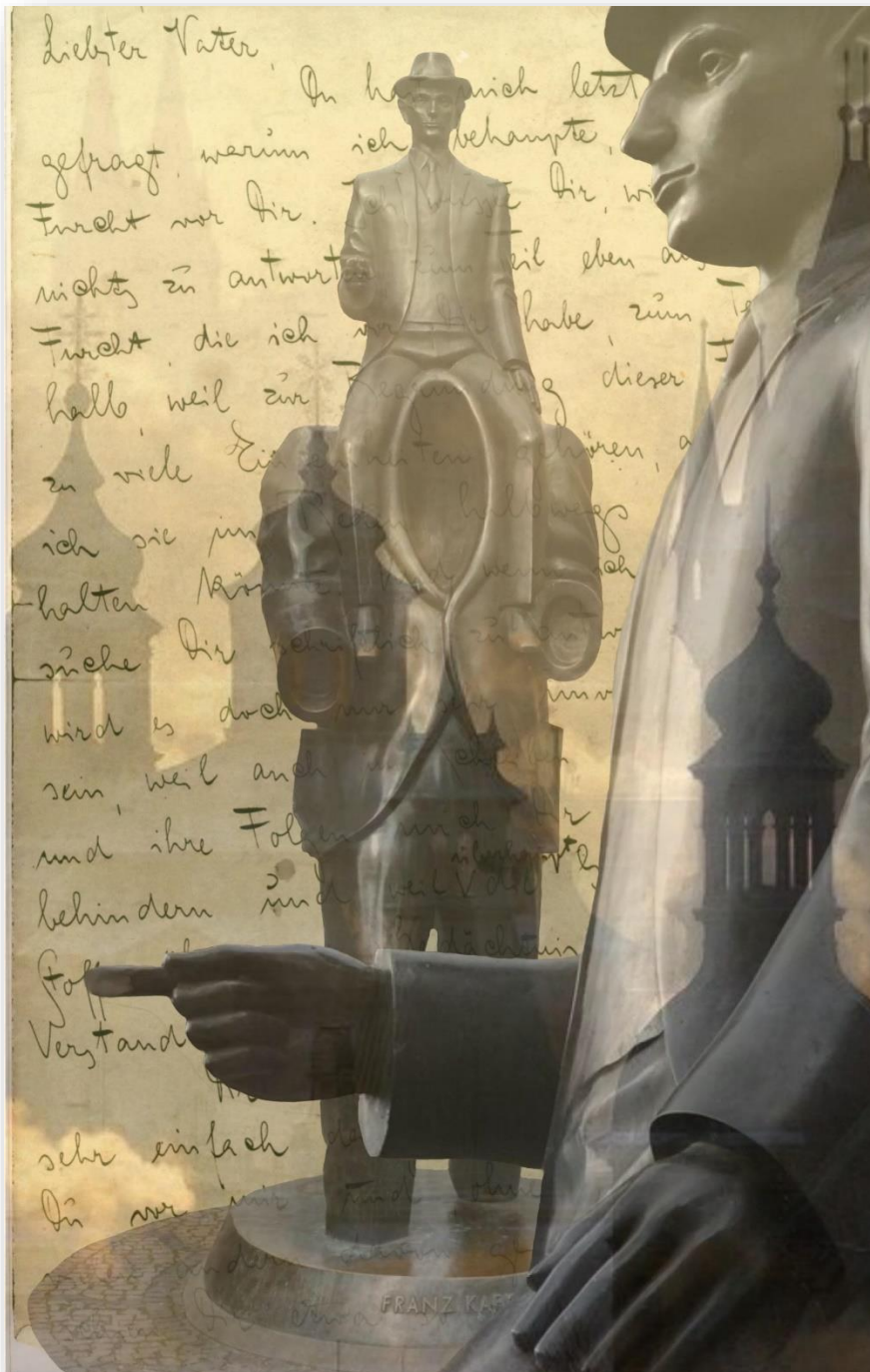


## Firstborn fear: "The Last dwelling"

The eternal struggle between the Superego and desire



By Sergio Aprea

Is it possible to talk about the Superego without falling into its effects? No! It is definitely not possible to talk about this instance without feeling taken by it. It is not harmless to work on the superego. This was the conclusion I arrived at while trying to learn more about that instance, when Freud said: "Much remains obscure and unanswered". Without ceasing to ask myself: What caught me about the thematic proposal of the Poster that summons us today?

