AN ESSAY ON THE ETHICS OF CREATION

Golem : Western Wall : Franz Kafka

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the critical question of the ethics of creation as it emerges to the forefront of contemporary thought in the late twentieth century. The question is examined through three independent yet interrelated motifs: the legend of the Golem, the symbol of the Western Wall in Jerusalem, and the literature of Franz Kafka. An understanding of these three motifs, in all their implications, can provide valuable commentary and insightful reflections so that a discourse on a possible moral and ethical ground for affirmative creation can be engaged. It is imperative, in light of the destructive potentiality of our creative making, to address this discourse if architecture is to regain cultural relevance.

Cette thèse examine la question de l'éthique de la création telle qu'elle apparait au premier plan de la pensée contemporaine à la fin de cette vingtième siècle. La question est étudiée sous trois thèmes différents qui sont en même temps en corrélation: la légende du Golem, le symbole du mur de Jerusalem, et les écrits de Franz Kafka. La compréhension de ces trois thèmes, dans leurs implications totales, peuvent nous fournir une observation signicative et une réflexion perspicace qui pourraient nous engager dans une discussion sur les motifs, tant moraux qu'éthiques concernant la création affirmative. Il est d'une importance capitale, en vue du potentiel destructif que nous avons crée nous mêmes, de s'adresser à une telle discussion si l'architecture songe à récupérer sa pertinence culturelle.

For Moses, the context from which I create

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Garden

A little garden,
Fragrent and full of roses
The path is narrow
And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy,
Like that growing blossom.
When the blossom comes to bloom,
The little boy will be no more.[1]

Franta Bass, Terezin Concentration Camp

Born September 4, 1930 Brno, Czechoslovakia; Deported December 2, 1942 Terezin;

Died October 28, 1944 Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

Of the approximate 15 000 children under the age of 15 who passed through Terezin, around 100 survived.

Concern for Ethics

The search for an appropriate ethical stance concerning 'creation' is one which prominently comes to the forefront of a multitude of disciplines as the twentieth century comes to a close. Architecture and the architect, due to the inherent nature of the profession, is explicitly confronted with this issue of ethics and creation. Ethics must be understood as the characteristic ways human beings have of acting in the world or of comporting themselves toward one another or toward themselves. This relatively recent form of concern for ethics is, I believe, directly linked to the fact that the vocabulary of 'creating', 'making', and 'acting' is not in the twentieth century a morally resonant one and that the potentially destructive repercussions of this fact have become increasingly apparent. The action of creating, the mental, verbal, and material process of making in the world, is usually described as an ethically neutral or amoral phenomenon. It is ordinarily perceived as empty of ethical content or divorced and autonomous from a separate discipline of ethics. This split in all its implications must be taken as a signal of how faulty and fragmentary our understanding of creation is and the vigorous need, in light of these implications (dicussed in this thesis), of a comprehensive understanding in order that some form of suitable dialogue on the subject may be put forth.

This search and concern, particularly in the act of creating, for an ethics at the individual and societal levels, is connected to the sense that at both these levels there is a loss or void of appropriate principles and guiding framework for our actions. This search and its accompanying loss can in part be seen as a derivation of the modern mind and its lack of a commonly accepted transcendant ('religious') order of things. What the modern mind perceives as order is established solely through the relationship between things themselves and nothing beyond, or an order that can only be positivist scientific in nature. In the pre-positivist tradition the role of ethics was inherent or internal to praxis

But with the success and glorification of scientific reason during the eighteenth century the mundane world gained prominence as the the only 'real' world and sole provider of absolute truth, order and lawfulness. The unavoidable corollary of this state of affairs is that religion and art lost their unquestioned birthright in the homeland of human reality and became relegated to the realm of a marginalized 'problem', worthy of intellectual discourse and little assignment within reality. During this process, the practice of architecture degenerated into the unashamed functional servant of formal requirements and technology while its ethical component, being infected with the same analytical scientific logic, became externalized and autonomous, concerned primarily with the limiting values of efficiency and economy. Thus this felt loss and void and its resultant search or concern for ethics and the ethics of creation must in many ways be viewed as a reaction to the direction the modern mind has taken and its neglect of the values that 'religion' and 'art' (in their broadest sense of understanding) provided during their primacy in human experience. It must as well be viewed as a protective mechanism against the growing sensation that this sense of loss and void is in the process of being wrongfully filled with potentially catastrophic consequences.

The concern for the ethics of creation as expressed above is directly linked to technology and our role as technological makers. Technology, in all its complexities and possibilities, arose from the modern mind in an effort to control and dominate the lived world. Its resultant success and structure, further polarizing the realm of ethics and praxis, only led to an affirmation of man's quasi-divine ambitions, which in the framework of modernity was cast within the trajectory from mathematical construction to self-deification. Thus technology and the implications of our relationship to a technological world cannot be taken as being value neutral or mute. In fact a large part of the equation of an awakening ethical concern is precisely because of the situation that an unchecked, utopic-oriented technology has lead to. A technology felt to be under control which now appears able, with horrifying consequences, to reverse these roles. An awareness into the

matter of technology, our technological making or creating (and subsequently architecture) and its relation to ethics is crucial if a de-humanized, alienated world can cease to be perpetuated, and the possibilities of truely affirmative creation may be posited.[2]

This theme of appropriate ethics and its propitious role in 'creating', in all its implications is explored in this essay through three independant and interrelated motifs, which I believe provide valuable commentary and insightful reflections on the above question: the legend or myth of the Golem, the symbol and 'architecture' of the Western Wall in Jerusalem, and the literary work of Franz Kafka

The legend of the Golem has, like no other post biblical Jewish legend, evoked the interest and provoked the imagination of Jews and non-Jews alike It has been influential in inspiring literary works, artistic expression, and scientific speculation and speaks directly to the ethical concerns of man's actions and creative making Despite Chayim Bloch's warning, writing at the beginning of the century, that "no one has yet been able to fathom the probable meaning of the Golem legends"[3] or possess the key to its mystery, the rich commentary and reflection on the various interpretations of the Golem legend, in its modern and pre-modern manifestation, only aid in elucidating the question it brings forth The nature of our creation/creature (Golem) must necessarily reflect back upon its creator. This reflection upon the character of the things we create can only serve as a conduit to self-reflection and subsequently self understanding Two aspects which are imperative if the question of present day ethics and creation can be approached.

The development of the symbol of the Western Wall in Jerusalem, from its emergence two thousand years ago up to its present form, reflects and echoes the ethical concerns on our creating that the legend of the Golem brings to light It expresses in a physical reality the larger or broader context that the legend exists within and discloses another layer of understanding and insight into a possible ethical ground for affirmative

creative making. It exposes, in a concrete and tangible manner, many of the paradoxes confronting western culture at the close of the twentieth century.

In the literary work of Franz Kafka, composed at the beginning of the century, we see perhaps the most vivid expression of these paradoxes, their destructive potentiality and its effect on an ethical directive in our actions and creations. Kafka and equally importantant literary works of the twentieth century have confronted and appropriated the great themes of philosophy, morality, and ethics. In many ways providing a narrative map of praxis while exploring the ambiguities of existence. In Franz Kafka's exploratory literature we have the workings of the modern mind in all its complexities. A mind that is

> seemingly self-sufficient, intelligent, skeptical, ironical, splendidly trained for the great game of pretending that the world it comprehends in sterilized sobriety is the only and ultimate real one - yet a mind living in sin with the soul of Abraham. Thus he knows two things at once, and both with equal assurance: that there is no God, and that there must be God.[4]

The three motifs, and their implications in relation to the ethics of creation, discussed in this essay are of a Jewish legend, a Jewish symbol and a Jewish author. This I believe to be particularly pertinent in that the Judeo-Christian framework of belief (important in all three motifs[5]) occupies a central position in the attributes that characterize western civilization and that the Judeo-Christian scriptures and endless commentaries (of which these three motifs can arguably be classified) puzzle incessantly over the nature of creating - the relation between body and image; body and artifact; body and belief. Therefore the Jewishness of these motifs, although integral in their formation, is not limiting and infact enhances their ability to speak beyond 'religious philosophy' to general human concerns of western society. The precarious relationship between body and creating and the potential release of uncontrolled destructive powers cannot merely be seen as a Jewish concern but a universal human one. One which carries with it enormous implications, including the awakening or realization that the concern for the

ethics of creation is now an imperative that cannot be dismissed as being external from praxis.

Notes

1. Hana Volavkova, ed. ... I never saw another butterfly ..., transl. Jeanne Nemcova (New York Schocken Books, 1959), p 50.

2. This discussion owes much to the conference entitled "Architecture, Ethics, and Technology" (Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal, November 15, 16, 1991) and the introduction to the proceedings by Alberto Perez-Gomez

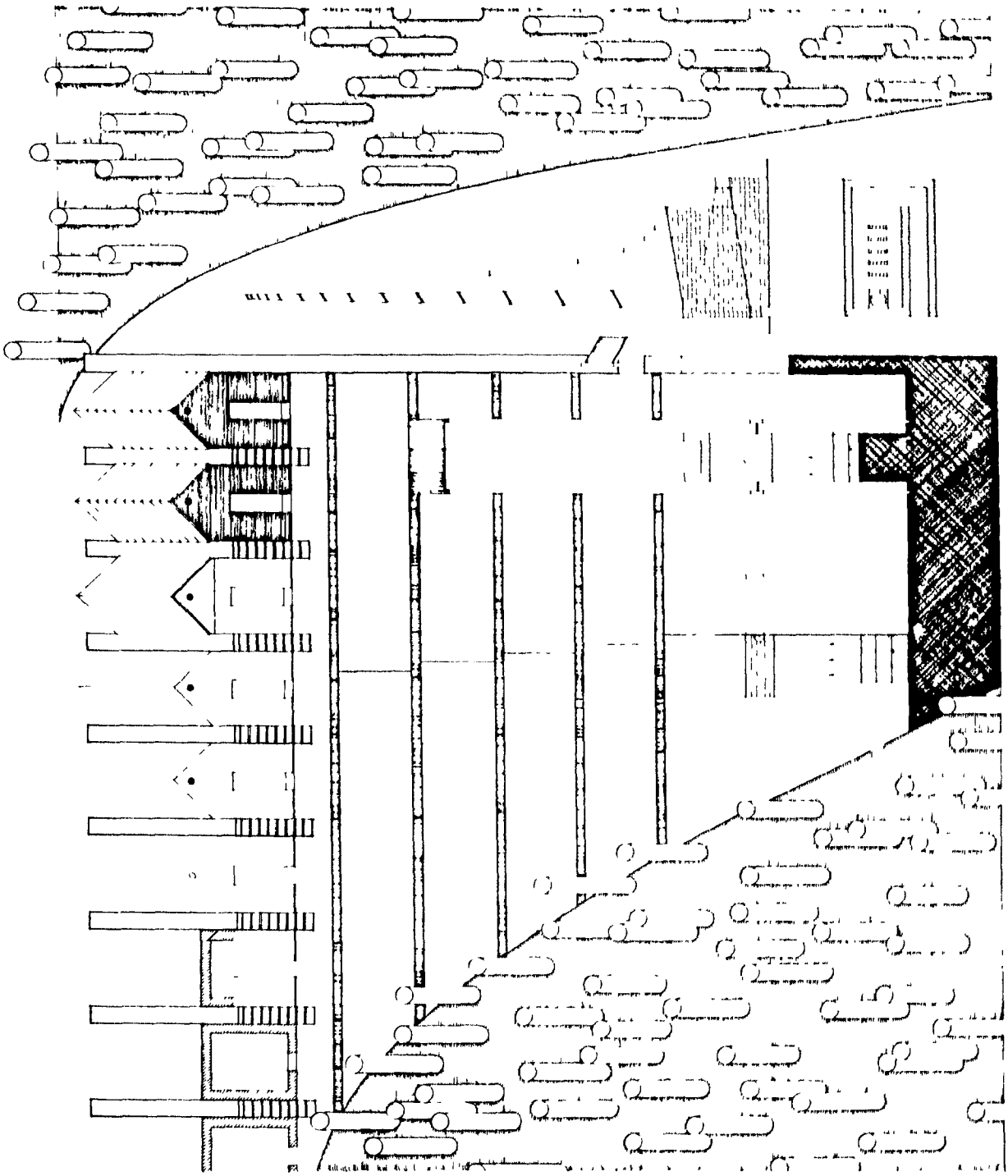
3. Chayim Bloch, The Golem, transl H Schneiderman (Vienna Verlay, 1925), p 36

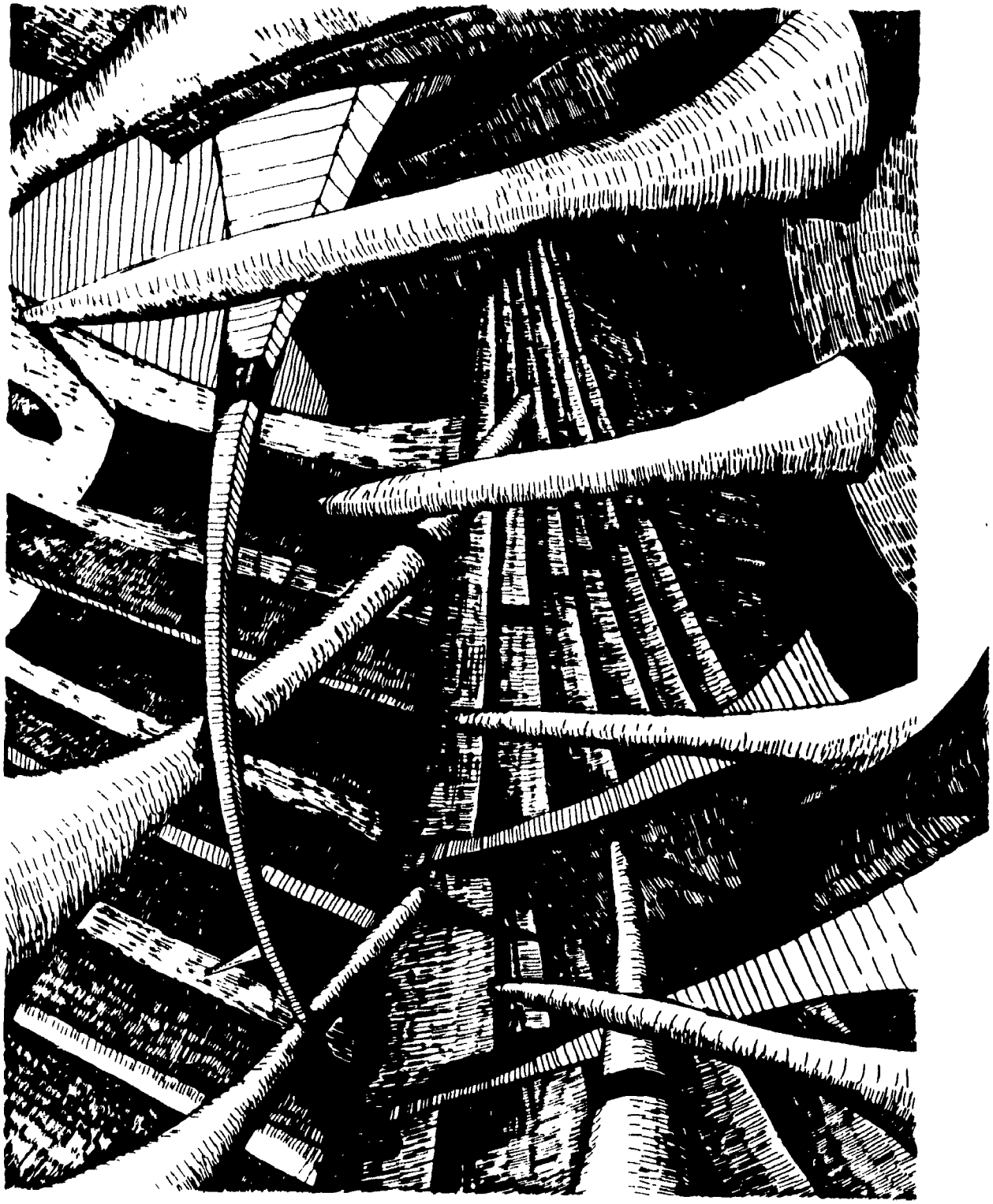
4. Erich Heller, Franz Kafka (Princeton Princeton University Press, 1974), p 105

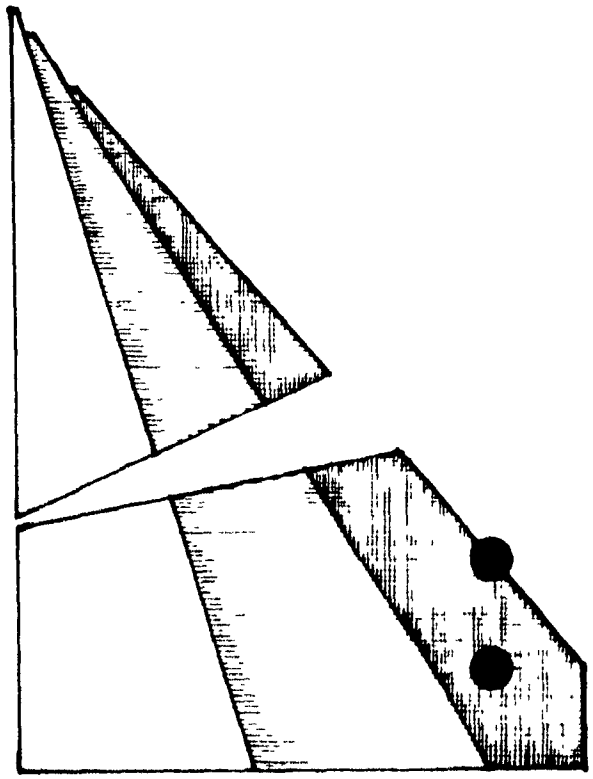
5. I would like to posit that this is true even in the case of Franz Kafka who ostensibly writes from a secular background The centrality of his Jewish framework and tradition of 'belief' to his work is I believe implicit within it See chapter 4.

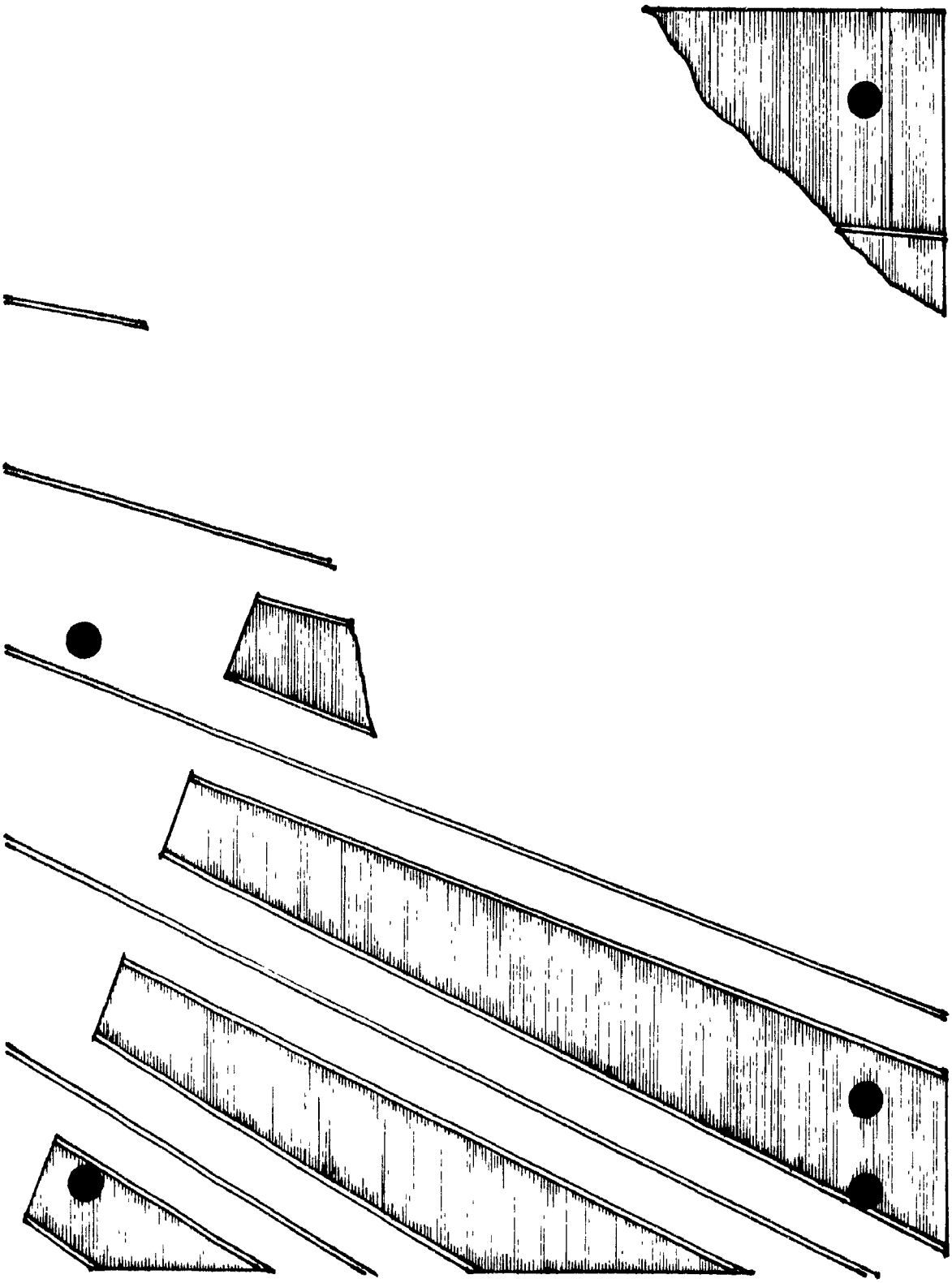
On a day similar to the previous one, at dawn, Abraham awoke to find himself in a solitude. Physically, he appeared to be no different His room, formed by modular furniture, had not changed The dense urban fabric, which enveloped him and where reason predominated for the good of humanity, still carried on its natural course Yet, Abraham definitely knew he awoke in a solitude Curious, Abraham pondered his new-found situation, lingering during his morning ritual for an abnormally long time This reality into which he awakened is for some reason hauntingly familiar to him, a distant shadow of a known object An environment he senses is shared by others An environment perhaps inherited and equally accepted Decidedly, Abraham felt that he must set out and regain a sense of "belonging" To what exactly, he wasn't quite sure. But it was something he felt he once had at some point and knew was integral to his being Why exactly, he wasn't quite sure either

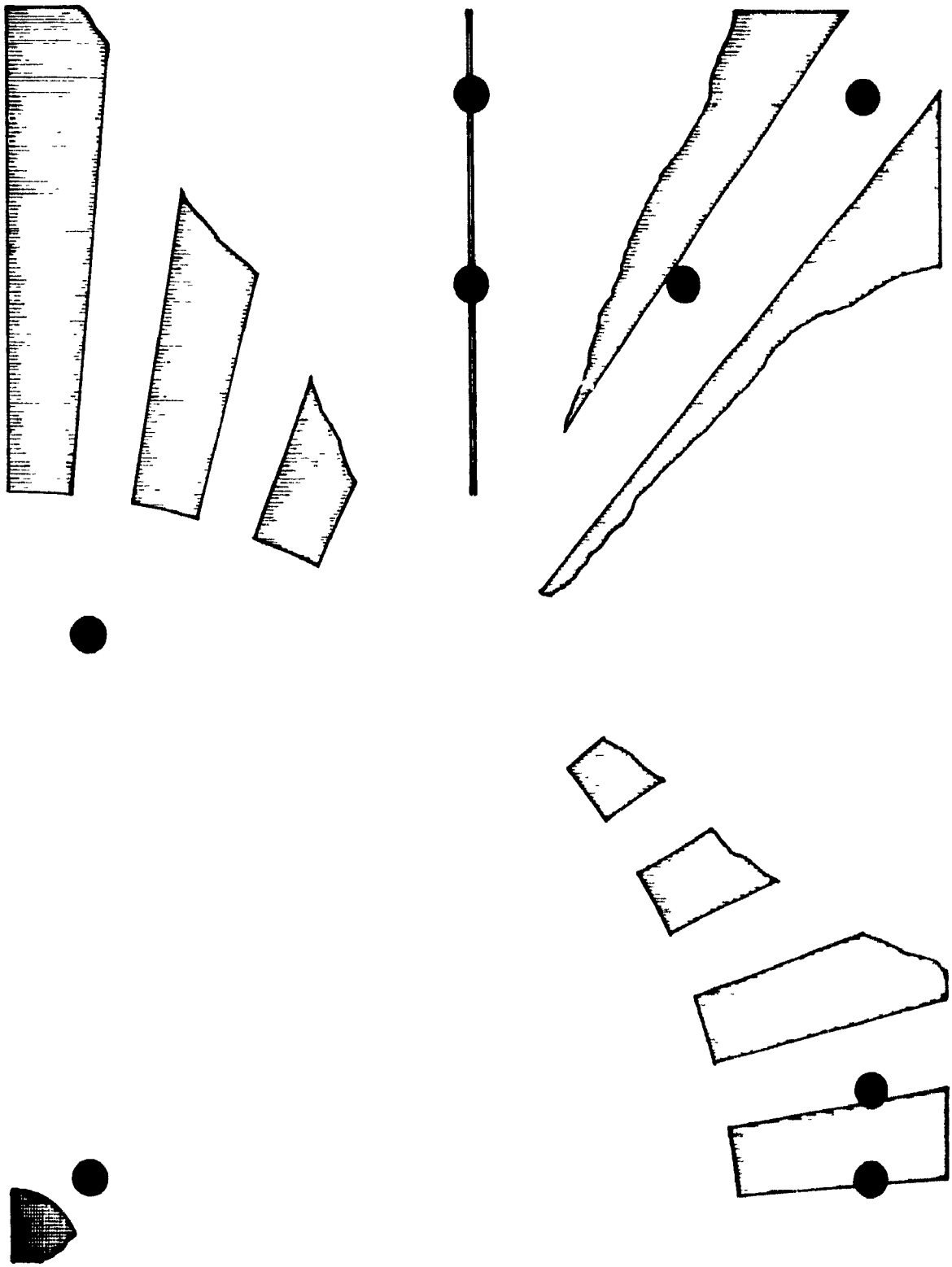
Abraham's lingering became obsessive and his lateness was assured for his particular function of the day Rushing around like a frantic wet dog, he quickly grew upset with himself for allowing this flagrant flaw in his usual scientifically orchestrated daily movements. Abraham, realizing his situation's potentially destructive possibilities and still fully within his faculty of reason, rationalized that his situation, although an explicitly new one , need not and should not hinder him in going about his daily business, as any other normal human would. 'I'll just put it in the back of my mind and allow my brain to take control of it and master it. This done, I will no doubt be able to get back to the way things were, with everything in its rightful place'. Satisfied with his cognitive ability to prevent any further mishaps as a result of his situation, Abraham went on his way











2. THE LEGEND OF THE GOLEM

Modern Manifestation

In the Hebrew year 5340 (1580 C.E.) the great Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, or as he is more commonly known as the Maharal[1] of Prague, undertook the making of a Golem in order to combat the continued attempt of the fanatical priest Thaddeus to cause mischief toward the Jewish community of Prague. On the second day of the month of Adar, after midnight, Rabbi Loew took his son-in-law, Isaac ben Simson, and his pupil, Jacob ben Chayim Sasson to the outskirts of town and the banks of the river. There, by torch-light and amidst the chanting of Psalms, they worked to form a giant figure out of clay. The three men placed themselves at its feet and Rabbi Loew bade Isaac to walk seven times around the clay body, from right to left, while reciting specific teachings from the *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Formation/Creation). When this was done the clay body became red like fire. It was then Jacob's turn to circumnavigate the clay figure seven times, only this time from left to right and with the appropriate recitations. As he completed this task, the fire redness was extinguished and water flowed through the clay body. Then the Rabbi himself walked once around the figure and placed in its mouth a

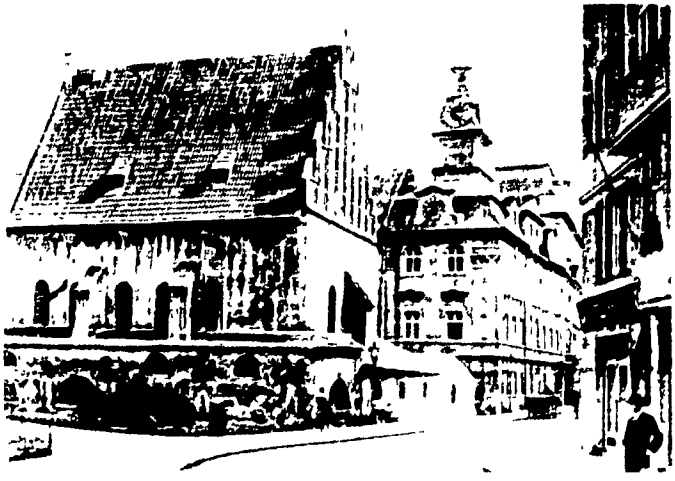
piece of parchment inscribed with the name of God. The three together bowed to the East, West, South and North and recited "And he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis II, 7) Fire, Water and Air brought to life the fourth element Earth and the Golem opened his eyes and looked about.

