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WAITING FOR THE VIOLENCE: KAFKA AND THREE NEGATIONS

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Abstract: This paper explores Kafka's literary work through the lens of Étienne Balibar's *Violence and Civility*, focusing on three distinct responses to violence that Balibar proposes. Kafka's ouvre serves as a profound critique of contemporary society, revealing the insidious nature of selective legal application and the omnipresence of anonymous violence. As he guides readers out of the metaphorical cave, Kafka suggests that true liberation entails dismantling the structures of oppressive anonymity and challenging the selective implementation of the law. Ultimately, his works prompt reflection on the delicate balance between individual autonomy and the pervasive powers that shape modern existence.

Keywords: Kafka, Waiting, Violence, Torture, Cave

Feeling the Pains of Waiting

Numerous theories view modernity and modernization as a process in which the decisive struggle for emancipation from external authorities took place. Kant would probably argue that it was an effort for individual autonomy to emerge where heteronomy once prevailed. Collective emancipation was typically observed from an individual perspective. Whether in politics, economics, or religion, after successfully breaking free from past constraints, individuals would be directed towards "liberating their own forces that contribute to the construction of new orders that they themselves have chosen" (Heller, 1989: 17). Moreover, the modern concept of freedom no longer confines itself to choosing this or that (*liberum arbitrium*), nor is it content with being freed from mundane everyday duties (*libertas*). Modern liberation primarily aims at freeing the subject's energies, which, during their articulation, should attain full self-awareness and insight into their capabilities.

If the distinctive features that enable us to easily distinguish modernity from preceding times are related to the liberation of subjective energies, contemporaneity could be linked to the opposite, or the dark side of that process. Namely, it emphasises awareness of the subject's powerlessness. Kafka's literature confronts us with the idea that in contemporaneity, there is no talk of liberation through the emphasis on talents and power. On the contrary, only by confronting one's powerlessness does the possibility of freedom emerge as a condition.

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For example, Kant does not only emphasize the unforeseen capacities of autonomy and the non-dogmatic use of reason. In addition to the necessary self-reliance, modern subjects have in their favour the fact that nature as a whole works on the development of their dispositions. As unusual as it may seem to us today, the philosopher from Königsberg was convinced that nature works for us. If it is not disputable that modern people have managed to make some breakthroughs towards liberation, then this happened predominantly because "nature wants" (Kant 2004: 17) the realization of all human capacities.

In contrast, Kafka, in a letter to his father, draws attention to his uniqueness by mentioning the "indifference of a selfsufficient but coldly imaginative child" (Kafka 2015: 37). In the categories of indifference, self-sufficiency, and cold distancing, we not only recognize the writer's intimate confession about himself but also a fundamental feature of contemporary subjectivity. The comment was not first and foremost about self-criticism but rather the critique of actual humanity. The initial inclination of the contemporary *last man* is comparable to a state of waiting. Waiting, by its nature, is suffering; while we wait, every other activity is suspended. When we wait, we are essentially doing nothing. Waiting is the activity which suspends the possibility of activity. The subjects who await don't develop their dispositions; in this regard, they stand in contrast to the modern individual.

In Kafka's fictious world, the one who waits has already been humiliated (Before the Law, The Castle, A Hunger Artist, In the Penal Colony). Furthermore, instances of humiliation manifest from multiple perspectives, often invisible and anonymous. It's as if that which is awaited is superior and far more powerful than the one who awaits it. Due to their lower ontological value, the waiting subjects are skilfully depicted as spatially diminished. They are by no means equal to what they are waiting for. Consider Gregor Samsa, transformed into a beetle, or a man from the countryside, spending his entire life as an outsider squatting before the law on a stool, looking ahead and above at a doorkeeper as an insurmountable obstacle. The humiliation experienced by the one undergoing the waiting lies in the realisation that it is not the usual, temporary activity after which the awaited will finally come. When conceived as a state, waiting is no longer a temporary suspension of activity; it becomes a way of life, a form of existence. *It seems that waiting in the Kafkaesque world is a metaphor for being tortured.* As genuine inactivity, waiting epitomizes the state in which repressive violence has already begun to celebrate its triumph: "repression operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know" (Foucault 1978: 4).

