

How to Research Like a Dog

**Kafka's
New Science**

**Aaron
Schuster**

Short Circuits series

HOW TO RESEARCH LIKE A DOG

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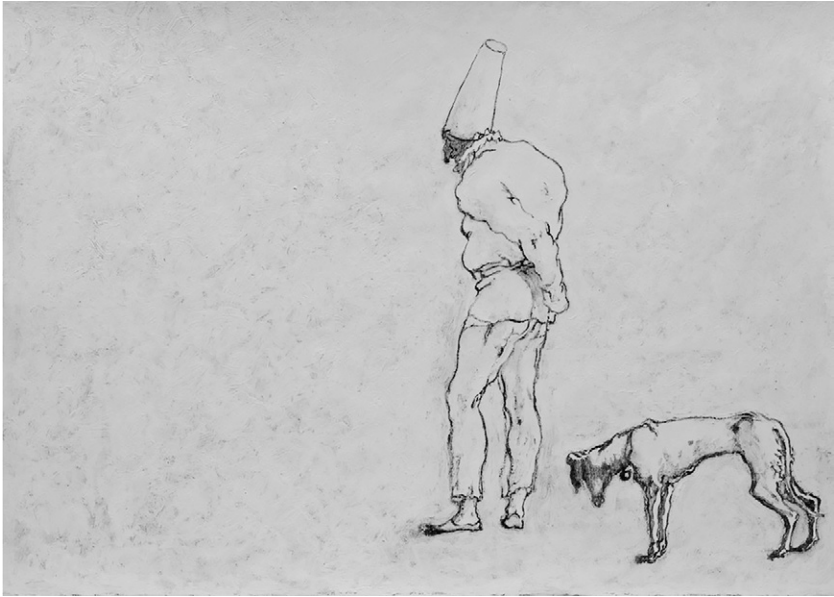
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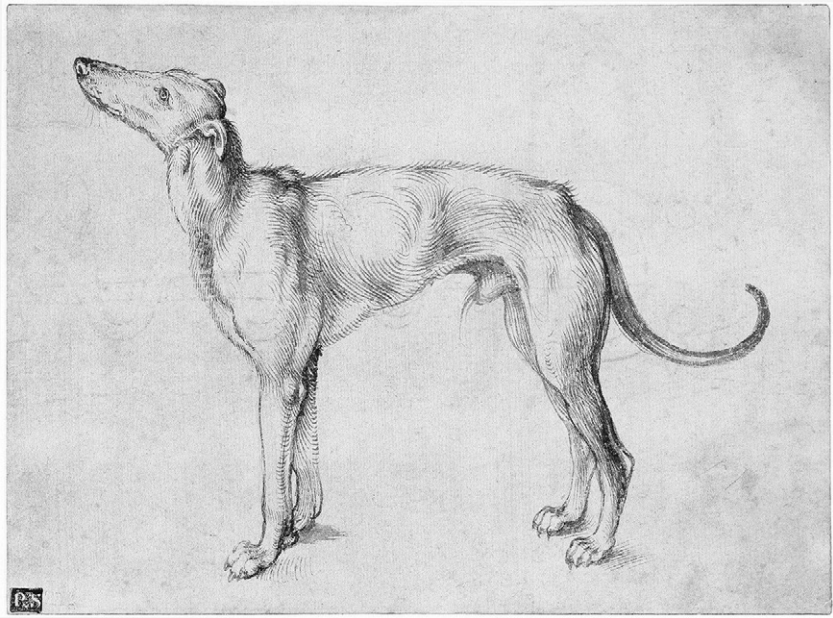
How to Research Like a Dog: Kafka's New Science, by Aaron Schuster











HOW TO RESEARCH LIKE A DOG

KAFKA'S NEW SCIENCE

Aaron Schuster

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For Katia and Mira

Berganza. First of all I'd like to ask you to tell me, if you happen to know, what philosophy means, for although I use the word, I don't know what it is; all I can gather is that it's a good thing.

—Miguel de Cervantes, *The Dialogue of the Dogs*

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SERIES FOREWORD

A short circuit occurs when there is a faulty connection in the network—faulty, of course, from the standpoint of the network’s smooth functioning. Is not the shock of short-circuiting, therefore, one of the best metaphors for a critical reading? Is not one of the most effective critical procedures to cross wires that do not usually touch: to take a major classic (text, author, notion) and read it in a short-circuiting way, through the lens of a “minor” author, text, or conceptual apparatus (“minor” should be understood here in Deleuze’s sense: not “of lesser quality,” but marginalized, disavowed by the hegemonic ideology, or dealing with a “lower,” less dignified topic)? If the minor reference is well chosen, such a procedure can lead to insights which completely shatter and undermine our common perceptions. This is what Marx, among others, did with philosophy and religion (short-circuiting philosophical speculation through the lens of political economy, that is to say, economic speculation); this is what Freud and Nietzsche did with morality (short-circuiting the highest ethical notions through the lens of the unconscious libidinal economy). What such a reading achieves is not a simple “desublimation,” a reduction of the higher intellectual content to its lower economic or libidinal cause; the aim of such an approach is, rather, the inherent decentering of the interpreted text, which brings to light its “unthought,” its disavowed presuppositions and consequences.

And this is what “Short Circuits” wants to do, again and again. The underlying premise of the series is that Lacanian psychoanalysis is a privileged instrument of such an approach, whose purpose is to illuminate a standard text or ideological formation, making it readable in a totally new way—the long history of Lacanian interventions in philosophy, religion, the arts (from the visual arts to the cinema, music, and literature), ideology, and politics justifies this premise. This, then, is not a new series of books on psychoanalysis, but a series of “connections in the Freudian field”—of short Lacanian interventions in art, philosophy, theology, and ideology.

“Short Circuits” intends to revive a practice of reading which confronts a classic text, author, or notion with its own hidden presuppositions, and thus reveals its disavowed truth. The basic criterion for the texts that will be published is that they effectuate such a theoretical short circuit. After reading a book in this series, the reader should not simply have learned something new: the point is, rather, to make him or her aware of another—disturbing—side of something he or she knew all the time.

Slavoj Žižek

CHAPTER 1

PORTRAIT OF THE PHILOSOPHER AS A YOUNG DOG

1.1 KAFKA'S PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Franz Kafka's story "Investigations of a Dog" might be retitled "Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog." In any event, Kafka did not assign a title to the story, which he left unpublished and unfinished. It was Max Brod who named it *Forschungen eines Hundes*, which could also be translated as "Researches of a Dog," to give it a more academic ring. But the term *investigations* has its fortuitous resonances in the history of modern philosophy. The dog's investigations belong to a great line of theoretical endeavors, like Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, with its retinue of animals, dogs included; or Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, which launched his new science of consciousness, phenomenology; or Schelling's *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, even more to the point since this is how the dog's investigations end, with the question of freedom, and the prospect of a new science of freedom. The word translated as "investigations" in these titles, *Untersuchungen*, is also used by Kafka's dog, who speaks of his "hopeless but indispensable little investigations," which, like so many momentous undertakings, began with the "simplest things."¹

We are not in the standard Kafkian milieu of the trial but the university. The name Kafka is popularly associated with the horrors of a grotesquely impenetrable legal system, but there is another aspect to Kafka, which concerns knowledge. "Investigations of a Dog" presents a brilliant and sometimes hilarious parody of the world of knowledge production, what Jacques Lacan called "the university discourse." And the contemporary academy might easily be qualified as Kafkaesque, with its nonsensical rankings and evaluations, market-driven imperatives, and exploding administrative ranks.² But Lacan's term was meant not so much to target the mismanagement of the modern university as to designate a broad shift in the structure of authority, a new kind of social link based on the conjunction of knowledge and power, the establishment

of systems of administration operating in the name of reason and technical progress. And this is where Kafka's dog comes in, to question this new order, to excavate the underside of its supposed neutrality, to propose another way of thinking, even, perhaps, a way out. The entry for "dog" in Gustave Flaubert's *Dictionary of Received Ideas* reads: "Especially created to save its master's life. Man's best friend."³ Kafka, a true Flaubertian, upends this cliché about canine fidelity to authority. His dog is not man's best friend, but the truth's; and he does not save his master's life, but risks his own in seeking to free himself from domination and reveal the hidden forces at work in his world. Along the way of this fraught quest, some of the questions the dog will grapple with are: Can one actually be friends with the truth? What kind of dissident science might be built around it? and, Who are his comrades in this struggle?

Written in the autumn of 1922, less than two years before Kafka's death at the age of forty, "Investigations of a Dog" was first published in 1931, in a collection edited by Max Brod, *Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer* (The Great Wall of China). It was translated by Willa and Edwin Muir shortly afterward, in 1933; today there are six other translations in English.⁴ Speaking about the canine science of food, the dog remarks that "countless observations and essays and views on this subject have been published," such that "it is not only beyond the comprehension of any single scholar, but of all our scholars collectively."⁵ One is tempted to say the same about Kafka scholarship. "Investigations of a Dog," however, was never one of Kafka's more popular stories, and, despite the attention it has received, it is a work that I believe still remains to be discovered. Critical judgment has been mixed, sometimes reserved; it's been called "one of the longest, most rambling, and least directed of Kafka's short stories."⁶ And it has also proved something of a puzzle for interpreters.

No less an authority than Walter Benjamin remarked, in a letter to Theodor Adorno, that "Investigations of a Dog" was the one story he never really figured out: "I have taken the fact that you refer with such particular emphasis to 'Investigations of a Dog' ['Aufzeichnungen eines Hundes' (sic)] as a hint. It is precisely this piece—probably the only one—that remained alien to me even while I was working on my 'Kafka' essay. I also know—and have even said as much to Felizitas—that I still needed to discover what it actually meant. Your comments square with this assumption."⁷ The mistake in the title is amusing: *Aufzeichnungen* means "records" or "notes," perhaps lecture notes, as if the story were a transcription of the dog's seminar. Kafka's dog as educator. In his correspondence with Benjamin, Adorno mentions the story in the context of discussing Kafka's relationship to silent cinema (incidentally, it's been suggested that "Investigations of a Dog" was partly inspired by a scene from one of Kafka's favorite movies), and also the link between language and music, a key element of the dog story. Much of Benjamin's commentary on Kafka concerns theology; against religious interpretations he insisted that "Kafka was a

writer of parables, but he did not found a religion.”⁸ But what about a philosophy? Was Kafka the author of a new philosophy, or rather its mythologist or parabolist? Descartes famously said, *I advance masked*. What if Kafka advanced philosophically under a dog mask? “Investigations of a Dog” can be read as a picaresque tale of the adventures of theory, but more than that, it’s a speculative fiction-essay that lays out the conditions of philosophy in its relations to knowledge, language, community, and life. In the guise of writing about a lone canine’s attempts to come to grips with his own peculiarities and those of his world—that is, in chronicling the thinker’s dogged pursuit of his alienation, his refusal to “live in harmony with my people and accept in silence whatever disturbs the harmony”—Kafka comes closest to giving us his philosophical manifesto.⁹

In the spirit of the dog’s eccentric experiments, this book is also a kind of experiment: an extended, and at times digressive, reading of a single story, that tries to think alongside its ingenious, crazed, comical, maladjusted, and melancholy protagonist. On the one hand, this focus will serve as a means of revisiting and rediscovering Kafka’s work, using the dog story as a guide dog, as it were. On the other, it’s meant as a show of solidarity with the dog’s research program, which I develop in a new way. What if Kafka’s dog were an unlikely hero of theory for untheoretical times? What would it mean to philosophize with Kafka’s dog? How to research like a dog?

1.2 THE SYSTEM OF SCIENCE

“Investigations of a Dog” is one of the most accomplished of Kafka’s animal stories, along with “The Metamorphosis” (unidentified beetle-like vermin), “The Burrow” (unidentified burrowing creature, maybe a mole), and “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk” (mouse). It has a special connection to “Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor” (missing dog plus two celluloid bouncing balls), which is also one of the less-read stories in Kafka’s oeuvre; before “Investigations,” Kafka called “Blumfeld” his dog story. Its focus on knowledge and the academic world places it in proximity to “A Report to an Academy” (ape), whose protagonist Red Peter narrates his miraculous transformation from ape to human before a distinguished audience of scientists and scholars. Yet the talking ape is an object of scientific study, a witness providing evidence, whereas the dog conducts his own inquiries and sets his research agenda; he is an investigator in his own right. Moreover, the dog disavows the scholarly world—he’s not part of the “Honored members of the Academy!” whom Red Peter addresses—in the name of another sort of theory.

Let me start with a brief summary of the story, and sketch out some of the themes and problems we will confront in this study. The tale is narrated by the dog himself, who is never named, from the vantage point of his later years (we don’t know exactly how old he is). After some preliminary reflections on

the nature of dogdom, and the present state of his work, he starts to reminisce about his life in theory, reckoning with his accomplishments and his failures, his colorful encounters and intellectual escapades. We learn of the philosopher dog's youth, of how his curiosity and investigative instincts were first aroused by a shocking event: a concert by a troupe of musical dogs. Intrigued by this fantastical song and dance show, and especially by the musicians' refusal to answer any of his questions—a refusal, he pointedly remarks, that contravenes canine law—the dog embarks on a quest to unravel the mysteries of the dog world. From the wondrous concert, the young philosopher soon turns to the fundamental preoccupation of canine existence, namely food. Food is the subject of an overwhelming amount of scientific research, but there is one question that science is silent on: Where does food come from? “Whence does the earth procure this food?”¹⁰ The dog conducts a number of experiments to test the food source and probe the mysteries of nourishment. He's ridiculed by his fellow hounds—when he asks about food, they treat him as if he's begging for something to eat—yet they are not unmoved by his questions. The dog detects a certain disquiet in dogdom.