To all appearances the Golem was ordinary except that the faculty of speech was lacking in him He was told by Rabbi Loew that his task was to protect the Jews from persecution and that he must obey the Rabbis commands at all times, as well, he was to be called Joseph.

Over the next several years Joseph Golem performed his function flawlessly, saving the Jewish community of Prague several times from blood libel accusations and plots [2] But one Friday afternoon, Rabbi Loew forgot to give instructions to Joseph Golem for the upcoming Sabbath as it was his custom. Generally, Rabbi Loew used to order him to do nothing else on the Sabbath but to serve as a guard. This one particular Sabbath the Golem began running about the Jewish quarter of Prague like a mad man, threatening to destroy everything. The panicked public reached Rabbi Loew and told him of the Golem's rampage and although it was the Sabbath this was a question of danger to human life and thus the profanation of the Sabbath was allowed Rabbi Loew rushed out and commanded Joseph Golem to stop, preventing any further mishaps and evil consequences to occur The Golem obeyed and peace was restored, but to the Rabbi's confidential friends he said worringly "The Golem could have laid waste all Prague, if I had not calmed him down in time "[3]

A long time had passed when the community was no longer molested by blood accusations and Rabbi Loew called on his son-in-law, Rabbi Isaac, and his disciple, Jacob Sasson and told them, "Now the Golem has become suerfluous, for blood impeachment can by this time no longer occur in any country. This wrong needs no longer be feared. We will therefore destroy the Golem "[4] It was the year 5353 (1593 C.E.) when the three men went to the garret of the Altneu Synagogue where the Golem had been told to wait.

Monument to Rabbi Judah Loew



The Altneu Synagogue in the Jewish Quarter of Prague

Fundamentally, in destroying the Golem, they did everything in the reverse order that they did in creating the Golem Even the words of the *Sefer Yetzirah* were read backwards After this task was accomplished, the Golem was transformed again into a clod of clay The body of the Golem remained in the garret of the Altneu Synagogue where it was strictly forbidden for anyone to enter

Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, sixteen years after the destruction of the Golem, died He had been involved in a dramatic episode where he encountered a terrible giant (The Angel of Death) who threatened the entire community. Although Rabbi Loew was able to save his congregation he could not save himself for his name had been earmarked for death [5]

The above account of the legend of the Golem is based on the 1917 novel "The Golem. Legends of the Ghetto of Prague" by Chayim Bloch and essentially forms the modern understanding of the legend of the Golem. The Golem of Prague is the most famous Golem in modern times and the prototype of most of the 'Golemim' in the twentieth century Although the form of this Golem in its various accounts has been altered, the appeal of the Golem in this century to the imagination of artists and their audiences is undeniable Of the variety of reports on the Golem legend throughout its history it is this sixteenth century Golem of Prague that has captured the modern fascination and predicament

Chayim Bloch's version of the Golem of Prague, presented as an original letter written by the Maharal himself to a Rabbi Jacob Ginzburg of Friedburg, differed only in details from a 1909 document entitled "*Niflaos Maharal HaGolem M'Prague*" ("The Wonders of the Maharal The Golem of Prague") published by Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg of Warsaw These two texts provide the most important literary outcome on the legend of the Golem of Prague in relation to Jewish mysticism Rosenberg's account is presented as being copied by the author from a manuscipt he found in the archives of the main library of Metz, France around the turn of the century The manuscript is said to be authored by

Rabbi Loew's disciple and son-in-law Rabbi Isaac ben Simson HaKohen Katz, who had participated in the creation of the Golem with the Maharal. Whether the authorship is actually Rosenberg's and not the sixteenth century eyewitness is something that may never be known, although the bulk of modern scholarship on the subject doubts the authenticity of Rosenberg's story of the sixteenth century origins to his 1909 publication. What is known is that the author was well aquainted with the printed material relating to the Golem. His story combines Kabbalistic material with Hasidic terminology and themes to produce an elaborate description of the Golem of Prague. Rosenberg was able to provide what seems to be the first systematic discussion of this topic and also the most influential one. Together with Bloch and his propagative efforts, it was this creative literary genius that contributed to the spread of the Golem legend of Prague to wider and secular audiences.

In the Jewish world, the eagerness of the Ghetto Jew to believe in the authenticity of such type of stories had the effect that belief in the Maharal's Golem became a part of Jewish patrimony to the extent that the historicity of the legend was unquestioned. This perception is best exempified in an interesting story told, by a holocaust survivor born in Prague. It was told to a Jewish soldier in Bologna in 1945 who remarked that the teller of the story appeared to be a free-thinker:

> The Golem did not disappear and even in the time of the war it went out of its hiding place in order to safeguard its synagogue. When the Germans occupied Prague, they decided to destroy the Altneuschul. They came to do it; suddenly, in the silence of the synagogue, the steps of a giant walking on the roof, began to be heard. They saw a shadow of a giant hand falling from the window onto the floor. The Germans were terrified and they threw away their tools and fled away in panic.
>
> I know that there is a rational explanation for everything, the synagogue is ancient and each and every slight knock generates an echo that reverberates many times, like steps or thunder. Also the glasses of the windows are old, the window-panes are crooked and they distort the shadows, forming strange shades on the floor. A bird's leg generates a shade of a giant hand on the floor... and nevertheless... there is something.[6]

This conception in the development of the Golem exists on the legendary plane where Jewish folk tradition having 'heard' of Kabbalistic speculations about the legend on the spiritual plane, translated them into down-to-earth tales and traditions, essentially that of the Golem of Prague. This tradition which has become our contemporary understanding of the Golem legend is characterized by the Golem being a technical servant of man's needs, controlled by him in an uneasy and precarious equilibrium. The Golem created to help insure our physical safety and comfort may ultimately threaten that physical safety. The creative act creates the potential for self-harm or self-destruction.

The origins of this modern understanding of the Golem as an historical figure, a famulus with the potential to harm its creator, can be traced back to the first half of the sixteenth century and the legends of German Hasidism. It is here that Nehemiah Brull found the story to the effect that Samuel the Pious (father of Judah the Pious, the central figure among these Hasidim) "had created a Golem, who could not speak but who accompanied him on his long journeys through Germany and France and waited on him." In another report published in 1614 by Samuel Friedrich Brenz it is written that the Jews had a magical device called *Hamor Golim*. It was an image of mud resembling a man that was able to walk when certain spells were whispered in its ears.[7]

This notion of the Golem ritual is quite a distance from its magical/mystical precedents in earlier legends. Here we identify the influence of a different realm of ideas, namely those concerned with the making of an automaton. The suggestion of a 'mechanical' golem as a famulus prior to these accounts appears nowhere else in the history of the Golem legend.

But it is the tradition of Rabbi Elijah Baal Shem of Chelm in its various forms that is the blueprint for the modern manifestation of the Golem legend of Rabbi Elijah's famous contemporary, Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague. The story of Rabbi Elijah as recorded by a probable Polish Kabbalist and dated between 1630 and 1650 is as follows:

It is known that whoever is an expert in *Sefer Yezirah*, is able to perform operations by the holy names, and out of elements, dust of a virgin soil and water, a matter and form [Golem] will emerge , which has vitality, even so it is called dead, since he cannot confer upon it knowledge and speech, since knowledge and speech are the Life of the Worlds . And I have heard, in a certain and explicit way, from several respectable persons that one man [living] close to our time, in the holy community of Chelm, whose name is Rabbi Elijah, the master of the name, who made a creature out of matter and form and it performed hard work for him, for a long period, and the name of *emeth* was hanging upon its neck, untill he finally removed for a certain reason, the name from his neck and it turned to dust [8]

It is probable that since the author states that the legend was known to several people it was in circulation prior to being submitted to writing. Its origins possibly date back to the generation immediately following the death of Rabbi Elijah in 1583

Although the creation of a Golem is here clearly linked with the modern understanding of the Golem as a famulus it displays a strong linkage to past traditions Firstly the term Golem is not used in its later designation as a creature but rather in line with its standard medieval terminology as an an equivalent for matter There is, as well, an emphasis on the conception of the creature as being dead, which reflects the earlier influence of the totally nonhuman, ahistorical nature of the Golem This account as a transitional piece also lacks many of the seminal features of the modern legend In particular the dangerous nature of the Golem and its 'tellurian' powers are not brought forth nor is the creator explicitly described as being worried about his creation Also the letters *emeth* (truth) are neither written on the forehead, nor on a parchment attached to his forehead. It seems to be hanging from his neck on some sort of amulet It should be noted that although Rabbi Elijah does take away the name *emeth* he doesn't indicate the precise reason for this act.

The motif of the Golem as a physical threat to its creator first appears in the writings of German students of Jewish lore in the seventeenth century It does not occur in Hebrew literature until almost one hundred years later. The earliest and most explicit

account of this in relation to Rabbi Elijah's activities is given in a letter written in 1674 by Christoph Arnold:

After saying certain prayers and holding certain fast days, they make the figure of a man from clay, and when they have said the *shem ha-meforash* (the most sacred name of God) over it, the image comes to life. And although the image itself cannot speak, it understands what is said to it and commanded; among the Polish Jews it does all kinds of housework, but is not allowed to leave the house. On the forhead of the image, they write *emeth*, that is, truth. But an image of this kind grows each day, though very small at first, it ends by becoming larger than all those in the house. In order to take away his strength, which ultimately becomes a threat to all those in the house, they quickly erase the first letter *aleph* from the word *emeth* on his forehead, so that there remains only the word *meth*, that is, dead. When this is done, the golem collapses and dissolves into the clay or mud that he was. They say that a *baal shem* in Poland , by the name of Rabbi Elias, made a golem who became so large that the Rabbi could no longer reach his forehead to erase the letter *aleph*. He thought up a trick, namely that the golem, being his servant, should remove his boots, supposing that when the golem bent over, he would erase the letter. And so it happened, but when the golem became mud again, his whole weight fell on the Rabbi, who was sitting on the bench, and crushed him.[9]

Jacob Emden, a descendant of this Rabbi Elijah, tells of a similar story almost one hundred years later. In it he recounts how Rabbi Elijah saw that the creature he had made kept growing larger and stronger by virtue of the Name which, written on parchment, was fastened to his forehead. Rabbi Elijah grew afraid that the Golem might wreak havoc and destruction (in a similar account by the same author he writes that the Golem might destroy the world). Rabbi Elijah eventually summoned up the courage to tear the parchment with the name of God on it from the Golem's forehead. The Golem then collapsed like a clod of earth and in the process damaged his master and scratched his face.[10]

In both cases the creator enters into a quandry because his creation is growing in such a way that he cannot control the process anymore, and he is therefore compelled to stop the process. Thus the accounts are essentially the same except for the degree of

damage inflicted upon the Golem creator in his attempt to stop the Golem's fury Other varients on this theme exist at this particular time all with the new feature of the dangerous character of the Golem being emphasized in some manner or another. This Golem has prodigious strength and grows beyond measure He has the ability to destroy the world or at the very least cause a considerable degree of damage It appears to be the power of the tellurian element, aroused and set in motion by the name of God, that allows the Golem to do so Unless this tellurian force is held in check by the divine name, it rises up in a blind and destructive fury This earth magic awakens chaotic and very powerful forces that must be kept within a proper ethical context and framework for them to be affirmative entities and not destructive.

This variation of the Golem legend of Rabbi Elijah Baal Shem of Chelm is further updated into the form of that of Jakob Grimm, who wrote extensively on the Golem phenomenon in the beginning of the nineteenth century [1] It must have been shortly before Grimm's day that the Polish legend about the Rabbi Elijah of Chelm moved to Prague and attached itself to the far more famous figure of the great Rabbi Loew of Prague. In this Prague tradition of the early nineteenth century, the legend was associated with certain special features of the Sabbath Eve liturgy The story is that Rabbi Loew fashioned a Golem who did all manner of work for his master during the week But because all creatures rest on the Sabbath, Rabbi Loew turned his Golem back to clay every Friday evening by taking away the name of God Once, however, the Rabbi forgot to remove the Name. The congregation was assembled for services in the synagogue and had already recited the ninety-second Psalm when the mighty Golem ran amuck, shaking houses, and threatening to destroy everything. Rabbi Loew was summoned, it was still dusk, and the Sabbath had not really begun. He rushed at the raging Golem and tore away the Name, whereupon the Golem crumbled into dust The Rabbi then ordered that the Sabbath Psalm be repeated, a custom which has remained to this day in that synagogue, the Altneu Schul. The Rabbi never brought the Golem back to life, but buried his remains

in the attic of the synagogue. Once after much fasting, Rabbi Ezekiel Landau, one of Rabbi Loew's most prominent successors, is said to have gone up to look at the remains of the Golem. On his return he gave an order, binding on all future generations, that no mortal must ever go up to that attic.[12]

Origin and Development

Prior to delving into the origins of the Golem tradition and the nature of its metamorphosis into its modern understanding, several utterances on the nature of the Golem as reported by Chayim Bloch should be kept in mind. Firstly, the actions of the Golem are like those of an automatic machine that fulfills the will of its creator. It has no trace of good or evil instincts As a result, when it ran amuck it didn't realize it was committing an evil act, and therefore its action can be seen as an inherent property of its nature. Also the Golem was perceived as an incomplete creation and was unworthy of *Neshamah* (the light of God) but was inhabited by *Nefesh* (sensory being) and *Ruach* (spirit). Since there was no *Neshamah* the Golem could only possess a small portion of intelligence, *Daat* (knowledge). The other two intelligences, *Chochmah* (wisdom) and *Bina* (judgement), could not be supplied at all. And finally the creator of the Golem must not only be a learned man but also a *Zadik* (righteous man) if he is to be able to collect the hidden rays concealed in the letters of the *Sefer Yetzirah* through which it is possible to give life to a lifeless body.[13]

The importance of the *Sefer Yetzirah* as a generating text for the creation of a Golem is evident not only in the above passage by Bloch (as well as his modern colleagues) but throughout the history of the Golem legend and as a result is its most influential text. Almost all medieval and modern authors who dealt with the Golem issue have mentioned this text, yet the creation of an anthropoid is not explicitly noted in this short, ancient cosmogonical and cosmological treatise. This text, probably authored by a

Jewish Neo-Pythagorean in the third century, in part deals with an explanation of some aspects of the Genesis story. The *Sefer Yetzirah* describes with astronomico astrological and anatomical detail how the cosmos were built, essentially from the appropriate permutations and combinations of the twenty two letters of the Hebrew alphabet along with the letters of the Tetragrammaton. These letters (or elementary letters) being the structural elements or foundation upon which Creation was built Man is presented as a microcosmos fully attuned to and in synchrony with the greater world

Though the treatise is presented as a theoretical guide to the structure of the Universe it may have been intended as a sort of manual of magical practices Certainly medieval commentaries on the Book, particularly in the tradition of the French and German Jews, interpreted it in a magico-mystical form The final chapter of the treatise in which "Abraham our father" is mentioned for the first time seems to point in this direction. In the final *Mishnah* (a unit of study) it is written that.

> When Abraham our father, may he rest in peace, came: he looked and saw, and understood, and explored, and engraved, and hewed out, and succeeded at Creation as it is said, "And the bodies they had made at Haran" (Genesis 12 5) The Lord of all - may His Name be praised forever - was revealed to him, and He set him in His bosom, and He kissed him on his head, and He called him "Abraham, my beloved" (Isaiah 41:8), and He cut a covenant with him and with his seed forever, as it is said "And he believed in YHVH, and He considered it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15 6), and He cut a covenant with him between the ten fingers of his hands, and that is the covenant of the tongue, and between the ten toes of his feet, and that is the covenant of the circumcision, and He tied the twenty two letters of the Torah in his tongue and He revealed to him His secret He drew them through Water, He burned them in Fire, He shook them through the Air, He kindled them in the Seven Stars, He led them through the twelve constellations [14]

From this passage the author promotes the notion that Abraham on the strength of his insight into the system of things and the potencies of letters had the ability to imitate and in a certain sense repeat God's act of creation. It as well provides a plausible

interpretation to Genesis 12:5 that Abraham actually made bodies or souls as the outcome of his knowledge of the principles set out in the *Sefer Yetzirah*

The interpretation of Abraham as creator of bodies or souls as a result of his knowledge of the permutations and combinations expressed in the *Sefer Yetzirah* is later qualified in many commentaries that attempt to establish the uniqueness and unity of the Creator. The assumption that *Sefer Yetzirah* serves this purpose is clearly displayed in the following discussion of the relationship between Abraham and the cosmological gnosis found in the treatise. Abraham, according to this source:

> sat alone and meditated on it, but could understand nothing until a heavenly voice went forth and said to him "Are you trying to set yourself up as my equal? I am one and have created the *Sefer Yetzirah* and studied it, but you by yourself cannot understand it Therefore take a companion and meditate on it together, and you will understand it " Thereupon, Abraham went to his teacher Shem, the son of Noah, and sat with him for three years and they meditated on it until they knew how to create a world And to this day, there is no one who can understand it alone, two scholars (are needed), and even they understand it only after three years, whereupon they can make everything their hearts desire Rava, too, wished to understand the book alone Then Rabbi Zeira said to him It is written, "A sword is upon the single, and they shall dote," that is to say a sword is upon the scholars who sit individually, each by himself, and concern themselves with the Torah Let us then meet and busy ourselves with *Sefer Yetzirah* And so they sat and meditated on it for three years and came to understand it. .[15]

Therefore the ability to understand the *Sefer Yetzirah* and all its correlative implications by oneself is conceived here solely as the prerogative of God. Man can achieve the utmost knowledge of the creative powers included in it, even to create a world, but it must be done with a companion. And so the hierarchy is made explicit and the context in which man's creative powers can flourish is clearly delineated.

The reference to Rava, who also wanted to create alone, and Rabbi Ziera is a derivation of the most influential and explicit passage treating the possibility to create an

artificial human being and one which gave credence to the above exegesis on Genesis 12:5. The passage is found in the following Talmudic verse:

> Rava said. If the righteous desired it, they could be creators, for it is written, "Your iniquities have distinguished between you and your God" (Isaiah 59 2) For Rava created a man and sent him to Rabbi Zeira. The Rabbi spoke to him but received no answer Thereupon he said unto him "Thou art a creature of the magicians. Return to your dust"[16]

Thus the creative power of the righteous, the pietists, is limited Rava is able to create a man who can go to Rabbi Zeira, but he cannot endow him with speech, and by his silence Rabbi Zeira recognizes his nature. This artificial or magical man is always lacking in some essential function We are not told how the artificial man was created but it can be inferred that it was made out of dust To this end the connection and similarity of the act of creating an anthropoid is made with the creation of Adam by God The various Genesis exegesis on Adam's creation form the root or base of the Golem legend A man who makes a Golem and God who makes Adam, the creative power of man and the creative power of God neccessarily enter into a relationship, whether it be of emulation or antagonism.

In essence this creation of an artificial man and its evolution into the Golem legend is a metaphor of Man's (Adam) own creation at the hand and breath of God (as well, in part, Adam's subsequent original act of transgression in seeking to be like God, and know of good and evil and the power of creation) For the purpose of this discussion the Rabbinical and Talmudic commentaries on Genesis are important for the evolution of the Golem legend, for at certain stages in Adam's creation he is actually referred to as a Golem. These commentaries add another layer (which are later developed and accentuated in the middle ages) beyond the more obvious connection between the making of Adam and the making of a Golem, namely that they were both formed "of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2.7). The term "Golem" used in these passages is adopted from the

Hebrew word that occurs only once in the Bible (Psalm 139:16) where it meant shapeless matter or unformed and is said in reference to the speaker who praises the Creator acknowledging how He secretly formed his body "in the lowest parts of the earth", from which came his golem (amorphous matter).

In one such Talmudic passage, where the term "Golem" is used in reference to the creation of Adam, the first twelve hours of Adam's first day is described:

> The day consisted of twelve hours. In the first hour, the dust was gathered; in the second, it was kneaded into a golem, a still unformed mass, in the third, his limbs were shaped; in the fourth the soul was infused into him, in the fifth he stood on his feet, in the sixth he gave names (to all living things); in the seventh Eve was given him for a mate, in the eighth the two lay down in bed and when they left they were four; in the nineth the prohibition was communicated to him, in the tenth he transgessed it; in the eleventh he was judged, in the twelfth he was expelled and went out of Paradise [17]

Adam is here perceived as a Golem, an unformed mass, prior to obtaining form and a soul and the ability to speak, in order to give things their name. A further development of this motif can be found in a *midrash* on Genesis 5:1 from the second and third centuries. Here Adam is not only described as a Golem, but a Golem of cosmic size and strength to whom God showed all future generations to the end of time:

> In the hour when God created Adam, He created him as a Golem, and he spread from one end of the world to the other, as it is written "Thine eyes did see my Golem" (Psalm 139:16). Rabbi Judah bar Simeon said: While Adam still lay as a Golem before Him who spoke and brought the world into being, He showed him each generation and its wise men, each generation and its judges, its scribes, its expositors and its leaders [18]

A possible extrapolation of this reading according to Gershom Scholem is that while Adam was in this Golemic state some tellurian power flowed into him out of the earth from which he was made and allowed him to receive such a vision.[19] Adam's size, as

well, can be interpreted as a sign that the power of the whole cosmos was concentrated in him, a perception that is reflected in this later *midrash* :

> When God wished to create the world, He began His creation with nothing other than man and made him as a Golem. When He prepared to cast a soul into him, He said If I set him down now, it will be said that he was my companion in the work of Creation, so I will leave him as a Golem, until I have finished everything else When He had created everything, the angels said to Him Aren't you going to make the man you spoke of? He replied· I made him long ago, only the soul is missing Then He cast the soul into him and set him down and concentrated the whole world in him With him He began, with him He concluded, as it is written: "Thou hast formed me before and behind" (Psalm 139 5) [20]

There is also here evidence of the trepidation or wariness of man's potential threat to God's unique position that becomes a prominent feature in many of the later versions of Golem making and its danger or warning. But to go back to the connection of the Golem and Adam, what we see from the above sources is that the Biblical verse mentioning the word Golem in Psalms was reinterpreted by Rabbinic sources as dealing with the creation of Adam. For the idea of the Golem it is possible to see in these commentaries elements and sequels of actions that foreshadow and are enhanced upon in later discussions on the creation of an artificial man or Golem. The magical/mystical power in the combination of the Hebrew letters (as displayed above with the *Sefer Yetzirah*) was superimposed to these Adam/Golem elements of creation at a later stage

The development of the Golem legend, through its origins and roots in the Bible (Psalm 139:16), *Sefer Yetzirah,* Talmudic passages and exegeses on the creation of an artificial man and the connection of Adam and Golem, essentially set forth the conception of the medieval idea of the Golem that sprang up among the strong esoteric movements of French and German Jews in the age of the crusades They were eager to perpetuate, if only in rites of initiation which gave the adept a mystical experience of the creative power inherent in pious men, the achievement attributed to Abraham and Rava and other

righteous men of old apocryphal legends. The Golem appearing in the twelfth century, in the sense of a man-like creature produced by the magical powers of man,[21] is perceived as a legendary figure derived from a set procedure varying slightly in different accounts. It is transformed into the object of a mystical ritual designed in a sense to confirm the adept in his mastery over secret knowledge. The creation of a Golem is here seen as an end in itself, the Golem must serve no practical purpose. The act of making a Golem is thought of as a ritual of initiation into the secret of creation.[22] This notion is perhaps best exemplified in the ecstatic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia (1240 - ca. 1292) where the mystical experience of the act of creation by the adept culminates in ecstasy. In a description of creating a creature Abulafia writes:

> At the beginning of the creation, the person must be aquainted with the quality of the weight, the combination and the variation And he has to be aquainted with the construction and all the alphabets, the 231 gates of the alphabets, which are engraved in the ninth sphere (or wheel), divided into sixty parts. And he has to be aquainted with the combination of all the letters, and all the alphabets, each one per se, until all the gates will be completed And he shall take pure dust and flour, turn the wheel in the middle, and begin to combine until the 231 gates are computed, and then he will receive the influx of wisdom. Afterwards let him take a bowl full pure of water and a small spoon and fill it with earth. He should know the weight of the earth before he begins to stir it and the size of the spoon When he has filled it, he should scatter it and slowly blow it over the water While beginning to blow the first spoonful of earth, he should recite loudly a letter of the divine name and pronounce it in a single breath until he will be exhausted and his face should be turned to the earth And so, beginning with the combinations that constitute the parts of the head, he should form all the members in a definite order, until a figure emerges .. it is forbidden to do like the deed of the Creator, and you shall not learn it in order to perform it, but you shall learn it in order to understand and to teach and to cleave to the great name of God, praised be He [23]

The above text is based on the recitation of the combinations of the alphabet, in order to receive the influx of wisdom, and the letters of the divine name in order to create the figure. The process of creation is not corporeal but of thought. It exists in the contemplation of the act and not in its instrumentality. Golem-making is a mystical,

spiritual experience for Abulafia and not about the practical purpose of actually creating a Golem, the real creation was the spiritual one which infinitely transcended any production of bodies. Abulafia and his medieval contemporaries use tradition or past Biblical and Talmudic passages only as a starting point for their present experience, hermeneutically altering the origins. The Golem in all scenarios is dissolved into the earth that it is born of as soon as it is created, and with the initiation of the creator it has served its purely psychic role. Abulafia takes this one step further and completely ignores the need to annihilate the creature since it was not even conceived of as a lasting entity and therefore there was no need to worry about its ontological status after the end of the mystical experience involved in its creation. The creature apparently dissapates when the Kabbalist returns from the paranormal state of consciousness produced by the appropriate technique of Golem making. Also with Abulafia we see a departure from the more traditional forms of Jewish mysticism which call for more than one participant in the operation of Golem making. This bears evidence to the particularly individualistic nature of ecstatic Kabbalah.

The conception of the Golem as illustrated above is that of an ecstatic experience where the figure of clay was infused with all those radiations of the human mind, deriving from the combinations of the Hebrew alphabet and the name of God. The clay figure became alive for a fleeting moment of ecstacy, but not beyond it. Although this pre-modern manifestation of Golem making is dominant and most relevant to this discussion, it should be noted that other notions concerning early Golem practices did exist. The variety of techniques to create a Golem demonstrate that the possibility to concieve of the Golem as exhausted by one definitive image would be simplistic. The particular nuances in Golem making changed forms in accordance to the particular metaphysical system serving as the background of the discussion.

To this end the emergence of the Golem legend in Prague is directly related to the particular leanings of the Franco-Ashkenazi mystics vs. the Sefardi with respect to the

Golem and creation. In Sefardi texts which elaborate on the Golem issue the act of material creation is presented as an inferior activity to be transcended by the intellectual creation This is to be understood by the influence of philosophical speculation in their writings which preferred the intellectual over the material, thought over matter, intellection over action The Franco-Ashkenazi mystics on the other hand embraced the notion of the performance of the ritual of creating a Golem This fundamental difference is carried down to later centuries, when the Golem is discussed in a favorable light by Ashkenazi authors, as almost a human being and is easily adapted or taken as an actual material entity As a result of this difference deep concern for the Golem in the thirteenth century amongst Franco-Ashkenazi Jews (and continued to present modern discussions) is strongly contrasted to the indifference of the Sefardi mystics who apart from Abraham Abulafia did not pay much attention to this tradition. It is significant that the most luxuriant production of Kabbalist literature, the *Zohar*, a work of thirteenth century Sefardic mystics, is indifferent to the practise of creating a Golem. This is also the case in Safedian Kabbalah. The one important Safedian Kabbalist, Rabbi Moses Cordovero, who offers something new on the Golem legend is rather reticent in attributing any spiritual degree to the Golem, and the act of creating a Golem is seen as a totally meaningless activity from a spiritual point of view The Safed Kabbalists of the sixteenth century speak of Golems as a phenomenon situated in the remote past and their discussion of the matter is of a purely theoretical nature [24]

But what is critical for our purpose is to recapitulate that in major developments, the conception of the Golem existed historically essentially on two quite different planes - modern and pre-modern What is important to note for this essay is the transformation and metamorphosis that occured between the two. The main aspect of which, amongst other features (which necessarily reflect this condition), is the emergence of the Golem in modern times as a practical, autonomous (and potentially dangerous) being. The Golem

as a savior and his creator's magical man of all practical work and labor is unknown in the medieval traditions.

When the populace of the community took up the old stories and descriptions of the Golem ritual, the nature of the Golem underwent a metamorphosis. Prominent religious contemporaries became Golem makers in these later developments as opposed to the twelfth and thirteenth century legends which were related primarily to persons of the Jewish antiquity (i.e. Abraham, Rava, Jeremiah and Ben Sira, etc.). As well, in later developments such as Rosenberg and Bloch's account, we see for the first time the Golem referred to by a proper name, Yosele (Joseph) Golem. This lends a quality of affectionate familiarity to the creature almost in the vein that one would treat an amiable contemporary or person. In a sense this familiarity offers a level of comfort and closeness that would lull the creator into a false sense of security over his creation. This would make the impact of the artificial being's turn against his maker and society all the more distressing and potent.