In one passage from his diary, Kafka mentions that he is prone to lateness because he does not feel the pains of waiting: "I am not punctual

because I do not feel the pains of waiting. I wait like an ox" (Kafka 1976: 141). However, what does the pain actually consist of, and what is it about it that actually hurts the one who awaits? Waiting for Kafka means being exposed, left outside, neglected, deprived of the world. Those who await are equally unable to wait to leave, as they are unable to wait to enter. In Kafka's fictitious world, the one who awaits transforms into either a child or an animal: "The degradation of the man from the country to the point of view of the small child or the dog is shown in the stool on which he crouches his life. Here he has to stare at the doorkeeper just as the beetle Gregor Samsa has to stare at his family." (Sokel 1964: 202). Waiting here implies double powerlessness because the one who awaits, like a child, cannot simply leave the previous state. On the other hand, an animal is a symbol of being stuck and paralyzed in itself, simply unable to move or take a step forward. The dog, Kafka's favoured animal, is an expression of a dependent being, whose life's decisions are basically made by others. Finally, Josef K. first lost himself by being the lawyer's dog and was eventually eliminated by being killed like a dog. The violence inflicted upon him was not measured against human (in)dignity but rather against animal powerlessness. Whether a child or animal, the being who awaits is, in every sense, dependent on the figure of the superior master. Hence, in the penal colony, there was an impression that it was enough to whistle for the convict, like a dog, to come to the execution as if expecting a reward (Kafka 2008: 142).

The powerlessness of the contemporary subject seems to depict an *image of an inverted prison*. Unlike the typical prison where inmates are extracted from their usual everydayness and locked away, Kafka confronts us with figures who desperately want to integrate themselves into a world where everything is supposedly unlocked and open. Moreover, they don't bother too much with questions concerning to what they want to gain access, or what sort of intersubjectivity they are trying to enter. The surveyor K. never questioned whether the castle promised personal fulfilment in an ideal human relationship of love, respect, and recognition, or if it might be a fatal trap where total subjugation and slavery are in force. He only knows that he wants to be free, and that this is impossible if life in the castle is denied to him. In return, he receives an answer from the bartender that he actually does not know the castle (Kafka 1946: 15). For Kafka, creating a world means not only securing an entry into it but also enabling an exit: "The emergence of the world becomes a process of entering into it, along with leaving what it is not, or not yet." (Blumenberg 1996: 13). When we are not locked inside but outside, we are only seemingly in open space, but in fact access is hopelessly denied to us. The paradox of Kafka's inverted prison is complete. Everything appears to be open and accessible, but we have no access anywhere. Moreover, we do not know the world we want to enter; we only recognize that it surpasses us in every aspect.

Ignoring What Concerns Us the Most

One of the sobering insights that Kafka's works convey to us is our ignorance of what concerns us the most. We barely know anything about the mechanisms of coercion, we are blind to the phenomena of social violence, and have no idea where they originate or what ideas they are based on. Furthermore, we are even less skilled at removing them. Perhaps the most troubling aspect is our difficulty in recognizing them. There is no longer public accountability of the judiciary for its part in executive-related violence. Kafka perceives the genealogy of violence in a fatal misunderstanding with the law, whose fundamental purpose from the very beginning was to make violence impossible. Where the right is exercised selectively, there is no right. Above all, it hurts to endure violence when it is accompanied by the awareness that some others are protected, safe, hidden from the face of justice. The twisted world that Kafka demonstrates to us is not one between understanding and reasoning, as in Hegel (Hegel 2018: 139-142), but between violence and law. The *raison d'être* of the law is to prevent violence, but the vital pulse of the law does exactly the opposite. Its selective application creates perhaps an even greater impression of a lack of protection than when there is no law and no rule in the first place.

From a contemporary perspective, it has become clear that Kafka was neither an outcast nor an overly pessimistic prophet of doom. On the contrary, his works translated the experience of a law expert into the language of fiction. It is no coincidence that torture has been called the epidemic of the twentieth century. According to *Amnesty International*, there are "reports of torture and other ill-treatment committed by state officials in 141 countries and from every world region" (Amnesty 2014: 10). A fundamental characteristic of torture is that it is an integral part of the institutional structure of many countries. Almost a hundred years after Kafka's death, not much has changed. Violence, on the one hand, is in the monopoly of the modern state, which it doesn't renounce. On the other hand, it is unavoidable even where the state's official and public intention is to offer protection with its laws and to help the individual:

> Modern states pervasively regulate and control their populations and […] their interactions with their citizens are regularly marked by violence that sometimes includes torture. Law's interaction with this violence is complex. It constrains state violence, but it also creates personal vulnerabilities alongside protections. Nearly every definition of torture treats it as conduct so harmful that everyone has an absolute right not to be subjected to it […] Most lawyers subscribe to the idea that there is an exception to every legal rule, and states will use the standard tools of legal argument to seek exceptions for torture. (Parry 2010: 3).