Later on, he investigates one of the strangest phenomena of the dog world, the so-called aerial dogs or *Lufthunde*. These pooches spend their days floating in the air—or at least such is the rumor, for the dog hasn't seen them himself. They don't labor like other dogs and are detached from the life of the community, though they claim to be engaged in important, “lofty” matters. Disdaining this self-styled superior breed as creatures that “are nothing much more than a beautiful coat of hair,”¹¹ the lonesome hound wonders who his comrades might be in his great theoretical endeavor. “But where, then, are my real colleagues?”¹² The dog asks himself whether his next-door neighbor might be one of these colleagues. Though he is desperate for the company of fellow researchers, the dog doesn't care much for his neighbor, whom he considers to be a nuisance. On the other hand, perhaps they are actually devoted to the same cause, sharing an understanding “going deeper than mere words.”¹³ What shared understanding—secret, unspoken—unites the dog people? Are all dogs united in theory? The philosopher dog then assumes the role of cultural critic and reflects on the troubled state of dogdom and its history, melancholically concluding against the prospect of any real transformation: “Our generation is lost, it may be.”¹⁴

Returning to his researches on nourishment, the investigator abandons his earlier experiments and adopts a more radical approach, one that goes against every fiber of canine being: he fasts. Fasting, he says, is “the final and most potent means of my research.”¹⁵ The dog dreams of the glory he will win with his daring philosophical project; instead, this new research method nearly kills him. The starving animal vomits blood, blacks out, then awakens to a radiant vision: a beautiful hunting dog is standing before him. The two enter

into a cryptic dialogue, the hunting dog warning him that he must leave, the philosopher insisting to stay. Their exchange is interrupted when the hunting dog starts to sing. Or rather, a voice suddenly appears from out of nowhere, as if singing on its own accord. "It seemed to exist solely for my sake, this voice before whose sublimity the woods fell silent."¹⁶ What begins with the astonishing concert of the musical dogs ends with an uncanny voice in the forest, singing to the dog alone.

In schematic terms, the story contains six main episodes: the musical concert, experiments in food science, the aerial dogs, the neighbor, the fast, and the hunting dog. It also includes two parables: the parable of the sages, contained within the section on fasting, and the parable of the bone marrow, which presents, in cryptic form, the problem of the philosopher's relation to the community, and reveals the philosopher's own "monstrous" desire. The question of community runs throughout the story. However solitary his investigations may be, the dog insists that they implicate the whole of dogdom. Even further, he needs the other dogs to accomplish his theoretical aims: "I do not possess the key except in common with all the others; I cannot grasp it without their help."¹⁷ What stands in the way of the realization of philosophy is the silence of the dogs, a silence that also afflicts the philosopher himself. This silence is both the greatest barrier to the dog's investigations and their most formidable object. Canine theory turns out to be a theory of resistance to theory. The problem is ultimately one of language. The true word is missing, laments the dog, the word that could intervene in the structure of dogdom and transform it, creating a new way of life and a new solidarity. Siegfried Kracauer, in the first important commentary on "Investigations of a Dog," highlighted the theme of the missing word as the crux of Kafka's oeuvre: "All of Kafka's work circles around this one insight: that we are cut off from the true word, which even Kafka himself is unable to perceive."¹⁸

The final pages summarize the results of the dog's researches, sketching the outlines of an ambitious philosophical system that might be called, not without irony, Kafka's "System of Science." It consists of four disciplines. The two main ones are the science of nurture (*Nahrungswissenschaft*), which could also be translated as the science of nourishment or food science, and the science of music or musicology (*Musikwissenschaft*), which might be seen as representing the field of art and aesthetics in general—music, not literature, is the paradigmatic art in Kafka's universe. Situated between these is a kind of transitional or bridging science, which investigates the link between the realms of life and art, or between physical nourishment and spiritual nourishment, what the dog calls the theory of incantation, or more fully the "theory of incantation by which food is called down." This consists of the rituals and symbolic actions performed by dogs for the procurement of food; in these practices of begging and supplication we may find the beginnings of a theory

of institutions. Between vital necessity and artistic creativity, there lies the institution. All institutions are, at bottom, the songs we sing, and the rules for singing such songs, to obtain whatever it is we want, our desired “food.” Finally, there is an “ultimate science” (*einer allerletzten Wissenschaft*), the science of freedom, a prize “higher than everything else.” This is how the story ends, with the dog declaring that freedom “as is possible today is a wretched business,” yet “nonetheless a possession.”¹⁹ If the main canine sciences mirror the classical division between the servile arts and the liberal arts, *artes mechanicae* and *artes liberales*, the place of the science of freedom is not immediately clear. In the Dog University there is a School of Agriculture and a School of Music, and there is also a Faculty of Law, dealing in the incantatory arts. Where does the science of freedom fit into this? Is it a separate discipline, with its own object and specialized knowledge? Is it the “queen of the sciences,” the pinnacle of the system, or is it rather a “maladjusted” science, without a prescribed place in the whole? Kafka is usually considered an unsystematic or even anti-systematic author, a poet of the fragmentary and the unfinished who warns against the danger of “totalitarian” systems. So, what should we make of the dog’s philosophical system?

Roberto Bolaño was a great admirer of Kafka; he even wrote a sequel to Kafka’s last story, “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk,” about a rat detective nephew of Josephine, Pepe the Cop. One of his poetry collections is titled *The Unknown University*, and this is an excellent term for naming what’s at stake in the dog’s investigations. How to push the Dog University in a radically new direction, toward the Unknown University? Incidentally, Bolaño’s other collection of poetry is *The Romantic Dogs*.

Although Kafka left “Investigations of a Dog” unfinished, the story gives the impression of being more or less whole. What is lacking, however, is an elaboration of the system. To take up things where the dog left off, to develop the conceptual architecture of the Cynological System of Science, means to address the following questions of Kafkian philosophy, which reflect the four-fold division of the system: What nourishes us? What is art? How does incantation structure our relation to others and the world? What is freedom?

If we put the story in the context of its times, Europe in the 1920s, the dog’s aspirations for a new science resonate with the two new disciplines that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, one dealing with consciousness, the other with the unconscious: Husserl’s phenomenology and Freud’s psychoanalysis. Both of these addressed, in very different ways, the crisis of European sciences and civilization, at a time when talk of the decline of the West, borne out by the devastation of World War I, was at its height—this acute sense of crisis is echoed in the dog’s lament of his being a lost generation. In the case of phenomenology, Husserl’s new science took the form of a renewal of the ideal of philosophy as the queen of the sciences, capable of

providing a rational foundation for the pursuit of truth, through its explication of the essential structures of consciousness. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, constituted a new field, without a clearly defined place in the existing order of knowledge, studying and treating the pathologies of psychic life. Freud showed how these psychopathologies were rooted in subjectivity—a person’s fantasies and drives and singular history—but a subjectivity torn and divided against itself. His investigations were dedicated to uncovering the structures of the unconscious, that which resists the light of truth and makes a hole in knowledge. Mladen Dolar has argued that the dog’s new science is none other than psychoanalysis, and Freud and his most original successor, Lacan, will be major interlocutors throughout this book.²⁰

In 1917 Franz Rosenzweig published a two-page manuscript that he had discovered a few years earlier at the Prussian State Library in Berlin, while researching what would become his book *Hegel and the State*. He gave it the title “The Oldest System-Program of German Idealism.” Though the handwriting was undeniably Hegel’s, Rosenzweig thought the text’s tone and content indicated that it had been originally written by Schelling and later copied by Hegel, the facsimile being the only surviving version of the text. Since then the fragment’s authorship has been vigorously disputed, with different scholars attributing it to Hegel, Schelling, and Hölderlin (it’s even been argued that the text was retroactively penned by Nietzsche).²¹ One of the slogans from the heyday of poststructuralist criticism was “What does it matter who’s speaking?,” and this seems to apply to “The Oldest System-Program”: perhaps the dispute over authorship belies the fact that it’s Spirit itself that’s speaking. The short manifesto lays out a radical program encompassing ethics, metaphysics, nature, politics, history, religion, and art, culminating in a call for a new “mythology of reason” that would unite theory and practice and make of philosophy a living, popular reality. This is a system for the realization of freedom—for “only that which is the object of *freedom* is called *idea*”—through its intimate connection with truth and beauty.²² There is no evidence, as far as I’m aware, that Kafka knew this text, but the dog’s system-building aspirations, as well as Kafka’s own forays into writing a new mythology (by twisting the old myths, from Odysseus and Abraham to the Tower of Babel and the Chinese Emperor), ought to be understood in light of this odd philosophical fragment, a kind of vanishing Ur-text of German Idealism. What if Kafka’s dog were a fellow traveler of the German Idealists, even their most faithful companion: Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Hölderlin, Schelling, and a woolly, unnamed hound? Of course, 1917 was also the year of the October Revolution, which brought with it the ideal of a communist science dedicated to a total renovation of human subjectivity, the creation of a New Man. Nikolai Zabolotsky, one of the original members of the Russian avant-garde collective *Oberiu* (Union of Real Art), composed an unorthodox paean to this new society titled “The Mad Wolf”;

it was written in 1931, the same year as the first publication of “Investigations of a Dog.” The poem depicts the founding figure of communist science as a visionary animal—not a dog this time but a wolf. “We are building a new forest / Utterly wretched only yesterday,” declares the leader of the student wolves, echoing a verse of “The Internationale”: “We will build a new world that is ours.”²³ This is also the dream of Kafka’s dog, to revolutionize canine existence, and, one might say, to usher in the birth of a New Dog: “The roof of this wretched life, of which you say so many hard things, will burst open, and all of us, shoulder to shoulder, will ascend into the lofty realm of freedom.”²⁴

1.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PHILOSOPHER DOG

Kafka’s is not the only philosopher dog. In Virginia Woolf’s eccentric biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s pet cocker spaniel, Flush, the poet actually mistakes her dog for a philosopher when she catches him inspecting himself in the mirror—in reality, the Victorian hound is a preening snob. “He was a philosopher, she thought, meditating the difference between appearance and reality. On the contrary, he was an aristocrat considering his points.”²⁵ A philosophical dog narrates the last chapter of Ričardas Gavelis’s masterpiece *Vilnius Poker*, the “secret God of Vilnius” who is “at the same time ... the most ordinary of dogs.” “I’m already tired of searching for the truth,” he laments. “No one knows what it is.”²⁶ The convalescing narrator of Italo Svevo’s “Argo and His Master” claims that his gundog, Argo, was the first canine philosopher, who authored a most remarkable speculative proposition: “When I induced him to philosophize (unquestionably Argo was the first philosopher of his species) he came out with this Futuristic phase: ‘Odors three equals life.’” Pace Svevo, we know that Argo wasn’t the first philosopher dog, since Kafka’s story predates Svevo’s by some five years. (Although Svevo couldn’t have read it since it hadn’t been published yet.) Still, Argo’s originality is to lay out a new taxonomy, a novel scheme for divvying up the furniture of the world, based on smell, or “odors three”: “the master’s smell, the smell of other men, Titi’s smell, the smell of various breeds of animals (hares, which can sometimes, but not often, be horned and large, and birds and cats), and lastly the smell of things.”²⁷ The joke here is that dogs can’t count beyond three, so three just means many, in this case five: master, humans, sexual object, animals, and things. Though maybe not as headspinning as the fabulous taxonomy in Borges’s Chinese encyclopedia that so inspired Michel Foucault, Argo’s proposition does raise the question of how we classify the world—a problem equally posed by Kafka’s Cynological System of Science. Like Argo, Kafka’s dog possesses a heightened sense of smell. But he is sensitive to what falls outside taxonomical schemas, or the “order of things”: he has a nose for the gaps.

Literary critic Theodore Ziolkowski has outlined a whole minor genre of the talking-dog story, what he nicely dubbed the “caninization of literature.”²⁸

At the heart of this canine canon is “Investigations of a Dog,” and Ziolkowski traces the rich history surrounding the story and its many mythological, philosophical, and literary connections, from the ancient domestication of *canis familiaris*, the first animal species to be taken into the human milieu some 15,000 years ago,²⁹ to the intelligent postapocalyptic dogs of Clifford D. Simak’s science fiction novel *City*, who pass down oral legends about a long-extinct creature known as “Man.” I want to highlight just two main threads of Ziolkowski’s history.

First, regarding ancient philosophy: in yet another case of everything being footnotes to Plato, it was Plato who “established the dog as the ‘philosophical’ animal par excellence.”³⁰ In book II of the *Republic*, during a discussion of the guardians of the polis, Plato commends the way dogs divide the world according to the category of knowledge, showing gentleness toward what they know and hostility to the unknown. “Surely this is a refined quality in its nature and one that is truly philosophical. . . . How could [the dog] be anything besides a lover of learning, if it defines what is its own and what is alien to it in terms of knowledge and ignorance?”³¹ “Dog” later became the moniker of a whole philosophical school, the Cynics, whose most storied exponent was Diogenes of Sinope (though they were not so much a “school” as a ragtag band of social iconoclasts and renegade moralists). How did they get their name? Some argue the term derives from the Cynosarges (the White Dog), the gymnasium where Antisthenes, a student of Socrates’s and the first of the Cynics, gave his talks; or else it may have been an insult provoked by Diogenes’s shameless behavior (lack of personal hygiene, masturbating and defecating in public), which the philosopher joyfully identified with, extolling the honesty of dogs and their natural lifestyle. In any event, the first talking-dog story would have to wait a few centuries for the satirist Lucian of Samosata. As Ziolkowski writes, “It was the curious union of Plato and his philosophical dog with the cynophilic philosophers that produced what seems to be the first example in Western literature of a philosophical dialogue involving a talking dog.”³² In the twenty-first of Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Dead* (the text is quite short, some thirty-two lines), the Cynic Menippus asks Cerberus, the hound of Hades, how Socrates behaved upon his descent to the underworld. “Seeing that you’re a god, you can be expected not merely to bark, but also to talk like a human when you wish.” Cerberus replies that Socrates put on a bold face but ultimately cracked, crying like a baby. “You alone were a credit to your breed—you and Diogenes before you, because you came in without having to be forced or pushed, but of your own accord, laughing and cursing at everyone.”³³ Cerberus, the original talking dog, praises the Cynics for their fearlessness, laughing and cursing in the realm of the dead.