In the classical versions of the Golem, there are no detailed descriptions of this creature, nor was his inner spiritual self addressed. No elaborate aesthetic or psychology of this anthropoid emerges even from the latest traditional versions. It remains an abstract idea (often serving to put in relief some other topic than the Golem itself) as opposed to a personalized, subjective one that we see in the modern account. The Golem is traditionally neither a part of nature nor a mishap of biology but an unnatural exception which is a transitory being whose emergence or annihilation are premeditated. The Golem is not a person, nor is it described in its idiosyncracies as a person would be. It has no particular name and its disappearance is of no matter to its human creator. It is an entity that serves the role of a silent witness of the creativity inherent in the tools which served God and men both in their creative endeavors. It helps certain men to externalize their acquaintance with the divine way of creating.[25]

The mute character of the Golem, almost universal in the legend tradition, also depicts in a more subtle nature the transformations of the Golem legend (Ancient - Medieval - Modern) This flaw in the nature of the Golem is essentially a demonstration of the limited power of the human creator with respect to the superiority of the Supreme Creator Therefore, just as man remains inferior to the divine intelligence of God although created in His image, the Golem lags behind its human creator, although created in his image. The value or weight associated with the lack of speech depended upon the particular era in which the legend was told. In ancient Judaism the oral aspect of being was very important in communication and study. The highest type of worship had to be performed in a verbal manner, inner or silent prayer was not adequate. This view is also true with the last phase of Jewish mysticism, Hasidism, which emphasized the importance of loud prayer and study of torah almost in an ecstatic manner. However, in the medieval period, the absence of speech is related to what was then concieved as the highest human faculty, reason (or the highest spirit as it is referred to by some authors) The silence of the Golem is thus explained not as the inability to create a speaking being, but rather the inability to create a rational being. The faculty of speaking being that which stands between the animal faculty and the rational one.[26] The modern version picked up on this tradition and used the Golem's lack of speech to reinforce its subservient role as a famulus to his master. The Golem is passed off as a dumb stranger and rabbinical bodyservant to those who were unaware of its creation. In Yiddish the term *golem* came to mean an ignorant person or dummy and is often uttered in the context of an affectionate insult [27]

In the medieval ritual, knowledge of the esoteric Hebrew language, as the effective formative elements of all that is created, bestowed upon the operator a state which trancended the magical operation. The operator shares with the Creator the cosmological secrets, he becomes a demiurge. This act fulfilled the felt need for Judaism, in contact and conflict with other dominant religions during its formative devolopment, to

assure itself of its value and uniqueness not only through its canonical texts but also by competing with alternative religions in the area of 'technology' and magic The Golem process in this light was an act of self-affirmation. It was initially for the masters themselves but in the later stages of the development of the legend and its translation to the populace, it becomes evident that the masses drew confidence from the fact that their hostile enviroment of Christian populations, pogroms and blood-libels could be effectively met by the magical achievement of their religious leadership [28]

Warning of Golem making

The inherent danger of the Golem that emerges in the modern manifestations of the legend also reflects a profound transformation or metmorphosis from the original conception. But this is at least, in part, inherited from the warning of Golem making that is a part of many of the medieval texts on the subject This warning in all its various nuances offers a strong point of departure to shed some light on the modern condition that is born out of it. It is this prohibition in the legend of the Golem, both in its modern and pre-modern variations, that is critical and give it such a rich and relevant nature for contemporary audiences. What is depicted in this discussion is that creativity is a double edged sword. Aside from the real, neccessary and possible benefits, the creative endeavor is replete with dangers. In the pre-modern version the danger is in Golem making itself and only later on is it transferred to the Golem directly as it becomes transformed into an historical figure.

In the medieval texts, an awareness of the sanctity of the recitation of the powerful letters of the Hebrew alphabet combined with the name of God opened the way to an awareness of the dangers involved in faults occurring during this recitation. Given the fact that the Golem can be undone by inversing a certain process or recitation, the assumption that these tehniques may also be dangerous becomes inescapable In the

Pseudo-Sa'adyan commentary on the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the creator may even sink into the earth. It is written in this thirteenth century text that:

> They make a circle around the creature and walk around the circle and recite the 231 alphabets, as they are noted, and some say that the creator put power in the letters, so that a man makes a creature from virgin earth and kneads it and buries it in the ground, draws a circle and a sphere around the creature, and each time he goes around it recites one of the alphabets. This he should do 462 times. If he walks forward, the creature rises to life, by virtue of the power inherent in the recitations of the letters. But if he wishes to destroy what he has made, he goes around backwards, reciting the same alphabets from end to beginning. Then the creature sinks into the ground of itself and dies And so it happened once to R I.B E (not known who this refers to) and his students who studied the *Sefer Yetzirah* and by mistake went around backward, until they themselves by the power of the letters sank up to their navels in the earth They were unable to escape and screamed out Their teacher heard them and said: Recite the letters of the alphabets and walk forward, instead of going backward as you have been doing. They did so and were released.[29]

Aside from the warning, it is also interesting to note that the Golem is buried in the earth, from which it rises. In this respect the earth serves as the womb of the embryo (the initial context of the Golem found in Psalms of the Bible). The Golem ritual which follows is concerned with causing the Golem to emerge from the earth (or equally extracting it from the womb) first and then animating the body.

In the case of Abraham Abulafia a mistaken recitation may actually cause bodily harm to the recitator Abulafia stresses that there is an organic affinty between the Hebrew letters and the limbs of the body so that the correct pronunciation of the orders of the letters is neccessary for the well being of the mystic. He writes that:

> If the person who recites the letter errs, God save us, in his pronunciation of the letter that is appointed upon the limb that is on the head of the person who reads, that limb is separated from its place and changes its place, its nature being immediately transformed, another form being conferred to it and the person becoming injured. .[30]

In another passage Abulafia directly relates the pronunciation of the letter with the imagining of the corresponding limb of the mystic himself. The pronunciation therefore includes a process of self-contemplation. The combination of this vocalization and introspection provide for a powerful technique that may be pernicious if inaccurate.

This preoccupation with danger can be understood to a certain extent in relation to anomian techniques in general. In Judaism nomian practices do not involve any danger in themselves. These are neccessary prescriptions to conduct one's life in accordance to God's will. This is of course not the case in anomian practices. They were rarely exposed as an imperative for the masses and commonly they were conceived as the enterprise of a few exceptional individuals, who deliberately chose to confront the inherent dangerous situation in order to attain a higher religious experience (this is the case in ecstatic Kabbalah). Greater the spiritual achievement and stronger the means to attain it, greater are the dangers the mystic has to confront.[31] Therefore the attempt to appropriate the ultimate human act of religious experience, Divine Creation of Man himself, bears with it the ultimate price or consequence for this act - Man's death.

Two thirteenth century versions on the Golem legend display vividly another varient of the destructive power of Golem making. Here it is in relation to idolatry and its possible implications. These stories are attributed to the Biblical prophet Jeremiah and his son Ben Sira.[32] One version is found in the *Sefer ha-Gematri'ot*, a collection of traditions stemming from the disciples of Rabbi Yehudah he-Hasid, composed probably in the second third of the thirteenth century.

Ben Sira wished to study the *Sefer Yetzirah*. Then a heavenly voice went forth. You cannot do it alone. He went to his father Jeremiah. They busied themselves with it, and at the end of three years a man was created to them, upon whose forehead stood *emeth*, as on Adam's forehead. Then the man they had made said to them: God alone created Adam, and when he wished to let Adam die, he erased the letter *aleph* from *emeth* and he remained *meth*, dead. That is what you should do with me and not create another man lest the world

succumb to idolatry as in the days of Enosh. The created man said to them: Reverse the combinations of letters and erase the *aleph* of the word *emeth* from my forehead - and immediately he fell to dust.[33]

A direct relation to Adam is made here, even to the point that the Golem was endowed with speech with which to warn his makers against the continuance of such practices. This anomolous detail may be compensated by the fact that it takes two people to create the Golem The mute Golem of the seminal Talmudic passage is the sole product of Rava. Thus, in both, the hierarchy between God's creation and Man's creation is maintained. But as we see in another version of the above passage, which amplifies and extends it to its ultimate conclusion, this hierarhy is only tenuous at best. In a text originating with the early Kabbalists of Languedoc and attributed to the Tannaite Judah ben Bathyra it is written that:

The prophet Jeremiah busied himself alone with the *Sefer Yetzirah* Then a heavenly voice went forth and said: Take a companion He went to his son Sira, and they studied the book for three years. Afterward they set about combining the alphabets in accordance with the Kabbalistic principles of combination, grouping and word formation, and a man was created to them, on whose forehead stood the letters *YHWH Elohim Emeth* (God the Lord is Truth) But this newly created man had a knife in his hand with which he erased the *aleph* from *emeth*, there remained *meth* Then Jeremiah rent his garments (because of this blasphemy: God the Lord is Dead, now implied by the inscription) and said: Why have you erased the *aleph* from *emeth*? He replied I will tell you a parable An architect built many houses, cities, and squares, but no one could copy his art and compete with him in knowledge and skill until two men persuaded him. Then he taught them the secret of his art, and they knew how to do everything in the right way. When they had learned his secret and his abilities, they began to anger him with words Finally, they broke with him and became architects like him, except that what he charged a thaler for, they did for six groats When people noticed this, they ceased to honour the artists and came to them and honoured them and gave them commissions when they required to have something built So God has made you in His image and His shape and form But now that you have created a man like Him, people will say There is no God in the world beside these two! (refering to the architect's renegade pupils of the parable and by extension Jeremiah) Then Jeremiah said What solution is there? He said. Write the alphabets backward on the earth you have strewn with intense concentration Only do not mediate in the sense of building up, but the other way around So they did, and the man became dust and ashes before their eyes. Then Jeremiah said: Truly,

one should study these things only in order to know the power and omnipotence of the Creator of this world, but not in order really to practice them [34]

In this Kabbalistic interpretation of the legend two fundamental contradictory motifs of Golem making meet. On one side the ability to create a Golem as a confirmation of man in his likeness to God, in juxtaposition with the creation of a Golem as a death sentence to that very God and the replacement of God by Man

The motif of warning against such creation, so dramatically expressed in the above passage, is not so much because of the explicit dangerous nature of the Golem or the enormous powers concealed in him (as become evident in modern manifestations of the legend) but because it might lead to polytheistic confusion and undermine the central principle of monotheism in Judaism. In this respect this Golem story is connected with the view of the origin of idolatry current in these circles (and explicitly noted in the first account of Jeremiah and ben Sira above) It was said that Enosh was the first idolater Enosh questioned his father Seth about his grandfather, Adam, and his origins and became aware that Adam had neither a father nor a mother but was created by God's breathing into the earth. When Enosh learned of this he proceeded to make a figure of mud and to breathe upon it. Satan then came and slipped into the figure and gave it an appearance of life. So the name of God was desacrated, and idolatry began when the generation of Enosh worshiped this figure This account along with its archetype in Adam's intial transgression (seeking to be like God) and subsequent demise into an historical time, subject to unending conflict, vividly apprise us of the dangers attached to Man's attempt to imitate God's power of creation Creativity can lead to spiritual rapture, but it can also be an invitation to idolatry One may begin to worship and adorate what one creates thereby replacing the uniqueness and unity of God (a higher trancendental order integral to the existance of Judaism) with polytheism.

What we witness here is the deeply rooted suspicion of the mimetic powers of the creative imagination. If Man, created in God's image avails of his imagination to create a new man (Golem) in his own image, is this not tantamount to the killing or dissolution of God by Man and the idolatrous birth of Man as God. Although the story of Enosh shows the Golem as the focus of worship, it is implicit in the above parables that the ones who created the Golem and not the Golem itself are to be God's eventual replacement or at the very least a challenge to God's supremacy. What these parables do not venture to presume is the natural corollary of the death of Man at the hand of its creation (Golem), an idea, as will be shown below, that is explored only in the modern manifestations of the legend of the Golem.

Golem making as evidenced in the above documents is dangerous, like all major creation it endangers the life of the creator. The source of the danger is not the Golem or the forces emanating from him as we see in the modern manifestations of the legend but the creator himself. The danger is not that the Golem becomes autonomous and develops overwhelming powers, but in the tension which the creative process arouses in the creator Mistakes in carrying out the directions do not impair the Golem, they destroy its creator This tension, this inner conflict on the part of the creator, is further developed in twentieth century accounts, adding a rich new dimension to the legend only hinted at in the medieval and talmudic accounts of the Golem Bloch perhaps best sums up this tension as well as fear when he writes "God knows what could have happened if a Golem had been given the faculty of speech also!"[35]

But prior to responding to this question of tension in all its contemporary complexities and implications a general note on the affirmative nature of Man's action in the Golem legend should be kept in mind. The Golem's intelligence in most traditional accounts of the legend always lagged behind the human (generally depicted by the Golem's lack of speech), just as the human mind remains infinitely inferior to the all-encompassing divine intelligence of God. The Golem lacks the essential characteristic

which alone makes Man what he is (this ingredient or characteristic depended upon the specific account of the legend and the particular nature of the Golem created). But still, even on a subhuman plane, there is in the Golem a representation of Man's creative power. The universe, as it is told by the Kabbalists, is built essentially on the prime elements of numbers and letters, because the letters of God's language reflected in human language are nothing but concentrations of His creative energy. Thus by assembling these elements in all their possible combinations and permutations, the Kabbalists who contemplate the mysteries of Creation radiates some of this elementary power into the Golem. The creation of the Golem is then in some way an affirmation of the productive and creative power of Man (albeit within the larger Creative or Divine framework of God). It repeats, on however small scale, the work of creation and in the process reaffirms Man's privileged place within this cosmology.[36] God has the ability to create Ex-Nihilo or out of pre-existing matter as in the case of Adam whom he created out of the earth. It is in the latter sense that Man's limited creative power exists and the possibility for him to become a creative substitute for God on Earth and establish his primacy amongst God's creative work. Through creativity the human being expresses his/her Godlike qualities, the ultimate of their mundane, earthly humanity. Human creativity articulates *imitatio dei*. If Man's creative instinct is seen to be directed towards the fulfillment of a Divine purpose then Man can be perceived as a 'partner' with God in the task of historical re-creation.

Contemporary Implications

The Golem legend returns in a variety of forms to confront our modern sensibilities. Many of the moral, psychological, and spiritual problems that we struggle with today seem to have been anticipated by the Golem legend in both its medieval and modern variations. As our modern 'Golems', the benifits they offer and the potential risks

they represent, become increasingly part of our daily experience, the insight and implications of the Golem legend become exceedingly pertinent.

Prior to engaging these possible insights a few important motifs of earlier Golem legends as discussed above are neccessary as background for an understanding of their reappearnace and variation in modern portrayals of the Golem legend. Firstly there is the Golem's huge size as well as its special power, a tellurian force, which enables it, at times, to have a vision of the future of mankind (an ominous foreshadowing of things to come) Then there is the danger of Man's conceit in creating artificial life and the inherent tension of the creative process and finally the eventuality of the Golem being returned to the clay or earth from which it was created Although in Rosenberg's seminal version of the legend, *Nifla'ot Maharal im ha-Golem* (1909), the Golem is removed because his mission has been successfully completed, most post-medieval versions have the creature's life being taken because it has become a threat either to its creator or the entire Jewish community or world

We have seen that creativity may begin as an act of faith in and emulation of God, the source of all creativity But it may develop into a negation of faith and a rejection of God Impressed by his/her own creations and personal abilities, the individual may replace worship of God with self-worship (theocentricity replaced by anthropocentricity). The scientific, industrial and technological revolutions have lead to the 'illusion' of human self-sufficiency, to the conclusion that belief in a God is unneccessary, extraneous or at the very most a purely formal excersice (the role that religion has been essentialy relegated to) Our contemporary society threatens the conclusion of this arguement that God and what this concept represents is dead and Man, each individual man, is the replacement Once the creature becomes creator, the creature may begin to think of himself exclusively as a creator (without any overriding context). Delusions of grandeur and omnipotence abound and so, although, creativity can provide psychological fulfillment, it can also become psychologically self-destructive as it rips apart the

foundation upon which this creativity rests.[37] (It should be noted that while this applies to Man it can equally be extended to Man's creation in the 'Golem' with the corollary conclusions of the death of Man).

In this respect, two important themes or added layers arise in contemporary versions of the legend that forewarn of the Golem paradox in its modern predicament First, there is the warning of the Golem itself not to be made and second a feeling of doubt or remorse on the part of the Golem creator about his creation Both revealing a contemporary perspective of paranoia and fear on the possible implications of the legend Abraham Rothberg's "The Sword of the Golem" offers a post holocaust viewpoint on the legend and best exemplifies the first of these two contemporary themes Rothberg's Golem objects to being born. "The very earth resisted his creation and lay limp and diffuse, refusing to be formed out of the chaos into that which was human " "An anguish in the clay pulsed to (Rabbi Loew's) fingers, speaking without speech, 'Do not rip me from this womb of clay!' " " 'If you bring me to life, my rage shall devour the living, my strength shall lay waste the earth ' " Rabbi Loew goes on to explain that neither of them can resist his destiny while the gray corpse laments his fate as "a clenched fist, a hulk, a golem!"[38]

The other added contemporary element of the creator doubting his creation in the Golem legend is eloquently displayed in the poetry of Jorge Luis Borges In a poem entitled "The Golem" (1958) the final three of eighteen quatrains express the ambiguity of the Golem legend as well as Borges own questioning skepticism

The Rabbi gazed fondly on his creature
And with some terror *How* (he asked himself)
Could I have engendered this grievous son,
And let off inaction, which is wisdom?

Why did I decide to add to the infinite
Series one more symbol? Why to the vain
Skein which unwinds in eternity
Did I add another cause, effect, and woe?

At the hour of anguish and vague light
He would rests his eyes on his Golem
Who can tell us what God felt,
As he gazed on his Rabbi in Prague?[39]

The contemporary notion of Golem making in all its ramifications shown above is no more vividly or literally expressed than in genetic engineering. A United States government report entitled "Splicing Life" (November 1982) investigated the social and ethical implications of genetic engineering. In reviewing the possible dangers of genetic engineering the report refers to the Golem legend and the "difficulty of restoring order if a creation intended to be helpful proves harmful instead." The report reflects on the painful irony of this situation when people "in seeking to extend their control over the world ... may lessen it The artifices they create to do their bidding may rebound destructively against them - the slave may become the master." The suspicions reflected in this report are mirrored by the public who in a National Science Foundation study opposed most restrictions on scientific research in all areas but one - the creation of new life-forms and genetic engineering with human beings.[40]

The apprehension that the golem-slave will become the master of its creator and display the corollary of the Golem legend in the death of Man is a recurrent theme in contemporary literary versions and related texts of the legend. In Joseph and Karel Capek's play R U R (Act 3) we read "Mankind will never cope with the Robots, and will never have control over them Mankind will be overwhelmed in the deluge of these dreadful living machines, will be their slave, will live at their mercy."[41]

It is reasonable to assume that the Capek brothers , who were from Prague , were influenced by the Golem legends circulating about when they wrote this play. It is in this work that the term "Robot " is first coined. Its derivation is from the Czech root meaning a "worker" in the sense of a slave laborer.

The play takes place at an R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots) factory which manufactures robots. In the course of the play, the robots take over both the factory and

the world. After the robots have all but destroyed the human race a clerk at the R.U.R factory asks the robots, "Why did you murder us ?" One of the robots offers the sobering reply "Slaughter and domination are necessary if you want to be like men. Read history, read human books. You must domineer and murder if you want to be like men "[42] Thus artificially created beings only reflect back on their creator. Our creations can tell us much more about human nature than about the creations themselves. Therefore creation of a Golem is not only an expression of human achievement, but an excercise, sometimes an horrifying one, in human self-understanding (we are what we make). The fear of uchecked technological achievement running amok and destroying its creator can be interpreted in effect as a reflection of a fear of our own unchecked creative making in the larger sense and not of its particular product. In light of the ever present nuclear threat (a Golem created to serve and defend that may ultimately destroy us), a fear that must be reckoned with. The potential of the Golem to wreak havoc and destruction and the consequent need for the Golem's potential destructiveness to be recognized and at least understood offers us a serious warning to temper our own destructiveness and that of the many powerful Golems we have created.

Another variation of the Golem (unchecked technology) destroying its creator theme is seen in the those tales which allude to the loss of a proper balance between the creator and his creation and the resultant growing indistinguishability between the two. The explosion of a technological utopic-orientated society advanced since the industrial revolution, may alter the very nature of the human experience itself. Technology as a purely individual and relative form of creative making with the ultimate fallacious intent of continual embetterment and perfection of humanity is in fact exposing itself as an alienating force from the real essence of our humanity. Our technological Golem may not only reflect human proclivities, but may cause us to alter the manner in which we think of human nature.

In this regard, Marx's observations in his "Economic and Philosophical Manuscipts", published in 1844, have become increasingly pertinent. He writes that "as machines become more human, men will become more like machines."[43] This view expressed by Marx, the proclivity of modern western thought to define the human being as a kind of mahine, and conversly, to grant human status to machines, is based on a mechanistic and objectified view of reality that is reductionist in nature and in approach. Beginning in the eighteenth century it became part of the human condition to define humanity as a kind of machine of reason with the ultimate and perceived highly attainable goal of self-perfection. Once internalized, this philosophical position becomes a determining factor in human behavior. Once accepted by the individual, this philosophical assumption becomes a psychological presupposition. This philosophic tendency though obscures the spiritual dimension of humanity and its neccessity to live within a framework that extends beyond itself. But because this attitude has become so deeply engrained in our mentality to the point of self-evidence, and because of the warning of the Golem legend and its corollary in the death of Man, it bears serious consideration.[44]

Jerzy Kosinski amply displays the possible conception of the self as a machine-like instrument when he writes in his "Passion Play":

> They appeared to him, most of them, to have consented to the manufacture of their lives at some common mint, each day struck from the master mold, without change, a duplicate of what had gone before and was yet to come. Only some accident could bring to pass upheaval in the unchallenged round of their lives.
> It was not contempt he felt for them, merely regret that they had allowed the die of life to be cast so early and so finally. He preferred individuals whose singularity gave him insight into himself ... people (are) so programmed to be efficient, civil, ready with a practised smile, that the very juices of life had been leeched from their bodies. Like the cash machines that were posted in the bank lobbies ... the men and woman who worked in banks were ... as functional as the currency itself.[45]

This notion of the human being as a variety of machine, once internalized, influences every aspect of our self-understanding, our attitude towards ourselves, and our behavior towards others. What Kosinski attacks is the dehumanization of individual human sanctity, the self-negation of being human that accompanies a human being's aquiescence, explicitly or implicitly, to the definition of the human being as a variety of machine. At a time when Golems populate our daily lives, at a time when we must relate to machines on a daily basis, the challenge before us is not how to build bigger and better Golems but how to prevent ourselves from becoming Golems and thereby having our lives controlled, harmed or even destroyed by the Golems we have created. The challenge posed is the pressing need for human beings to intensify their quest to realize and to manifest those essentially human qualities that ultimately distinguish us from the Golems we have created.

This theme of Man becoming indistinguishable from the Golem he has made (in all its repercussions) is brought out in a story of a wealthy American Jew who visited Prague after World War II wanting to see the remains of the Golem in the attic of the Altneu synagogue. The American businessman upon having his request obviously rejected by the shammes, slipped the clergyman a considerable amount of money. The American entered, but fifteen minutes later returned, complaining angrily that he had wasted his time and money because he found nothing in the attic but old, warn tallisim, torn prayer books and mounds of dust. When the shammes asked if there was anything else in the attic, the angry American remembered one other thing - an old mirror on the wall. The shammes quickly replied "then you did see the Golem!"[46]

The identification of humanity with and as the Golem in its potential destructive capabilities is perhaps most concretely felt in our present day enviromental destruction and with the opening words to the recent Earth Summit "We are now a species out of control."[47] Humanity as the Golem in a mechanistic, objectified and relative state has come to use evironmental resouces as pure 'standing reserve' for society and not that which

sustains us in a symbiotic relationship. This attitude is at the source of the enviromental destruction that presently threatens the human race. We have become indistingiushable from our Golems that now run out of control.

The warning of the Golem in these versions is that if we concieve of ourselves in a technological, objectified framework then we become as such - devoid of freedom, creativity, and spontaneity; we become soulless mechanical entities alienated from our true essence and enviroment The full impact of this notion in all its consequences is explored in greater depth through the literary work of Franz Kafka in Chapter 4.

Gershom Scholem, in a dedication speech on behalf of a newly built Israeli computer in 1965, provides an interesting postscipt to this section. When Scholem heard of the new computer, he told Dr. Chaim Pekeris, who "fathered" the computer, that in his opinion the most appropriate name for it would be Golem No.1 (Golem Aleph). Dr. Pekeris agreed, on the condition that Scholem would dedicate the computer and explain why it should be so named. Scholem, in his dedication speech, makes a direct link between the legendary activities of the sixteenth century Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague and the computer created at the Weizmann Institute at Rehevot (The Golem of Rehevot). Scholem then goes on to compare the Golem of Prague with that of Rehovot. He cites the modern electronic engineer or applied mathematician as the latter day disciples of the Rabbis of Poland and Prague, concocting their own kind of computerized Golem, yet without the theological and ethical context of their rabbinical ancestors He concludes his address, in recognition of the tenuous limit of the technological and scientific advances without any overriding justifiable ethical context, by resigning himself to anxiously say "to the Golem and its creator develop peacefully and don't destroy the world."[48]

The ultimate conclusion of our Golems and our relation to them is of course yet to be written and rests uncertain. But what is of certainty is the meaningful reflections that arise in the contemplative theories about the legend of the Golem in all its variations that have come down to us, from the Bible to present day novels, poetry, plays and film.

Notes

1. Maharal was an acronym for *Moreynu HaRav Loevy* or Our Teacher, Rabbi Loew see Gershon Winkler, The Golem of Prague (New York. Judaica, 1980), p. 29

2. The Blood Libel was the accusation that Jews murder non-Jews in a religious ritual and drink their blood. It originated in twelfth century England partly due to the belief that Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Christ By the fourteenth century, the ritual murder charge had become associated with Passover; Jews were accused of mixing Christian blood into their matzah and wine These accusations lasted right into the twentieth century and led to the murder of tens of thousands of Jews

3. Chayim Bloch, The Golem, transl H Schneiderman (Vienna Vernay, 1925), p 191

4. Ibid , p. 192

5. Rabbi Loew's death at the hand of this terrible giant may be Bloch's device for alluding to the Golem and its ability to effectively destroy its maker

6. Document No. 11383 of the Archives of Jewish folklore in Haifa, Israel, quoted in Moshe Idel, Golem (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p 256

7. Gershom Scholem, On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism, transl R Manheim (New York: Schocken, 1971), pp 198, 199.

8. Ms. Oxford 1309, fols. 90b-91a, quoted in Idel, Op. Cit., pp 207, 208

9. Letter to J. Christoph Wagenseil quoted in Scholem, Op. Cit., pp 200, 201

10. Ibid., p. 201.

11. In 1808 Grimm wrote on the Golem legend in his "Journal for Hermits". Only eight years after Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1785-1851) published "Frankenstein" It is not unreasonable to assume that she was influenced by the Golem legend Although she lived in England, she had access to German literature and, in fact, in one of her letters, she attributes her insperation for "Frankenstein" to German 'ghost tales' she had read. The Golem is clearly the closest in theme to the Frankenstein story and it is difficult to imagine that a literary figure like Shelley should not at some point have come across the numerous Golem tales in German literature that existed before and during her time see Winkler, Op. Cit., pp. 19, 20.

12. Scholem, Op. Cit., p 202, 203

13. Bloch, Op. Cit., pp. 199-203

14. *Sefer Yetzirah*, transl D R Blumenthal in Understanding Jewish Mysticism (New York Ktav Publishing House, 1978), pp 43, 44

15. Quoted in Scholem, Op. Cit , p 176

16. Isadore Epstein, ed. tractate "Sanhedrin" in The Babylonian Talmud (London: Soncino Press, 1935), p. 446.

17. Ibid., p. 242.

18. Jacob Neusner, ed. Genesis Rabbah (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 264.

19. Scholem, Op. Cit., p. 162.

20. Quoted in Scholem, Op. Cit., p. 162.

21. This magical knowledge is not seen as a perversion, but a pure and sacred knowledge which belongs to man as God's image.

22. This notion is central to the idea that Gershom Scholem stresses is the one underlying point of the Golem legend in his essay "The Idea of the Golem".

23. *Tehillat ha-Yezirah*, quoted in Idel, Op. Cit., p. 97.

24. Idel, Op. Cit., p. 275.

25. Ibid., p. 261.

26. Ibid., pp. 265, 266.

27. Arnold Goldsmith, The Golem Remembered, 1909-1980 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), p. 16.

28. Idel, Op. Cit., p. 266.

29. Commentary on *Sefer yetzirah*, quoted in Scholem, Op. Cit., pp. 186, 187.

30. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 14b quoted in Idel, Op. Cit., p. 100.

31. Ibid., p. 264.

32. The association of the prophet Jeremiah to these stories can be related to his Biblical role as a warning against the evil and idolatrous behavior of the people of Israel at this time (ca. 600 B.C.E.). The prophet's pleas are disregarded and a causal link is then made between their behavior and their subsequent defeat, destroyed Temple, and Exile at the hands of the Babylonians.

33. Quoted in Scholem, Op. Cit., p. 179.

34. Ibid., p. 180.

35. Bloch, Op. Cit., p. 69.

36. Gershom Scholem, "The Golem of Prague and the Golem of Rehovot," in The Messianic Idea in Judaism (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 337.

