergence. That is what happens. People have to accept everything patiently and fearlessly. Man is doomed to live, not to die." [58] In *The Trial*, facing the executioner, he does not always give in, but "always seems unnatural and awkward." [59] Even until death, there still remains a sense of shame of human beings.

In the trial process, Josef K still follows his own personal time when facing the court time that "you should have arrived one hour and five minutes earlier", [60] arriving at the court when "the hands of the clock has pointed to ten o'clock", [61] scorning the court time with his personal time that "whether I'm late or not, I am here now". [62]

When Kafka asked the police for directions in a hurry within his personal time, although he only got the metaphor that "you're better off, forget it" [63], he showed his eagerness to find a way.

"I am now at the apex of my life journey, at which time, I can hardly get a completely peaceful moment." [64] For this reason, Kafka created a private space of "underground cave", in which "the greatest advantage is quietness." [65] The seemingly absurd psychological adventure and fear of danger are in fact Kafka's exploration of the possible path.

Faced with the ubiquitous and pervasive castle bureaucracy, although land surveyor K is "a foreigner, a redundant person, a person who obstructs everywhere, a person who always causes trouble to others" [66], he still dares to choose an equal conversation with the representative of the castle, Kramer, in the face of being insulted and despised. This effort to maintain dignity, this confrontation by "ignorance" alone, is a veto of the castle aristocratic system in the mouth of the restaurant owner. What is more, it is the stubbornness and dignity of human beings.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Kafka's excellence is not manifested in his ability to grasp the contradictions and conflicts between human beings and society as well as among human beings in the development of human society, nor in his prescription for resolving these contradictions and conflicts.

The significance of Kafka should be that he presents these contradictions and conflicts in front of every reader

through paradox literary technique, and awakens the reader's consciousness of the subject with the posture of a questioner.

It is not and should not be the power of a few people, but the participation of all people in the construction of a good society that should be expected by everyone. Therefore, only by awakening everyone's consciousness of the subject can the readers better realize the good social vision. This is precious in Kafka's literary works.

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conflicting. However, the logical conflict between the center and the periphery itself is more fascinating to encourage the reader to use his imagination to think. Perhaps this is the embodiment of Venus' incomplete beauty; in addition, the paradox literary technique will be further articulated below.

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