Second, in modern times, the talking dog was given new life by Miguel de Cervantes in his novella *The Dialogue of the Dogs* (*El coloquio de los perros*, 1613), the

last of the *Exemplary Tales*. If there is one work that “Investigations of a Dog” is in dialogue with, it is *The Dialogue of the Dogs*. (Although one shouldn’t forget Goethe’s *Faust*, where Mephistopheles first appears in the shape of a black poodle—in the great legend of the knowledge-intoxicated scholar and his pact with the devil, Faust sold his soul to a dog.) *The Dialogue of the Dogs* takes the form of a story within a story. It’s framed as possibly the fever dream of a man hospitalized for syphilis, who overhears two dogs, Berganza and Scipio, conducting a spirited and wide-ranging conversation—the patient, Campuzano, transcribed their dialogue and has now offered it to his friend as an entertaining read. In the dialogue, it’s Berganza who does most of the talking: he recounts his many colorful, and sometimes harrowing, adventures, describing his life under various masters and raising questions about philosophy and the nature of language. (The primordial function of language, he conjectures, is slander and gossip—a provocative thesis, to say the least.) A sequel was written by E. T. A. Hoffmann, *A Report on the Latest Adventures of the Dog Berganza* (1814), that transposes the Spanish talking dog to the world of German Romanticism; Hoffmann’s emphasis on music presages the musical encounters of Kafka’s dog. (In 1908, another sequel was penned by Spanish dramatist Jacinto Benavente y Martinez, *New Dialogue of the Dogs*.) A teenage Sigmund Freud was fascinated with Cervantes’s story, and he and his friend Eduard Silberstein taught themselves Spanish by conducting an epistolary exchange in the language, Freud signing his letters Scipio and Silberstein Berganza—already anticipating the psychoanalytic setup, with Freud taking the role of the silent listening dog, interrupting at key moments, and Silberstein the loquacious storyteller. Before there was the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society there was the *Academia Española*, a fictional institution (or “strange scholarly society,” as Freud later described it) founded by Freud and his friend, with its rituals, regulations, and projects (and scandals), and its two official members, the talking dogs. There is a subterranean thread linking Cervantes, Hoffmann, Kafka, and Freud, through the figure of the philosopher dog. A secret canine history of modernity.

Though Ziolkowski’s history is quite exhaustive, we can extend it by turning to the field of visual art. According to an old tradition, the dog has a uniquely melancholy temperament, and Albrecht Dürer drew on this folklore for one of his most celebrated engravings, *Melencolia I* (1514). Dürer’s picture possesses an exquisite symbolism that spectators have been unpuzzling (rousing them out of their melancholy?) for ages. At its center is the brooding angel, surrounded by a panoply of objects and tools—including weighing scales, a plane, a hammer, a saw, a crucible, a pouch, a millstone, a sphere and a polyhedron, a magic square, an hourglass, a bell, a ladder leading off-frame, and a rainbow encasing a comet or possibly a planet—and accompanied by a dejected-looking putto to her left. Erwin Panofsky’s influential interpretation

makes of it the supreme artistic allegory of the Renaissance humanist conception of melancholy, linking gloominess with creative vision under the sign of Saturn. The title, he argues, derives from physician and occultist Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, who articulated a scheme of the three levels of melancholic genius: the first concerns the imagination (*imaginatio*) of artists; the second belongs to the reason (*ratio*) of scientists and thinkers; and the third and highest form pertains to the intuitive mind (*mens*) of theologians.³⁴ Incidentally, Agrippa was also behind Faust's Mephistophelean dog: Agrippa had a black hound, his familiar, who jumped into the Rhône at his master's death; rumored to be a demon, the spirit dog was incorporated into the legend of Faustus, eventually becoming Goethe's *schwarze Pudel*.³⁵ *Melencolia I*, written on a banner held aloft by a flying bat, designates the inspired moroseness of the artistic imagination, striving to realize an impossible ideal. Among the engraving's various objects, tools, angelic beings, and cosmic scenery, there is one figure of special interest to us: curled up at the hem of the angel's dress, perhaps neglected, or else mimicking her pensiveness, is an emaciated dog.

Taking up Panofsky's interpretation, Frances Yates highlights the dog as essential to the artwork: "The starved dog is an important key to the meaning. This hound, in my opinion, is not yet another indication of a depressed mood of failure. It represents, I believe, the bodily senses, starved and under severe control in this first stage of inspiration, in which the inactivity is not representative of failure but of an intense inner vision. The Saturnian melancholic has 'taken leave of the senses' and is soaring in worlds beyond worlds in a state of visionary trance."³⁶ Following Agrippa's scheme, we might consider "Investigations of a Dog" as the belated companion piece to Dürer's engraving, a *Melencolia II*, which depicts the *second* stage of inspiration of the melancholic thinker, with the dog now in the starring role. And while Yates would emphasize inspired vision over depressive failure, the sense of impasse and impossibility persists. Dürer writes, "The lie is in our understanding, and darkness is so firmly entrenched in our mind that even our groping will fail."³⁷ "I am a dog," says Kafka's narrator, "in essentials just as locked in silence as the others, stubbornly resisting my own questions, dour out of fear."³⁸

Walter Benjamin discusses *Melencolia I* in his early work *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, which makes it somewhat surprising that he was not more interested in "Investigations of a Dog" while undertaking his investigations of Kafka; the theme of the melancholy hound and its venerable symbolism, which he was well aware of, could have been a possible inroad to an interpretation of the story.³⁹ Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl's classic study *Saturn and Melancholy* provides an extensive account of the history of canine ennui, ending with the Latin phrase "The best dog is the one who shows the most melancholic face":

The first of these auxiliary motifs is the dog, which in itself belonged to the typical portraits of scholars. Its inclusion and the inversion of meaning by which it becomes a fellow-sufferer with *Melencolia can*, however, be justified by several considerations. Not only is it mentioned in several astrological sources as a typical beast of Saturn, but, in the *Horapollo* (the introduction to the *Mysteries of the Egyptian Alphabet* which the humanists worshipped almost idolatrously), it is associated with the disposition of melancholies in general, and of scholars and prophets in particular. In 1512, Pirckheimer had finished a translation of the *Horapollo* from the Greek, and Dürer himself had supplied it with illustrations; and curiously enough, of this jointly produced codex, there survives the very page (Dürer's drawing L83) on which it is written that the hieroglyph of a dog signifies among other things the spleen, prophets, and "sacras literas"—all notions which, since the time of Aristotle, had been closely linked with the melancholic—and that the dog, more gifted and sensitive than other beasts, has a very serious nature and can fall a victim to madness, and like deep thinkers is inclined to be always on the hunt, smelling things out, and sticking to them. "The best dog," says a contemporary hieroglyphist, is therefore the one "qui faciem magis, ut vulgo aiunt, melancholicam prae se ferat" [which shows the most melancholic face, as they say]—which could be said with all justice of the dog in Dürer's engraving.⁴⁰

From Dürer we can pass to Goya: the most enigmatic of his "Black Paintings" depicts a small dog's head poking out from behind a hill, perhaps a sand dune, its eyes turned up toward an immense dirt-stained sky. It is a scene of Pascalian pathos, a tiny hound alone in the infinite expanses of the universe. The Black Paintings are untitled, and the work is often simply called *The Dog* (*El perro*, 1820–1824), or *A Dog* (*Un perro*). The official title of the Museo del Prado is *Sunken Dog* or *Half-Sunken Dog* (*Perro semihundido*), though it's also been called *Dog Buried in the Sand* (*Perro enterrado en la arena*) and *Dog Struggling against the Current* (*Un perro luchando contra la corriente*), for a watery interpretation. It evokes loneliness, abandonment, and anguish, but also perhaps waiting and expectation. Is the dog searching for its missing master—like humans lost in a desolate world without God—or is it cowering before a menace hidden in the shadows? Is the dog a Cerberus-like symbol of death? Are its eyes following something in the sky, like the motion of flying birds (as suggested by photographic analysis of the painting)? Is the painting an early harbinger of modernist abstraction? It's been described as a portrait of a dog at "the end of the world."⁴¹ But the scene could also be signaling that "there is a world to be looked at yet."⁴² As much as *Melencolia I* beckons for interpretation, Goya's *Dog* frustrates it; bereft of narrative and visual accessories, Goya's tableau is as mute as Dürer's is loquacious. Just an inscrutable dog's head, eyes peering into the abyss.

Then there is Giacometti's sculpture *Dog* (*Le chien*, 1951). This was one of the artist's most personal works. "It's me," Jean Genet reports Giacometti as saying. "One day I saw myself in the street like that. I was the dog."⁴³ If, according to Panofsky, *Melencolia I* was Dürer's "spiritual self-portrait,"⁴⁴ Giacometti deeply identified with *Dog*. Apparently starving, the skin claspings the bones, the hound presses forward on its spindly legs, gaunt face bowed to the earth. Genet spied in its graceful lines a kind of artistic signature. "If it was first chosen as a sign of misery and solitude, it seems to me that this dog is drawn as a harmonious signature, the curve of the spine answering the curve of the paw, but this signature is also the supreme magnification of solitude."⁴⁵ Genet gives a special significance to the word solitude, which is not merely about loneliness or the deprivation of others' company, but involves an inner dimension, or rather an inner retreat: a flight from oneself into the most impenetrable and incommunicable region of one's being (Genet also calls this the "wound"). Solitude concerns something "in you more than you," to use the Lacanian phrase, a part of the self both intimate and alien, singularizing yet impersonal. Yates saw the emaciated dog in Dürer as signifying a concentration of forces, the intensity of an inner vision, but it's Giacometti's dog that best captures the fractured yet indomitable spirit of Kafka's hunger theorist. Kafka adds a twist to the motif of the starving dog: his dog starves in the name of research. Fasting is a research method, the pathway to truth.

The melancholy dog, the silent dog, the solitary dog—are these some of the philosopher's missing comrades? To this pack should be added one more: the stray dog, without an intellectual home. Kafka had a strong interest in ancient China, as evinced in his stories "An Imperial Message," "An Old Manuscript," and "The Great Wall of China," and there's also a resonance with Chinese history in the figure of the philosopher dog. For all his colossal posthumous success in shaping Chinese morality and culture, Confucius failed to garner an official post during his lifetime. He spent many years traveling from kingdom to kingdom and was often treated well by his hosts, who used him for their own purposes though without granting him a significant position. Once he was referred to as a "homeless dog," a description that the itinerant sage readily affirmed. This is the other side of the glorified teacher and thinker: Confucius was a stray dog searching for a master and, to his deep disappointment, failing to find one.

Confucius and his disciples had lost track of each other in the city of Cheng. Someone saw Confucius standing at the East Gate, and told Zigong:

"There is a man at the East Gate, with a head like that of Emperor Yao, a neck like that of Gao Yao, and a shoulder like that of Zichan, but from the waist downwards is shorter than Emperor Yu by three inches. He appears crestfallen like a homeless wandering dog."

When they had found each other, and Zigong had told the story to Confucius, the latter said:

“The first part of the description is not quite right, but ‘like a homeless wandering dog,’ he’s quite right, he’s quite right!”⁴⁶

1.4 A NEW DIOGENES

But the key reference for dog philosophy, of course, is Diogenes the Cynic. Kafka explicitly refers to Diogenes in a letter to his Czech translator and confidant Milena Jesenská, dated November 1920; the passage reads like a short story in its own right:

In my case one can imagine 3 circles: an innermost circle A, then B, then C. The center A explains to B why this man is bound to torment and mistrust himself, why he has to give up (it isn’t giving up, that would be very difficult—it’s merely a having-to-give-up), why he may not live. (Wasn’t Diogenes, for instance, very sick in this sense? Which one of us would not have been happy, when at last favored with Alexander’s highly radiant gaze? But Diogenes pleaded desperately to let him have the sun, this terrible Greek sun—constantly burning, driving people mad. That barrel was full of ghosts.) Nothing more is explained to C, the active human being; he simply takes orders from B. C acts under the greatest pressure, in a fearful sweat (is there any other sweat that breaks out on the forehead, cheeks, temples, scalp—in short, around the entire skull? That’s what happens with C). Thus C acts more out of fear than understanding; he trusts, he believes that A has explained everything to B and that B has understood everything and passed it on correctly.⁴⁷

The incident Kafka is alluding to is one of the most celebrated anecdotes about Diogenes, his encounter with Alexander the Great. In Diogenes Laertius’s recounting: “When he was sunning himself in the Craneum, Alexander came and stood over him and said, ‘Ask of me any boon you like.’ To which he replied, ‘Stand out of my light.’”⁴⁸ Another story goes: “Alexander once came and stood opposite him and said, ‘I am Alexander the great king.’ ‘And I,’ said he, ‘am Diogenes the Cynic.’ Being asked what he had done to be called a hound, he said, ‘I fawn on those who give me anything, I yelp at those who refuse, and I set my teeth in rascals.’”⁴⁹ And finally: “Alexander is reported to have said, ‘Had I not been Alexander, I should have liked to be Diogenes.’”⁵⁰ The fates of Alexander and Diogenes were somehow intertwined, both even supposedly died on the same day in 323 BCE. Their legendary, and probably apocryphal, meeting is one of the great fables of the philosophical tradition, the anecdote that sums up philosophy’s relation to power. The indigent Diogenes, who knew something about begging, turns the tables on the Macedonian conqueror. Alexander’s magnanimous offer to grant whatever Diogenes

wishes contains an implicit demand, that he should let the king display his kingliness by turning himself into a beggar whose desire may be ostentatiously fulfilled. This is what Diogenes refuses. By telling Alexander to move out of his sun, he unexpectedly short-circuits the demand hidden in Alexander's offer, revealing the king to be the real beggar. Diogenes is not enslaved by any wants that would make him dependent on a powerful benefactor; conversely, Alexander is slave to his own ideal of magnificence and grandeur.⁵¹ The sovereignty of power is routed by the sovereignty of thought, which Alexander himself acknowledges in own wish: had he not been Alexander, he would've wanted to have been born as the Cynic.