37. Byron Sherwin, The Golem Legend (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 24, 25.

38. Abraham Rothberg, The Sword of the Golem (New York: McCall Publishing, 1970), pp. 5-7.

39. Jorge Luis Borges, "The Golem," in A Personal Anthology, ed. Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 79.

40. See Sherwin, Op. Cit., pp. 25-28.

41. Joseph Capek, Karl Capek, R.U.R., transl.. R. Selver (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 71.

42. Ibid., p. 94.

43. Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" Quoted in Sherwin, Op. Cit., p 44

44. Sherwin, Op. Cit., pp. 43, 44.

45. Jerzy Kosinski, Passion Play (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp 126, 244

46. Goldmith, Op. Cit., p 142

47. These words were spoken by Maurice Strong, the secretary-general and organizer of the United Nations Conference on Enviroment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from June 3-13, 1992. The Conference was attended by more than 100 world leaders and was meant to confront the most threatening enviromental problems in an interdisciplinary and global fashion. This historic events' outcome (as a potential catalyst or simply another purely formal exercise) is yet to be written.

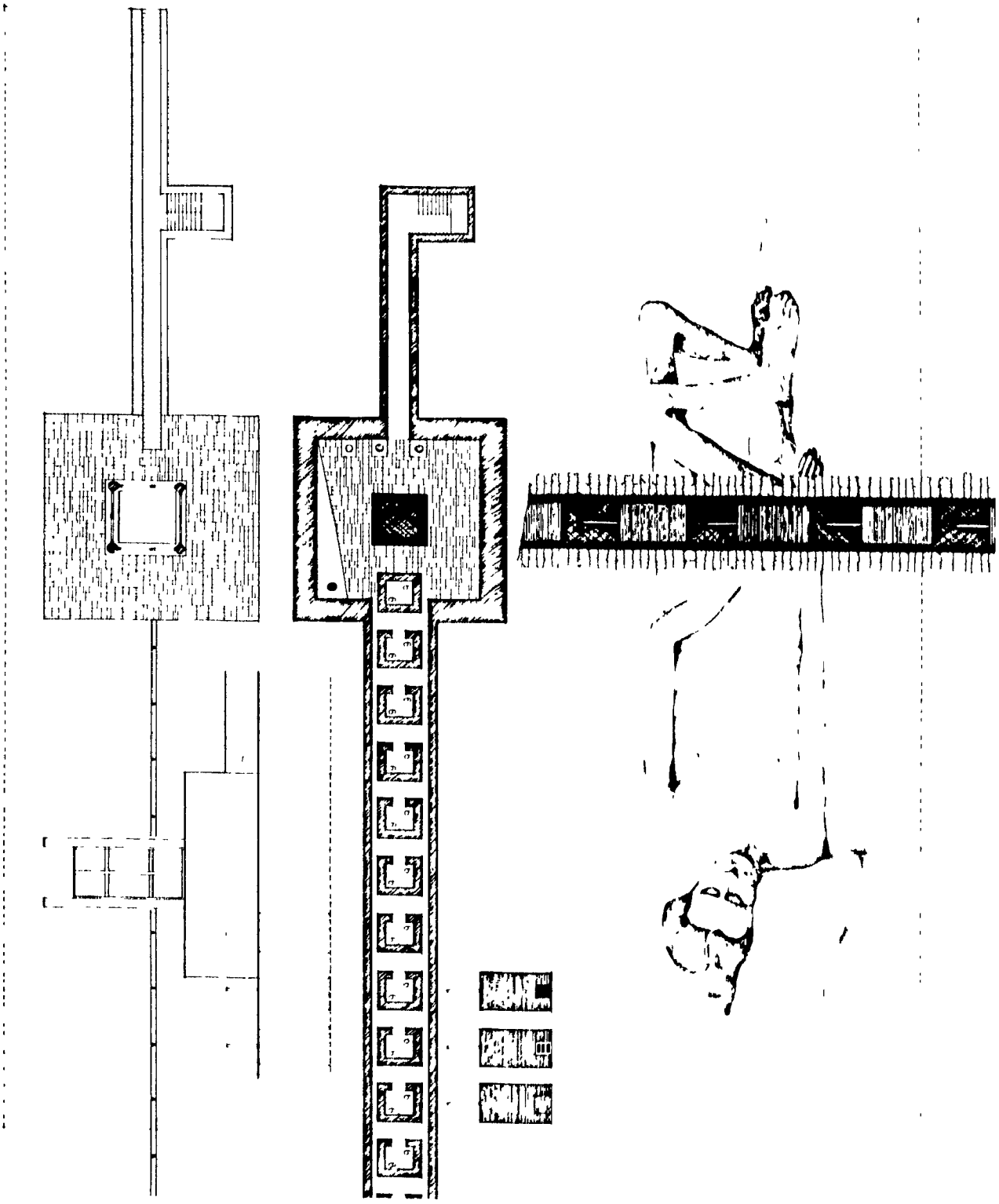
48. Scholem Op. Cit., p. 340.

The night before Abraham awoke, he dreamed a dream It was of the day he awoke in solitude and was performed at the plant where he worked.

Abraham's action, his lateness, caused by his preoccupation with his situation allowed for serious repercussions to occur Four of his fellow workers were forced to change their work burden in order to cover for Abraham and his tardiness. By doing so, they had to alter their ingrained daily patterns that they so prided themselves upon But their transition wasn't as smooth as they thought possible and the obvious occurred .. production was delayed The Four were reprimanded immediately

Abraham arrived at the scene in an ephemeral state between levels of consciousness to witness the ensuing death struggle His four colleagues had been placed in a standing cell large enough for three of them and with enough air for the few cockroaches that had gathered at their feet Gasping at a crack of light, their bodies crushed one against the other They were covered in excrement and vomit, blood trickled from their noses, mouthes, and ears Their screams were only surpassed by Abraham's "Stop" he yelled, "They were only trying to help me They " his words dropped off as no one was moved to listen Work diligently carried on Abraham's face fell to his hands in anguish Helpless, anxious, Abraham was unable to arrest the proceedings, the scene etched itself into his mind Lamenting in his own self-pity for his act, Abraham raised his heavy eyes in a curiosity he could not explain The scene continued relentlessly, although the characters had now changed, replaced with four fresh bodies, four others.

Physically and emotionally drained, Abraham fled for home. His body fatigued, his head vacuous, Abraham re-entered the realm of the dream world



3. THE SYMBOL OF THE WESTERN WALL

The Golem as False Messiah

The symbol of the Western Wall of the Temple mount of Jerusalem that has evolved throughout its history, in many ways provides an echo to, and physical manifestation of, the Golem legend in both its original inception and modern interpretation. A study of the symbol of the Western Wall reveals another layer of understanding into the Golem legend and its implications and a view into the broader context that it exists within. And at the same time it furnishes insight into the question of a possible ethical ground for our creative making in light of its present destructive potentialities.

The emergence of the symbol of the Western Wall particularly in its modern manifestation is inextricably linked with the contemporary idea of the Golem as a savior and ultimately a false Messiah that was alluded to in the previous chapter. This idea, most notably expressed and expounded upon in the work of H. Leivick[1] (1888-1962), can be seen as valuable commentary and understanding into the paradoxical symbol that the

Western Wall is today. It, as well, can provide the neccessary metaphoric backdrop to comprehend the complexities that have arisen in the Architecture of these ancient stones.

Leivick's work "The Golem: A Dramatic Poem in Eight Scenes" was published in 1921 and combines the folk legend of Rabbi Loew of Prague and his Golem creation with poetry, biblical allusions, surrealism and philosophical and religious probing. Leivick adds a new dimension to the legend with the introduction of two new characters, The Old Beggar (Elijah the Prophet) and The Young Beggar (The Messiah). Their auspicious appearance first occurs as they arrive in Prague after a long journey. Upon encountering a shocked Rabbi Loew and his Golem the two 'Beggars' are hastily asked to leave, the Rabbi commenting that "*Their* time / Has not yet come. This is *your* (Golem) time."[2] It is evident that Leivick conceived of the Golem as a precursor to the Messiah, or as the Messiah ben Joseph, an obscure figure in Talmudic Haggadah who will arrive during the cataclysmic days of Gog and Magog preceding the arrival of the real Messiah and who is to serve as the temporary redeemer at this critical juncture and use force if neccesssary, something which the real Messiah, the son of David, cannot ascribe to.

In the following scene the two Beggars sit beside a road leading off into the distance in a field outside Prague. The Young Beggar, The Messiah, is disappointed with his reception and laments the potential pogrom at the beginning of Passover as a result of the ensuing blood libel plot. The angry Maharal arrives and again reiterates his position that they must leave immediately, noting that:

The world has not exhausted yet
Its store of cruelty, on us
Has *each* of us in every land felt
The butcher's knife against his throat?
Has he yet heard the final groan?
Or seen the last of lifted swords?[3]

The Messiah must not be contaminated and cannot fight violence with violence He "must be *the last* ... / And woe to him if he should try / to intercede for us against our will." The Maharal goes on to explain that "There is another one to do my bidding, / The only one permitted to be dark, / Permitted to spill blood for blood "[4] The Maharal, of course, refers to the savior, the Golem, with his fists and his axe The Messiah, despaired, leaves not knowing whether he came one moment too late or one stroke of time too soon

In the final scene the inevitable destructive potentiality of the 'savior' comes to fruition with the Golem running rampant in Prague, destroying houses and killing innocent Jews of the ghetto. The Maharal in anguish over this action asks the Golem if it realizes that it has hurt the people it was created to save The Maharal accepts the blame, "On my head falls the blood. On my head"[5] and goes on to question the nature of his own proscriptive creative impulse in attempting to hasten some form of redemption for his burdened community:

Did You reveal to me the more than human,
Allow me to create, to rule, command,
Only that I might see at last
My insignificance, my massive sin?
And more than that - my sin against all Jews?
That, in impatience and despair, I wished
To turn my back on those ways of Your people
That are eternal, gentle, patient, full of faith?
My sin in wanting what the foe lays claim to?
The foe demanded what was his
The blood that I desired to save - I shed [6]

What emerges in Leivick's play is far more than a commentary on an isolated event in Jewish history. It is a play in which the Jews act as a symbol for mankind in its present state in both its suffering and yearning for redemption But it is also the tragedy

of the Maharal "who discovers that force contaminates and consumes." It is the "tragedy of a man who, grown impatient with the prospect of the eternal victim, grown weary of the sight of innocent suffering, learns that suffering is the inescapable lot of man, that endurance and the wisdom of endurance - compassion for the sufferers - are the only alternatives open for man as Man."[7] The Maharal also learns that he was deluded in believing that he could both control the Force that he created and that this Force could actually solve real fundamental problems. He learns the lesson that the traditional wisdom of his people is rooted in the reality, that whatever the temporary effect of this Force is, it cannot solve the human condition (It is important to note that this position, the position of Leivick himself, is later altered to the extreme opposite in light of his experience with Holocaust survivors, despite the implications he is aware of and writes about in "The Golem" See the discussion below in the section "Transformation of Ideology")

This notion of the Golem or equally its maker as a false Messiah is echoed in Abraham Rothberg's "Sword of the Golem" despite its post Holocaust publication. The Messianic overtones that accompany Rabbi Loew's creation are cautioned by the Rabbi's close friend, Mordecai Marcus Meisel, a Jewish merchant, financier and philanthropist. Meisel tells his friend, "Judah, you are carried away with your obsession to be a savior." The Rabbi defends his desires but Meisel continues warning of "...the arrogance of one who sets himself in the forefront without remembering that those who remain behind him must pay for his affront. You are not the Messiah nor were meant to be."[8] Despite this admonishment Rabbi Judah Loew is confident about his actions, reasoning that:

> Man is not created in final perfection, he must realize perfection himself. So, too, is his world not created in final perfection, man must realize and create the world's perfection himself. The way of true conduct lies in keeping order in daily life and in recognizing order in the occurances of the world around us. Sin is disorder To put order into the world is man's messianic task.[9]

This fully anthropocentric 'modern' attitude (albeit expressed within a quasi-religious tradition) of the Rabbi is later altered when the pogrom finally breaks out and the Golem is unleashed in a wild fury killing not only Christians but Jews as well, striking out with his axe at everyone in his path. In the aftermath of the destruction, the Rabbi laments over what has occurred by asking a series of questions directed at God:

> did I have messianic nightmares that I might make an end to this violence without end? Did I imagine a worldly redemption, which cannot be garnered where there is none? Did you move me, out of pride and desperation, to spill blood through the Golem and yet to think to keep my hands clean? In my blind desire to do good, did I commit the very sin I sought to avoid for Your people? Did You tempt me with my dream of salvation that I might avoid the rule of man's necessity and Your necessity that we must wait, suffer, endure, have faith in Your providence and mercy? Did I walk in the ways of the nations and thereby lead Your people on that very same path - and not on Yours?[10]

Despite the Rabbi's realization of the nature of the Golem or equally himself as a false Messiah it is important to note that this whole notion of the Golem as a potential savior and redeemer for man is a completely modern conception. Rothberg in his account goes as far as to move the traditional date of the creation of the Golem from 1580 to 1589, exactly two hundred years after the monstrous pogrom of April 18, 1389, in order to enhance, in an almost mythic manner, the messianic overtones that accompany the story. But in all accounts of the legend prior to the conception of the Golem as a famulus and an historical figure there is no mention of the Golem as a savior or Messiah despite equally harsh conditions for the ghettoized Jewish communities. The savior archtype does not appear in Ashkenazi discussions of the Golem in the Middle Ages, in a period when the memory of the 1096 pogroms by the Crusaders, was still fresh. All the central European versions of the Golem discussed in the first chapter ignore any salvific allusions. This is also the case in those commentaries penned by Sefardic figures like Moses Cordovero, in the generation following the great Expulsion of Jews from Spain.[11]

Thus the emergence of the Golem as a savior (and ultimately false Messiah) cannot simply be attributed to a particular reaction of an historical crisis. This modern conception marks a profound transformation in the epistomological condition of man that was alluded to in the first chapter of this essay and will be more fully developed on the following discussion of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. The Western Wall acts almost as a physical embodiment and framework or foundation of the paradoxes of the Messianic vision seen above. The same paradoxes which infuse the Golem legend with such metaphoric richness for contemporary audiences.

Genesis of a Symbol

The development of the symbol of the Western Wall dates back more than two thousand years to the second Temple period. Toward the end of the first century before the common era, King Herod of Judea, undertook the massive initiative to enhance and expand the ancient Temple of Jerusalem initially conceived under the rule of King Solomon in the tenth century B.C.E. and later rebuilt by Zerubabbel in the sixth century B.C.E. after the Babylonian Exile. Herod greatly enlarged the Temple precinct forming the vast area known today as the Temple Mount. The massive stones Herod used to construct the buttress walls of the Temple's newly expanded plateau are, in part, still intact, particularly along its western side. Although these stones contained no sanctity in themselves as long as the Temple existed, a small portion of them have evolved over the centuries, in the wake of the Second Temple's destruction in 70 C.E., into the living religious, political, and social phenomenon that is the Western Wall today.

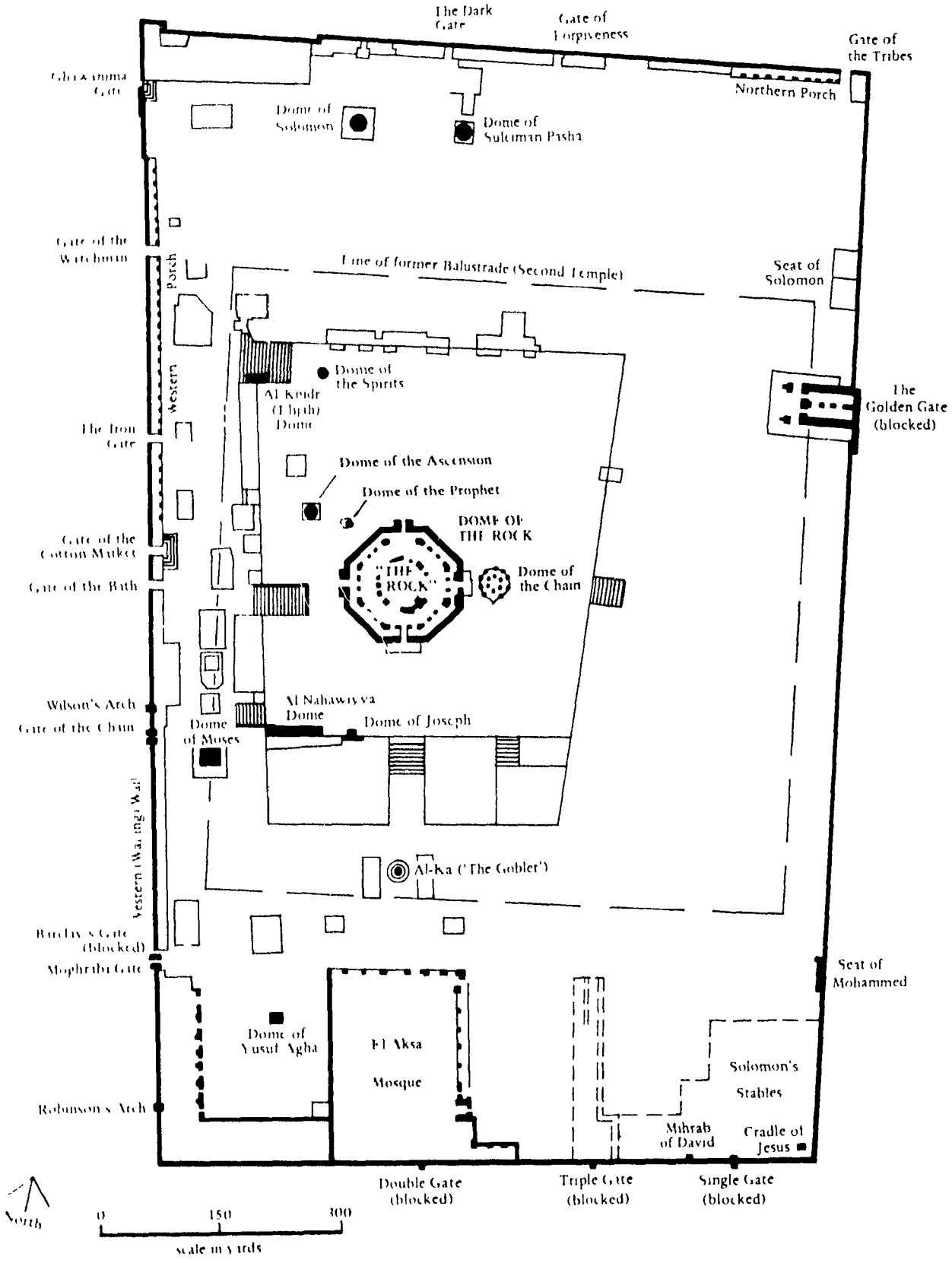
Prior to the Temple of Jerusalem's destruction, it was the focus of Israel's cultural and religious life and the center of judicial and legal activity. Its operation and functioning acted as a spiritual marker for the whole nation and a beacon by which the moral life of the people could be navigated.[12] During this period, the walls of the Temple

Mount contained no specific sanctity as it was concentrated in the Temple and in the sacred precincts around it. But even so, the southern wall of the Temple Mount was considered to be more honored than the other three since it was the location of the two main gates to the Temple Mount. At the southern wall's base pilgrims would gather, listening to preachers extol the virtues of honesty, morality and piety

After the destruction of the Herodian Temple and the failed rebellion of Bar Kokhba in the year 135 C.E. severe restrictions were placed on the Jews They were not allowed to live in Jerusalem nor visit the ruins. During the entire Roman period in Israel, the second and third centuries, Jerusalem lay in ruin and the Temple Mount was desolate. Jews, who wanted to view the ruins of the Temple Mount could come to Jerusalem but only to the Mount of Olives, which bordered the city on the east side across a deep ravine. From there they were able to look and mourn the Temple site. It was at this time that the eastern wall of the Temple Mount and the remains of the Shushan Gate became predominant.

The Christian dominance of the Roman Empire beginning in the fourth century only maintained the restrictions. Constatine and his successors saw the destruction of the Temple as a symbol of the demise of Judaism and the growth of Christianity in its place During this entire time up until Jerusalem fell to the Moslems in 638 C E , it was the eastern wall of the Temple Mount that was the focus of Jews' attention, it being the wall directly opposite the Mount of Olives In addition to this the gate in the eastern wall was used by priests on ceremonial occasions

The Arab conquest of the region brought with it two major changes to the situation. First there was the construction of two mosques on the Temple Mount, it now being identified as the site where the prophet Mohammed had ascended to heaven when he travelled from Mecca on his wondrous horse Al-Buraq The second important change for the purpose of this discussion was that Jews were now allowed into the city They took up residence at the south-west corner of the Temple Mount in order to be near the



Plan of the Temple Mount

ruined Temple. During this period it appears that the Jews of Jerusalem and the pilgrims prayed at both the eastern (continuing the past tradition) and the western walls of the Temple Mount. There is at this particular time no sign that the western wall had any special sanctity.[13]

In the following centuries from the Crusader conquest of 1099 C.E. through successive rules of the Ayyub Moslems, the Tatars, and the Mameluke Sultans, the Jews continued to live in Jerusalem. It was during this time that reports of the Temple Mount's western wall being an important sacred site come to light. It would appear that the Western Wall's location inside the city and its easy accessibility from the Jewish quarter transformed it into a favored place of prayer. In this period of less than five hundred years up until 1516 with the conquest of Jerusalem by the Ottaman sultans, the Western Wall goes from being one of many holy sites to the prime sacred location. It is also during this period that the tradition of the Western Wall and its eternal Divine Presence become entwined in the collective folk consciousness of the Jewish people. The Divine Presence that was said to have never left the western wall of the Temple now attaches itself to the western wall of the Temple Mount. Therefore in order to magnify the Western Wall's importance, this new tradition ascribed to it a special sanctity dating from the time of the Temple and its subsequent destruction.

This notion of the Divine Presence attaching itself to the Western Wall is critical in its development as a symbol. It derives from the Salomonic Temple where at the western wall of the Holy of Holies (the most sanctified chamber of the Temple) the Ark of the Covenant was supposed to have been placed. Of the four walls of the Holy of Holies, according to Temple tradition, it was the western wall which was the most sacred, because it was the resting place of Divine Presence. There is also in tradition the story that at the time of the second Temple's destruction the only wall which remained standing (albeit temporarily) was this western wall of the Holy of Holies. Its salvation being seen as providential in nature. This identification of the Temple Mount's Western Wall with

the Temple's western wall is the root for the renaming at that time of one the ancient gates of the Temple Mount's Western Wall to "The Gate of the Divine Presence". This tradition permeated the consciousness of Jews at this time to the extent that it became self-evident as is witnessed by this account from an anonymous source written in 1537 C.E., "To the west is the Western Wall, an ancient structure from which the Divine Presence has never departed "[14]

The Ottoman rule commencing in 1516 C.E. saw a great influx of Jewish settlers in the Land of Israel. The Jews who were expelled from Christian Spain and Portugal were encouraged to come and settle, their administrative talents and economic and trade expertise were eagerly welcomed. The Jews were also welcomed as part of an Ottoman Empire population policy that tried to dilute any strong occupied nationality. But Suleiman "The Magnificent" was still not satisfied and to encourage still more Jews to come, he took an unprecedented step by granting official recognition to the Western Wall as a Jewish holy place. The court architect prepared it as a monumental site and Jews were granted legal rights regarding the Wall. The Sultan hoped for a loyal Jewish population to counterbalance the local Arabs and any possibilities of rebellion.

It was at this time that Jewish religious tradition became tightly woven around the Western Wall making it the foremost accepted Jewish holy site for both the community as a whole and for the individual Jew Its primacy was further bolstered at this time with a religious prohibition of entering the Temple Mount area. Jews during the Ottoman reign were not permitted to enter the Temple Mount, it being a Moslem domain, and as such derived their own internal religious and philosophical reason for refraining from the area, thereby solving the problem of how a Jew could renounce Jewish rights to the Temple Mount This was accomplished with the attitude that the Jews did not have to renounce their rights since it still spiritually belonged to them but because of the uncertainty regarding the exact location of the Holy of Holies, the whole Temple Mount area must be considered as a possible location for it thereby completely prohibiting entrance so as to

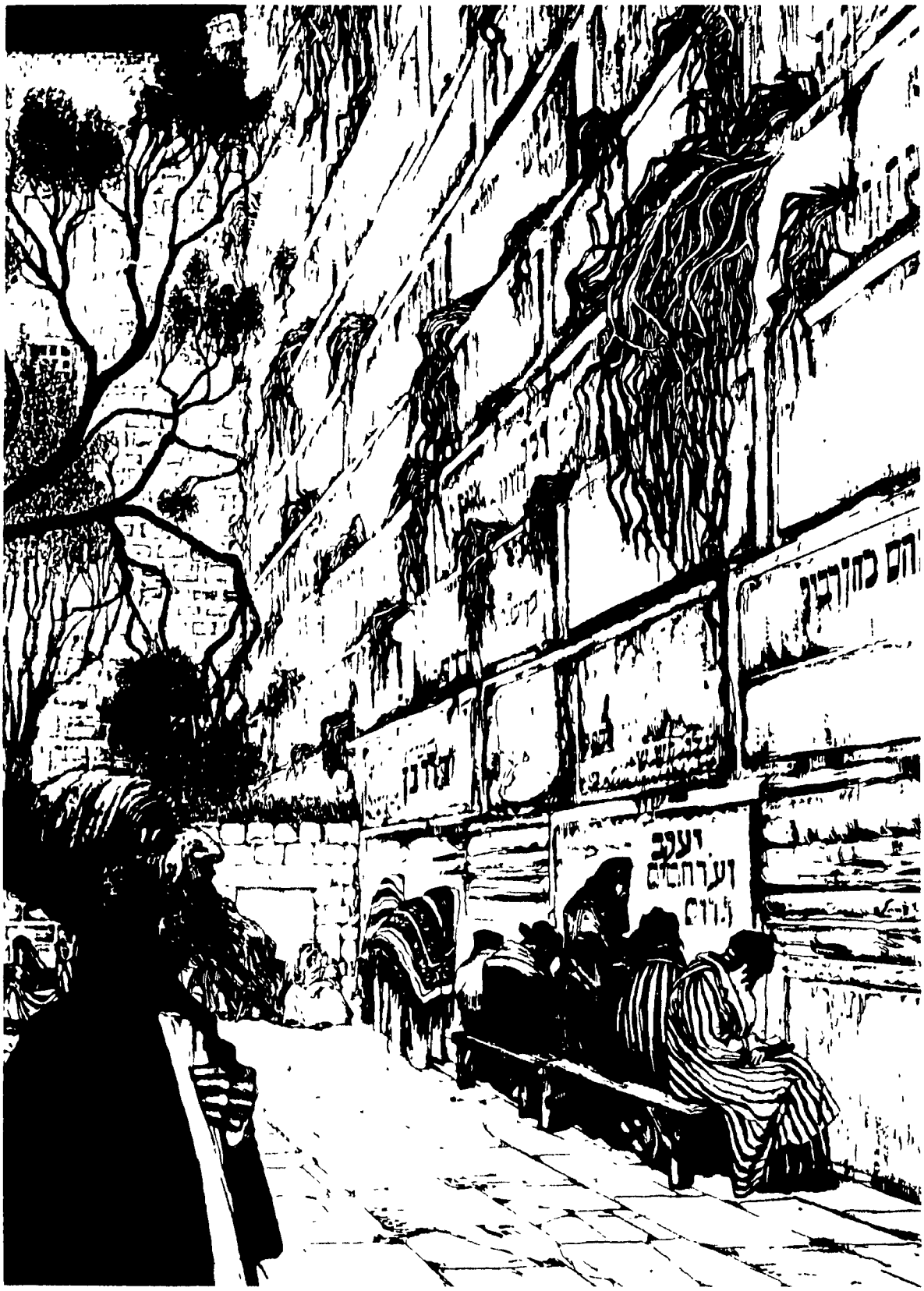
not defile it. Previous to this time Jews had entered the Temple Mount area when they were permitted by local authority.[15]

This new 'truth' essentially allowed the focus upon the Western Wall to come to the fore without any spiritual qualms. In the next four hundred years of Ottoman rule up until the beginning of the twentieth century the Western Wall continued to gain prominence. The small area which had been created in front of the twenty meter high wall continued to be reserved for Jewish prayer and to serve as the site for Jewish pilgrims throughout the Diaspora.

