

Ungedrucktes von Franz Kafka.
Unpublished by Franz Kafka.
An introduction

di Rosalba Maletta
rosalba.maletta@unimi.it

The present Issue of the Academic Journal *Materiali di Estetica* is devoted to the only one known epistemic Fragment which Franz Kafka expressly dedicated to aesthetical questions.

Max Brod found the Fragment and edited it for the first time in 1965 in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* (N. 43 – 22 October).

The translation we present here is thoroughly new, if confronted with the one published 45 years ago in the volume *Confessioni e diari* (1972), edited by Ferruccio Masini and translated by Ervino Pocar. This new translation is also the first to emend the Italian “psicologico” which appeared in *Confessioni e diari*¹ instead of the original “physiological”², an oversight which greatly influences the reception of Kafka’s thoughts and ideas.

Also the concise introduction and comments, with which Brod accompanies his friend’s remarks in 1965, are here translated for the first time. In fact, we have chosen to publish Kafka’s Fragment with Max Brod’s introductory notes and reminiscences, so as he conceived them for *Die Zeit*. We have also compared this first version with the comments and variations registered one year later in Brod’s monograph *The Prague Circle* (1966).

We have also to remember that the author of the Fragment is a young law student of 23 years who invites us to abandon predetermined categories of

¹ F. Kafka, *Confessioni e diari*, edited by F. Masini, translated by E. Pocar et alii, Mondadori, Milano 1972, p. 5: «c) La prova principale della nuova opinione è un fatto psicologico universale, non soltanto estetico, cioè la stanchezza». The same oversight also appears in the translation onto Italian of Max Brod’s *The Prague Circle*: Idem, *Il circolo di Praga*, edited by L. Ferrara degli Uberti, e/o, Firenze 1983, p. 99, where Ferrara Degli Uberti chooses to reproduce Pocar’s translation of 1972, as he specifies in a footnote on the same page.

² «c) Der hauptsächliche Beweis für die neue Ansicht ist eine allgemeine physiologische, nicht nur ästhetische Tatsache, und das ist die Ermüdung» (see below: *MAX BROD – FRANZ KAFKA UN INEDITO DI FRANZ KAFKA*, where we reproduce the original text).

analysis. By so doing, he also encourages us to explore the inner workings of his text and of texts in general.

In the Fragment the young Kafka contrasts and counters the formula which makes up Brod's equivalence of beauty as novelty and, conversely, of novelty as beauty.

As Kafka underscores, the techniques of apprehension are means of expressing contents that are indissociable from their forms, which entails that they cannot be recognized as such.

In other words when we have an aesthetic experience we do not agree with its content. Novelty is not the wrapping-up of beauty as well as beauty is not necessarily the expression or the form of novelty.

This implies that the writer Franz Kafka, who was about to graduate in Law, does enact a search for an ethically viable form of subjectivity arguing that the individual's materially and psychically determined body affects the structure of language beyond evidence and communication.

The writer Franz Kafka reflects upon aesthetics as related to corporeal consciousness, kinesthetic body / world relationship, tactile sensitivity and verbal language. In actually experiencing objects and people, binary thinking turns out to be lacking, for instance in those situations in which we are at a loss for words and feel moved in an affectively unique manner.

For all these reasons and many others Kafka's Fragment has proved over the century to be one of the most interesting reflections upon representation, aesthetic enjoyment, language and creativity.

Having presented these considerations we hope to have provided readers of this forgotten text with contextual information. Kafka's Fragment deserves to stand alongside his fictional narratives and it is indeed a form of literature as well as an aesthetic reflection, which precisely now and particularly in times like these, needs to be read, discussed and worked through.

For that purpose we have gathered scholars of international prestige and fame in order to investigate Kafka's arguments and style, to analyse them thoroughly and unreservedly, paying due attention to pages which have been forgotten and often overlooked in Kafkian studies.

We are grateful to all these specialists, whose acute critical insights contribute to highlight Kafka's Fragment with new understanding.

The present Issue of *Materiali di Estetica* celebrates Kafka's ideas a century after they were written in order to underscore an important, neglected key to puzzle out the author's world which represents our contemporary life and helps us to define and specify what our work as academics involves. All of us are engaged with the interpretation of reality; as human beings we feel compelled to explain how physiology affects our thinking and our ideas. Kafka's style, the arguments he presents and articulates in this Fragment suggest that we are bodies which urge to be expressed in order to apprehend beyond any dual emphasis.

In conclusion, the Fragment together with the contributions we propose and edit proves that Kafka's ideas have largely withstood the test of time. His gift for synthesis, his style, the focus on experiencing bodies and his attention to sensory perception rather than to theory alone encourage and confirm many contemporary researches and also contribute to the air of ethical engagement the Fragment exudes.