In Kafka's updating of Cynicism, the problem of authority has become more elusive and intractable. In its original telling, Diogenes could confront Alexander directly; it was possible to imagine a face-to-face encounter with Power, in which a fearless street dog symbolically defeats the mighty king. This kind of confrontation is impossible for Kafka. It belongs to another age, or to the myth of such an age. Instead of a dual relation, we have a more complex scheme of concentric circles. At its core is the master (A), who is withdrawn and inaccessible; his will is relayed to the subject (C) via an intermediary (B) whom C must "trust" to be A's reliable representative. There is no direct contact between C and A, no means of access to the inner circle of Power. The center exerts its force on the self precisely as something opaque and unreachable. From the perspective of this new configuration, Diogenes's retort to Alexander appears as the expression not of fierce independence and courageous truth telling but of debility and illness—he must have been "very sick," and the barrel in which he slept "full of ghosts." To bask in the radiant gaze of a master like Alexander is true happiness, and the fiery Greek sun, "constantly burning, driving people mad," the real horror. How should we understand this reversal?

Kafka casts a neurotic gaze on Diogenes, he proposes a modern neurotic reimagination of this specimen story of ancient philosophy. (This is where the radicality of Kafka lies: he doesn't offer a new reading of Diogenes or a more sophisticated understanding of Cynic philosophy, but, with a line or two, undermines the premise on which such readings rest.) The secret of the neurotic is that authority is not so much dreaded and despised as longed for and admired; it's the master who shelters, or at least is supposed to shelter, the subject, protecting it from the "burning" madness of desire. How wonderful it would be to have a master like Alexander!—from the perspective of the neurotic's deeply ambivalent and convoluted relationship to authority, not to want such a master would be the sign of an even greater sickness. Diogenes's deconstruction of authority is not the solution but precisely the problem; the neurotic is haunted by a deficient, broken-down authority. If Diogenes exposed the emptiness of the master, humiliating the sublime Alexander by telling him

to get out of his light—Alexander, a true master, could acknowledge his defeat with dignity, that is, without being humiliated—the neurotic knows this emptiness all too well. Or rather, he both knows it and does not know it, he is “bound to torment and distrust himself” without understanding exactly why but imagining that there is some agency out there, namely A, who does know and is ultimately responsible for it. Kafka’s universe is full of such A’s, and the problem of his protagonists is that of trying to grasp what the Emperor, the Law, or the Castle wants, while being confronted with their own desire for this elusive final instance. But A can never be reached, the Law is a game of Chinese whispers, it’s the intermediaries who compose B that the hero must contend with. The subject lives under a remote and incomprehensible injunction that makes life impossible, and it negotiates this impossibility through the medium of various gatekeepers, go-betweens, managers, and messengers—all these little others who run about in place of the missing A, *le grand Autre* (*Andere* in German) or big Other.

This very short story (Kafka presents it as a self-analysis) may be seen as expressing the fundamental formula of Kafka’s fiction, its algebraic crystallization, literally its ABCs: the distant, inaccessible authority, the sprawling ranks of emissaries and administrators acting in its stead, and the subject who, under great pressure from an opaque source, cannot live. It’s not, like the poet says, that the center cannot hold, but there is no center and it holds all the more tightly. What “Investigations of a Dog” gives us is the portrait of a modern Cynic, one who belongs to the lineage of Diogenes but operates in a very different universe, with a different relation to power, language, and truth. Kafka’s dog is a Diogenes for the era of the decentered subject, the subject of the unconscious.

1.5 THE MOST SUBLIME OBSESSIONAL NEUROTIC

Interestingly enough, the paragraph on Diogenes and the ABCs of Kafka is preceded by a brief meditation on psychoanalysis—one of the rare mentions of psychoanalysis in Kafka’s writings. Here is the passage (the two parts together make up the whole letter):

You say, Milena, you don’t understand it. Try to understand it by calling it a disease. It’s one of the many manifestations of disease which psychoanalysis claims to have discovered. I do not call it a disease and consider the therapeutic part of psychoanalysis a helpless mistake. All these alleged diseases, sad as they may seem, are matters of faith, anchorages in some maternal ground for souls in distress. Consequently, psychoanalysis also maintains that religions have the same origin as “diseases” of the individual. Of course, today most of us don’t feel any sense of religious community; the sects are countless and limited to individuals, but perhaps it only seems that way from our present perspective.

On the other hand, those anchorages which are firmly fixed in real ground aren't merely isolated, interchangeable possessions—they are preformed in man's being, and they continue to form and re-form his being (as well as his body) along the same lines. And this they hope to heal?⁵²

Kafka's relationship to psychoanalysis was complicated. "Never again psychology!" he once wrote, though this could also serve as a slogan of psychoanalysis, or phenomenology, for that matter, both of which sought to distinguish themselves from the study of empirical consciousness or the ego.⁵³ While Kafka had his reservations about psychoanalysis, in this passage he has more in common with it than he thinks.⁵⁴ What Kafka holds against psychoanalysis is not its method of analysis per se, but its therapeutic pretensions. For the "alleged" diseases it diagnoses are no mere sicknesses, the negative of health and flourishing, but constitute the soul's very substance, its anchoring in "some maternal ground." As Kafka puts it, what psychoanalysis considers symptoms of illness are really "matters of faith . . . for souls in distress." They are what positively allow the subject to live and desire, however much misery they may cause. This paradoxical, compromised vitality is what Lacan designated with the term *jouissance* (enjoyment), which is neither pleasure as opposed to pain nor even pleasure in pain, as it's sometimes described, but might best be defined in Kafka's terms, as an anchoring in being. In effect, Kafka criticizes psychoanalysis for purporting to heal what amounts to the human condition. What psychoanalysis describes as mental illnesses are not aberrations of a proper psychological development or deviations from the normal, but so many ways of being in the world, insofar as this being is necessarily askew in one way or another. Kafka even suggests that the different "anchorages" are "preformed in man's being," and that they "continue to form and re-form his being (as well as his body) along the same lines," hinting at a limited number of such modalities of anchoring, like psychoanalysis's table of diagnostic categories. This is perhaps as close as we get to a Kafkian transcendental: there is no way of living without some kind of ontological crutch, and these follow certain regular, preset lines. Mental illnesses (but again, illness is a misleading word) are occluded modes of access to being.

These remarks could also serve as the starting point for reexamining one of the most hackneyed themes in Kafka's reception: the religion question. Symptoms, Kafka says, are matters of faith for souls in distress. According to the above passage, religion has not so much disappeared in the modern age as dispersed into a multitude of individual cults: one's private psychopathology is the new object of faith, the "religion" (here we can recall the etymological sense of religion as *religare*, to tie or to join) that binds together the subject's being. God is not dead, but unconscious. When Kafka writes of the dispersal

of beliefs he seems to be speaking of the splintering of official religions, but his observation perhaps fits the case of psychopathology even better. Where we encounter God in modernity is not so much in the official rituals and holy books of organized religion (although these are going nowhere), as in the anxieties, symptoms, and unconscious fantasies that both perturb and sustain our everyday “secular” lives—this is where belief in higher powers, and demonic forces, still fires the imagination and affects our bearing toward self, others, and the world.⁵⁵ (Kafka is especially sensitive to the Biblical-style dramas that can erupt in our mundane dealings with bureaucracy.)

The common source of psychopathology and religion stems from the fact that the subject’s fundamental relation to reality is one of trust or faith, and not knowledge. Reality is something one believes in, or not—but not believing often involves a much more fanatical belief in an alternate, more “true” reality. Conversely, to try to rigorously rationalize and justify one’s faith in the world is already the expression of madness. Kafka’s algebra is based on trust: the subject C has no knowledge of A, but must trust in its emissaries, B. (This language is notably echoed by the narrator of “The Burrow”: “I can only trust myself and my burrow.”)⁵⁶ There’s no being in the world without a kind of primordial trust, but, because there’s nothing to guarantee this trust (otherwise it wouldn’t be trust), this is where things can get dangerous, and interesting. Psychic reality is always, to varying degrees, tenuous; it’s ungrounded and so needs to find its own “maternal ground.” The organization and management of this faith inevitably take one form or another, whether it’s the collective religions of old, or the individual psychic conditions, wrongly labeled “diseases,” that provide modern subjectivity with its existential weight.

One could go a step further than Kafka here and ask whether the different categories of the Freudian clinic actually constitute new kinds of communal religion: the church of neurotics, the church of perverts, and the church of psychotics. In one of his science fiction novels, Philip K. Dick imagines something akin to this. A psychiatric hospital colony on another planet declares independence from Earth and organizes itself around pathological clans, each with its specialized social function: Heebs (hebephrenic schizophrenics: laborers), Skitzes (schizophrenics: poets and priests), Manses (manics: soldiers), Ob-Coms (obsessive compulsives: clerks and managers), Pares (paranoiacs: leaders), Polys (polymorphic schizophrenics: dreamy creatives), Deps (depressives: endless dark gloom), and so on.⁵⁷ While intriguing, Dick’s vision of mental illness as hegemonic social form—a kind of Freudian (non-)identity politics—never came to pass; other groupings have proved more decisive for us. Nonetheless there is something unsettling about this satirical science fiction: even if we don’t officially live in a world-cum-mental asylum,

in another sense, perhaps we do. For modern souls find and lose their way according to how they live that part of themselves that irremediably escapes them: the unconscious.

Does Kafka himself belong to one of these psychosects? One of the earliest psychoanalytic comments about Kafka comes from Otto Fenichel, who assimilates Kafka to schizophrenia, though without elaborating: "In Kafka's case no doubt we are faced with a moving portrayal, drawn from internal sources, of schizophrenic experiences."⁵⁸ In *Kafka's Prayer*, the first book-length study of Kafka in English (forgotten today), Paul Goodman similarly argues that Kafka "drags us to depths far beyond our ordinary maladjustments; he asks us what it means to have a consciousness altogether; and from another point of view, he introduces us to problems of psychosis rather than neurosis."⁵⁹ Instead of a conflict between the ego and the drives, Kafka's work addresses the more profound conflict between consciousness and reality: "with Kafka, the self seems to feel that, if it temporarily relaxes, the entire order of the world will fly in pieces."⁶⁰ This perspective was later developed by Louis Sass, who calls Kafka's early story "Description of a Struggle" "perhaps the most vivid evocation of schizophrenic experience in all of Western literature."⁶¹ In a remarkable close reading, he shows how the text contains "the entire progression of a schizophrenic illness—from schizoid self-consciousness and hyperscrutiny through self-alienation and solipsism, and on to the dissolution of both self and world."⁶² Kafka portrays the different shades and manifestations of "ontological insecurity," from excessive reflexivity and bodily dissociation to the most spectacular symptoms of world-ending catastrophe and "cataclysmic apocalypse."⁶³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari elaborated the most famous schizophrenic interpretation of Kafka, covering his entire oeuvre, but instead of ontological insecurity they put the emphasis on "schizo escape": delirious metamorphoses and animalian becomings, and the minoritization of literature.⁶⁴ For an alternate view, we can turn to Samuel Beckett: "The Kafka hero has a coherence of purpose. He's lost but he's not spiritually precarious, he's not falling to bits. My people seem to be falling to bits."⁶⁵

My own position is closer to Beckett's. Like Goodman and Sass, I think that the aspect of ontological insecurity—the loosening or fracturing of psychic reality—is essential to Kafka's work. Yet while elements of schizophrenic experience can be found in his writings, these should be understood as part of a neurotic structure. Or as part of a neurosis on the edge of madness, that mobilizes neurosis as a defense against madness, but also uses schizophrenic elements to press itself to its own limits. Kafka's obsessions, including: the impossible quest (in Beckett's words, the Kafkaian character's "coherence of purpose"); the ever-frustrated desire for permission and authorization;

compulsive overthinking (manifest in the form of Kafka's sentences, which branch off in multiple trajectories only to double back then take flight again, and his virtuosic use of the word "but"); deferral, delay, procrastination, and postponement; hesitation, raised to the level of method ("There is a goal, but no way; what we call a way is hesitation")⁶⁶; uncertainty, as opposed to psychotic certitude; misunderstanding, and the indeterminacies and equivocalities of interpretation; failure, which, as he writes in a diary entry, he cultivates precisely as a defense against psychosis, as a way to keep "from going mad"⁶⁷; guilt, whose ultimate cause is elusive and unknown; the tortuous intricacies of grievance (Kafka is the supreme anatomist of complaint); and, quite simply, *obsession*—are those of the obsessional neurotic.⁶⁸ It's this kind of "anchoring" that he informs us about and, through his literature, creatively investigates.