After a tour of various authors on this topic, I closed my books and with them an irrepressible need for reading. Thus dropping a stern and insistent little voice regarding the rigor with which I should treat this topic, coming to the conclusion that behind that excess of reading there was only a strong inhibition towards production and writing.

A dilemma arises here: a superego force that tries to sow the fertile field of creation with ideals, and vice versa. -Dilemma is a word derived from the Greek dilemma: two issues. Namely, the dilemma of our work lives with indolence the struggle between superego and desire. To get around this dilemma, I resorted to the balm of artistic sublimation. We all know that the art object is an object that touches us intimately, since it is intimate and simultaneously ecstatic. As much his own as someone else's. To this end, I turned to the memory of a trip to Prague, a captivating city, an open-air museum. It was love at first sight. A delicate palette of pastel colors during the day and an enigmatic diversity of gray tones during those nights illuminated by shy flashes

During that tour, one day near the new Jewish quarter, an immense work of art stood in front of me - I was shocked - it was a sculpture almost four meters high and eight hundred kilos of bronze by the Czech artist Jaroslav Roná, and a single inscription at the foot of it: *Franz Kafka*. ([Imagen1](#))

I immediately associated while contemplating the work, the letter that the author wrote to his father. All those pages were there, cast in metal and confused in my mind. When observing the work, one sees little Franz, on the shoulders of a colossal male figure without hands or face, a man as imposing as he is gigantic.

Who else but the father could have been that great man in childhood? Freud wondered. Is this a representation of that invisible face, without gestures, the stern face of the superego, without hands to accompany, to caress and unable to accommodate?

A detail can be observed in that sculpture: a slight "movement" of Franz Kafka, his right arm barely flexed and pointing with his index finger over the shoulders of his rigid father. A leaky father, really strictly speaking, just a covered emptiness. What would the author of the work have wanted to point out to us? I transferred this same question to the author of it: Where or what is that finger pointing to?

Jaroslav Róna: "The finger pointing at the statue. It essentially suggests that there is some goal to which it is possible to arrive, that is, hope. I wanted to limit myself a little to the generality and an expanded understanding of F. Kafka's work within the framework of the absolute hopelessness of individuals in society. I think Kafka had faith in the Law that religion grants to Jews, although its realization seemed almost impossible to him. But there it is, and that is the hope, that is the finger that points, a small movement at least forward, towards life. So that's my subjective reason for it: The pointing finger."

At the end of 1919, Franz Kafka, at the age of 36, wrote a letter of more than a hundred handwritten pages to his father, Hermann. But instead of delivering it himself, he asks his mother to perform the task, his mother-messenger refused this request and returns the letter to her son-author. Thus we have on the one hand the triad of the Freudian novel: the father, the mother and the son; and, on the other hand: the missive, letter (written piece of paper) and *letter* (what forms words)

At that time, almost all Jewish intellectuals attended conferences in Prague. This is how the writer discovered Freud in 1912. At that time and since its inception, there would be some attraction to psychoanalysis by the Jews, this had already been warned by Freud with concern and some fear "That psychoanalysis would be locked in a very marked circle (...) and the universal validity of its discoveries would not be recognized and would end up suspected of occultism, despised by Western science.

At these meetings Kafka met the writer Max Brod, who would eventually become his best friend and, after his death, a "traitor", since his works were published almost entirely posthumously despite the Czech writer's request: "My last request. All that I leave behind [...] in the form of notebooks, manuscripts, letters, drafts, etc., should be incinerated unread and up to the last page". So Max Brod, disobeying his friend's demand, published in 1952, "The Letter..." that it was never read by his father-addressee since he himself died in 1931 -seven years after his first-born son- I say demand because Kafka's (indestructible) desire to which he never yielded, since it could well have been he himself who carried out such an imperative to burn "up to the last page".

Even so, "The message always reaches its destination," Lacan points out, in his writing about the Stolen Letter. According to the RAE, the first meaning of the word Destiny is Hado: which derives from the Latin Fatum and which, according to the classical tradition, was considered by the Romans as that "unknown force that works irresistibly on people's lives". Was it the superego of the ancients? But the second meaning of the word, is even more disturbing: "Fatal chain of events."

Kafka's description of his father was that of a man who displayed all the attributes of his manhood, in his own words: "the gigantic man, my father, the last instance", "you are for me the measure of all things", "you ran the world from your armchair", "your spiritual domain", "what you shouted at me was a heavenly commandment", "your words and judgments, as if you had no idea of your power", etc.