The Western Wall, standing as close as it did to the source of Jewish sanctity, the Temple, came to be seen through tradition as a temporary substitute for it. The Wall of destruction became permeated with the sense of a transitional architectural symbol, from past ancient glory, harkening back to the Davidic dynasty and Solomonic Temple, to future redemption in the Messianic era and the rebuilding of the Temple, representing the ultimate conjunction between heaven and earth where God's presence will be made manifest and man's primordial Edenic proximity to God will be restored.[16]

This sense of transition is perhaps best seen in a unique inscription faintly engraved into the stones of the Wall some time between fourth and eighth centuries. The unfinished work is a fragment from the Book of Isaiah which reads: "And you will see and your heart will rejoice and their bones like an herb." The text to which this inscription belongs is from the final chapters of Isaiah which deal with prophecies of consolation and dwell on the "end of days", the resurrection and on the good times to come for the people and Land of Israel. It reads:

Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad in her, all that love her. Rejoice a rejoicing with her, all that have mourned for her. So that you may suck and be satisfied from the breast of her consolations, so that you may suck and be delighted from the nipple of her glory. For thus says the Lord: I will extend peace to her like a river and the respect of the nations like a flowing stream, you shall suck, you shall be lifted on (her) side and dandled on (her) knees. Like a man whose mother comforts him, so will I comfort you and in Jerusalem



Etching of the Western Wall by Ephraim Lilien

shall you be comforted. And you will see and your heart will rejoice, and your bones like an herb will flourish ...[17]

In the heart of the Jew in exile and in the writing in this Wall of past glory is the message of salvation in Messianic hope; to live in anguish knowing that better days will come to them and to Jerusalem and that the Temple would rise again as a shining beacon in the city.

The ability for the Western Wall to occupy such an important place in Jewish religious philosophy as well as folk literature is in part due to the inherent nature of the Wall as both a ruin and a two dimensional, non-descript collection of stones which by their very nature are imageless It is a Wall of ethereal qualities, of a 'non architecture' The Western Wall displays the uniqueness of Jewish symbolism in which the spiritual is dominant over the corporeal, material destruction does not mean that the sanctity is destroyed. True holiness derives from the sources of eternity and the destruction of its symbol is only temporary and unable to affect eternal sanctity This notion of everlasting sanctity that came to be represented in the Western Wall is reinforced by the sages of the Mishnah who explain the following Biblical verse "And I will make your sanctuaries desolate" (Leviticus 26:31) as meaning that they still have the sanctity of sanctuaries even when they are desolate (Megillah 3:3). This sanctity and its ethereal nature is further discussed in midrashic material:

Rabbi Eleazer said. The Divine Presence never departed from the Temple, as it is written, 'For now I have chosen and sanctified this house so that My name shall be there for ever and My eyes and My heart will be there all the days' (II Chronicles 7 16) . Even when it (the Temple) is destroyed, it remains in its sanctity Even when it is destroyed, God does not leave it Rav Aha said 'The Divine Presence will never leave the Western Wall, as it is written, 'Behold, He (God) stands behind our wall' (Song of Songs 2 9) [18]

The nature of this transitional state as embodied in the Western Wall in part dates back to the destruction of the first Temple and the first exile at the hands of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzer The tradition that established the Tabernacle in the desert and Solomon's Temple was now broken. In 538 B.C.E. the Persians conquered Babylonia and the Persian King Cyrus allowed the former political and religious elite of Judah to return to Jerusalem after a forty nine year exile. But without political independance, without a Davidic king and with a precarious religious situation, the rebuilding of the Temple did not carry with it the same self-evident providential order of the past. The precise architecture of the new Temple was not of particular importance, it sufficed so long as it vaguely resembled its prototypes. The main concern was to reestablish the basic conditions of a renewed Temple cult. It is during this period that a new point of unification for the people emerges the Torah of Moses. The Torah, the written word of Moses, starts to take precedence over the Temple. This break is exemplified in the first century B C E. with the rebuilding of the Temple by King Herod of Judea Herod's action was meant to support his royal authority, but from the theological and political perspective of the dominant social forces in the country, it was of no major significance, so long as what was done in brick and mortar did not affect the people's exercise of piety The royal politics of the kingdom and the Law as embodied in the Torah were separated [19] This notion of living by and through the hermeneutical word of the Torah was reinforced by the second of the Ten Commandments written in both Exodus and Deuteronomy "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image Thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them..." (Deuteronomy 5 7,8,9)

This idea is bolstered into the consciousness of the people of Israel through two significant events that shaped the form of Judaism that persisted in the Western world from the time of Christ until the end of the eighteenth century when an 'other than Christian' politic emerged, namely one of democracy and secularism.

The first event, the destruction of the second Temple in 70 C.E. and the disheartening failed rebellion of Bar Kokhba in 135 C.E., produced the Mishnah, completed around the year 200 C.E. The Mishnah compiled by the sages set down the oral tradition of the Mosaic Torah. It systematically codified Jewish law and worked out a Judaism without a Temple and a Cult. The work produced a system of sanctification focused on the holiness of the priesthood and its festivals as well as a system of rules for the protection of that holiness. Therefore what we see in the aftermath of the destruction of the holy place and its cult is an ideology in which the sanctity of the holy people and its way of life would persist indelibly in Israel. Thus the nation was able to sustain itself beyond its physical reality.

The second major event was the political triumph of Christianity in the age of Constantine. With the ascendency of the faith of Christ and Christ as Messiah the principle components of Judaism were being challenged and called for a response. This response was to be found in the writing of the Talmud (a discussion on the Mishnah). The Mishnah payed no attention to speculation about the Messiah as an historical supernatural figure, or to the matter of the end of time. But at the end of the fourth century with the writing of the Talmud, a shift in historical thinking, from a focus on the Temple and its supernatural history to the people of Israel and its natural this worldly history, arose.[20] The Messiah myth was also transformed into an essentially ahistorical force. If the people wanted to reach the the end of time or history they had to rise above it in a meta historical approach to life. Therefore the Talmud presented an eschatological vision of the teleology of the Mishnah in response to the Christian question. For the people of Israel and Judaism, the Messiah will come only once everyone fully accepts the teachings of the Torah. When the whole would come together, forming the perfect creation as at the beginning of time, then would come the end of time, the Messiah and his age, the enduring Sabbath (counterpart to the Sabbath of creation).[21]

The paradox becomes clear, Israel acts to redeem itself through the opposite of self-determintion or by subjugating itself to the word of God. (The oral Torah, the Mishnah and the Talmud, along with the written Torah, the five books of Moses, were believed to be given to Moses at Sinai thereby assuring divine proximity to the newly written oral tradition of the written Torah) Israel's power lies in its negation of power or action, its destiny is in giving up all pretense at deciding its own destiny. The self evidence of this Judaism of the dual (oral and written) Torah essentially allowed for them to exist and persist within a state of becoming as a self-contained distinct society amongst the Christian west from the time of Constantine until the nineteenth century.

A means of integrating the nature of Man's imagination/creation within this eschatological vision is accomplished by the notion of 'Free Will'. Man's choices are fully within his capacity and within the context of his moral and ethical horizon of decision, although they take part in the ultimate framework of an integration and reconciliation of God's plan of Creation The word of God or the Torah providing the supreme guide for Man's efforts to return to his initial state of Being. The Jew is placed into the historical notion of 'Becoming', a dynamic movement towards the end of history or time and the arrival of the Messianic era and a return to Man's initial state of Being. In order that this occur Man must act firstly within himself and ultimately with all of Mankind. Therefore as opposed to the Hellenic cyclical notion of time, Hebraic time is of a linear historical path subject to alteration by human intervention. Paradoxically it expresses the idea of always approaching but never arriving (or u-topic).[22]

The essence of the utopian content of Messianic redemption focused in the Western Wall is preseved in all its paradoxical nature principally in the writings of the mystics The Zohar ties the arrival of the Messiah to impossible if not highly inconsistent conditions It tells that in the days of the Messiah man will no longer quarrel with his fellow man but with himself and that the Messianic world will be one without images, referring to some mode of Being that can't be pictorially represented. The magnitude of

this Messianic idea, corresponding directly to the endless powerlessness of Jewish history during the centuries of exile, came to be embedded throughout the Diaspora in the emerging symbol of the Western Wall. A life lived in deferment, in which nothing can be irrevocably accomplished, a life lived in a tension that never burns itself out.[23]

The ephemeral nature of the Wall and its rootedness in the above idea is further brought home in a Zoharic interpretation of the Hebrew word for the Wall, *Kotel*, which contains the letters *kaf, vav, tav,* and *lamed. Tav* and *lamed* together form the word *Tel* or mound or hill, while *kaf* and *vav* together have the equivalent numerical value to the letters in the Divine name or tetragrammaton. Thus the Divine presence of the Wall as a focal point toward which all turn is made implicit in its nomenclature.[24]

The development of the Western Wall's symbolization as a prime element of transition, shown above, embodying the ability to live within a transitional space or a perpetual state of becoming, lends a sense of context to the medieval notion of Golem making seen in the previous chapter. This notion being that the creation of the Golem was perceived as an end in itself and not a means toward an end, as well as an affirmation of Man and his creative potential within the larger framework of God's divine plan. Essentially displaying the ability to live creatively within a theocentric, spiritual structure and perpetual state of becoming. The context of the transformation of the Golem legend into its modern manifestation is, as well, echoed by the further development of the symbol of the Western Wall in all its implications.

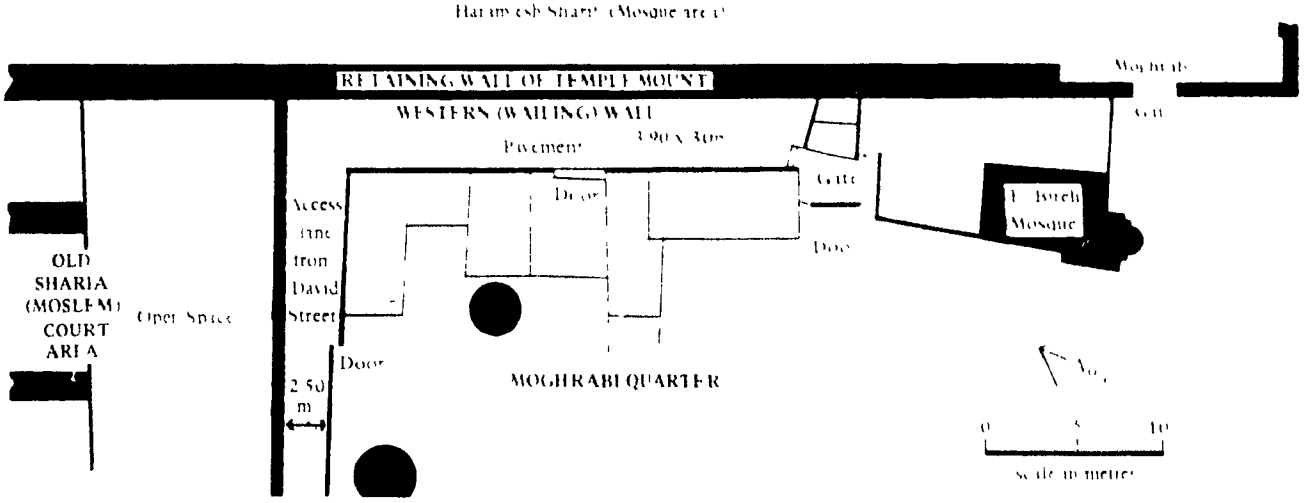
Transformation in Ideology

In the second half of the nineteenth century, with the start of nationalistic stirrings among European Jews, born out of the epistomological transformations ushered in post French Revolution, the Western Wall took on a new dimension. The process of democracy and the equality of rights for all mankind, that occured at the turn of the

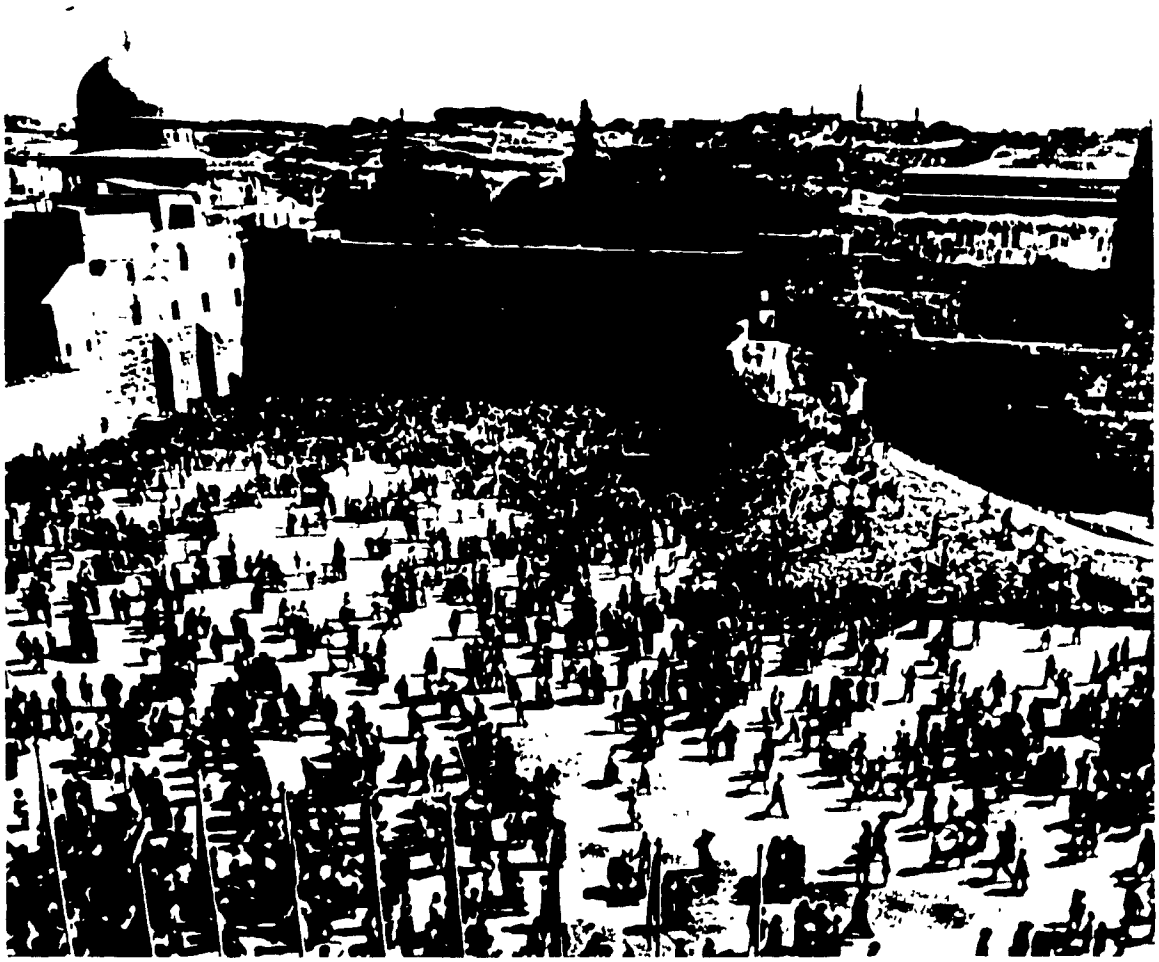
eighteenth century would eventually include the emancipation of Jews (i.e. given the right to citizenship) and in its wake threaten the relative stability the Jew previously possessed in social and political life.

The project of democracy ushered in through the Enlightenment opposed the theological and political claims of Christianity and essentially dethroned it. This new rationalism aimed at nothing short of the perfection of humanity through reason. The Jews, previously a pariah community within Christianity, could in theory be an equal citizen like everyone else and many began to accept these ideals. In the process though, their inherent status of a 'protected' social entity isolated from the body politic would be lost forever. The Jew/Citizen was able to rise politically and socially within this modern body politic of the nation-state. But toward the end of the nineteenth century with the rise of imperialism and the decline of the nation-state western Jewry essentially lost its preferential position within the nation-state. Their useless wealth and lack of power within a strife-ridden, power-unbalanced Europe lead to contempt and anti-semitism. The rise of imperialism lead as well to the racism that engulfed the Jews who still retained their distinctness if only formally, but as with the color of one's skin, it was enough to be considered racially inferior.[25]

The reciprocal result of this anti-semitism was Zionism, the movement towards self or auto-emancipation and it is at this time that, in addition to its religious significance, the Western Wall also became a symbol of nationalistic aspirations. Artistic representations of the Western Wall begin to appear on documents acknowledging aid and contribution to the Land of Israel and the Zionist campaign. The Wall provided the most powerful symbol for the modern rational movement of Zionism to ground itself within a justifiable historic framework, a grounding that was essential to its claims. Prior to these nationalistic desires the Western Wall had only been a motif on religious objects, primarily those of the festivals, but with Zionist inclinations the Western Wall acquired a secular Jewish significance.[26]



Plan of Western Wall area before 1967



View of piazza at the Western Wall soon after the Six-day war and the demolition of the Moghrabi Quarter

The very real complex of religious and secular strains imparted to the Western Wall have only in recent years been further infected and confounded by the substantial events in Jewish and world history: the systematic destruction of European Jewry and the subsequent response in the creation of the state of Israel. Israel, born as a twentieth century nation-state, sought to ground itself within an historical framework, in many ways justifying itself theologically. It was seen as a rebirth of a society and Zionism espoused a 'myth of mission' in a return to the land of Israel. But up untill 1967, Zionism constituted only one choice among many for Jews throughout the world. On June 9, 1967 the Zionist vision was solidified when, in the aftermath of the remarkable 6-Day War, the people of Israel celebrated the return to a unified Jerusalem and the newly liberated ancient Western Wall of the Temple Mount. This event of a consciously perceived restoration and redemption placed new significance on the 'incomprehensible' extermination of European Jewry, over one third of the world Jewish population. It became the Holocaust and not just one malaise of humanity amongst many others. The complete negation and nihilsm of a Holocaust or Apocalypse could not instinctively be put forth without its corollary of affirmation in redemption or the persistance of humanity (i e. the perception of the Jews returning to their ancient holy land and Jerusalem, the seat of the Temple) Thus the restorative/redemptive symbol of the liberated Western Wall, very much a part of the collective conscious throughout the Jewish diaspora, allowed for the myth of Holocaust and Redemption to gain ascendancy This notion of Holocaust and Redemption provided a self-evident truth upon which the foundations of a modern democratic society could be built [27]

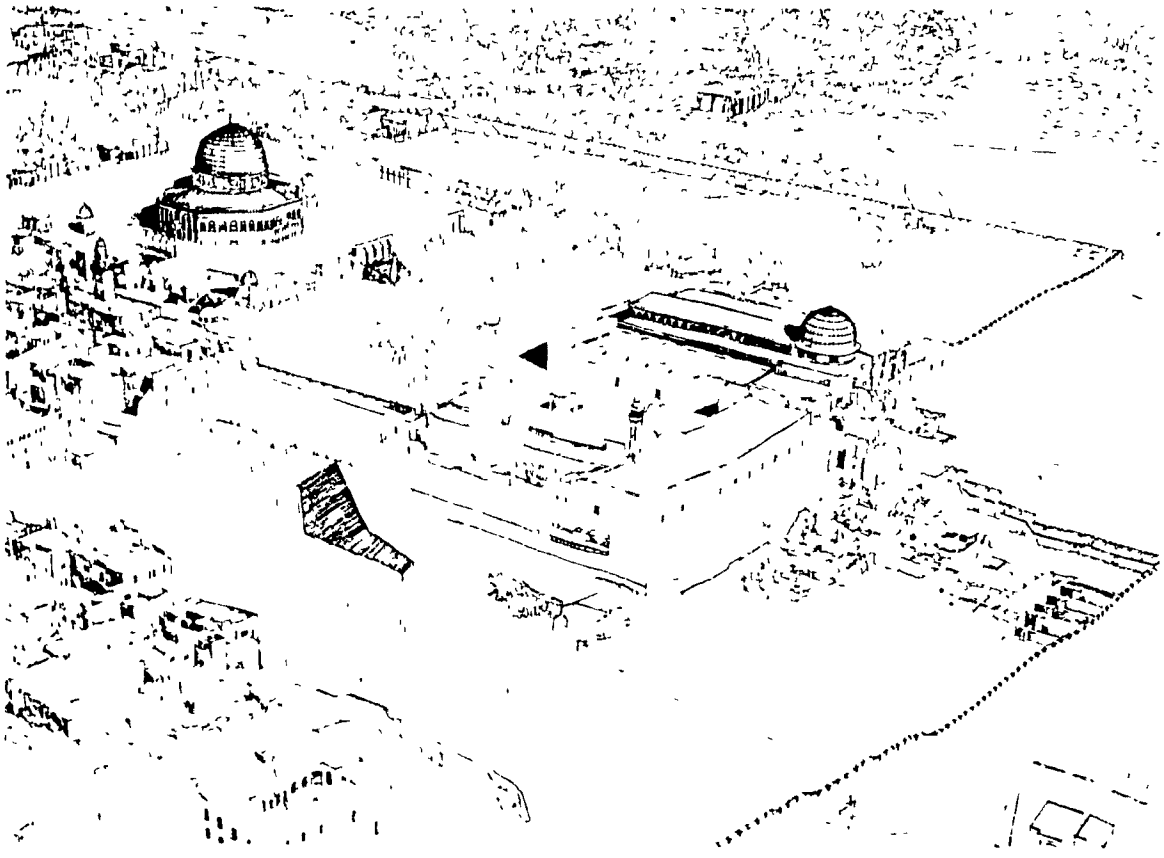
In this respect the idea of Zionism and the state of Israel can be seen as political permutations of the modern Golem legend. In fact, Chayim Bloch in his seminal version of the Golem legend foreshadows this idea when recounts the moral underlying his book. He notes that he retells the stories of the Golem legend so that "future generations might know that God does not desert His people, Israel, and that, just when their misery is at its

worst, help is at hand."[28] In "Psychohistory of Zionism" Jay Gonen observes that like the Golem, Israel was created as a means of protecting the physical safety of the Jews through the use of physical power. Even H. Leivick, who eloquently espouses the notion of the Golem as a false messiah in his play "The Golem: A Dramatic Poem in Eight Scenes", is taken by this modern version of Holocaust and active redemption. Leivick after having experienced the Holocaust writes his last drama, "In the Days of Job" (completed in 1953) and comes out of a darkness of doubt into a reinvigorated faith. He saw that after the deluge of blood a rainbow was appearing in the heavens in the creation of the state of Israel.[29] But this new Zionistic Messiah, as Gonen reminds us, must be viewed with an air of suspicion in light of its resemblance to the modern Golem legend. Zionism could destroy that which it wanted to protect, its victory could spell defeat and its 'messianic fulfillment' could mean the end of the Jewish people.[30]

The myriad of forces acting in conjunction or opposition upon and within the Western Wall have over time developed into what is the contemporary situation of the Western Wall today in all its complexities and inherent ambiguities. Unquestioned though in all this is the religious, political and social importance of the Wall as a self evident living, interactive phenomenon. It is an historical fragment functioning in a modern society as the locus of Jewish identity.

The discourse that has evolved over time to this day between both the complementary and conflicting forces acting within the Western Wall, in many ways presents some of the paradoxes confronting contemporary Western culture. In particular the question of action or creation in a technological utopic orientated society and the possible moral and ethical ground upon which such action can be based. The inherent danger of man's individual creative power is made readily manifest in the dialogue that has revolved around the Western Wall and the tainted visions of its intentionality and essence. Contaminated by Messianic prophecies (restorative and redemptive), utopian impulses, nationalistic and traditional aims, as well as specific current events, a variety of

Nineteenth century photograph of the Western Wall



Aerial perspective of the Wall area at present

groups have actively sought the rebuilding and rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem The intent is that the Messianic era, with all its connotations, can be hastened through man's proscriptive action in fulfilling propheey.[31] As the location where the three great monotheistic religions converge and intersect as no other place on earth, bringing with them their particular passions and zeal, the area's dynamic importance cannot be overstated.[32] Equally the potential danger, not only physically but more so ethically and morally, cannot be overemphasized when persons are motivated by religious, political, and traditional themes blurred by modern rationalism and the utopic idea of progress and the anthropocentric task of humanity perfecting itself.

The Messianic idea is inextricably linked with Jewish history and as such the horizon of Redemption has concentrated in itself the historical outlook of Judaism It is therefore easy to comprehend the Messianic overtones that have accompanied the rational modern Jewish readiness for irrevocable action in the concrete realm when it set out on the utopian return to Zion. Born out of the dramatic events of the past century and a half and fully within the modern framework that informs our technological making, this active utopian return is bound to history itself and not to meta-history. It is not informed by hopes but by deeds. The consequence of this venture into the concrete realm under distorted intentions which have become fully self-evident may prove to be potentially catastrophic, particularly for Jewish history.[33]

Therefore a discovery or awakening of the Western Wall's true essence (exile and alienation; incompleteness and imperfection, transition and atemporality, the perpetual state of becoming) is imperative and a means of reconciling this essence within its modern predicament.

Thus the question must be asked whether a viable synthesis is possible between apparently antagonistic principles? Can they coexist in a positive restorative manner, one informing the other? Does a living fragment of the past, imbued by a variety of conflicting and complimentary forces, have the ability to speak of essences, to

communicate a pre-reflective sense of meaning linked to tradition? Can a political icon of a modern nation state embody a trans-historical reality and is it possible to see within these stones of the Western Wall not only the incongrueties of a modern situation but a symbol of the possibility of action in the concrete realm that is truly affirmative and in the process provide a suitable locus of Architecture in contemporary society?

An interesting postscript to these questions and prelude to the following chapter is provided by Franz Kafka and his attitude on Zionism and the coming of the Messiah. In a paradox entitled "The Coming of The Messiah" Kafka echoes many of the sentiments seen in the Zoharic interpretations on the subject noted above. In this respect he shows an appreciation for the importance of an orthodoxed point of view despite his essentially secular existance It is probable that precisely because of his situation he displays an awareness for this viewpoint (see chapter 4). Kafka writes:

> The Messiah will come as soon as the most unbridled individualism of faith becomes possible - when there is no one to destroy this possibility and no one to suffer its destruction ... The Messiah will come only when he is no longer necessary, he will come only on the day after his arrival; he will come, not on the last day, but on the very last [34]

In light of this view it is not surprising that he exhibits profound reservations concerning Zionism. This was probably due to his suspicion that the normalization of the Jews in a national state would endanger exactly that which he regarded as the most valuable Jewish quality, found above all among East European Jews: a particular kind of religiousness and spirituality, something that was unreal, but unreal for once in Kafka's lexicon, that is meant in a positive sense [35] Kafka shows an adept awareness in relation to these questions which, as we shall see, are directly informed by his situation and reflected in his literary work But what is unknown, and left solely to speculation, is whether Kafka's viewpoint would have been altered if he had witnessed and survived the Holocaust.

Notes

1. H. Leivick was the pen name for Leivick Halper who used the pen name after a dispute with another established Yiddish writer (Moyshe Leyb Hapern) who felt the two might be confused

2. H. Leivick, The Golem transl. Joseph C. Landis in Great Jewish Plays (New York Avon,1972), pp. 277, 278.

3. Ibid., p. 287.

4. Ibid., p. 288.

5. Ibid , p. 350.

6. Ibid., p. 350.

7. Ibid., p. 221 in introduction by Joseph C Landis.

8. Abraham Rothberg, The Sword of the Golem (New York McCall Publishing, 1970), p 109

9. Ibid., p. 198.

10. Ibid., p. 221, 222

11. Moshe Idel, Golem (Albany: State University ofNew York Press, 1990), pp 255, 256

12. Joan Comay, The Temple of Jerusalem (New York Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), pp 35-177.

13. Meir Ben-Dov, Mordachai Naor, Zeev Aner, The Western Wall, transl. R Posner (Israel. Ministry of Defence Publishing House, 1983), pp. 11-33

14. Quoted in Ben-Dov, Ibid , p 68

15. Ibid., pp. 33-35.

16. Stanley Tigerman, The Architecture of Exile (New York: Rizzola International Press, 1988), pp. 9-47.

17. Isaiah 66. 10-14

18. Quoted in Ben-Dov, Op. Cit., p 83

19. See Robert Jan van Pelt, "Israel frente a Judaʾ los templos de Jerusalem en una perspective actual" chapter Seven in Dios Arquitecto: Juan Bautista Villalpando y el Templo de Salomon, ed Juan Antonio Ramirez (Madrid. Ediciones Siruela, 1990), pp 121ff

20. Jacob Neusner, Death and Birth of Judaism (New York Basic Books, 1987), pp 33 75

21. Jacob Neusner, Messiah in Context (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1984), pp 11-15

22. Richard Kearney, The Wake of Imagination (Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 37-78.

23. Gershom Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism, transl Michael Meyer (New York Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 33-35.

24. Menahem Kasher, The Western Wall, transl. C. Wengrov (New York: Judaica Press, 1972), pp. 15-17.

25. Hannah Arendt, "Antisemitism" part One The Origins of Totalitarianism (New York: HBJ Book, 1951), pp 3-16

26 Ben-Dov, Op. Cit., pp 35-37.

27 Jacob Neusner, Death and Birth of Judaism (New York. Basic Books, 1987), pp. 225-285.

28 Chayim Bloch, The Golem, transl H Schneiderman (Vienna. Vernay, 1925), p. 216.

29 Sol Liptzin, The Flowering of Yiddish Literature (New York Thomas Yoseloff, 1963), pp. 219-236

30 Jay Gonen, A Psychohistory of Zionism (New York· Mason/Charter, 1975), pp. 317-322.

31. To this end a number of concrete anticipatory acts have been undertaken: A three ton cornerstone for the new temple has been carved without the use of metal chisels as per Biblical instructions; a yeshiva in the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem was established in the early 1980's to train students in the rites prescribed for priests for service in the Temple, other groups are studying the rituals of the Temple as well as the manufacturing of priestly garments, at one point the "guards of honour" custom for the Temple Mount was reestablished in which Levites used to stand guard in twenty-one places around the Temple Mount The re-institution of this ancient procedure was believed to bring the redemption and the Messiah nearer Even more important and concrete than these acts have been the few attempts, since 1967, to destroy the Islamic shrines that have occupied the Temple Mount precinct since the beginning of the eighth century C E· and under whose control the Temple Mount area is at present. The various attempts were perpetrated by a Jewish-Christian partnership which sought to clear the way physically for the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem and with it, according to prophecy, the coming of the Messianic Age or the second coming of Christ

32 The large rock outcropping on the Temple Mount (over which the Dome of the Rock is constructed) is believed to be standing on the exact spot where Abraham came to sacrifice his son Isaac; where Jacob had his famous dream, where Salomon's as well as the Zerubabbel/Herodian Temple stood; where Jesus taught and threw moneychangers out of the Temple and from where Mohammed ascended through the seven Heavens into the presence of Allah.