For this reason, Kafka's phenomenology of violence is primarily concerned with addressing prejudices, or rather naive ideas about what law is and how it is implemented. As if she were Kafka's student, Hannah Ar-

endt recognized the need to control and eliminate social violence in the source of the political. The meaning of communication was not related to better interpersonal understanding, nor to the creation of a superior intellectual community. The democratic *polis* sought *isonomia* because aimed to disable man's natural tendency to violence "*polis* represents the first attempt to exclude violence from the common life of people" (Arendt 1994: 30). As if the political origin of the *polis* has been completely perverted, communicative equality is no longer there, nor is dialogical community. The lasting popularity of Kafka's work with a large part of the audience probably stems from the inversion, thanks to which madness has taken up residence where reason should reign, naked forms of violence reign where justice should be dispensed, and debauchery is in power where the kingdom of love should be.

The great ideas of reason, freedom, equality, justice, all of them in Kafka's world dissipated like soap bubbles, giving way to their opposites. Instead of being at the service of its citizens, it turned out that: "The state is the bosom enemy of the society it protects" (Balibar 2015: 32). What can we learn from violence? Every occasion is a lesson on embodiment on the border between humanity and savagery, on the boundary that establishes the line of demarcation between the experienced and the unexperienced: "The 'lesson' consists precisely in losing all connections with everyday life, in the destruction of 'living communication with the world' (Merleau-Ponty), within which the meaning of elementary physicality arises, up to verbal communication. That staging of meaninglessness as meaning is a materialization, a total approach and embodiment at the extreme limits of experience and at the extreme limits of sociality" (Grüny 2003: 81).

In accordance with the three different concepts of negation, as proposed by Étienne Balibar (Balibar 2015: 23), we also have three versions of the confrontation with violence. Here, *we will roughly examine Kafka*'s *oeuvre with regard to the possibilities of concretizing the idea of different ways of confronting violence*.

The first is *non-violence*, the rejection of violence, the verbal, physical and existential protest that does not agree to the use of violent methods. It is possible to escape violence, abandon its logic and fight against it peacefully, passively, non-violently. Even if it pays a high price and becomes trampled by violent procedures, *the rationale of non-violence aims at democratic means in the fight against violence*. They become functional when the majority realizes the power of nonviolence, when it sees that it declines after violence is exposed. In other words, it is possible to change everything, provided that ignoring and accepting violence turns into an attitude of active non-violent resistance to violence.

Nonviolence, by its very concept, is a call for the restoration of institutions, for the re-establishment of rules, for the re-imagining of human rights (Balibar 2015: 6). Their role is precisely to remove the non-existent aura of eternity and untouchability from the phenomenon of violence,

and thus enable possible resistance to violence through non-violence. In Kafka's fiction, the perverted understanding and functioning of violence must abolish itself. An officer in a penal colony decides to commit suicide, and the execution machine disintegrates by itself: "How can a certain understanding of law regulate the life of a group when there are no more supporters to stand up for it, that is, when there are too few supporters. When no one is convinced of such a pronouncement and enforcement of rights, it loses its power" (Biemel 1968: 31).

Kafka's description of the nonviolence is also shaped by strategies of deconstruction and demystification. One of the most successful ones is depicted by means of the deconstruction of the waiting as a non-activity. The hunger artist deliberately presents himself as an artist, albeit he doesn't do anything. In his case, the food causes only disgust, which is why hunger is his favourite condition. The fasting artist does nothing but wait. He is proud of himself, not due to his abilities to do this or that, but only because of his own incapability to do anything. As an artist in waiting, he misused his autonomy to imprison himself in a cage. Kant would have been shocked: the autonomous decision to accept heteronomy, to become totally dependent on the mood of the audience, is an equally possible solution. Instead of creating something, like all other artists, the waiting and fasting artist hopes only for the preservation of his alleged art thanks to publicity, owing to the fact that he can resist fulfilling human necessities longer than anybody else. Consequently, his art consists of removing his own subjectivity from the common world, isolating and imprisoning himself. Waiting starts and ends in inflicting violence on the one who awaits. Bearing that in mind, Kafka claims that this kind of artist looks like a "pitiable martyr, which the fasting-artist was, only in a quite another sense" (Kafka 1981: 244–245). Art as a kind of negation, in the case of hunger artist, negates the performer himself. So, we are getting closer to the paradox of Kafka's non-violence. On the one hand, exaggerated violence seems irrational and unavoidably loses collective support, finally leading (at least in the long run) to the abolition of violence. On the other, the subject who confronts violence through non-violent waiting risks his own annihilation and self-imprisonment, the destiny of an *unfortunate martyr*. Vulnerability caused through self-negation has its origin in the fact that the artist, instead of producing the new creation or performing a new shape of life, has actually neglected and forgotten the whole world.

