The Labyrinth within Kafka’s The Castle: A Fluctuation between Nihilism and Existentialism

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Abstract

Man lives within a social context he finds himself involved in. He is doomed to choose in spite of the fact that he has had no choice in his coming to the world. Man’s being in the world subjects him to a series of social, political, ideological, and theological challenges that, at the end, induce a major transformation in his essence. This existentialist predicament suffered by modern man makes him stand at the brink of the precipice of nihilism where nothingness lies there enveloping many lived phenomena that may appear rationalist and meaningful. Through the characters and the technique of writing, Kafka’s The Castle embodies this fluctuation between nihilism, with all its implications of the loss of meaning, and the existentialist mode of thought that tries to annihilate nothingness through social and political involvement in spite of the fact that nothingness is believed to be envelo

This paper seeks to investigate this philosophical oscillation both on the level of the text and its technique of writing and of the characters who are deeply involved within the political bureaucracy of the Castle, its ideological maze, and its theological anxiety. The spatio-temporal context K. finds himself involved in is one which asserts one fact that has been verbalized by Nietzsche: Man would rather will nothingness than not will at all