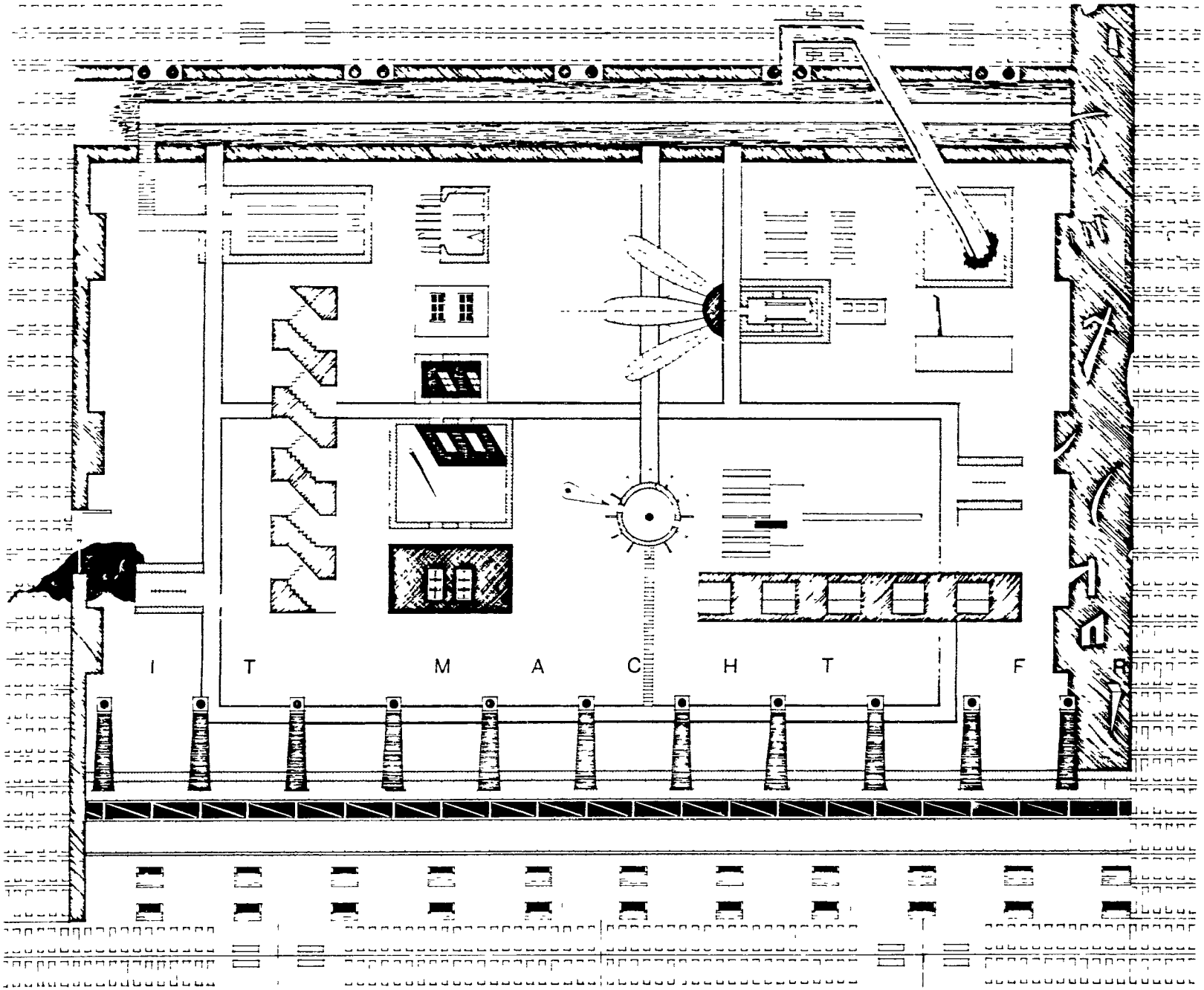
33 Scholem, Op. Cit., pp 35, 36

34 Franz Kafka, "The Coming of the Messiah" in Parables and Paradoxes, ed. Nahum Glatzer (New York Schocken Books, 1958), p 81.

35 Erich Heller, Franz Kafka (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 68, 69.

Abraham eventually arrived at the plant located in an outlying suburban area He was both wary and in fear of the dream of the night before he awoke Regardless, he took up his position amongst his co-workers and assumed his task Abraham's tardiness, resulting from his situation, went to his surprise largely unnoticed, excepting of course, to his own personal scrutiny But, expecting more of himself in relation to the other, Abraham felt he must correct this alienating wrong immediately

To restore what was, to relieve his conscience, and alleviate this situation of solitude, Abraham rose five flights of stairs to the level of upper management and his immediate supervisor The air grew heavier and more oppressive with each step he took, his body quickly grew saturated from his own internal fluids The upper level was crowded with men and women all seemingly wearing the same attractive uniform with ever so slight variations in individuality, none of whom so much as flinched upon encountering Abraham and his now ungainly stature Losing his orientation amongst this swarm, Abraham passionately pleaded for recognition, yelling out over and over for some sort of direction "You mustn't call attention to yourself", a uniform told him, "then you will be noticed" continued another, "It's the only way" a third one completed Abraham went on, penetrating deeper and deeper into the depths of perspectival corridors, narrow winding wooden staircases revealing little of their destination, and passageways filled with others like Abraham, waiting Light filtered through high little skylights, defining a vertebrae of plaster-covered roof beams Large, lofty, dark rooms, lit only by windows looking out onto an air shaft, spotted the ceaseless hallways he navigated and renavigated Abraham was within the bowels of a Golem (perhaps his own) which had inherently sought to destroy its maker Alienated, helpless, the recesses of the vast, impervious labyrinth engulfed him Obsessed with a quest he could no longer remember yet he alone could perform, Abraham drifted in and out of consciousness Stifling air, implosion, Abraham stumbled into a shattered mirror It reflected a creature he could not name, precariously balancing on all fours Abraham collapsed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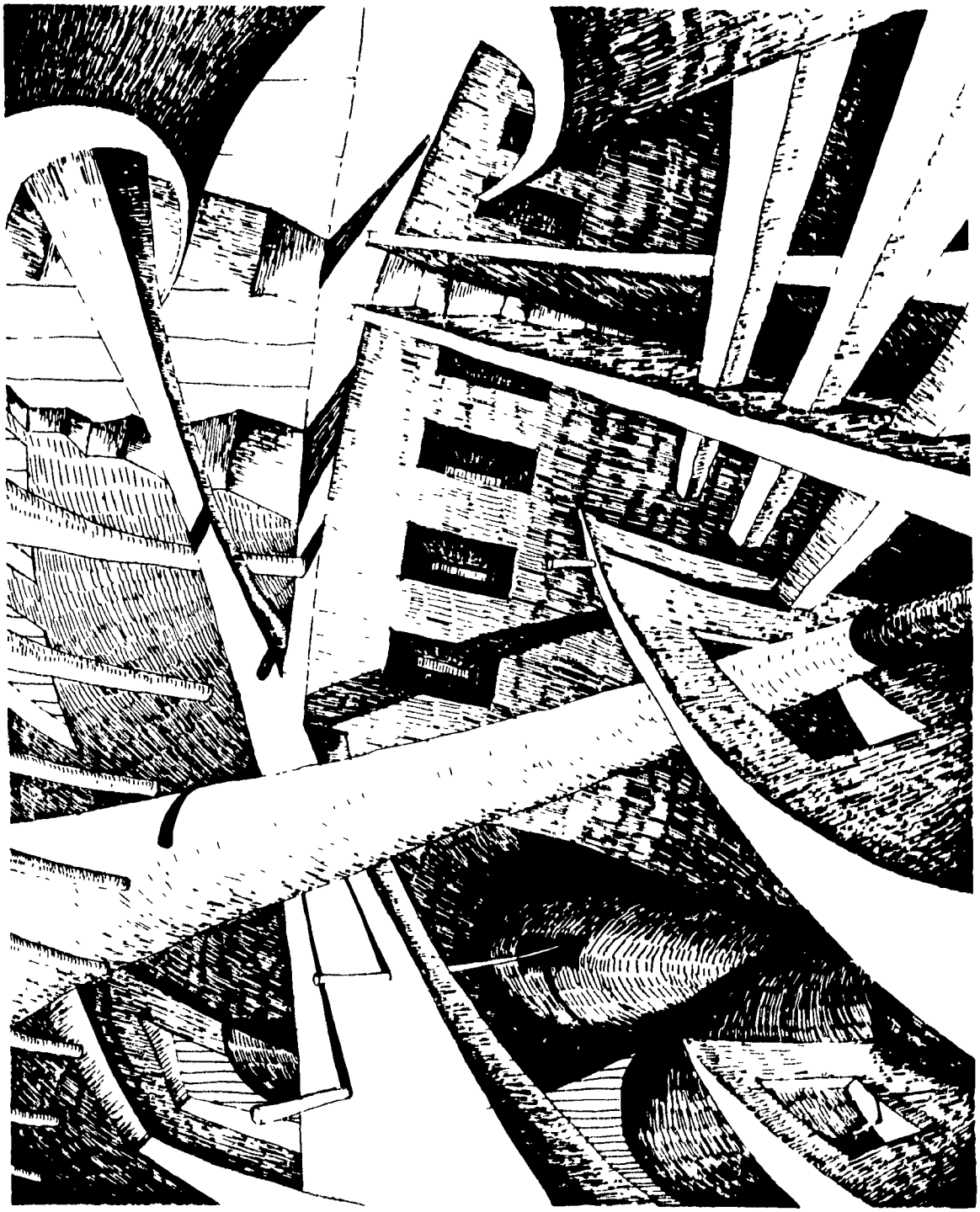
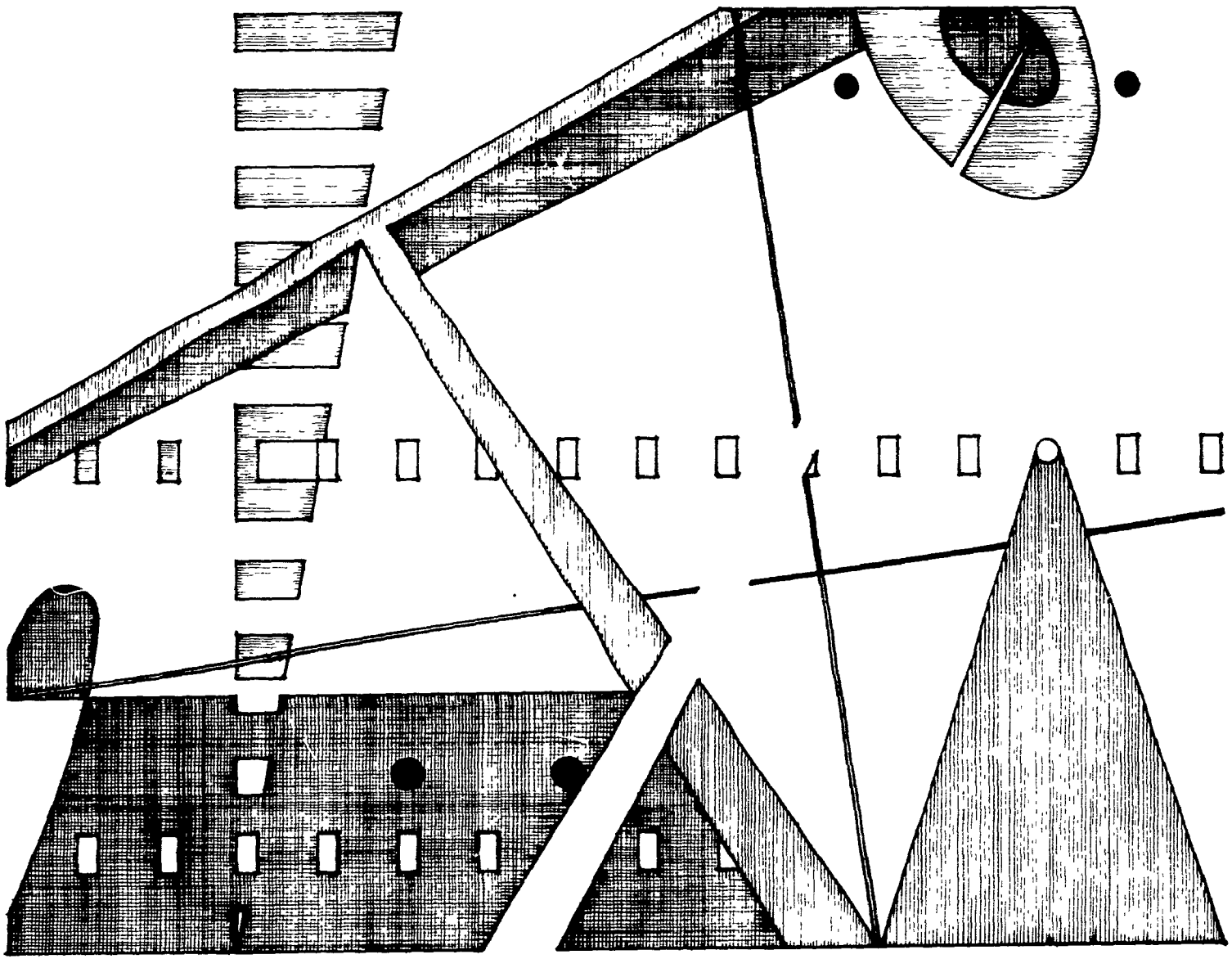




4. THE LITERATURE OF FRANZ KAFKA

A Vision of Reality

The literary work of Franz Kafka (1883 - 1924) brings to light the horrors of the phenomenon of action as negation and the resultant implications of this phenomenon. In this respect his work offers one of the most chilling indirect commentaries on the legend of the Golem in a modern society. Kafka is in essence pushing the contemporary notion of the Golem legend to its ultimate conclusion, first with the indistinguishability between the operator and his creation, the vast machinery of society that Kafka portrays consumes its inhabitants (those that created it) into one self-perpetuating homogenous whole. And then finally the death of the operator (humanity) at the hand of his creation, the misfortune of most of Kafka's protagonists. The Golem, or the society that mankind has created, is seen as an alienating force between man and his enviroment or truer self. It is this perceived irremediable breach between subject and world, man's alienation from his enviroment, so thematic in Kafka's work in all its ramifications, that will provide the focus for this discussion. It can only be through a critical awareness and understanding of such a situation that any ethical ground upon which to act affirmatively can be posited, an

ethical ground for creation which effectively deconstructs the commentary that Kafka himself puts forth in his literary work.

Franz Kafka presents us with a distortion. A distortion of the world which is needed in order to make visible the madness which so often appears and passes as normal. But this distorted world is treated as normal thus conveying an even more tortured view that madness itself isn't even recognized. Kafka creates an experimental situation in which modern man is placed. The situation distorts nature and thereby distorts the object (modern man). Yet the result is a closer approximation to the truth and a deeper insight into reality. Kafka's use of distortion is not meant to obscure his meaning but to make it clearer. The reader can contemplate without the prejudice that would normally be placed on an undistorted situation. Kafka removes us from reality in order to gain access to it in a manner that makes impartial judgement possible.[1]

The subject in Kafka's work is therefore alienated from the world in order that we may get to know him better. This alienation of Kafka's subject is very much the condition of modern man and his world. It is an alienation that empty habit and uniformity cause him to be oblivious to. In this alienated world, nature becomes "nature morte" and man is forced into performing the function of things where man himself effectively becomes a thing, non-human or simply an automaton, in many ways echoing some of the commentaries on the contemporary implications of Golem making seen in chapter 2.

An astonishing aspect of Franz Kafka's work is not so much the distortion of things and events or the alienation of man but how his characters react to them as they would to normal situations with little or no emotion. The distorted or grotesque is treated as everyday normality. Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning as a gigantic beetle in Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and see nothing surprising about his fate. His concerns lie in the mundane activities of his life and job as a travelling salesman. His terror is not having turned into a repulsive animal but having overslept and missed his train. Kafka writes:

And he looked over at the alarm clock, which was ticking on the chest of drawers. "God Almighty!" he thought. It was six-thirty, the hands were quietly moving forward, it was actually just the half hour, it was already near a quarter to. Could it be that the alarm hadn't gone off? You could see from the bed that it was set correctly for four o'clock. The next train left at seven o'clock, to make it, he would have to hurry like a madman, . . and he himself didn't feel especially fresh and ready to march around. And even if he did make the train, he could not avoid getting it from the boss, because the messenger boy had been waiting at the five-o'clock train and would have long ago reported his not showing up. What if he were to say he was sick?[2]

The creation Kafka puts forward is a hybrid product of sanity and insanity, homeliness and horror. It is a normalcy of the grotesque.

Kafka achieves in this incongruous ensemble a truer description of reality although it appears highly implausible. It is a reality in which the world of duty and the private world have little in common but are able to merge without conflict into one world. The full impact of this idea wouldn't be completely felt until after Kafka's death when the industrialized mass-murderer and the comfortable family man were able to be one and the same individual. Hannah Arendt writes on Adolf Eichmann, the man known to have been in charge of implementing the 'Final Solution'[3] to the problem of the Jewish question, "it would have been very comforting indeed to believe that Eichmann was a monster. The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him and that many were neither perverted nor sadistic that they were and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal."[4] Hans Frank who administered the Final Solution was an avid connoisseur of Mozart and Bach, while Eichmann himself had claimed that he had always observed Kant's categorical imperative. Arendt goes on to declare that Eichmann, "who is in actual fact 'hostis generis humani' was unable to discern his wrong doing from the moral standards of normality."[5] The two had merged easily within the realm of logic and reason.

But Kafka's images go beyond the mere representation of reality. Many of his images are conceived of as being doubly removed from reality. They are images of images. The different degrees of reality are mixed and the resulting confusion is potentially horrifying. The real and unreal are confused to the point that neither is discernible. Kafka does this by painting his image of an image with scrupulous regard for detail such that a simultaneous sense of unreality and precision is felt. There is a shock of being exposed to something more real than representation. Kafka's concern is to undermine the apparently firm structure of those things we unthinkingly accept as real or unreal. This revision demands that we learn to see things anew and to this end Kafka has devised a new technique of literary vision.[6] A vision which exposes reality to its bare essence, unencumbered by the baggage which clouds insight and access.

Alienation as Endemic

The alienation displayed in Kafka's work was not just an intuitive sense on the condition of man but very much part of Kafka's own lived experience. He was by destiny and nature an alien as a Jew, as a non-practicing Jew and as a Jew not quite among the bourgeois West European Jews (from whom he descended and whose cultural ethos was for him a false mode of existence) nor among the East European Jews who really did live as a nation with unity and integrity, but nonetheless as a nation unto themselves. Houston Chamberlain, a staunch German patriot and historian identifies in his "The Foundation of the Nineteenth Century" published in 1899, the nineteenth century as the "Jewish Age" and the Jews as an alien people. He writes that:

> This alien people has become precisely in the course of the nineteenth century disproportionately important and in many spheres actually dominant constituants of our life. . The Indo-European moved by ideal motives, opened the gates in friendship. The Jew rushed in like an enemy, stormed all positions and planted

the flag of his, to us, alien nature - I will not say on the ruins, but on the breach of our genuine individuality.[7]

Chamberlain continues with a warning of a "Jewish conspiracy" through purity of race to overrun Europe. His view of Jews as an infection with the only possible cure being a rise in the Teutonic races (the other perceived racially conscious group to arise from the collapse of the Greco-Roman civilization) would of course find a well prepared niche in Hitler's world view and the Third Riech.

Kafka's inherent alienation as a Jew finds an interesting and relevant expression in Jean-Francois Lyotard's generic notion of the alien or forgotten in his use of the term, "the jews" ("Heidegger and "the jews""). The Jew pushed to the idea of "the jews" would be a notion that informs Kafka's writings and gives it its broader relevance and powerful impact Lyotard's use of the term "the jews" derives from a specific critical understanding of this idea. He writes:

I use the lower case to indicate that I am not thinking of a nation I make it plural to signify that it is neither a figure nor a political (Zionism), religious (Judaism), or philosophical (Jewish philosophy) subject that I put forward under this name I use quotation marks to avoid confusing these "jews" with the real Jews What is most real about real Jews is that Europe, in any case, does not know what to do with them Christians demand their conversion; monarchs expel them; republics assimilate them, Nazis exterminate them. "The jews" are the object of a dismissal with which Jews, in particular, are afflicted in reality They are that population of souls to which Kafka's writings, for example, have given shelter only to better expose them to their condition as hostages[8]

Kafka gives expression to this fundamental and constitutive (non)place of "the jews," at the same time within, on the margins of, and radically excluded from Western thought He discloses that "the jews" are the debt Western thought rarely acknowledges and can never repay. He brings to the fore the ethical demand associated with the name "the jews", brought to light by their repeated dismissal and alienation[9]

Kafka was as well a German-speaking Czech, not quite at home among the Czechs nor as a German-speaking Jew at home with the Bohemian Germans. As a writer he was apart from his insurance office colleagues and personally, he resigned himself to becoming a permanent bachelor despite the potential loss of a sense of security and its consequences that he was fully aware of. But most importantly Kafka was an alien within his own family. A family dominated by his overbearing, businessman father, whose approbation Franz continually struggled to win. A family, amongst whom he lived a life of estrangement, for 33 years, in a freezing solitude he called 'Russian'. He actually writes in a letter that in his family he is more estranged than a stranger.

The very proof of Being which Descartes puts forward in his second meditation, "I am, I exist, is necessarily true every time that I pronounce it or conceive it in my mind,"[10] which would form part of the seed for the modern condition, ceases to be valid in Kafka or his work. It has in fact been inverted to the extent that "the self" is now final proof of one's own non existence (in a sense decrying the fate of modernity). This being that "the self" Kafka discovers is an "alien" self, a stranger with no raison d'être in this world and therefore no being. What Kafka describes is not so much what is, a world to which the individual belongs, but the state of not-belonging or of not being. His central character K is just sufficiently in the world to realize how deeply he is excluded from it. The commonplace temporal world has become infinitely remote, inaccessible and mysterious. Kafka gives the experience of alienation, through the undermining of Descartes' maxim, its most powerful formulation, an intensity which would almost suggest religious vision.[11] Kafka's situation is only exacerbated through technology and its ability to make man unknowable, even to himself.[12] The potential horror of Golem making and its implication of man's alienation from the world and subsequently from himself (discussed in chapter 2) come to fruition in Kafka's work and consequently beyond.

The inherent separateness of the characters' being is continually plagued by a sense of guilt. A guilt that "is never to be doubted" and which forms "the guiding principle" that rules the legal system in which judge and executioner are one and the same person. Kafka suggests a doctrine of original sin, of universal guilt, although a doctrine in which the major component, God, is very much in doubt. Original sin without a god to sin against. Their souls cast into an inscribed mold in which the scribe is no longer felt to exist. It is a negative, inescapable scenario where sin and guilt more often than not appear to lie not in any kind of doing, but simply in being, being a separate individual.[13]

Kafka's alienated central characters, nonetheless, attempt to gain access to this world. Their efforts are of course destined to fail. In the case of K. in Kafka's "The Trial" this failure leads to death. Kafka's hero cannot penetrate this world for he does not belong there. The more he tries to gain access to it the deeper his exclusion is felt and closer he comes to his death or ultimate form of exclusion. He stands out as an absolute non-entity. He is so estranged from reality that he is in the hopelessly pathetic position of being a hero without a world. The congruence of subject and world do not exist in the experience of K.

If a man is alienated and does not know where he belongs he is unable to know to whom he is bound in duty or equally where his interest lies. This will inevitably develop into a moral panic. Furthermore, if a man does not know who he is morally obliged to help then he will not know upon whom he can rely. This ensuing moral dilemma is circuitous and can be summarized as follows. Kafka's heroes are victims of an endemic alienation or a kind of original sin. The paradise from which they have fallen and been banished was in their case the world. Man's exclusion from the world (or equally from a particular social or ethnic group) applies to space and time. The protagonist ceases to share the world of other people and their destiny. As a result of his situation the individual loses sight of where his obligations lie. This ignorance gives rise to a bad conscience such that he feels he has no rights. If he has no rights he is continually in the

wrong with no moral or ethical structure upon which to base positive affirmative action. Being in this situation intensifies his moral anguish and subsequently places him further outside the world. He is alienated and comes full circle in this vicious cycle of moral torture. Kafka's protagonist seeks not liberation from, but entry into the security of the world.[14] K. and equally Kafka strive for a sense of Belonging.

This moral theology for Kafka provides the foundation for two essential and related themes in his work. The phenomenon of time-paralysis and the inversion of cause and effect which can occur as a result of it. Kafka, particularly in "The Trial," understood how this bizarre inversion of cause and effect, crime and punishment, could become possible. He takes the notion of historical relativism in which events in history are hermeneutically disconnected and applies this relativistic logic to the understanding of the momentary and the immediate. The traditional concepts of development and progression, which derived particularly from the combined effect of Judeo-Christian eschatology mixed with the ideals of the French Revolution, and which assign to the action and response a logical, rational, sequential order, no longer apply to history nor to the story of our own lives. Through this relativist historiography, the heroes' life in Kafka's narrative becomes the disjointed configuration of meaningless rituals and futile repetition of the alien.[15] Where there is only repetition there is no progression in time. Thus time is frozen and the situations in Kafka's novels, after the initial position is put forward, are frozen images. In fact, the endings if they exist at all, appear to be placed at a fortuitous point in the novel. After the initial act the novel seems to move in a circle such that all action is perceived as futile and negative. The novel appears to be a series of fragments. Kafka's hero, condemned to a life of repeated failures is imprisoned. But this is a negative prison such that K. in "The Trial" does not feel "shut in" but "shut out." The characters purpose is not to break out, but to break in, into the world.[16]

Kafka's understanding of the nature of human activity in relativist time leads to a paralysis of time that is so complete that he can, with an appearance of perfect

naturalness, reverse the sequence of cause and effect "The Trial" commences, "Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K , for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning "[17] K is accused of a crime which is never substantiated let alone revealed, but K is nonetheless drawn into guilt (and the accompanying alienation with its moral dilemma described above) K is not allowed to know the content of the charge and is therefore " condemned not only in innocence but also in ignorance "[18] The essence of jurisprudence in relativist time The attempt of K to negotiate his life in this realm results in his execution The crime (cause) is placed after the punishment (effect) and our sense of time is completely subverted A punishment which precedes guilt is also taken as evidence of guilt, expressing the notion that I wouldn't be punished if I wasn't guilty In "The Trial" K literally sets out after this guilt He is in pursuit of his own assumed, though unsubstantiated guilt Even though K is released by the officials conducting the opening examination he actively pursues them

Kafka's alienation and its resultant time disorientation and inversion of cause and effect is echoed and extrapolated in the work of his contemporary Bruno Schulz Schulz, particularly in his "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies, or The Second Book of Genesis" (a fragment of "The Street of Crocodiles") expresses the corollary of Kafka's work in his paralysis of affirmative action or creation Kafka's alienation and action as negation is translated into Schulz's spiritual and physical paralysis inhibiting creativity Although we see Bruno Schulz's "father" aspiring to, and advocating the great heights of creative ascendency, power and freedom, his words must be qualified by the context as well the mode of completion of his monologue Schulz's "father" commences

'We have lived for too long under the terror of the matchless perfection of the Demiurge' my father said 'For too long the perfection of his creation has paralyzed our own creative instinct We don't wish to compete with him We have no ambition to emulate him We wish to be creators in our lower sphere, we want to have the privilege of creation, we want creative delights, we want - in one word - Demiurgy '[19]

This longing for demiurgic creative power is quickly qualified when he notes that he is not concerned with long term creations or long term beings, nor is he concerned with durability or solidity of workmanship These creations' "roles will be short, concise, their characters - without a background Sometimes, for one gesture for one word alone, we shall make the effort to bring them to life "[20] The bulk of this limited, secondary creative energy is concentrated on the modest The "father" concludes his monologue "we wish to create man a second time - in the shape and semblance of a tailor's dummy "[21] Schulz's definite indirect reference to the Golem legend provides an eerie foreshadow to the manner in which the telling of this monologue is completed (It should be remembered that both Kafka, in Prague, and Schulz in Drogobych, Poland, were writing at the time that the legend of the Golem of Prague emerged and flourished for wider audiences. No doubt they knew of the various ruminations on the subject and were in some manner influenced)

Upon the utterance of the word "dummy" Schulz writes that a minor insignificant incident occurred but then goes on to explain it in great detail.