The Paradox of Violence

The second negation is revolutionary *counter-violence*. Existing violence must be responded to with violence to gain a monopoly over violence, to bring it under control, to manage violence, to "bring it into order" (Balibar 2015: 48). The tradition of violence is as old as the human community. Ever since Homer's world "the rule of kings was already

distinguished from the power of other tribal leaders by being described as the rule 'by might'. A king either had a might or did not rule […] it was justified by the fact that he was stronger, richer and more splendid than anyone he ruled" (Hensley 1986: 16). It is necessary to recognize the mechanisms and the logic of violence in order to create confusion with counter-violence and to put traditional violent mechanisms out of action.

According to Kafka, the paradox of violence consists in the idea that we are condemned to suffer it, and most of the time we know nothing about it. As if violence is fateful, unavoidable, inevitable. The tragedy of violence consists precisely in the impossibility of life on the other side of violence. We haven't really moved too far from the tragic heroes. If something of the old-fashioned vision of fate remained in our world, then we are destined for violence to become an immanent ingredient of our lives at some point: "To have a fate entails not that one's life is entangled in a chain of ruinous incidents, but rather that in the midst of life a rupture comes about that turns it into its opposite […] The fate is internal to life: it begins and ends within this one life. And that is also to say: it is explicable in terms of this one life" (Menke 2009: 5).

In the course of Kafka's elaboration of the idea of fate, we encounter sentences that, with their irony, surpass anything previously known to us. Indeed, who would doubt the wisdom of the old laws? The one who was shocked primarily by his ignorance and not by the omnipresence of the court. The trial takes place everywhere, in every corner. The representatives of the court are not concentrated in one building, but are scattered, disseminated and present everywhere. Already with the spatial totalization of the court, the arrested person is lost in advance. The lawsuit is everywhere, but the defense is nowhere. Ther guilt is unquestionable, the violence inevitable. The court is everywhere because the source of violence is anonymous and depersonalized. Kafka depicts the techniques of contemporary power in a regime of self-totalization. It involves erasing the origins of power, eliminating boundaries with anonymous authority, and obliterating the possibility of interference. The hermeneutics of contemporary power seems to be a game of life and death. It's as if power is everywhere or nowhere. It appears to be devalued and meaningless with every remaining island of resistance, every asylum successfully holding out against it.

The unlimited capacities of power are recognizable in its striking disparity. The individual pitted against the omnipresent machinery of power has absolutely no chance. At the same time, the one who is judged, who is most affected by it, is unaware of it at first. The revolutionary capacities of Kafka's literature can be gleaned from this idea. There are many places where the discrepancy between the idea of human rights and the real stuttering in front of the supreme, overbearing and transcendent forces of law is pointed out: "power is evasive, it withdraws […] You can see them, but cannot be certain you have seen them; the real relationship between

the powerless human beings who live at the foot of the castle hill and the officials is one of waiting for superiors. The question of raison d'être of the superiors is never asked" (Canetti 1974: 83). In such a constellation, the primary revolutionary premise is that law and justice are not where they were previously seen. That is why the wisdom of the old laws should first be doubted. Hence also in the *Castle* the conclusion that there is no significant difference between the castle and the village, for there is no sublimity and excellence. This conclusion triggers an earthquake when it comes to the premises of Kafka's oeuvre. Namely, if the nobility stands outside the law, creating the impression that the law is exclusively in the hands of the nobility, what if it turns out that there is no nobility in the first place? There is simply no noble, nor transcendent stronghold upon which the violence is based: "Unfortunately, our laws are not widely known, they are the secret of a small group of nobles who rule [...] Laws are so old, centuries worked on their interpretation, so that those interpretations also became laws." (Kafka 1992: 106–107). When interpretation becomes law, it means that it does not stem from ancient wisdom but the exclusive, totalitarian language of the hermeneutics of power. The interpretation that has become law strives at all costs not to present itself as one of the possible interpretations, but as the only possible one, as the Law. The source of violence, the basis of its authority, is reduced to a transformation through which what was originally only one among the interpretations, is presented as an indisputable and lawful fact.