The philosopher dog even provides a motto for this research, when he says that he "bows" before the authority of knowledge but seeks to "wriggle out through the gaps."⁶⁹ The dog is installed in the world of dogdom, he's a "normal enough" canine, caught in the middle of things, but it's a broken middle, and it's from the holes and ruptures that he strives to create something new, to found a science of the gaps, as it were. There are some more schizophrenic moments in "Investigations of a Dog," especially involving music: the psychedelic concert that launches him on his path, and the quasi-hallucinatory voice in the forest that sings to him alone. The fast also produces a hunger delirium, in which he undergoes bodily dissociation and the borders between self and world precariously blur. But at the same time these breakdowns belong to the dog's philosophical quest, that is, to his questioning, including the silence that rises in response to his questions. "Investigations of a Dog" is a tale of theoretical obsession, and the dog's drivenness could be compared to that of Freud himself, who identified as an obsessional neurotic, laboring in a "sealed-off world."⁷⁰ (William James made a witty remark about Freud's meta-obsessionalism: "I confess that he made on me personally the impression of a man obsessed with fixed ideas.")⁷¹ Instead of psychoanalyzing Kafka, my aim is to explore the parallels between Kafka and psychoanalysis—a relation that, curiously enough, runs through the figure of the dog, a shared spirit animal or "conceptual persona" of Kafka and Freud.

The point is not to reduce the author to a type or to try to put him on the couch. Rather it's what Kafka does with his neurosis—how he uses it, transforms it, and doggedly investigates it—that constitutes his originality and gives to his writing its universal dimension. Lacan once called Hegel "the most sublime of hysterics."⁷² Kafka, the most sublime obsessional neurotic? Despite his criticism of psychoanalysis, Kafka is struggling here with the same essential question as Freud and Lacan: if one can't be "healed" from one's "sickness," since it's the soul's very anchorage in being, what can be done about

it? Or better, what can be done with it? For psychoanalysts, this concerns psychoanalysis. For Kafka, it's about literature. And for Kafka's dog, it's a matter of theory: the investigations of a neuroticized Cynic.

1.6 KAFKA'S SCREWBALL TRAGEDY

There's one more aspect of the story that needs to be mentioned at the outset: its comedy. "Investigations of a Dog" is a unique example of Kafka's humor in that it's the jokiest of all his fictions; indeed, the whole story is essentially one long joke. Like a shaggy-dog story—the narrator is even of a "woolly" breed—the tale leads you on and on, moving from one misadventure to the next, but without any climax or resolution, until it just trails off. But if the punchline is never explicitly stated, as soon as one gets it it's apparent everywhere, in the dog's various encounters, the mysteries he confronts, his entire research program. And the punchline is this: dogs do not see human beings. Humans are the elephants in the room, as it were, the invisible masters of the universe, and this massive gap in canine perception is what, from the reader's (presumably) human perspective, leads the dog into all kinds of funny traps and pseudo-problems. "Recently I have taken more and more to casting up my life, looking for the decisive, the fundamental error that I must surely have made; and I cannot find it."⁷³ This blindness is the *proton pseudos*, the fundamental error, on which the dog's investigations rest.

Thus the mystery of the fantastical concert is explained as soon as one realizes that the dog has stumbled onto a performance of trained circus dogs; their upright posture, which so scandalizes the puppy, is part of the act, the loud music is produced not by the dogs themselves but by an organ grinder or other human performers, and the labyrinth of wooden bars in which the dog gets caught are simply chair legs, which, at ground level, appear as an impenetrable maze. Or again, the enigma of nourishment is easily solved when one understands that the dogs are being fed by an invisible hand, throwing scraps to hungry hounds. Likewise, the *Lufthunde* or air dogs are the pampered lapdogs of the bourgeoisie, toted around in well-to-do ladies' arms, or nowadays in designer pooch purses. And in the episode with the hunting dog, it's as if Laska had wandered into the story from *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy's dog warning Kafka's dog to clear the field, for Levin and his shotgun are on the way (*Anna Karenina* contains a couple of daring scenes where the point of view shifts into the hunting dog's stream of consciousness).

The whole thing is extremely well constructed, but the problem is: how should we interpret this joke? Is "Investigations" nothing but an extended intellectual gag? Is the story really a satire on philosophy, poking fun at the follies of metaphysical speculation? Would an author such as myself risk looking ridiculous by taking the dog's philosophical quest too seriously? The story is a brilliant exercise in what Viktor Shklovsky called estrangement or

defamiliarization (*ostranenie*), but what is being defamiliarized here? In a sense, what the story throws into relief is the setup of Kafka's own fiction.

If we return to Kafka's fundamental formula, two things stand out. First, "Investigations of a Dog" radicalizes the distance and withdrawnness of the central authority A to the point of its virtual disappearance. There is no mysterious Castle, no inaccessible Law, no unreachable Emperor. A has now effectively vanished. Meanwhile B is flourishing, in the form of the accelerating progress of scientific knowledge that rules over dogdom, the Dog University—though this has taken on some of the opacity of A by virtue of its own success, the sprawling and unmasterable accumulation of knowledge. And what about C, the subject? Here Kafka makes another turn of the screw. It's as if the more intractable and invisible domination becomes, the more imperative is the striving for freedom. In the original setup, C suffers from an obscure injunction that renders life unlivable. The dog, too, experiences his calling as an obscure injunction, even a monstrous, unachievable task, but he is far less beholden to some external agency or power than most of Kafka's agonized heroes: instead of seeking official permission or status he is the one who authorizes his own investigations. And he looks for others to join him in his philosophical quest to radically transform dogdom. Indeed, the dog is the bringer of the plague, like Freud supposedly said to Carl Jung on their voyage to America. Or better, he is the Kafkian agent who tries to bring a sense of the Kafkaesque to a world that would rather know nothing about it. Kafka's dog is the intrepid researcher who interrogates the gaps in the edifice of knowledge, which point to the unbearable unspeakable secret of—the dogs' domestication.

We need a new phrase to capture Kafka's brand of dark humor: a screwball tragedy. "Investigations of a Dog" is a theoretical burlesque where research involves singing into a hole, dancing with the earth, conjecturing about flying dogs, and undergoing an extended bout of food deprivation. It's a literalization of what Hans Blumenberg called "theory as exotic behavior," in his study of the oldest joke about philosophy, the story of Thales and the Thracian maid. Philosophy, from the very beginning, appeared as an eccentric, "exotic" practice, divorced from everyday life and its pragmatic, down-to-earth concerns. The stargazing Thales (the so-called first philosopher) falling into a well and being laughed at by a servant girl is the specimen joke of philosophy, the joke told by and at the expense of philosophy to capture its own strangeness and distance from life. In Blumenberg's words, "The interaction between the protophilosopher and the Thracian maidservant . . . became the most enduring refiguration of all the tensions and misunderstandings between the lifeworld and theory."⁷⁴ As Blumenberg shows, the history of this joke, with its many variations and interpretations—its retellers sometime siding with Thales, sometimes the maid—is coextensive with the history of philosophy itself.

Kafka's tale may also be considered a part of this history, and, in a way, it constitutes another retelling of the joke.⁷⁵ But if the dog's oddball investigations literalize the exoticism of theory and its remoteness from daily life, Kafka's story is also a literalization of Socrates's reply to the joke.

They say Thales was studying the stars, Theodorus, and gazing aloft, when he fell into a well; and a witty and amusing Thracian servant-girl made fun of him because, she said, he was wild to know about what was up in the sky but failed to see what was in front of him and under his feet. The same joke applies to all who spend their lives in philosophy. It really is true that the philosopher fails to see his next-door neighbor; he not only doesn't notice what he is doing; he scarcely knows whether he is a man or some other kind of creature.⁷⁶

Indeed, who knows, perhaps the philosopher is not a man but a dog.

What is remarkable in Plato's presentation is the way that Socrates, in the face of ridicule, ups the ante. He does not try to defend the value or usefulness of philosophy. (This starts with Aristotle, who recounts how Thales was able to make money from his stargazing by successfully predicting olive harvest yields, and continues to our day with the promotion of philosophy as commercially exploitable critical thinking skills.) Instead, he radicalizes the consequences of Thales's fall. It is not just the physical ground beneath his feet that the philosopher loses, but the metaphysical ground of being and thought: he no longer knows who or even what kind of beast he is. What if, in Kafka's case, the *cogito* were a *dogito*?

This brings us closer to the heart of Kafka's humor. But what is screwy about the dog's investigations—and what I mean to convey with “screwball tragedy”—has to do with their faltering trajectory, their persistently thwarted yet ever-revitalized character, the Kafkian mixture of necessity and impossibility, indispensability and hopelessness, perseverance rendered in its pure and empty form. Throughout his theoretical adventures, the dog keeps tripping over himself, he is both propelled and stymied by an insurmountable inner—what exactly? The idea of screwball tragedy is illustrated perhaps most purely by one of Kafka's variations on the Don Quixote story: not the famous parable “The Truth about Sancho Panza,” which I will come to toward the end of this book, but another fragment.

One of the most important quixotic acts, more obtrusive than fighting the windmill, is: suicide. The dead Don Quixote wants to kill the dead Don Quixote; in order to kill, however, he needs a place that is alive, and this he searches for with his sword, both ceaselessly and in vain. Engaged in this occupation the two dead men, inextricably interlocked and positively bouncing with life, go somersaulting away down the ages.⁷⁷

Kafka presents here a highly original philosophy of life as a continually failed suicide. In this quixotic suicide, the dead subject comes bouncingly alive through its vain attempts to find the last little bit of life to extinguish, and this repeated failure is the missing “place that is alive,” the seat of an exuberant, and uncanny, vitality. The somersaulting vivaciousness of a Don Quixote, split from himself, sword drawn yet forever missing its nonexistent target, takes the form of a double negation, or rather, a repeatedly failed negation. This failed negation is the Kafkian expression of positivity and life, and the source of a twisted metaphysical humor. As Kafka puts it later on in his notebooks, “One cannot not-live, after all.”⁷⁸ Unlike the logic of logicians this “cannot not” is not simply the same as “can”: it means that the “can” can only assert itself through the detour of a more primordial impossibility that both impels and undoes it. Kafka’s Don Quixote can only live by constantly failing to kill himself; the flipside of this is that Quixote is unkillable because he is already dead, and so he keeps “somersaulting away down the ages.” “More obtrusive than fighting the windmill” is this eternally failed negation.

Tilting at windmills is, of course, the Cervantine image for fighting imaginary enemies, and this famous episode epitomizes Don Quixote’s self-styled literary existence, the life he lives through the imitation of already faded (“dead”) chivalric literature. Kafka’s quixotic suicide takes this idea of simulated existence one step further. Virtual or symbolic life is now its own delirious enemy: the Kafkian Don Quixote tilts at himself. Kafka’s characters are all, in different ways, victims of themselves, they are their own worst “imaginary” adversaries. But they also come alive precisely through their failure to cancel themselves out, by spinning around (or tumbling over) their own impossibility, by *failing to not-live*. If animals, crossbreeds, and uncanny nonhumans appear so frequently in Kafka’s work—if a dog should embody the thinker—it’s because they are the best spokescreatures for this internally divided being, which only misrecognizes itself by thinking of itself as a superior and masterful creature, as “human.”

Kafka’s protagonists are possessed by an exceeding *driveness*, and “Investigations of a Dog” is the story of the drive to philosophize, the theory drive—with the added twist that the philosopher should become reflexively aware of the structure of this *driveness*, which is why the story can provide clues for understanding Kafka’s other stories, the general form of his fiction. Kafka’s dog *cannot not-think*. Despite his concerted efforts, the canine philosopher *cannot think himself and his world*, he fails to break through the wall of silence (this is the tragic aspect of the story), but he also *cannot not-think* these things (the screwball one), and so he pushes ahead with his idiosyncratic inquiries and iconoclastic methods, persisting in his “hopeless but indispensable little investigations.” The dog presses forward, as if the true way were less a path to

be followed than an obstacle to be stumbled over. One of Kafka's aphorisms goes: "The true way is along a rope that is not spanned high in the air, but only just above the ground. It seems intended more to cause stumbling than to be walked along."⁷⁹ (This could be read as a rejoinder to the Thales joke: instead of gazing at the heavens, the theorist focuses on the ground, but the ground has become treacherous, a tripwire for the thinker.) Here we may once again recall Freud. Freud's essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is about the self-destructive and self-sabotaging tendencies of psychic life—is not death drive Freud's name for the quixotic suicide? It concludes with the quotation: "What we cannot reach flying we must reach limping... The Book tells us it is no sin to limp."⁸⁰ "Investigations of a Dog" contains a number of images of flying and levitation, a dreamed-of transcendence, but it's this internally inhibited or arrested movement that best captures the faltering course of the dog's investigations. Limping, stumbling, or, more acrobatically, "somersaulting away down the ages": these are physical images of thought contending with its own impossibility, a word that has a special valence for Kafka.

"According to ancient lore, dogs are supposed to recognize angelic presences before humans can see them," writes Alberto Manguel in a remarkable essay on Dante's dogs.⁸¹ But not Kafka's dogs. They are deprived of this gift of extrasensory perception, they have no special sense for the beyond; indeed, they fail to apprehend the reality right before their eyes. Manguel compares the mystery of God for human beings to how humans must appear to dogs: "To this framing orthodoxy belong the savage examples of God's judgment, the gratuitous demonstrations of God's mercy, the divine hierarchies of bliss, and the infernal gradations of punishment: all beyond human understanding, much as our erratic behavior must be beyond the understanding of dogs."⁸² God is to man as man is to dog.⁸³ Yet for Kafka's dogs there is no man-God. His dogs are top dogs, masters of their realm where knowledge reigns supreme. Max Brod summed up the story as a "melancholy travesty of atheism."⁸⁴

But there's another way of looking at it. Kafka turns Manguel's line about the special angel sense of dogs around. His dog has a nose not for the emissaries of the other world, but for the fractures in this one. While submitting to the progress of science and the canon of canine knowledge, the philosopher dog sniffs out the trail of their inconsistencies and distortions, their fissures and gaps. "I bow before their knowledge ... but content myself with wriggling out through the gaps, for which I have a particularly good nose."⁸⁵ Following the logic of the shaggy dog joke, these gaps would be the telltale signs of an "other world": the hidden masters, the invisible human owners, the unnoticed gods of the dogs. But what if this idea of hidden masters were itself a comical ruse, and the truth is that it's not invisible outside forces that are in control but we who are doing it to ourselves? We, human beings, are self-domesticating

animals, the wild and ever-resourceful architects of our own cages. And—paradoxically—it’s the very wildness of our self-domestication that points to a freedom that remains untamed. This is why our investigations into freedom are both indispensable and hopeless.