> The incident, completely nonsensical and incomprehensable in the sequence of events, could probably be explained as vestigial automatism, without cause and effect, as an instance of the malice of inanimate objects transferred into the region of psychology We advise the reader to treat it as lightly as we are doing [22]

The incident, upon Schulz's "father" pronouncing the word "dummy", was that he started to cough nervously becoming red in his face. His tremendous expressiveness stilled and he took on an air of humility "He - the inspired Heresiarch, just emerging from the clouds of exaltation - suddenly collapsed and folded up. Or perhaps he had been exchanged for another man? .. My father rose slowly, still looking down, took a step forward like an automaton, and fell to his knees."[23]

Schulz's protagonist is consumed by his modest potential creative ability to the point of paralysis or inaction. Written with allegorical overtones of the 'original sin', the Schulzian modern man is afraid of both the inherent theological and mundane implications of his creative powers. Barely capable of contemplating the Golem let alone acting towards it. The medieval masters within their secured cosmological structure were able to strive toward and achieve aims that are beyond the modern frame of mind. Their intention was an experience that went beyond the witnessing of a unique theatrical gesture to the attainment of spiritual revelation. Schulz and equally Kafka display a general sentiment that avenues regarding creativity once open are no longer accessible to man. The inherent inhibitions of action or creative urges are part of this loss of direction and disorientation which characterizes modern figures and vice versa.[24]

Schulz's "father's" vivid trepidation continues the next evening when he resumes his monologue on this "dark and complex subject". A newly expressed awareness and cautiousness (previously only perceived as being implicit) is now seen. Fear, respect and possibly self-pity are entwined in the tormented words of this father.

'Figures in a waxwork museum,' he began, 'even fair-ground parodies of dummies, must not be treated lightly. Matter never makes jokes, it is always full of the tragically serious. Who dares to think that you can play with matter, that you can shape it for a joke, that the joke will not be built in, will not eat into to it like fate, like destiny? Can you imagine the pain, the dull imprisoned suffering.'[25]

In the Shadow of Auschwitz

The significance of the paralysis of time and subsequent inversion of cause and effect in the world of Kafka's alien (modern man) comes down to Kafka's own nature of experience and his ability to accept the verdict of society which he paints. A society steeped in a sense of helplessness, exposed as in "The Trial" to an overwhelming "anti natural power of dead human labour stored up in our machinery, an alienated power

which turns back against us in unrecognizable shapes and paralyzes all projects of collective as well as individual praxis "[26] A society void of transcendence A society for Jean Amery, a survivor of Auschwitz and a philosopher, which becomes crystalized one winter evening at Auschwitz, while he was walking back to the camp A waving flag prompted him to mechanically utter, "The walls stand speechless and cold, the flags clank in the wind "[27] He then repeated the stanza somewhat louder, listening to the word's sound, trying to track the rhythm, and expected that at the emotional and mental response, that for years this Holderlin poem had awakened in him, would emerge. But nothing happened The poem no longer transcended reality There it was and all that remained was the objective statement such and such, and the Kapo roars' and the watery soup, and the flags that are clanking in the wind Amery's attempts to overcome this void were fruitless At Auschwitz neither the believed reality of the world of the mind nor intellectual discourse had any social relevance or value

Elie Wiesel, another survivor of the death camps and perhaps its most intellectual and passionate scribe, pushes Amery's lost cultural transcendence to its extreme conclusion. Wiesel would write that the Holocaust has made us unintelligible to ourselves, because, "At Auschwitz, not only man died but also the idea of man. To live in a world where there is nothing anymore ... It was its own heart the world incinerated at Auschwitz At Auschwitz the hope of man was extinguished."[28] It was Man's collective suicide The camps were designed in such a way that their tectonics and their rites would destroy purposefully the inmates' sense of meaning and direction It was the "Shoa" (annihilation) of the spirit and the extermination of the body. George Steiner echoes this sentiment in "In Bluebeard's Castle " The death of the Jews allowed in a perverse way for the extreme limit of rational intelligibility to be reached and the inevitable subsequent self-destruction of reason The Jews were associated, as the 'chosen people', with the ideals and vision of God But despite modern rationalism these goals simply couldn't be rejected since society acknowledged in some sense their neccessary value. The Jews thus

became in a way the bad conscience of Western history. Kafka once said that to strike down a Jew was to strike down man/mankind. And in this manner the Holocaust depicts to a large measure mankind's self-mutilation or the suicide of humanity. The Germans attempted to eradicate God by killing those who "invented" God.[29] It is metaphorically the sacrifice of God and the resultant sacrifice of Man that are foreseen in the warning of Golem making.

Jean Amery curiously enough holds onto a project of enlightenment but one which is tempered by his experience. He writes of an enlightenment, not restricted by methodology, which embraces

> more than just logical deduction and empirical verification, but rather, beyond these two, the will and the ability to speculate phenomenologically, to empathize, to approach the limits of reason. Only when we fulfill the law of enlightenment and at the same time transcend it do we reach intellectual realms in which 'ratio' does not lead to shallow rationalism. Enlightenment can properly fulfill its task only if it sets to work with passion.[30]

Despite Amery's appeal for a modified continuum of the enlightenment (which should be viewed in reference to his fate) it must be recognized that we live in a world that learned to create and perpetuate Hell on Earth. That this apocalyptic power exists and we have used it on ourselves suggests perhaps that we are in, as Steiner puts it, a "Post Culture". But, in the end, Steiner is inconclusive as to the significance and possible consequences of this moral and ethical human discord. Much of the puzzlement of the Holocaust remains for him. Nonetheless its significance survives. To simply allow, arguably the most important action of contemporary time (the Holocaust) to be a question of German oppressor versus Jewish victim, as an abberation in the history of man or equally as just another series of objective facts in a history book is to revert into a relativist position. The dangers of which are outlined above.

Tadeusz Borowski realized the implications of the Holocaust. Borowski's Auschwitz stories written right after his release, remove the difference of executioner and victim of all greatness and pathos. Both are reduced to bare essentials. His use of a deputy Kapo to narrate some of his stories is a conscious moral decision of the author to identify with his captor. It is an acceptance of mutual responsibility, mutual participation and mutual guilt for the concentration camp. Borowski, in writing to a general public, notes that besides telling "about the daily life of the camp, about the hierarchy of fear, about the loneliness of every man", you must also tell that "you, you were the ones who did this. That a portion of the sad fame of Auschwitz belongs to you as well."[31] For Borowski everyone was assigned a double part: executioner and victim. He understood that Auschwitz and the events which caused it spoke of a radicalized Western condition which arguably had its seed in Cartesian philosophy and its fruition in the Enlightenment.

Towards Affirmative Action

Kafka and his writings, which eerily preview many of the horrors that are made manifest in the Architecture of Auschwitz, go beyond the mere literary exploits of a fiction writer. Kafka's world and the world of Auschwitz is our world. Max Brod recalls a conversation with Kafka on this very predicament.

'We are nihilistic thoughts, suicidal thoughts that come into God's head,' Kafka said. This reminded me at first of the Gnostic view of life: God as the evil demiurge, the world as his Fall. 'Oh no,' said Kafka 'our world is only a bad mood of God, a bad day of his.' 'Then there is hope outside this manifestation of the world that we know.' He smiled. 'Oh, plenty of hope, an infinite amount of hope - but not for us.'[32]

To simply associate and marvel in awe at the terror with which the purity and beauty of Kafka's words (the purity and beauty of a failure) are put forth, as Walter Benjamin does, is to advance a critique of society without an hermeneutic of affirmation. The ominous

possible conclusion to this is evidenced by many of the sources for this essay Borowski, Amery, Levi and Benjamin all committed suicide But, perhaps it is Kafka himself who offers the clearest clue to survive in a world which he posits as lacking in any moral or ethical ground upon which to act. Kafka's own ability to write, to act, despite his wish that all his manuscripts be destroyed (a request he knew wouldn't be carried out), tempers his own words and provides a possible understanding for action Kafka's solitude/alienation is not complete since he talks about it Through his continual pursuit of negation, negation itself is given a chance to become positive Affirmation is sought through negation And transcendence is through this affirmation It exists through being denied; it is present through not being there [33]

For Kafka writing was everything It was a writing or literature that approached autobiograghy, almost to the extent that it formed an identity In 1912 he wrote in his diary that he recognized in himself a concentration that placed all its force on his nocturnal writing habit It was a concentration he associated with his real life

> When it became clear in my organism that writing was the most productive direction for my being to take, everything rushed in that direction and left empty all those abilities which were directed toward the joys of sex, eating, drinking, philosophical reflection and above all music Naturally, I did not find this purpose independantly and consciously, it found itself and is now interfered with only by the office My development is now complete and, so far as I can see, there is nothing left to sacrifice, I need only throw my work in the office out of this complex in order to begin my real life [34]

Kafka writing about himself in one of his letters to Felice actually notes that he is literature. He equated being fully alive with having the inspiration to write. His passion was complete to the extent that he felt he could not marry Felice because marriage would have endangered his literary work He was honest enough to accept every aspect of it, including its nature as a craft, art and ideal pursuit. He was convinced that he who writes cannot dispense with writing well.

More than an all encompassing obsession, literature was a mode of salvation for Kafka. It was the means he had chosen to fulfill his spiritual and intellectual destiny. Kafka's writing has often been described as a form of prayer. Kafka himself noted that occasionally, when writing, he experienced a state of illumination in which he dwelt in each thought while maintaining the ability to simultaneously realize each one. It was a harrowing state that made him feel that he burst the frontiers of his own being and attained the frontiers of the universe. It was his way, his only way, of reaching truth and the immutable. It was his way of praying.[35]

But along with this went the angst of living in an all encompassing literary existence, the angst of sacrifice, of enslavement, of conflict and discord. He felt chained to his writing table to the point that if he would ever release his grip on his literary work he would risk falling into madness. At the same time he was both dissatisfied and ill at ease with it. The immense sacrifice it took upon his soul only lead to guilt for not submitting to a more conventional lifestyle. Kafka and his literature belong to the domain of that sin he has contracted by eating of the Tree of Knowledge.[36]

Kafka's growing awareness of the sacrifice that literature demands and the sense that writing does not lead neccessarily to expansive states but to a kind of living death is reflected in his diary entry of August 6, 1914:

> What will be my fate as a writer is very simple. My talent for portraying my dreamlike inner life has thrust all other matters into the background; my life has dwindled dreadfully, nor will it cease to dwindle. Nothing else will ever satisfy me. But the strength I can muster for that portrayal is not to be counted upon; perhaps it has already vanished forever, perhaps it will come back to me again, although the circumstances of my life don't favor its return. Thus I waver, continually fly to the summit of the mountain, but then fall back in a moment. Others waver too, but in lower regions, with greater strength; if they are in danger of falling, they are caught up by the kinsmen who walks beside them for that very purpose. But I waver on the heights; it is not death, alas, but the eternal torments of dying.[37]

For Kafka, to write was to know of the delights of reflection but also to know of condamnation and placelessness. To be a dead creature from whom the living must flee, as he metaphorically accomplishes through the experience of Gregor Samsa and his metamorphosis into a monstrous vermin. The etymology of monstrous vermin or *ungeheures ungeziefer* lays bare this point with remarkable clarity. *Ungeheuer* connotes the creature who has no place in the family while *ungeziefer* is the unclean animal unsuited for sacrifice, the creature without a place in God's order. "The Metamorphosis" harshly conveys Kafka's essential vision that to be a writer and by extension to simply 'be' is to be condemned to irreperable estrangement. When writing about a monstrous non being Kafka writes about himself. But in doing so, by the very nature of this action, he also stays a little bit ahead of himself, for he is above all the narrator of the story, who survives the death of the vermin.[38] It is at the time when he feels most imprisoned and circumscribed that the unsuspected potentialities that exist, surface and ascend, those which are born out of this very entrapment.

Kafka's writing was an experience of self affirmation, it wasn't conceived as goal orientated with a defined product in mind. It is the writing, the process of writing, that is an end in itself. For Kafka it was a cathartic act of truth, relevance and meaning. An act which is echoed in the words of Elie Wiesel when he says that after his tenth year of silence, upon surviving Auschwitz, that the only thing he could do was to write, to search for the words and through the words for some form of relevance. It is a quest for questions which have no response. It is the quest for action, creation or simply survival, where the essence of the action is in the act itself and not its proscriptive outcome. It is a state which effectively deconstructs and works through the felt construct that exists and denies affirmative action. Kafka and Wiesel, exist affirmatively by using the language of their felt context in order to work through it.

Samuel Beckett's unnameable narrators' "I can't go on, I'll go on" in many ways parallel the paradox of Kafka's world. Kafka continued to write just as the inmate at

Auschwitz continued to live, despite their existence as a "being of death" (as opposed to a "being towards death") It is precisely at this point when life has lost its meaning that the will to live becomes more urgent and the will to survive gains ascendancy.[39]

Franz Kafka in his diary writes

"Anyone who cannot cope with life while he is alive needs one hand to ward off a little despair over his fate with his other hand he can jot down what he sees among the ruins, for he sees different (and more) things than the others, after all, dead as he is in his own lifetime, he is the real survivor.[40]

In a similar vein Primo Levi, an Auschwitz Sonderkommando, records that a co-worker of his declared that certainly he could have killed himself or got himself killed; but he wanted to survive .. and bear witness [41]

The importance of these final two statements is paramount if an ethical-poetical imagination based on u-topic (the guaranteed perpetual striving for a no-place), testimonial (the hermeneutic, critical recognition and witnessing of the past) and empathic (the ability to listen to and recognize yourself in the other) functions is to be posited as a mode for existence [42] (See chapter 5. Afterword for an elaboration on this idea in relation to the three motifs discussed in this essay) It is an imagination which recognizes, (for thought to survive) that Auschwitz 'is' and 'ought no to be', but denies that "all assumptions informing our ideology of a created environment were effectively destroyed by the builders of Auschwitz "[43]

The imperative of addressing these issues in order that we may be able to work through it, as Franz Kafka was appropriately able to, is simply and succinctly described by Primo Levi. "It is neither easy nor agreeable to dredge this abyss of viscousness, and yet I think it must be done, because what could be perpetrated yesterday could be attempted again tomorrow, and could overwhelm us and our children."[44]

Notes

1. Gunther Anders, Franz Kafka, transl A. Steer and A. K Thorlby (London Bowes and Bowes, 1960), pp. 9-12.

2. Franz Kafka, The Metamorphosis, transl S Corngold (Toronto Bantam, 1972), pp 4, 5

3. The 'Final Solution' to the Jewish Question was the Nazi code name for the systematic destruction and mass extermination of Jewry.

4. Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem (New York· Penguin, 1963), p. 276

5. Ibid., p. 276

6. Anders, Op. Cit., pp 16-18

7. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Foundations of the Nineteenth Century, transl . John Lees, 2 vols. (New York: John Lone, 1912), vol 1 pp 330f

8. Jean-Francois Lyotard, Heidegger and "the jews", transl A. Michel and M Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p 3

9. Ibid , pp 3-48

10. Rene Descartes, Discourses on Method and Meditations, transl L J. Lafleur (New York Macmillan, 1960), p. 82

11. Anders, Op. Cit., p 21

12. Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, transl H Zohn (New York Schocken, 1968), p 137

13. Erich Heller, Franz Kafka (Princeton. Princeton University Press, 1974), pp 18-23

14. Anders, Op. Cit., pp 30f.

15. Robert Jan van Pelt, Architectural Principals in the Age of Historicism (New Haven Yale University Press, 1991), pp 370-375

16. Anders, Op. Cit., p 38

17. Franz Kafka, The Trial, transl Willa and Edwin Muir (New York Schocken, 1974), p 1

18. Ibid., p. 50

19. Bruno Schulz, The Streets of the Crocodiles, transl C Wieniewska (New York Penguin Books, 1963), pp 60, 61

20. Ibid , p. 61

21. Ibid., p. 62.

22. Ibid , p. 62.

23. Ibid., p. 63.

24. Moshe Idel, Golem (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. xv, xvi

25. Schulz, Op. Cit., p. 64.

26 Richard Kearney, The Wake of the Imagination (Minneapolis. University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 378

27 Jean Amery, At the Mind's Limit, transl S Rosenfeld (New York Schocken, 1986), p 7.

28 Elie Wiesel, The Legends of our Time (New York Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), pp. 180, 190

29 George Steiner, In Bluebeard's Castle (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 27-57.

30 Amery, Op. Cit., p xxi In this passage where Amery describes the potentiality to live beyond Auschwitz, he continues, saying that he always starts with a concrete event but never becomes lost in it. Less than two years after he wrote these words he killed himself.

31 Tadeusz Borowski, This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentleman, transl. B. Vedder (New York Penguin Books, 1976), pp 21f

32 Quoted in Benjamin, Op. Cit., p 116

33 Maurice Blanchot, The Sirens' Song, transl S Rabinovitch (Great Britain: Harvester, 1982), pp 21-29

34 Franz Kafka, The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913, ed. Max Brod, transl.. J. Kresh (New York: Schocken Books, 1949), p 211

35 Heller, Op. Cit., pp 82-97

36 Blanchot, Op. Cit., pp 30-42

37. Franz Kafka, The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1914-1923, ed. Max Brod, transl. M. Greenberg (New York Schocken Books, 1949), p 77

38 See Kafka, The Metamorphosis, introduction by S Corngold, pp. xvi-xxii.

39 Jean Baudrillard, The Ecstacy of Communication (New York. Semiotext(e), 1988), p. 50.

40. Franz Kafka, The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1914-1923, p 196

41. Primo Levi, The Drowned and the Saved, transl. R. Rosenthal (New York: Summit, 1988), p. 53 The 'Sonderkammandos' or 'Special Squads' of which Levi was one were a group of prisoners (primarily Jews) who were forcibly responsible for running the crematoria The idea of the squads subtly shifted the burden of guilt onto others (specifically the victims) such that they were even deprived of the solace of innocence Levi writes "The squads had a meaning, a message We, the master race, are your destroyers, but you are no better than we are, if we so wish, and we do so wish, we can destroy not only your bodies but also your souls "

42 Kearney, Op. Cit., pp. 359-397.

43 Robert Jan van Pelt, "After the Walls Have Fallen Down" Queens Quarterly (vol. 96, 1989), pp 642f

44. Levi, Op. Cit., p 53

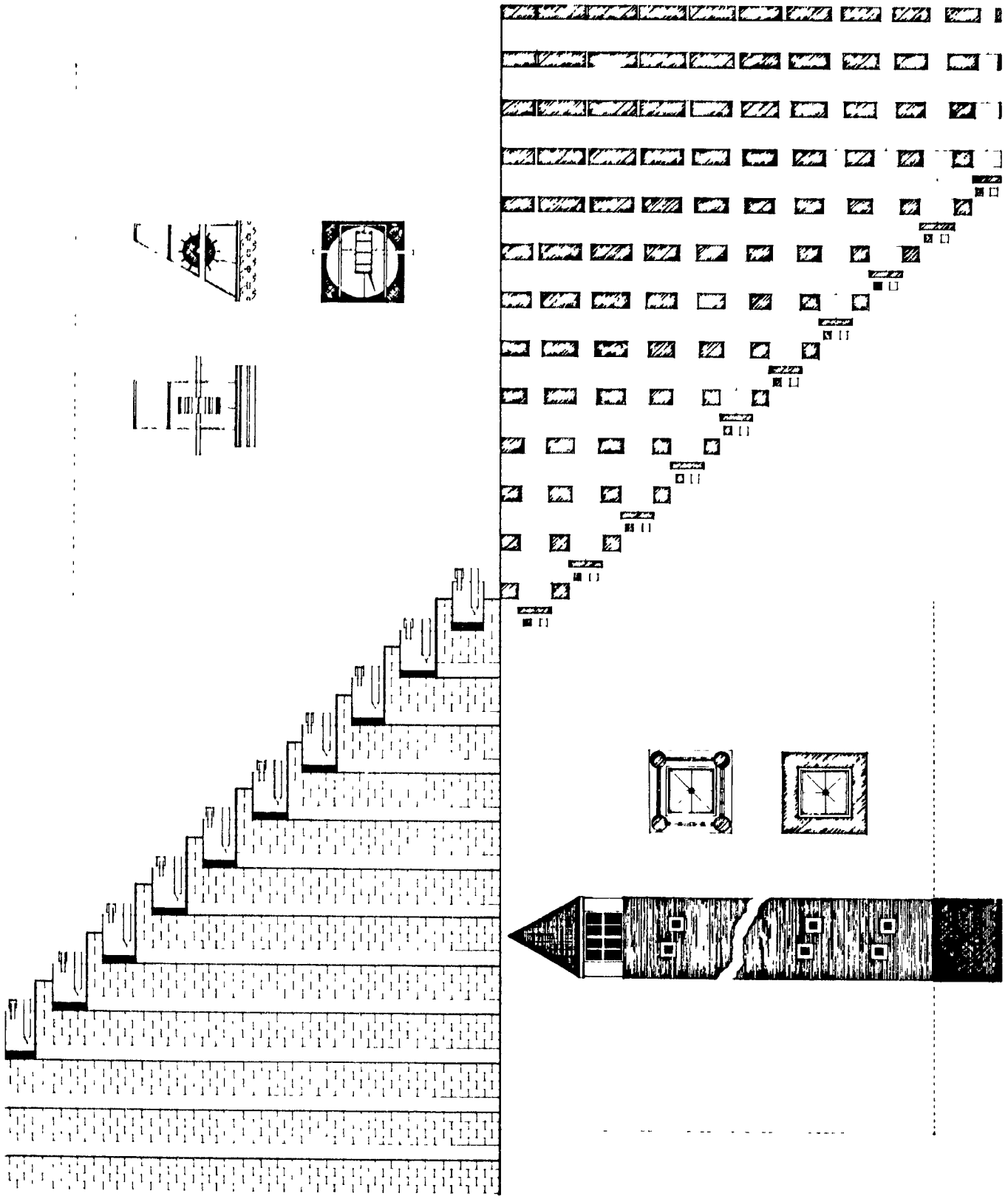
The following Saturday Abraham was revived His surroundings looked vaguely familiar, it was the entrance to the level of upper management and his immediate supervisor A form letter taped to his shirt sleeve read in bold print **Due to your absence of <u>one</u> (1) working week without notice your position has been terminated. Proper severance will accompany your release. Thank you for your service.**

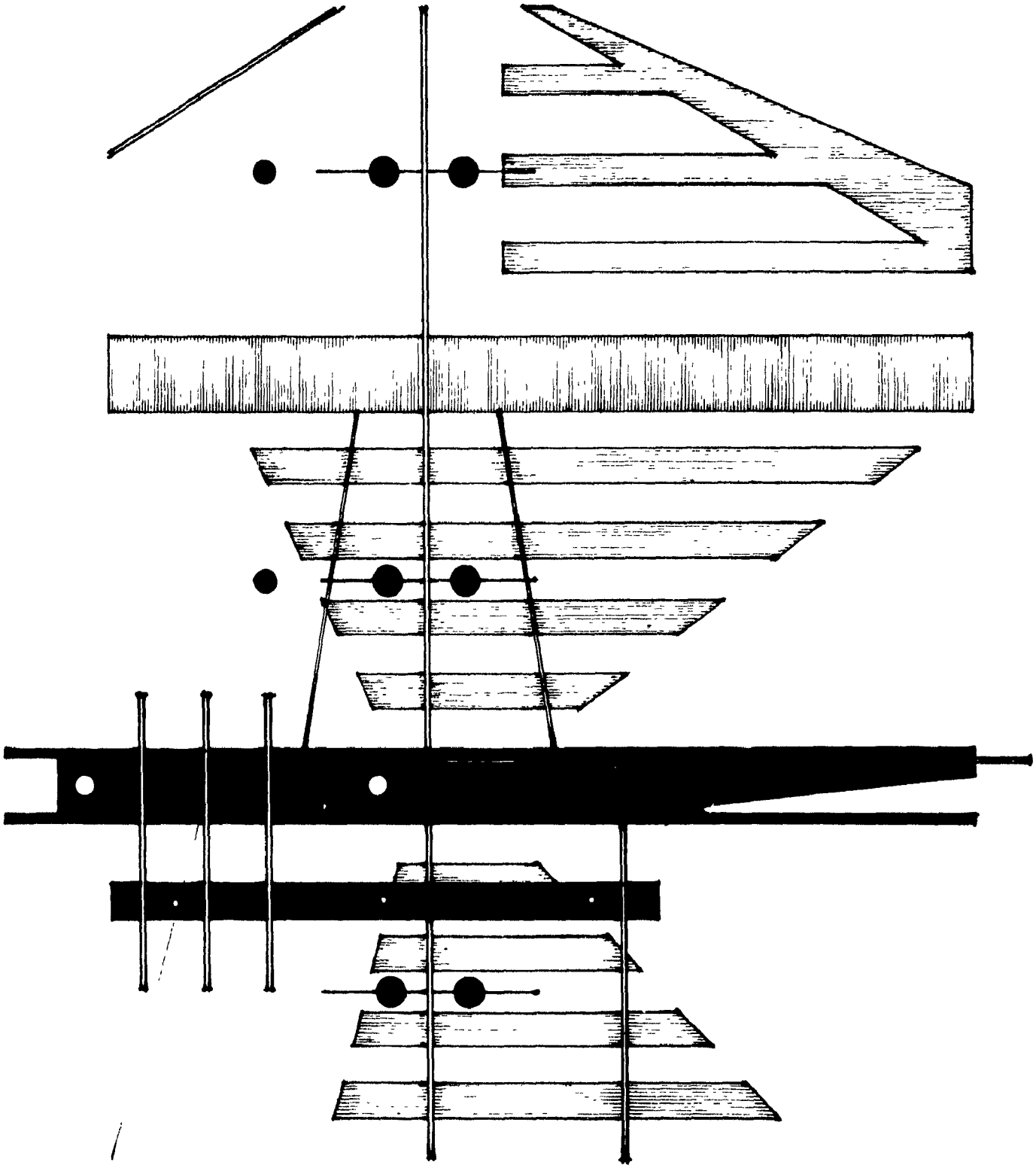
Abraham picked himself up, brushed himself off, and neatly folded the letter again and again and again. Surprisingly, he felt quite light considering the situation he was in and the significant amount of activity that surrounded him

A man and a woman uniform walked quickly toward him Abraham overheard the woman uniform, "Yes, you're quite right, they are always easy to spot" "It must be some sort of natural law" the man uniform replied Barely breaking stride, they brushed by him on their way to a very important meeting Abraham, feeling a bit self-conscious, drifted down to the plant below He certainly had no desire to offend anyone through his presence

Abraham walked slowly amidst the many rows of endless technology that were a prosthetic to him Light from the clerestorey above poured down onto the immense productive mechanisms which seemed to rise form the ground to meet it Abraham's silhouetted body was strongly contrasted This sublime almost ominous vision of the perpetually overwhelming plant caused Abraham to see it anew The technology appeared to lose its closed representational value and objective, static masses were able to become subjective, dynamic organisms Abraham marvelled at the beautiful simplicity of it all 'But how could this be?' he mumbled to himself, knowing of the seemingly credible complexities and ambiguities that plagued him 'How could this be?' he mumbled again, moving effortlessly, timelessly, through this communicative, ethereal setting 'How could this be?'

Confused, Abraham exited through the rear entrance





5. AFTERWORD

On A Sunny Evening

On a purple, sun-shot evening
Under wide-flowering chestnut trees
Upon the threshhold full of dust
Yesterday, today, the days are all like these.

Trees flower forth in beauty,
Lovely too their very wood all gnarled and old
That I am half afraid to peer
Into their crowns of green and gold

The sun has made a veil of gold
So lovely that my body aches
Above, the heavens shriek with blue
Convinced I've smiled by some mistake.
The world's abloom and seems to smile.
I want to fly but where, how high?
If in barbed wire, things can bloom
Why couldn't I? I will not die![1]

Terezin Concentration Camp, 1944

Written by the children in Barracks L 318 and L 417, ages 10 - 16 years.

On Hope, Tradition and Empathy

I hesitate to posit any proscriptive answers to the questions raised on the nature of the ethics of creation as brought forth through the three motifs in this essay. The notion of a proscription or a response and a resultant methodology to the 'crisis' of modern culture and the distortion and displacement of human values would in essence run the risk of lapsing into the reductive formalism that characterizes modernity. This would be in effect acting in the same manner that is cautioned against and laid bare in this thesis and has, in part, resulted in the dilemma of modernity in all its implications. What is critical here is an awareness of a situation and its ramifications, an awareness of an existance, an existance 'within' and 'through' what we have created, and an existance that recognizes the ability to persist (even in the presence of the profound doubt of the labyrinth or the existential angst of the Death Camp). With this in mind I would like to conclude by describing a particular scenario of each of the three motifs discussed in this essay. Together they speak of essential qualities if an ethical discourse on our creative making is to be engaged. They are, as well, at once integral to and implicit in the collective idea that this thesis outlines - hope, tradition and empathy.