Already in ancient Rome, there was a widespread sentence of imperial law according to which what is in consonance with the will of the ruler has the force of law (*quod principi placuit legis habet vigorem*). Power interprets the law as it sees fit, places itself at the center when its interests dictate, but is also inclined to protect itself and place itself outside the law. Here, we recognize an example of Agamben's paradox of sovereignty in Kafka, but also an inversion thereof. Namely, sovereignty occupies an inside/outside position with respect to the law, in the sense that the sovereign "who is outside the law" can "declare that there is nothing outside the law" (Agamben 1998: 15). What, from Agamben's perspective, is the signature of power, in Kafka becomes a characteristic of powerlessness. The one who is outside the law in the case of Kafka's sovereignty turns out to be an outlaw. Kafka's subject comes into contact with the law by falling away from it. As a consequence, the outlaw is not, like the sovereign, beyond the reach of the law but, metaphorically, "beneath" the law. The law no longer protects the outlaw from violence but instead makes the violence inevitable. Remaining outside the law thus becomes a mark of powerlessness and vulnerability.

Kafka's literary work is grounded in the idea that there is no external judge, there is no vertical of judicial proceedings. Higher instances are fictitious, unavailable, absent. If being-in-the-world also means being-in-violence, and being simultaneously means being arrested, being prosecuted,

the only thing left is to realize that the area of struggle touches the elementary question of personality. Thus, the essence of the whole process is not related to the realization of personal interests, but touches, fundamentally, the personality itself. It is a question of its constitution and survival, or submission to mere impersonality: "If I had to choose between staying in a fortress and staying in a cave, I would choose a cave for all my life, only there would I enter in and out of it and guard the fortress" (Kafka 2008: 663). Contrary to *learned helplessness*, enlisted as the primary achievement in a torture clinic like Guantanamo (Waldenfels 2019: 103), Kafka's allegedly "self-sufficient and coldly imaginative" K. embarks on a robust fight for the sake of community, regardless of how harsh the consequences for him might be. Therefore, revolutionary counter-violence requires the abandonment of egoism and a willingness to sacrifice. The essence of this stance can be recognized in the following statement from *The Trial*: "I could simply close the door behind me, refuse to see or hear anything further, and go home. But I'm not doing that, on the contrary, I'm seriously trying to have them set free" (Kafka 2009: 60).

Anonymity Has Liberated Violence

The third version of negation is defined as *anti-violence*:

> I say anti-violence because the prefix 'anti-', as in antithesis, antipathy, or antinomy, designates the most general modality of the act of "facing up to"—from within the polity or community as well—or of measuring oneself against that which is, doubtless, enormous or incommensurable […] I counterpose it both to the act of turning away, counting oneself out, or even protecting oneself (designated by the term non-violence insofar as it seeks to avoid or defer extremities) and also to the act of returning violence or paying it back in kind with counter-violence, which thus presents itself as second and as such a legitimate reaction to a "first violence," generally presented as illegitimate. (Balibar 2015: 23–24).

Literary forms of linguistic "measurement" also represent strategies of Kafka's anti-violence. *The deconstruction of the metaphor could be marked as a privileged figure of his anti-violence procedure*. We are convinced that Kafka's ambiguous and enigmatic notion of law can be interpreted on the basis of that insight. Contrary to the realist paradigm, the law is not there to sanction violence but to guarantee it. As long as the law is in force, the stage is set, the actors ready for violence are prepared. According to expectations, the law should be accessible to everyone, to be available everywhere and at any time.

Instead, Kafka creates surreal scenes of "entering" the law. The law is applied selectively, those who have not entered it remain permanently outside the law. To realize their right, the individuals are allegedly forced to enter the law, to step into it, which means to first leave the area beyond

the law. There is no such thing in the real world of criminal procedural law, just as in the biblical texts there is no mention of the image of an "open door" next to which a guard stands, and through which one should step in. The door, already open, but lacking possibility to cross over the threshold, symbolizes the paradoxical openness that is closure, the enabling institution whose function is to prevent passage. A legal entrance intended exclusively for the individual is meaningless, while in the case of the Bible, similar to everyday life, the one who wants to enter is expected to knock on the door first. There are simply no pre-opened doors meant for an individual, except perhaps those that separate life and death.

The motive is thus existential; the door is open, and what's more it is intended for that particular individual, but there is no entry. Nothing prevents him from entering, but he still does not enter, because what is behind the door is accessible only through its inaccessibility. *Kafka's anti-violence, on the one hand, subverts established and supposedly enormous, inaccessible verticals*. The accessibility of the originally inaccessible other is an adequate description of what is subjectively appearing as foreign to us ("The character of the existent 'other' has its basis in this kind of verifiable accessibility of what is not originally accessible") (Husserl 1960: 114).