Let us recall here Freud's remark: "If the father was severe, violent and cruel, the Superego takes these conditions from him" (1928). This paternal figure: severe, rigid, would exert a strong subjective subjection on the son, perhaps, by not fulfilling expectations, mandates or projected desires. Following the Law: "You will be nothing but your father", the author himself is perceived as fearful, weak, insecure, incapable, small in front of his giant father: "I, the slave", "Before you I could not speak or think", "malicious, lazy, miserly child", "Worm", "bug" are some examples of subjective position and glimpses of the super-egoistic instance that has hindered the affective relationships and the life of the author.

What could we say about the writing effect on Kafka with the letter to his father and his fate? Both the effects of writing, and the effect it causes to the observer and/or viewer of its first handwritten page, is stormy, overwhelming, blurry, gloomy ([imagen2](#))

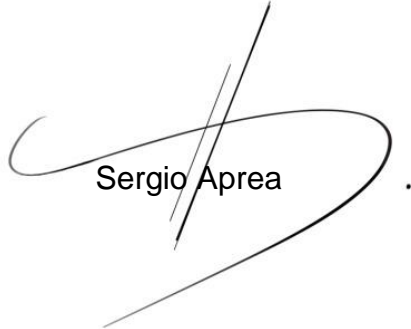
*"Dear father, recently you asked me why I say that I am afraid of you. As usual, I did not know what to answer, partly precisely because I am afraid of you, partly because to explain the reasons for that fear I need many details that I should keep in mind in a conversation. And even if I try to answer you in writing now, my answer will be very incomprehensible, because even when writing fear and its consequences inhibit me before you, and because the magnitude of the subject exceeds my memory and my understanding"* - Franz Kafka

To conclude a brief review of the fate of Kafka. The little one was named in honor of the emperor and military Franz Joseph I. He was the first of six siblings. Two of them, Georg and Heinrich, died at the age of fifteen and six months, respectively, before Franz turned seven. This event of the death of his two little brothers would leave an indelible mark on the writer's life. Especially because he felt guilty of such a denouement by linking it with his desire for them to disappear, motivated by his jealousy. Freud in his text: "Dostoevsky and Parricide" (1928) mentions "that the mere fact of fantasizing an act is from where the feeling of guilt and the need for punishment takes its main source".

There is another interesting detail that both Czech artists are related to, I mean Kafka and Róna: the Kafkaesque atmosphere with which you wrap your answer to the question, What do you think was the reason that led you to have your atelier near Kafka's grave? "The proximity of my studio to the tomb of F. Kafka is something very special, from my point of view, it seems like a coincidence, but there is a wonderful mysterious predestination there. Since at the time I got that studio, I had no idea that I would be a sculptor (I wanted to be just a painter and graphic designer), much less that one day I would be in charge of such a serious task as designing a monument to Franz Kafka. I have a secret idea, that F. Kafka himself helped me with this proposal, as my neighbor from the cemetery. By the

way, in that cemetery not far from the F. Kafka grave my parents are buried and I will probably lie down there one day too.”

Around this, in two of his main works, “Metamorphosis” and “The Process”, the protagonists are surprised in the place where they felt safest, in their abode: one waking up being an insect; in the other and suddenly being arrested by a stranger without knowing the cause of their crime. But also in "Letter to Father" he himself is the protagonist since there is no other character that covers his fear. So in his graveyard, the merciless Fates and his "*Fatal chain of events*" does its thing, when the father himself, bursts in like thunder, his eternal rest when he dies some years later being encumbered in the same grave.



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Liebster Vater

~~Gelesen~~

1

Du hast mich letztthin einmal  
gefragt, warum ich behaupte, ich hätte  
Furcht vor Dir. Ich wusste Dir, wie gewöhnlich,  
nichts zu antworten, zum Teil eben aus der  
Furcht, die ich vor Dir habe, zum Teil des-  
halbo, weil zur Begründung dieser Furcht  
zu viele Einzelheiten gehören, als dass  
ich sie im Reden halbwegs zusamen-  
halten könnte. Und wenn ich hier ver-  
suche Dir schriftlich zu antworten, so  
wird es doch nur sehr unvollständig  
sein, weil auch im Schreiben die Furcht  
und ihre Folgen mich Dir gegenüber  
behindern und weil die <sup>überhaupt</sup> Größe des  
Goffs über mein Gedächtnis und meinen  
Verstand weit hinausgeht.

Dir hat sich die Sache immer  
sehr einfach dargestellt, wenigstens soweit  
Du vor mir und, ohne <sup>zuzwahlen</sup> vor  
vielen andern davon gesprochen hast. Es  
sahen Dir etwa so zu sein: Du hast