In the 1920's film directed by Paul Wegener and based on the scenario by Henrik Galeen *Der Golem. Wie er in die Welt Kam* (The Golem. How He Came into the World) we see for the first time the introduction of children at a critical juncture in the story's denouement. The film version of the modern legend proceeds in the usual manner until the time comes to destroy the dangerous Golem who went on a rampage in the Prague ghetto. Traditionally it is the creator himself who is able to halt the Golem. But in a striking twist of plot, the idea of the child appears. The Golem who reappears at the city gates after his fury has somewhat subsided, watches a group of children playing in the bright sunlight. The children flee in terror from the giant except for one girl who remains

Golem and Child, scene from *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt*

frozen. As the golem approaches the girl offers him an apple The Golem picks her up and holds her in his arms. Fascinated by the amulet on the Golem's chest (which gives him his power), she removes it, and reduces the Golem to lifeless statue The returning children play with the amulet until it is lost The Rabbi eventually arrives to find the children sitting on the inert body, now covered with flowers This unique vision and interpretation of the legend presents and holds out hope for the future in the innocence and ability of the child. It is in the purity of the child and the idea of eternal regeneration that hope is present as is its unlimited potential in overcoming that which it was born into

Folk tales and beliefs such as the Golem legend which are concerned with supernatural motives are based on ambivalent elements This is equally true in the concreteness of holy places In the symbol of the Western Wall and its sanctity as a holy grave, the believer nonetheless feels discomfort at the impurity of the 'corpse' that is interred there Likwise the admiration the believer feels for the miracle worker (and equally the miracle worker's self-adoration) is tempered by the experience of fear of these wondrous abilities This dichotomy is prevalent in the Western Wall and is, I believe, responsible for its richness and relevance In it we see the symbol of hope, of redemption, and of the 'end of days' when the Temple will be rebuilt Yet at the same time it prevents redemption and rebuilding as a memorial to defeat and destruction To reconcile this crisis of will, folk imagination provides a parable to concretely express this abstract thought. From this stems the popular belief that amongst the courses of stones within the Wall one stone exists (of pagan nature) that prevents Israel's redemption As long as it is there (indistinguishable from the others) redemption cannot come

What this idea speaks of is the notion of living in tradition Tradition being the living interpretive and re-interpretive dialogue with the past and anticipation of the future Unfortunately tradition as a dimesion of culture has been obscured beyond recognition within modernity. This is in part due to the fact that its subjective reality doesn't meet the imposed standards of the dominant scientific truth nor the 'enlightened' tendency to

denounce authority in favor of absolute judgement based on pure reason. In this enviroment, the truth of tradition became relegated to an expression of two-dimensional pastiche. But through a hermeneutical understanding of tradition a new way of seeing the depth and meaning in history may be posited. This understanding can be seen as the equivalent of embodied memory, never fully manifest but permanently present as a latent possibility. This tradition is an experience sedimented and embodied in the specificity of culture in the same way that the soul is embodied in our being. The living tradition that is epitomized in this idea of the Western Wall, apart from being a recollection of the past, is also an expectation of creative possibilities that open up the future to hope.[2]

Integral to this idea of tradition and built upon its foundation is 'cyclicity' (not in the sense of endless repitition, but a form of continual regeneration in tradition). It is a generational responsibility which denies the fallacious modern framework of progress toward a perceived attainable perfection. In the process, it implies an ethic of being the custodian of the continuity of life, instead of being a one-shot plunderer during a brief individualistic episode in mortality. It is a recognition of birth, death and rebirth as a part of the same whole as well as the perpetual state of becoming. There is thus the simultaneous sense of temporariness and eternity. Or, as is emblematic in this idea of the Western Wall, the understanding of living in a transitional state while rooted in the strength and depth of history and cultural continuity.

In the literary work of Franz Kafka a clue is offered which expands a culturally specific hermeneutical tradition to a universal realm. It has been noted as eminently significant that Kafka became aware of the possibilities literature presented (for himself, his existance and in order to survive) when he realized that writing was the transition from *Ich* to *Er* or from 'I' to 'He'. Therefore it is only when you can write, He is unhappy, that language begins to take the form of a language which participates in my suffering and begins to gradually define and project the world of suffering. It is the ability to empathize with the other and to see yourself in the other. What Kafka recognized as

being critical to meaningful existance was a principle of empathy and 'mutualism', i.e the ethics of interpersonal responsibility born out of a relationship with the 'other', instead of from the self-interest of the absolute individual It posits an idea of coexistance and an alternative to dominance and submission And it allows Kafka's art, the place of anxiety, self-destruction and infinite disintegration to be as well the place of empathy, of living 'within' and 'through' his context (the 'world' that informs creating) and of eternal life [3]

Modernity has theoretically played itself out, as is evident in the implications of the three motifs on the ethics of creation discussed in this essay In the intellect's centrality and pursuit to control matter through knowledge of physical principles of the material world, it has lost any connection to nature and the spirit Guided by a Cartesian world view that made the thinking self absolute, modernity progressed to the point where it threatens to bring death to the human species and its environment But, practically, while these statements creep into public consciousness, civilization continues to embrace the technological project globally. It is therefore critical that an awareness for strategies of creation that are informed by hopes, traditions and empathy (fully embodying an ethical intentionality), is brought forth for a truely post-modern reality to be built

Architecture's relative atemporality, its possibility of embodiment and its immediacy of experience, its potential ability to communicate phenomenologically and hermeneutically; its ability to speak directly to humanity's perception and imagination (as opposed to an absolute intellect), and its ability to fully acknowledge a public dimension that can work 'within' the dominant technological character of world culture, places it in an advantageous position to explore the critical issue of the ethics of creation, one that learns from and is informed by the legend of the Golem, the symbol of the Western Wall and the literature of Franz Kafka

The awakening of ethical concerns cannot be taken as fashion or the latest in an endless list of stylistic preoccupations It must be seen as revolution in consciousness which in part will be carried out through the professions including architecture, (largely

devoid of crucial ethical concerns during the past two centuries). Architecture and the professions in the secular late twentieth century world must be viewed as value-forming, value-carrying, value-affirming and value-destroying institutions. Ultimately the cultural relevance of architecture depends precisely on its ability to embody ethical issues at an individual and societal level.[4]

Notes

1. Hana Volavkova, ed ... I never saw another butterfly ..., transl. Jeanne Nemcova (New York: Schocken Books, 1959), p. 53

2 For a fuller discussion on tradition and its relation to architecture see Dalibor Vesely "Architecture and Continuity" AA Files (Vol 1, #2, 1982)

3 Maurice Blanchot, The Sirens' Song, transl S. Rabinovitch (Great Britain: Harvester, 1982), pp. 37 42

4 See M. A Somerville "Ethics and Architects: Spaces, Voids and Travelling-in-Hope" in Architecture, Ethics and Technology, ed Alberto Perez-Gomez (Montreal. McGill-Queens University Press, 1993)

Abraham found himself upon the road to the rural areas The street was darkened by the quickly approaching dusk and was littered with byproducts from the plant Children playing behind bars, malnourished adolescents kicking a decomposed can, mothers holding out disfigured stumps where fingers once existed, disease-harbouring aged clinging to bars which have now become one with their bodies

Abraham looked on, vividly seeing the futility of resistance, although knowing that he must absorb it all The road cut deeply through this terrain, and he walked on through the sea of flesh, managing but one thought, 'The only thing for me to go on doing is to maintain my intelligence, calm and analytical until the end'.

Abraham walked on

A man who appeared to be important, preached to a group in a tongue foreign to theirs of an oncoming global direction toward peace and prosperity

Abraham walked on

Another, a scientist, wandered about aimlessly, haunted by the viscious circularity of his inner vanities that have surfaced

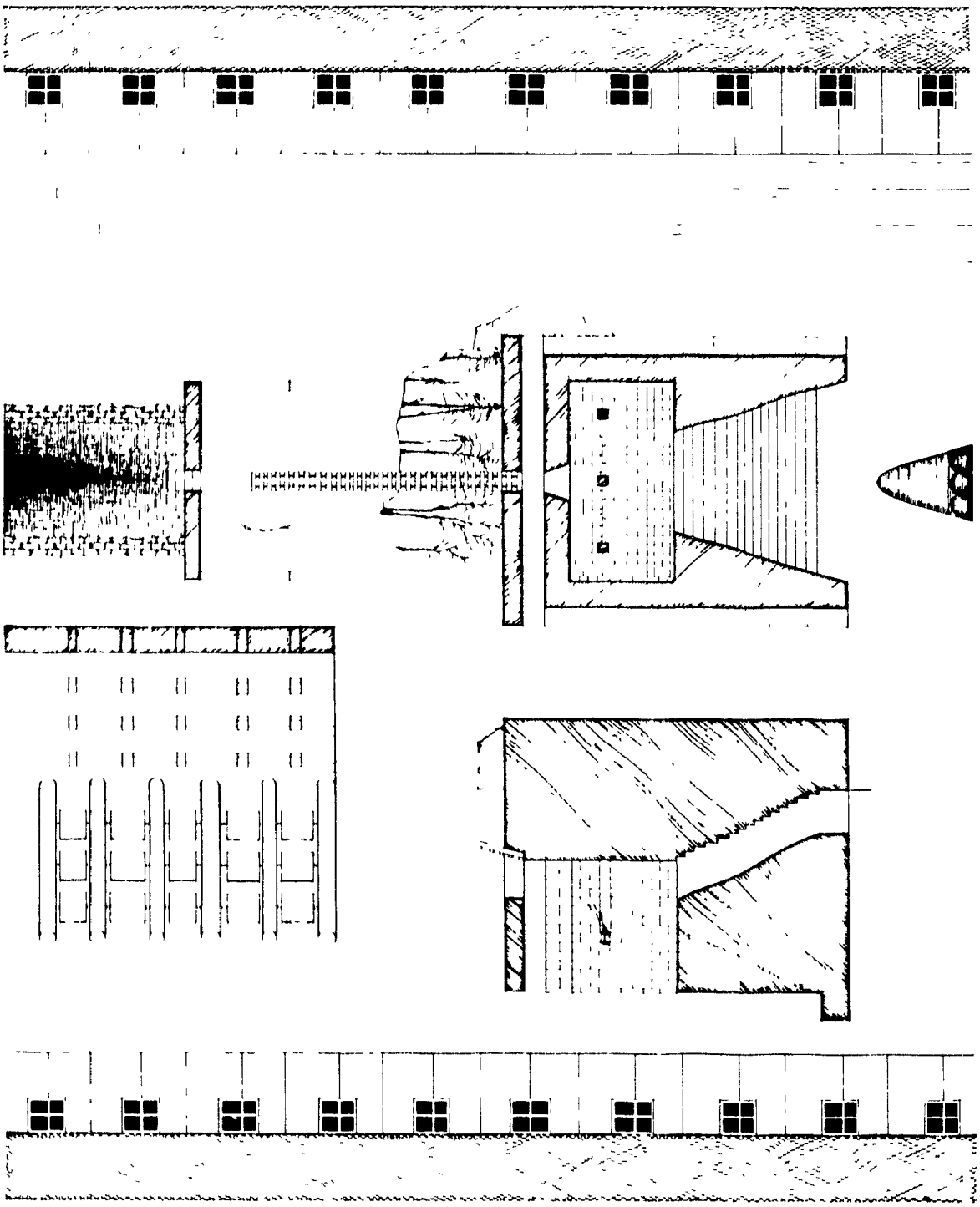
Abraham walked on

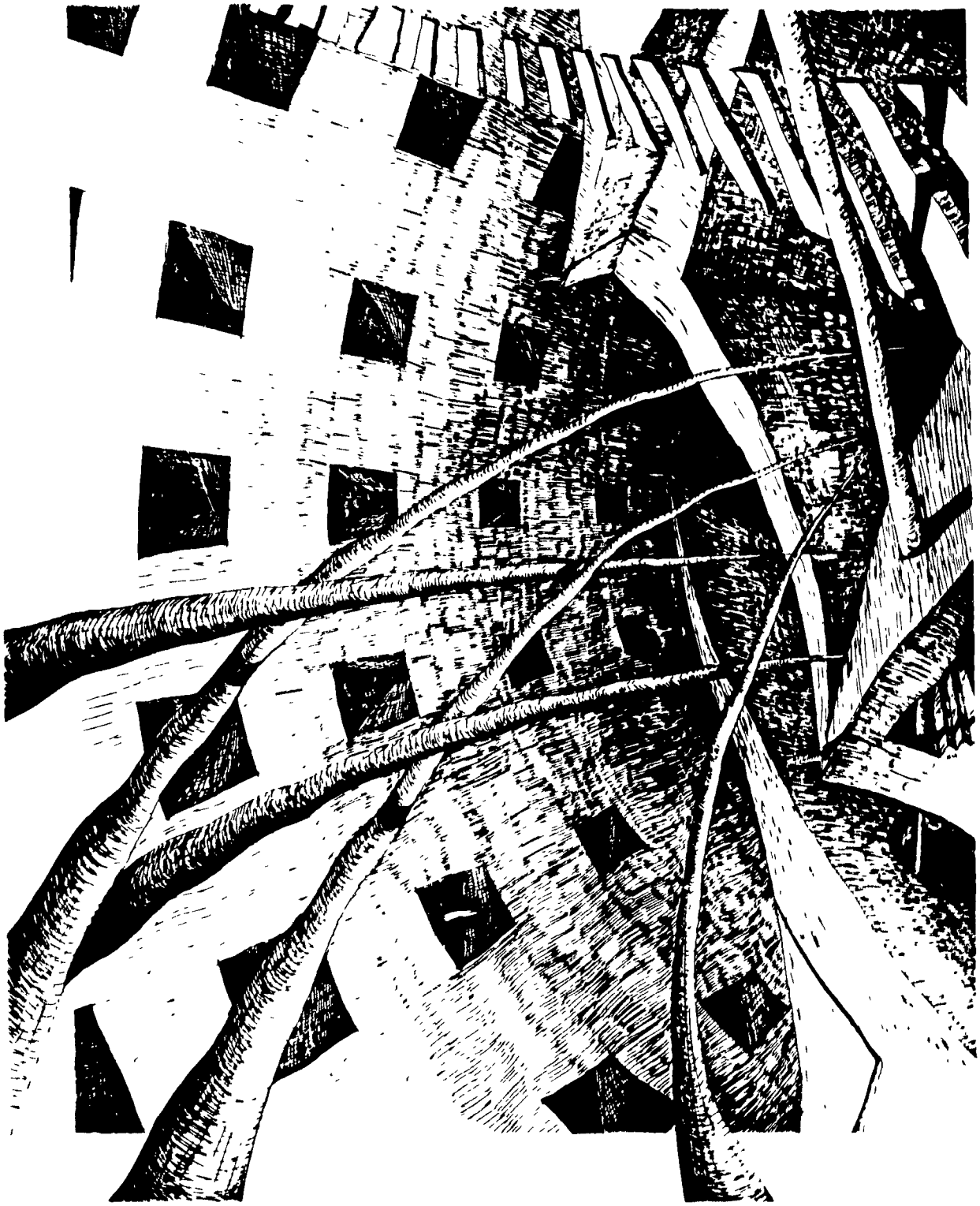
Yet another, an apparently beautiful woman, incessantly caught questioning her affirmation, kept uttering the same surprising words over and over "I am, am I"

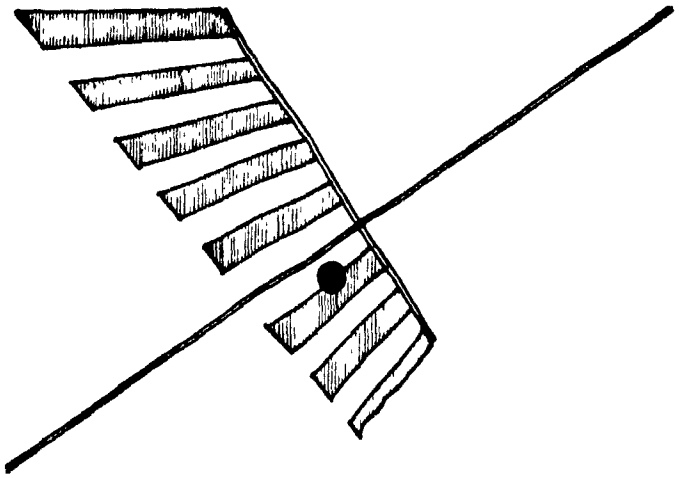
Abraham walked on

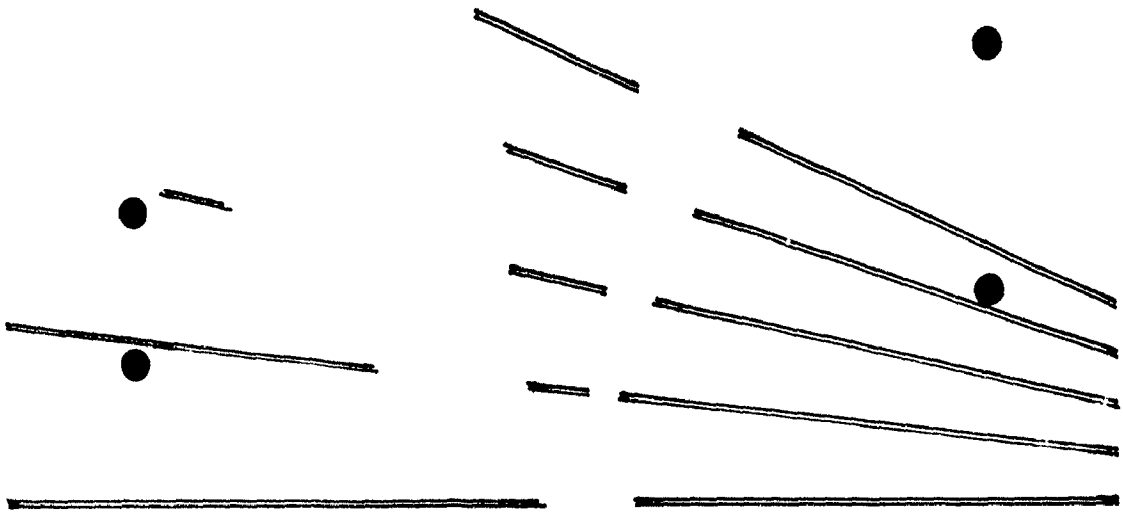
Abraham walked on through this morass, slipping deeper and further into a catatonic state he know knew he could no longer prevent The moon shone with a simplicity and serenity as it alone has the power to do And in this light of darkness, a father of many walks on, thoughts streaming through his blood, of the day before he awoke

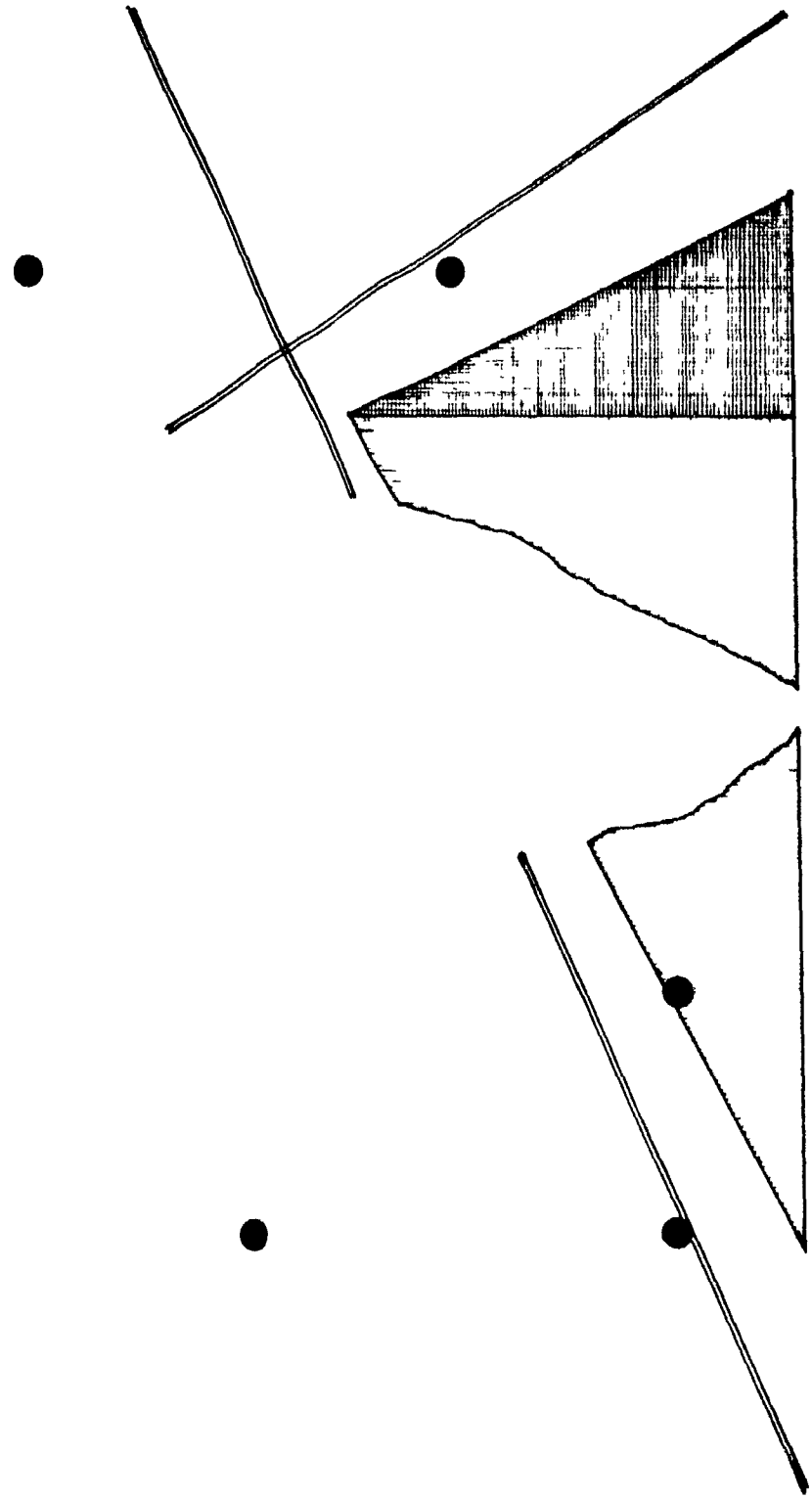
Abraham walks on

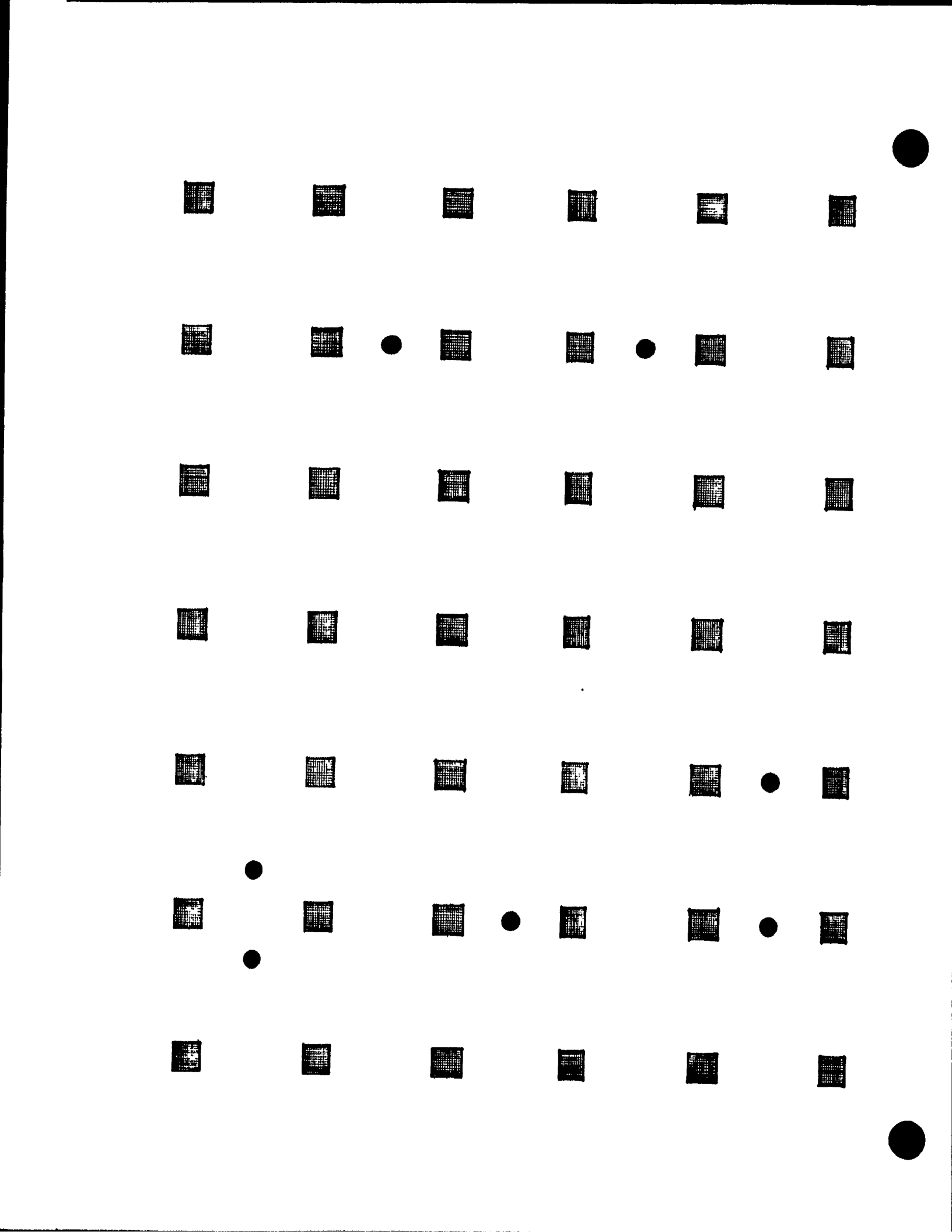


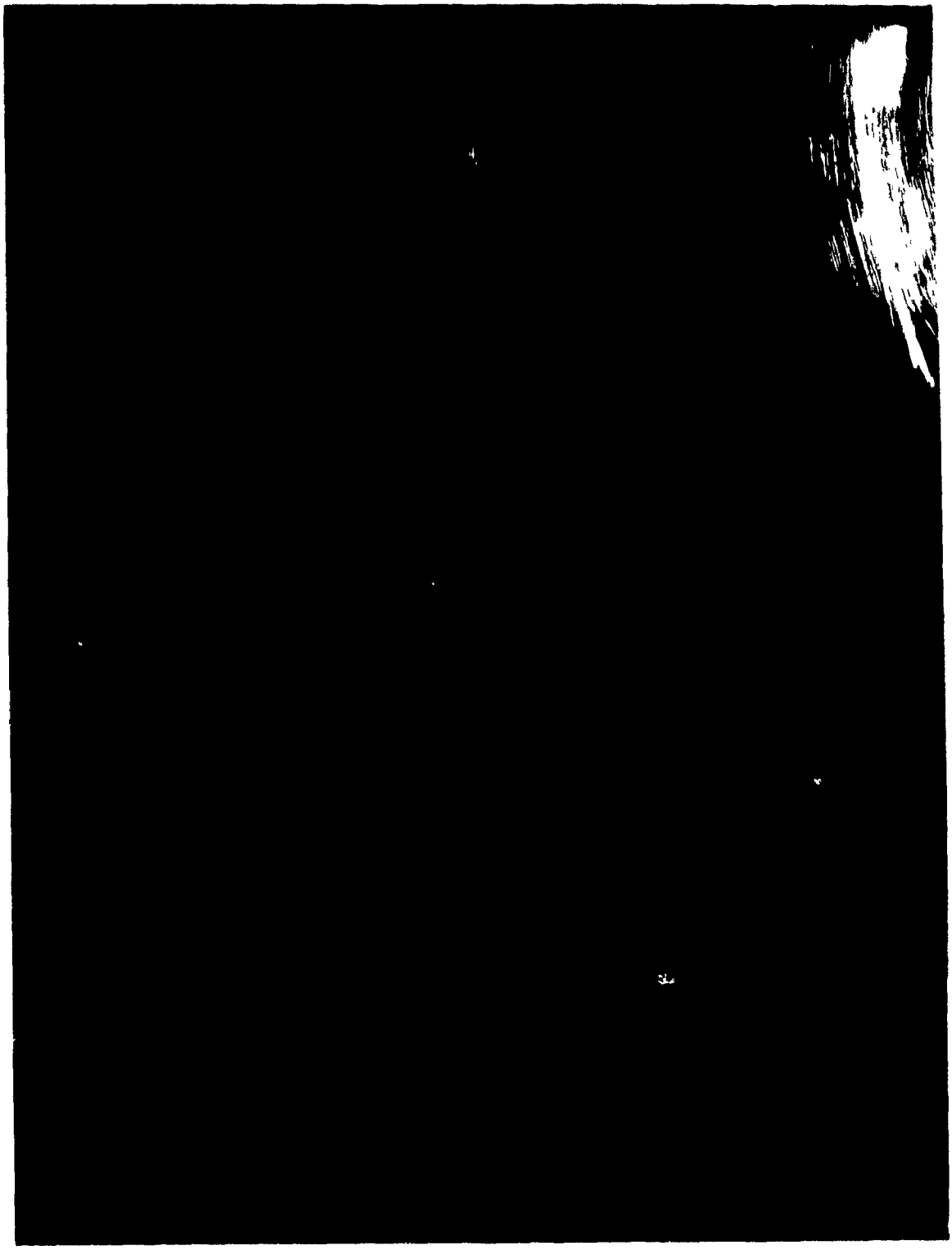












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