The suggestion, however, should be resisted. Kafka's door does not lead from the domestic sphere into some heterogeneous world where different legal rules are to be respected and where the laws are potentially better, human rights and basic human needs are more recognized. There is no selective application of laws, but all together they serve to realize the idea of rights and justice. The door of the law seems to lead nowhere. They do not even lead to the underground, because there can be no talk of a linguistic cave, in which K. had to be faced with trapped, thwarted and restrained words that no one will hear anymore and that no one wants to know about.[1]

There is no nobility; the nobles are actually peasants. There is no one who is so exalted as to be outside the law. In other words, no one is sovereign enough to manipulate violence. On the other hand, an open door does not lead anywhere, it does not point to something outside itself. *Openness is mere simulation*. There is no reality behind it, no passages lead from it, it does not point to anything, nor is it connected to a specified something. The result is a deconstruction of the metaphor of sovereign, transcendent and otherworldly power, together with the idea of personal salvation.

A new transcendence is conceivable exclusively as a paradoxical conception through the infinite fragmentation of meaning. And that procedure, for its part, establishes a new kind of totality, dangerous and empty, for Kafka's policy of literary anti-violence creates confusion, a split between what is expected, what is used and what is shown, what is presented

1 See Derrida, *Préjugés: vor dem Gesetz,* Passagen Verlag, Wien, 2017.

in literature: "Expression must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sproutings. When a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content, that will necessarily be part of a rupture in the order of things" (Deleuze/ Guattari 1986: 28).

Contrary to the modern trinity of rational thinking, freedom and autonomy, the doctrine of contemporary subjectivity boils down to the thesis of "sovereign impotence". To this extent, being contemporary refers to the awareness of personal impotence, on the basis of which the possibility of self-liberation is only announced. Likewise, Kafka's servants and officials possess power only through awareness and acknowledgment of their powerlessness. This is why the court official observes that "most of the accused are so sensitive" (Kafka 1990: 95). Namely, "being sensitive" is a convincing allegory of failed liberation, for the vulnerability that has manifested itself in the most basic of all laws. Modernity is a mimesis of tragedy, and "tragedy is a faithful mimesis of being" (Sokel 2010: 65).

Kafka's anti-violence does nothing but answer the question "who am I?" using the language and means of literature. We are convinced that there is a cacophonous chorus of attacks, from both the right and the left side of political spectrum, calling out Kafka's literary heritage for allegedly promoting helpless subjectivity and a vision of sinister social reality. Instead, Kafka's literature throws down the gauntlet in the face of imperial law and every form of political absolutization. If contemporaneity was created according to the model of tragedy, its deconstruction implies a drastic revision of the relationship between the individual and the community, that is, the protagonist and the chorus.

Moreover, Kafka can certainly confirm that the perpetrators of violence almost unquestionably remain anonymous, at a safe distance, and nothing threatens them. *Anonymity*, instead of liberating the thought, to open up the power of reflection and fantasy, without fear of consequence, *has in fact liberated violence* and, more importantly, in an environment without significant restrictive norms. The free territory of public space is increasingly creating observers reminiscent of Plato's cave, individuals who are present only to witness what is offered to them without many comments, let alone questions. Hence, leaving Kafka's cave would mean the abolition of anonymous violence, as well as selective application of law. The sun blinding those who manage to leave the cave would render the following lines lose their pointedly ironic message: "After all, K. had rights, the country was at peace, the laws had not been suspended […]" (Kafka 2009: 7).

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Драган Проле

Чекање на насиље: Кафка и три неīације

Резиме

Чланак разматра Кафкино књижевно дело оптиком књиге Етјена Балибара *Насиље и цивилност*, сконцентрисан на три различита одговора на насиље која анализира Балибар. Кафкина књижевност служи као дубинска критика савременог друштва, обелодањујући подмуклу природу селективне примене права и свеприсутност анонимног насиља. Будући да своје читаоце води изван метафоричне пећине, Кафка сугерише како истинско ослобођење упућује на демонтирање структура угњетавајуће анонимности и на оспоравање селективне примене права. Напокон, његово дело изискује рефлексију о деликатном балансу између индивидуалне аутономије и доминантних моћи које обликују модерно егзистирање.

Кључне речи: Кафка, чекање, насиља, тортура, пећина

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