* * *

Before going any further into the story, however, I’d like to make a detour. To better lay out the stakes of Kafka’s philosophical investigations, it is necessary to turn from the topic of dogs to one of the most enigmatic matters in Kafka’s work: swimming.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 278, 286.
2. See Mark Fisher, who uses Kafka's distinction between "definite acquittal" and "ostensible acquittal" to describe the evaluatory regime of contemporary university administrators, in *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (London: Zero Books, 2009), 22–23.
3. Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (Funks Grove, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), 295.
4. At least, as far as I know. While I will be mainly using the Muirs' translation, I have also consulted the original text, as well as other translations by Stanley Corngold, Joyce Crick, Peter Wortsman, Philipp Strazny, Michael Hofmann, and Phillip Lundberg, all of which have their advantages. These may be found in *Kafka's Selected Stories*, trans. Stanley Corngold (New York: Norton, 2007); *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*, trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); *Konundrum: Selected Prose of Franz Kafka*, trans. Peter Wortsman (Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books, 2016); *Franz Kafka: Investigations of a Dog*, trans. Philipp Strazny (Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2016); *Investigations of a Dog and Other Creatures*, trans. Michael Hofmann (London: New Directions, 2017); *Kafka Unleashed*, trans. Phillip Lundberg (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2018). The critical edition of the story was published in Franz Kafka, *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*, ed. Jost Schillemeit (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1992).
5. Kafka, "Investigations," 286, 287.
6. Richard T. Gray, Ruth V. Gross, Rolf J. Goebel, and Clayton Koelb, *A Franz Kafka Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 95. Other critics have lauded the story; for example, Eric Williams called it "one of his most accomplished and intricately reflexive short stories" ("Of Cinema, Food, and Desire: Franz Kafka's 'Investigations of a Dog,'" *College Literature* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 92). And Horst Steinmetz claimed that it is "a key narrative for the work as a whole," "a kind of commentary on the rest of Kafka's oeuvre" (*Suspensive Interpretation: Am Beispiel Franz Kafkas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 122). Closest to my own philosophical approach to the story are the studies of Mladen Dolar, "Kafka's Voices," in *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Investigations of a Kantian Dog," in *Crimes of the Future: Theory and Its Global Reproduction* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014); Serge Druon, *Quelqu'un arrive, Franz Kafka* (Paris:

Éditions Edilivre, 2011); Rainer Nägele, “I Don’t Want to Know that I Know: The Inversion of Socratic Ignorance in the Knowledge of the Dogs,” in *Philosophy and Kafka*, ed. Brendan Moran and Carlo Salzani (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013); and Eric Santner, “Caninical Theory,” in *Untying Things Together: Philosophy, Literature and a Life in Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021). Léa Veinstein’s *Les philosophes lisent Kafka*: Benjamin, Arendt, Anders, Adorno (Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l’homme, 2019) argues that a philosophical interpretation of Kafka depends on “taking charge of the literality of animal speech” and highlights in this regard “Investigations of a Dog” (p. 300).

7. Walter Benjamin to Theodor Adorno, January 7, 1935, in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 471.

8. Walter Benjamin, “Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (1934; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 126.

9. Kafka, “Investigations,” 280.

10. Kafka, 303.

11. Kafka, 296.

12. Kafka, 298.

13. Kafka, 301.

14. Kafka, 300.

15. Kafka, 309.

16. Kafka, 314.

17. Kafka, 291.

18. Siegfried Kracauer, “Franz Kafka: On His Posthumous Works,” in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995 [1931]), 270.

19. Kafka, “Investigations,” 316.

20. See Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 188. Dolar’s reading of the story was a major source of inspiration for my own.

21. “The genuine author and holder of the copyright is—Friedrich Nietzsche. Now, I am aware that a minor chronological difficulty mars my thesis. Yet for a thinker who was, as Nietzsche insisted he was, ‘born posthumously,’ chronology poses no serious problem. Besides, Nietzsche must be the author, for, if he were not, then German Idealism would possess in its infancy a power and range that far exceed what we have ever been willing to attribute to it in its maturity” (David Farrell Krell, “The Oldest Program towards a System in German Idealism,” *The Owl of Minerva* 17, no. 1 (Fall 1985): 19).

22. I cite David Farrell Krell’s translation of “The Oldest System-Program of German Idealism,” in his *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 23.

23. This connection was made by Darra Goldstein, in her *Nikolai Zabolotsky: Play for Mortal Stakes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 186–187. I quote from Goldstein’s translation of “The Mad Wolf.”

24. Kafka, “Investigations,” 290.

25. Virginia Woolf, *Flush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23.

26. Ričardas Gavelis, *Vilnius Poker*, trans. Elizabeth Novickas (Flossmoor, IL: Pica Pica Press, 2009), 412, 424.
27. Italo Svevo, "Argo and His Master," in *Short Sentimental Journey and Other Stories*, trans. Beryl De Zoete, L. Collison-Morley, and Ben Johnson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 167, 169.
28. Theodore Ziolkowski, "Talking Dogs: The Caninization of Literature," in *Varieties of Literary Thematics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983). For more on talking-dog literature, see also Jacques Brenner, "Les animaux dans la littérature," in *Une humeur de chien* (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1985).
29. Scientists today date this domestication even earlier. See Ewen Calloway, "Ancient Wolf Genome Pushes Back Dawn of Dog," *Nature* (May 21, 2015): <https://www.nature.com/articles/nature.2015.17607>.
30. Ziolkowski, "Talking Dogs," 96.
31. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1015, 376b.
32. Ziolkowski, "Talking Dogs," 97.
33. Lucian, "Dialogues of the Dead," *Lucian VII*, trans. M. D. Macleod, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 19, 21.
34. Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 169.
35. Donald Tyson, in his preface to Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, thoroughly discusses the rumors surrounding Agrippa's dog, including his jumping into the Rhône at his master's death: "Another fable that enjoyed wide commerce was that Agrippa kept a familiar demon always with him in the form of a black female dog. This familiar traveled far and wide in the twinkling of an eye and brought Agrippa news of all the happenings around the world, informing him of wars, plagues, floods and other significant events. This story ... is founded upon a kernel of truth. Agrippa was inordinately fond of dogs and kept them with him wherever he went" (Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, ed. Donald Tyson, trans. James Freake (St Paul, MN: Llewellyn Press, 1993), xxxv).
36. Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge, 1979), 66.
37. Quoted in Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 171.
38. Kafka, "Investigations," 291.
39. See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), 152. Alice Kuzniar has devoted a number of pages to teasing out the links between Benjamin's reading of Dürer and Kafka's "Investigations of a Dog" in *Melancholia's Dog: Reflections on Our Animal Kinship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 14–24.
40. Raymond Klibanysky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), 322–323. A little more than a century after *Melancholia I*, Robert Burton wrote: "Of all other, dogs are most subject to this malady, insomuch some hold they dream as men do, and through violence of melancholy run mad" (*The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Philadelphia: E. Claxton & Co., 1883 [1621]), 51).
41. François Maspéro, "Le survivant de la fin du monde," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, April 27, 1984, 16.

42. Valeriano Bozal, *Goya: Black Paintings* (Madrid: Fundacion Amigos del Museo del Prado, 1999), 60.
43. Jean Genet, "The Studio of Alberto Giacometti," in *Fragments of the Artwork*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 50.
44. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, 171.
45. Genet, "The Studio of Alberto Giacometti," 50.
46. This story is found in the *Kongzi Jiayu* [*Conversations of Confucius's Family*]. I cite the translation from Lin Yutang's talk at the Winter Institute of the foreign YMCA, Shanghai, on November 25, 1930, "Confucius as I Know Him," http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/030/features/030_confucius.inc. More recently, Li Ling's 2007 book *A Homeless Dog: My Reading of the Analects* provoked controversy with its desublimated portrait of the sage. For an account of this, see Carine Defoort, "A Homeless Dog: Li Ling's Understanding of Confucius," *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 41, no. 2 (Winter 2009–2010): 3–11.
47. Franz Kafka, *Letters to Milena*, ed. and trans. Philip Boehm (New York: Schocken Books, 1990), 216–217. This passage has also been excerpted and published as an independent short story. See Kafka, "Diogenes," trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, in *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 95. It also appears in his notebooks: *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*, 341–342.
48. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2, trans. R. D. Hicks, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 41.
49. Diogenes, 63.
50. Diogenes, 35.
51. My analysis draws from Steven Connor, *A History of Asking* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2023), 89–91.
52. Kafka, *Letters to Milena*, 216.
53. Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991), 42.
54. For a helpful overview of Kafka's remarks on psychoanalysis, see Leena Eilittä, "Kafka's Ambivalence toward Psychoanalysis," *Psychoanalysis and History* 3, no. 2 (2001): 205–210; and Carolin Duttlinger, "Psychology and Psychoanalysis," in *Franz Kafka in Context*, ed. Carolin Duttlinger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 216–224.
55. This, broadly speaking, is what Eric Santner has called the "psychotheology" of everyday life, in parallel with Freud's psychopathology of everyday life. See Eric Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
56. Franz Kafka, "The Burrow," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 338. Elsewhere, Kafka writes on the subject of trust: "Man cannot live without a permanent trust in something indestructible in himself, though both the indestructible element and the trust may remain permanently hidden from him. One of the ways in which this hiddenness can express itself is through faith in a personal god" (*The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 29).
57. See Philip K. Dick, *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (London: Harper Voyager, 2008 [1964]).
58. Otto Fenichel, "The Concept of Trauma in Contemporary Psycho-Analytical Theory," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 26 (1945): 43; originally published in German in 1937.

59. Paul Goodman, *Kafka's Prayer* (New York: Hillstone, 1947), 106.
60. Goodman, 44.
61. Louis Sass, *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 263.
62. Sass, 268.
63. Sass, 267.
64. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: For a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 35.
65. Samuel Beckett, quoted in Israel Shenker, "Moody Man of Letters," *New York Times*, May 6, 1956, section II, 1. Beckett goes on to say, rather enigmatically: "Another difference. You notice how Kafka's form is classic, it goes on like a steamroller—almost serene. It seems to be threatened the whole time—but the consternation is in the form. In my work there is consternation behind the form, not in the form" (p. 1). Is Beckett maybe trying a little too hard here to distinguish himself from Kafka? I believe Beckett is arguing that, for Kafka, "consternation" is contained within the form of his fictions, which draw on the classic sources of the fable, the parable, and the epic quest. Thus one never gets the sense that the writing itself is breaking down ("it goes on like a steamroller—almost serene"), however much the universe being depicted is. For Beckett, on the other hand, form provides no such guarantee of containment: his writing presses toward "disintegration," "nothing but dust" (pp. 3, 1). To bring in psychoanalysis, one could broadly distinguish here between neurotic and psychotic literary styles. I thank Alexi Kukuljevic for this reference.
66. Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 23.
67. "There is a certain failing, a lack in me, that is clear and distinct enough but difficult to describe: it is a compound of timidity, reserve, talkativeness, and half-heartedness; by this I intend to characterize something specific, a group of failings that under a certain aspect constitute one single clearly defined failing (which has nothing to do with such grave vices as mendacity, vanity, etc.). This failing keeps me from going mad, but also from making any headway. Because it keeps me from going mad, I cultivate it; out of fear of madness I sacrifice whatever headway I might make and shall certainly be the loser in the bargain, for no bargains are possible at this level" (Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 411, entry for February 3, 1922). I return to this crucial passage in chapter 19, "A New Mythology."
68. Other psychoanalytic critics have interpreted Kafka in terms of obsessional neurosis. For example, Sergio Benvenuto writes: "In my opinion, the literary work that gets closest to this obsessive disorder in *The Trial* by Kafka" (*Conversations with Lacan: Seven Lectures for Understanding Lacan* (London: Routledge, 2020), 143). Like Sass, Benvenuto regards Kafka's work as displaying the highest level of clinical precision.
69. Kafka, "Investigations," 310.
70. In a remarkable letter to Carl Jung, sent while Jung was lecturing in Amsterdam at the same time Freud was "looking for mushrooms in the woods," Freud treats his fellow analyst as the hysteric to his obsessional neurotic, more well suited to the task of popularizing psychoanalysis: "You are better fitted for propaganda, for I have always felt that there is something about my personality, my ideas and manner of speaking, that people find strange and repellent, whereas all hearts open to you. If a healthy man like you regards himself as a hysterical type, I can only claim for myself the 'obsessional' type, each specimen of which vegetates in a sealed-off world of his own" (Sigmund Freud to Carl Jung,

September 2, 1907, in *The Freud/Jung Letters*, ed. William McGuire, trans. Ralph Manheim and R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 82).

71. Cited in Lennard J. Davis, *Obsession: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 129.

72. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, 1969–1970*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007), 35. Slavoj Žižek used this phrase as the title of his PhD dissertation, first published in French as *Le plus sublime des hystériques: Hegel avec Lacan* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011), and translated into English as *The Most Sublime Hysteric: Hegel with Lacan*, trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (Cambridge: Polity, 2014).

73. Kafka, “Investigations,” 292.

74. Hans Blumenberg, *The Laughter of the Thracian Woman: A Protohistory of Theory*, trans. Spencer Hawkins (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 3.

75. See chapter 5, “The Philosophy of Food.”

76. Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. M. J. Levett, rev. Myles Burnyeat, in *Plato: Complete Works*, 193, 174a-b.

77. Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 18.

78. Kafka, 54.

79. Kafka, 87.

80. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 18:64.

81. Alberto Manguel, “What Is an Animal?,” in *Curiosity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 210.

82. Manguel, 215.

83. This is an old equation. As early as the seventeenth century Francis Bacon wrote: “For take an example of a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man, who to him is in stead of a god” (“Of Atheism,” in *The Essays*, ed. John Pitcher (London: Penguin, 1985 [1612]), 110). Charles Darwin, citing Wilhelm Braubach, as well as Bacon and the poet Robert Burns, writes that “a dog looks on his master as on a god” (*The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1889 [2nd ed. of 1882]), 96).

84. Max Brod, *Verzweiflung und Erlösung im Werk Franz Kafkas* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1959), 7. Going back to Agrippa’s scheme of melancholic genius, this depressive atheism would make of “Investigations of a Dog” not *Melencolia II* but *Melencolia III*.

85. Kafka, “Investigations,” 309–310.

CHAPTER 2

1. Quoted in Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Echolalias: On the Forgetting of Language* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 146. Translation by Heller-Roazen. The original can be found in Franz Kafka, *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*, ed. Jost Schillemeit (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1992), 334.

2. Reiner Stach, *Kafka: The Early Years*, trans. Shelley Frisch (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 105.

3. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 301, entry for August 2, 1914.

4. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, August 4, 1913, in *Letters to Felice*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, trans. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 296.
5. Franz Kafka, "Fragments," trans. Daniel Slager, *Grand Street* 56 (Spring 1996): 118. To my knowledge, Slager's was the first English translation of the piece; the original can be found in Kafka, *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*, 254–257. Reiner Stach included the story in his *Is That Kafka? 99 Finds*, where he provides valuable information on its background:

This fragment was probably composed on August 28, 1920, in Prague. It was preserved in the so-called "Konvolut 1920" ("1920 Bundle"), which consists of fifty-one unbound pages. Kafka's corrections to the beginning of the text are particularly notable. Instead of "I had come from the Olympiad in X, where I had set a world record in swimming," the manuscript initially read: "I had come from the Olympiad in Antwerp, where I had set a world record in the 1500-meter swim." The 1920 Summer Olympic Games really did take place in Antwerp, and the final round of the swimming competition was held from August 24 to 26. That means that Kafka probably wrote the fragment as soon as the results were announced. The winner of the 1500m and 400m freestyle was the twenty-four-year-old American Norman Ross, who was later disqualified in the 100m freestyle.

Is That Kafka? 99 Finds, trans. Kurt Beals (New York: New Directions, 2016), 175. Curiously, Slager's translation restores Antwerp to the text but leaves out the race's length. Subsequent quotations in this paragraph are from Slager's translation.

6. This line, like the deleted information about Antwerp and the length of the race, is also from the original version of the text. See Franz Kafka, *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II: Apparatband*, ed. Jost Schillemeit (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1992), 269.
7. Kafka, "Fragments," 118.
8. Marcel Mauss, "The Techniques of the Body," trans. Ben Brewster, *Economy and Society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 71.
9. Daniel Heller-Roazen compares the swimming paradox with Freud's analysis of aphasics. See Heller-Roazen, *Echolalias*, 146–147.
10. Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London: Continuum, 2008), 338.
11. The distance between Serres and Kafka is acknowledged by Serres in an interview where he comments on Kafka's idea of literature as an "axe for the frozen sea inside us." Opposing this figure of violent rupture, Serres explains: "In your quote from Kafka, there is, first, discontinuity and second, destruction, whereas I would feel it more like a continuous web that would form around the spike, and would almost be the metaphor seen in reverse. There is no axe, there is no event, there is no discontinuity, there is no break, there is no freeze. On the contrary, there is a kind of flow that wraps itself around an event and makes an object" (Luc Abraham, "Un entretien avec Michel Serres," *Horizons philosophiques* 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1997): 1–2).
12. Franz Kafka, "Description of a Struggle," trans. Tania Stern and James Stern, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 19.
13. One of the purest expressions of this is "The Next Village": "My grandfather used to say: 'Life is astoundingly short. To me, looking back over it, life seems so foreshortened that I scarcely understand, for instance, how a young man can decide to ride over to the next village without being afraid that—not to mention accidents—even the span of a normal happy life may fall far short of the time needed for such a journey'" (Franz Kafka, "The Next Village," trans. Tania Stern and James Stern, in *The Complete Stories*, 404).

14. Jorge Luis Borges, "Kafka and His Precursors," in *Labyrinths*, trans. James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964), 190.
15. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, January 13, 1921, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 249.
16. Kafka, 249.
17. Kafka, 250.
18. Kafka, 250–251.
19. Kafka, 250.
20. Kafka, 249.
21. Kafka, 249.
22. Kafka, 251.
23. Franz Kafka, *Letter to the Father*, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York: Schocken Books, 2015), 13.
24. The phrase "You are unfit for life" is from Kafka, 119.
25. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 315.
26. Kafka, 316. Of course, the main impossible profession for Kafka is literature—swimming, singing, and research may be considered three impossible vocations that appear within this (impossible) writing. Kafka discusses the impossibility of writing in a well-known (and fittingly, unfinished) passage from another letter: "The impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing German, the impossibility of writing differently. One might also add a fourth impossibility, the impossibility of writing. . . . Thus what resulted was a literature impossible in all respects, a gypsy literature which had stolen the German child out of its cradle and in great haste put it through some kind of training, for someone has to dance on the tightrope. (But it wasn't even a German child, it was nothing; people merely said that somebody was dancing) [breaks off]" (Franz Kafka to Max Brod, June 1921, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, 289).

CHAPTER 3

1. As Kafka wrote in a letter to Felice Bauer, "[I] am made of literature; I am nothing else and cannot be anything else" (in *Letters to Felice*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, trans. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 304).
2. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 280.
3. Kafka, 282.
4. Kafka, 284.
5. Kafka, 284.
6. Kafka, 284.
7. E. T. A. Hoffmann, "A Report on the Latest Adventures of the Dog Berganza," in *Fantasy Pieces in Callot's Manner*, trans. Joseph M. Hayes (Schenectady, NY: Union College Press, 1996), 72, 73. See Hartmut Binder, *Kafka Kommentar zu sämtlichen Erzählungen* (Munich: Winkler, 1982), 268.
8. Hanns Zischler, *Kafka Goes to the Movies*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 42.

9. Anton Chekhov, "Kashtanka," in *Fifty-Two Stories*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 2021), 271.
10. Mikhail Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, trans. Andrew Bromfield (London: Penguin, 2007), 111.
11. Kafka, "Investigations," 286.
12. See Kafka, "The New Attorney," trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, in *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 97–99.
13. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses, 1955–1956*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 1993), 7.
14. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 [1975]), 10.
15. Gregg Houwer brilliantly develops this point in his short and illuminating volume *Into the White: Kafka and His Metamorphoses* (Leuven: Acco, 2010). "Kafka's writings are not about the events in themselves. The events are there only to bring something else to the surface, namely the very mechanism by which these problematic circumstances are able to blossom into their fully overscaled dimensions" (18).
16. See Giorgio Agamben, "K.," trans. Nicholas Heron, in *The Work of Giorgio Agamben: Law, Literature, Life*, ed. Justin Clemens, Nicholas Heron, and Alex Murray (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).
17. See chapter 1, "Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog."
18. See chapter 9, "The Burrow, or The Philosophy of Enjoyment."
19. See chapter 14, "Genealogy of the Office Comedy."
20. Franz Kafka, "The Vulture," trans. Tania Stern and James Stern, in *The Complete Stories*, 443.
21. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Allen Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 50. On the empirical and intelligible characters, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 536–537, A539–541 / B567–569.
22. See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* vol. 1, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 301–302.
23. F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006), 54.
24. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square, 1956), 461–462, 465, 570, and *passim*.
25. See Sigmund Freud, "The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis: A Contribution to the Problem of Choice of Neurosis," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 12:317–326.
26. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac, 1988), 69.
27. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Le Second Voyage d'Er l'Arménien ou L'Olympe chrétienne*, in *Écrits de Jeunesse*, ed. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka (Éditions Gallimard: Paris, 1990 [1927]). Schopenhauer discusses the myth of Er in *Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals*, in *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, ed. and trans. Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 175–176.

28. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1222, 620a.
29. Plato, 1223, 621a–b.
30. Plato, 1220, 617e.
31. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 405, entry for January 24, 1922. Given Kafka's interest in Plato, it is not implausible that he might have been thinking of the myth of Er here, although there are many other traditions of reincarnation, including the Jewish *gilgul*.
32. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), 30.
33. R. D. Hinshelwood, *Suffering Insanity: Psychoanalytic Essays on Psychosis* (East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge, 2004), 73–74. For a commentary on this passage, see my *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 180–181.
34. J. P. Hodin, “Franz Kafka: Reflections on the Problem of Decadence,” in *The Dilemma of Being Modern* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1959), 10; emphasis added.
35. Georg Lukács, “Franz Kafka or Thomas Mann?,” in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963), 80–81.
36. Lukács, 77.
37. Hannah Arendt, “Franz Kafka: A Reevaluation,” in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 1994), 80.
38. J. M. Coetzee, “Time, Tense and Aspect in Kafka’s ‘The Burrow,’” *MLN* 96, no. 3 (April 1981): 575.
39. Feigl and Kafka’s metaphysical scheme of the arts (painting-space, music-time, writing-causality) would deserve further commentary. I will only mention here a certain irony: while Günther Anders shows that Kafka’s stories, with their characters who fail to progress and their frozen tableaux, has a uniquely painterly or sculptural quality—“Whereas nearly all modern literature, at least that more or less directly influenced by the Romantic movement, has an affinity with music, Kafka’s prose is far more closely related to the plastic arts”—music is the supreme art in Kafka insofar as it marks a rupture or rift, a gap in the causal order. See Günther Anders, *Kafka Pro and Contra*, trans. A. Steer and A. K. Thorlby (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1960), 55.
40. Franz Kafka, “A Country Doctor,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 225.
41. Jacques Lacan, Seminar XVI, *D’un Autre à l’autre*, session of June 25, 1969, Staferla edition, <http://staferla.free.fr/S16/S16.htm>. I cite here Cormac Gallagher’s unpublished translation.
42. Jacques Lacan, “Presentation on Psychic Causality,” in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006 [1946]), 145; translation modified.
43. Jacques Lacan, Seminar XV, *L’Acte psychanalytique*, session of March 13, 1968, Staferla edition, <http://staferla.free.fr/S15/S15.htm>.
44. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), 30.
45. Kafka, “Investigations,” 315.
46. Kafka, 291.

47. Kafka, 291.
48. Marjorie Garber, *Dog Love* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 115.
49. Stanley Corngold, *Lambent Traces: Franz Kafka* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 121.
50. Kafka, "Investigations," 292.
51. Kafka, 286.
52. Kafka, 286.
53. Kafka, 286.

CHAPTER 4

1. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 313.
2. Kafka, 314.
3. Kafka, 314.
4. Kafka, 314.
5. Kafka, 314.
6. See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 5:509–511.
7. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 [1975]), 36.
8. Kafka, "Investigations," 314. On the great complaint, see my "Critique of Pure Complaint," in *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 16–18.
9. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," in *Investigations of a Dog and Other Creatures*, trans. Michael Hofmann (London: New Directions, 2017), 149.
10. Kafka, "Investigations," trans. Hofmann, 149. I spliced in lines from the Muirs' translation, which follows the second version in the critical edition: "Investigations," Muir translation, 281; emphasis added.
11. Stanley Corngold and Benno Wagner also commented on this addition, in "Kafka and the Philosophy of Music; or, 'des Kommas Fehl hilft' ('Researches of a Dog')," in *Franz Kafka: The Ghosts in the Machine* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 102.
12. Kafka, "Investigations," Muir translation, 315.
13. Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir (New York: Everyman's Library, 1992), 21–22.
14. Franz Kafka to Milena Jesenská, June 14, 1920, in *Letters to Milena*, ed. and trans. Philip Boehm (New York: Schocken Books, 1990), 48.

CHAPTER 5

1. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 286–287.
2. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste, or Meditation on Transcendental Gastronomy*, trans. M. K. F. Fisher (New York: Vintage, 2011), 15.

3. Ludwig Feuerbach, "Die Naturwissenschaft und die Revolution," *Gesammelte Werke* 10: *Kleinere Schriften III*, ed. Werner Schuffenhauer (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), 358.
4. Feuerbach, 358–359.
5. For an illuminating reading of Feuerbach's essay, see Melvin Chernob, "Feuerbach's 'Man Is What He Eats': A Rectification," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no. 3 (July–September 1963): 397–406.
6. See Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog, or On Substance," in *Kafka Unleashed: Stories, Dreams & Visions*, trans. Phillip Lundberg (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2018).
7. "I remember that when I wrote 'The Freudian Thing' there were heaps of people around me who pursed their lips: 'Why does he call it that? The Thing! That is disgusting, when all we have ever been trying to do is to prevent reification.' Speaking for myself, I have never held that view. I have never thought that when a rupture occurred, as in 1953, it was because of a divergence of views over the reification or not of what our practice was about. It was about reifying in a good way" (Jacques Lacan, "Religions and the Real," ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg, *Hurly-Burly: The Lacanian Review* 1 (Spring 2016): 11).
8. Kafka, "Investigations," Muir translation, 299.
9. Kafka, 287.
10. Kafka, 288.
11. Kafka, 288.
12. Kafka, 302, 303.
13. Kafka, 303.
14. Kafka, 303.
15. Kafka, 304.
16. Kafka, 305.
17. Kafka, 305.
18. Kafka, 306. Regarding these funny food experiments, I cannot help citing the example of George Romanes, a nineteenth-century evolutionary biologist and proponent of Darwin, who, in the context of debates about the origins of religion, undertook his own experiments demonstrating how dogs have "a sense of the mysterious": "Romanes conducted experiments on a Skye terrier—'a remarkably intelligent animal'—by making a bone move with an invisible thread and by blowing soap bubbles across the floor. In both experiments, the intelligent dog thought inanimate objects were alive. But the dog also displayed fear of the unknown. In the case of the moving bone, 'his astonishment developed into dread, and he ran to conceal himself under some articles of furniture, there to behold at a distance the "uncanny" spectacle of a dry bone coming to life'" (David Chidester, "Darwin's Dogs: Animals, Animism, and the Problem of Religion," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 92, nos. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 2009): 64–65).
19. Kafka, 306.
20. Kafka, 305.
21. Kafka, 304.
22. Kafka, 304.
23. Kafka, 315.
24. Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. Breon Mitchell (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 217.

25. In a scene from the television series *Mad Men*, advertising executive Don Draper explains, “Happiness is a billboard on the side of the road that screams with reassurance that whatever you’re doing is OKAY” (*Mad Men*, season 1, episode 1, “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes”; first aired July 19, 2007). This is the neurotic formula for happiness: not a sense of contentment or well-being, but the feeling of the Other authorizing your existence.
26. Kafka, “Investigations,” Muir translation, 303.
27. Franz Kafka, “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk,” trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 367.
28. Kafka, 371.
29. See chapter 1, “Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog.”
30. Steven Connor, *A History of Asking* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2023), 91.
31. Kafka, “Investigations,” Muir translation, 288.
32. Kafka, 289.
33. Kafka, 303.
34. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 [1975]), 20. Also cited by Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 186.
35. Kafka, “Investigations,” Muir translation, 289.
36. Kafka, 306.
37. Kafka, 289.
38. Kafka, 289.
39. Kafka, 289.
40. Kafka, 289.
41. Kafka, 309.
42. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954–1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: Norton, 1988), 205; and “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006 [1956]), 29.
43. Of course, the mouth can serve other purposes as well; for Freud, it was above all a sucking machine.

CHAPTER 6

1. Franz Kafka, “Investigations of a Dog,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 309.
2. Franz Kafka, “A Hunger Artist,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 270.
3. Kafka, 277.
4. Kafka, 271; emphasis added.
5. Giovanni Succi lasted even longer, fasting for up to forty-five days. On the history of hunger artists, see Breon Mitchell, “Kafka and the Hunger Artists,” in *Kafka and the Contemporary Critical Performance*, ed. Alan Udoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), and Oliver Preston, “The Hunger Artists: Starved for Attention,” *Cabinet* 61 (Spring–Summer 2016), <https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/61/preston.php>. As I learned

from Preston's article, Tanner's biography, by Robert A. Gunn, is titled *Forty Days without Food! A Biography of Henry S. Tanner, M.D.* (New York: Albert Metz & Co., 1880).

6. Paul Valéry, "Philosophy of the Dance," in *What Is Dance?*, ed. Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 62.

7. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, November 24, 1912, in *Letters to Felice*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, trans. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 60.

8. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, January 21–22, 1913, in *Letters to Felice*, 165.

9. There is one other reference to the Chinese poem in Kafka's correspondence with Bauer, where he ironically compares the very letter he needs to write to her to the scholar's impatient mistress: "Dearest, while I have been writing it has got very late again. At around 2 o'clock every morning I keep remembering the Chinese scholar. Alas, it is not my mistress who calls me, it's only the letter I want to write to her" (Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, January 14–15, 1913, in *Letters to Felice*, 155).

10. Kafka, "A Hunger Artist," 270.

11. Kafka, 273.

12. Kafka, 276.

13. See for example the story of the fasting girl Sarah Jacob and the physician Robert Fowler, in Preston, "The Hunger Artists: Starved for Attention."

14. As Frank Vande Veire argues: "The hunger artist *feigns feigning*. He presents his starvation as an art in order to hide from his audience the fact that his pain is real, as it is only pleasure" ("So Fake, So Real! Josephine and the Voice of Death," *Problemi International* 3, no. 3 (2019): 242; original emphasis).

15. Kafka, "A Hunger Artist," 277.

16. Kafka, 277.

17. Quoted in Reiner Stach, *Kafka: The Years of Insight*, trans. Shelley Frisch (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 377–378.

CHAPTER 7

1. Franz Kafka, "A Hunger Artist," trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 271; "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk," trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 363.

2. Kafka, "Josephine," 362.

3. Kafka, 371.

4. Kafka, 371.

5. Kafka, 372.

6. Kafka, 373.

7. Kafka, 361.

8. Mladen Dolar develops this comparison with the readymade in *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 176.

9. Kafka, "Josephine," 362.

10. Kafka, 367.

11. Kafka, 367.

12. Kafka, 360.

13. Kafka, 361.
14. Kafka, 363, 364, 370.
15. Kafka, 364.
16. Kafka, 367.
17. Kafka, 362.
18. Kafka, 368.
19. Kafka, 369.
20. Kafka, 368.
21. Kafka, 364.
22. Kafka, 370.
23. It is an odd oversight that Vila-Matas does not mention Josephine in his discussion of Kafka's artists; see *Bartleby & Co.*, trans. Jonathan Dunne (New York: New Directions, 2004), 52.
24. Kafka, "Josephine," 386.
25. Judith Butler's interpretation is instructive for the way it gets things totally backward: "See, for instance, France [sic] Kafka's 'Josephine the singer, or the mouse folk,' for an account of how the leader—a singer—is inflated by the people, idealized in impossible terms, because they depend on her for a sense of their national unity and belonging. In the end, she is weak and barely speaks or sings, but the mechanism of their idealization stays intact, and it appears that the people (the mouse folk) are the ones with the idealizing power to sustain their leader. In the end, transience takes over, and the entire history is ushered into oblivion" (Judith Butler, "Political Philosophy in Freud: The Death Drive and the Critical Faculty," in *On Psychoanalysis and Violence: Contemporary Lacanian Perspectives*, ed. Vanessa Sinclair and Manya Steinkoler (London: Routledge, 2019), 30). Every claim here is wrong: it's not Josephine who is inflated by the people, rather she inflates herself; the people are not captivated by her concerts in spite of her weakness or her poor singing, but because of them; and transience does not take over in the end, rather the magic of Josephine's art is to sing as if she had already disappeared.
26. Kafka, "Josephine," 367.
27. Kafka, 365.
28. Fredric Jameson has argued that we should see in the mouse people's refusal of special privileges for Josephine a representation of the role of art in the realized utopia. Josephine serves as the vanishing mediator that brings the collective together, "she constitutes the necessary element of exteriority that alone permits immanence to come into being" (*The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University, 1994), 125). Slavoj Žižek has taken this idea one step further, calling her "Josephine, the People's Artist of the Soviet Mouse Republic" (*Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2010), 371). There is some evidence to support this view. In a letter to a friend complaining about mice during his stay in Zürau, Kafka describes them as "an oppressed proletarian race": "Up the coal box, down the coal box, across the room they ran, describing circles, nibbling at wood, peeping softly while resting, and all along there was that sense of silence, of the secret labor of an oppressed proletarian race to whom the night belongs" (Franz Kafka to Felix Weltsch, mid-November 1917, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 168).
29. Kafka, "Josephine," 372.

30. Frank Vande Veire, "So Fake, So Real! Josephine and the Voice of Death," *Problemi International* 3, no. 3 (2019): 230; original emphasis. My reading owes much to Vande Veire's original and compelling essay.
31. Kafka, "Josephine," 363.
32. See Vande Veire, "So Fake, So Real!," 232–233.
33. Maurice Blanchot, "Kafka and Literature," in *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 25.
34. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 302.
35. Kafka, 308.
36. Kafka, 311–312.
37. Kafka, "Josephine," 376.
38. Kafka, "Investigations," 298.
39. Kafka, 298.
40. Kafka, 298.
41. Kafka, 298.
42. Kafka, 302.
43. Kafka, 298.
44. Kafka, 298.
45. Kafka, 301.
46. Kafka, 301.
47. Kafka, 302.
48. Kafka, 298.
49. Kafka, 301.
50. Kafka, 301.
51. Kafka, 301–302; emphasis added.
52. I first discovered this line in Vivian Laska's *When Kafka Says We: Uncommon Communities in German-Jewish Literature* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 25.

CHAPTER 8

1. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 309.
2. Kafka, 308–309.
3. Paul Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (New York: International Universities Press, 1950), 104.
4. Kafka, "Investigations," 310.
5. Kafka, 310.
6. Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. Breon Mitchell (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 231.
7. Kafka, "Investigations," 309.
8. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2:15. David Hume will echo this sentiment: "I dine, I play a game

of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther" (David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 269).

9. "A young dog, at bottom naturally greedy for life, I renounced all enjoyments, apprehensively avoided all pleasures, buried my head between my front paws when I was confronted by temptation, and addressed myself to my task" (Kafka, "Investigations," 292).

10. Kafka, "Investigations," 314.

11. This is my way of developing a suggestion Lacan makes in his twentieth seminar. He states that "nowadays, well, we just don't have that many substances. We have thinking substance and extended substance," and then goes on to propose "another form of substance, enjoying substance (*la substance jouissante*)" (Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore, 1972–1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 21, 23).

12. Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991), 16.

13. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX ... or Worse (1971–1972)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), 42.

14. Animals are not lacking this lack, but they are less exposed to or better protected against it. As Gilles Deleuze writes: "Animals are in a sense forewarned against this [abysal] ground, protected by their explicit forms" (*Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 152).

15. Franz Kafka, "The Hunger Strike," trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, in *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 187.

16. Kafka, "Investigations," 310–311.

17. For this interpretation of *The Scream*, see Jacques Lacan, Seminar XII, *Problèmes cruciaux*, session of March 17, 1965, Staferla edition, <http://staferla.free.fr/S12/S12.htm>; and Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 116–117.

18. Kafka, "Investigations," 310.

19. Cited in A. C. Grayling, *Descartes: The Life of René Descartes and Its Place in His Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 159; Descartes, *La Description du corps humain et toutes ses fonctions*, in *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1909), 11:241–242.

20. Kafka, "Investigations," 279.

21. Kafka, 279.

22. Marjorie Garber, *Dog Love* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 114.

23. "Descartes doit revivre à l'heure actuelle sous un chapiteau de cirque revêtant les apparences d'un chien savant" (Jacques Brenner, *Plaidoyer pour les chiens* (Paris: Julliard, 1972), 112–113). "Trained" would arguably be a better translation of *savant* than "learned," but the image of a "learned dog" suits the reincarnation of the philosopher.

24. Kafka, "Investigations," 309, 287.

25. Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, *From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine: Animal Soul in French Letters from Descartes to La Mettrie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 70.

CHAPTER 9

1. Franz Kafka, "The Burrow," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 340, 342.
2. Kafka, 355.
3. Corngold's translation is the accurate one: "but everything remained unchanged, the * * *. [Here the story breaks off.]" (Kafka, "The Burrow," in *Kafka's Selected Stories*, trans. Stanley Corngold (New York: Norton, 2007), 189).
4. Kafka, "The Burrow," Muir translation, 331.
5. Kafka, 333.
6. Kafka, 334.
7. Kafka, 334.
8. Kafka, 334.
9. Kafka, 335.
10. Kafka, 335.
11. Kafka, 335.
12. Franz Kafka, "The Burrow," in *Kafka, Investigations of a Dog and Other Creatures*, trans. Michael Hoffman (London: New Directions, 2017), 212; "The Burrow," in *Kafka's Selected Stories*, 171; "The Burrow," in *Konundrum: Selected Prose of Franz Kafka*, trans. Peter Wortsman (New York: Archipelago Books, 2016), 346–347.
13. "The Burrow," Muir translation, 336. The narrator sums up life in this hole as follows: "I creep into my hole, close it after me, wait patiently, keep vigil for long or short spells, and at various hours of the day, then fling off the moss, issue from my hole, and summarize my observations."
14. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, ed. and trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 98.
15. Reiner Stach, *Kafka: The Years of Insight*, trans. Shelley Frisch (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 22.
16. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, ed. and trans. Alastair Hannay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 260.
17. Kafka, "The Burrow," Muir translation, 346.
18. Kafka, 346; emphasis added.
19. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), 195.
20. Kafka, "The Burrow," Muir translation, 343.
21. Kafka, 348–349.
22. Kafka, 357.
23. Kafka, 343.
24. Kafka, 347.
25. Kafka, 352.
26. Kafka, 339.
27. Kafka, 353.
28. Kafka, 353.

29. Kafka, 351.
30. See Mladen Dolar, "The Burrow of Sound," *differences* 22, nos. 2–3 (2011): 112–139.
31. Kafka, "The Burrow," Muir translation, 357.
32. Kafka, 338.
33. Kafka, 350–351.
34. Kafka, 356.
35. Kafka, 356.
36. This topological reversal is what interested Jacques Lacan about "The Burrow"; in his words, "Man is a burrow animal." See Lacan, *Seminar IX L'identification* (unpublished), session of March 21, 1962. Mladen Dolar comments on this in *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 166–167.
37. Kafka, "The Burrow," Muir translation, 338.
38. Kafka, 338.
39. Kafka, 359.
40. Lorenzo Chiesa formulated this point nicely: "If the badger were a paranoid, he would be paralyzed by the certainty that the less his enemy displays a rationally consistent behaviour, the more he is nonetheless malignantly succeeding in taking over the burrow. For instance, the 'small fry' of the short story would not be annoying but ultimately innocuous little animals that dig out unauthorized new channels and do not deserve to be 'spared,' but undefeatable emissaries or emissions of the Evil Beast ..." ("The Trojan Castle: Lacan and Kafka on Knowledge, Enjoyment, and the Big Other," *Crisis and Critique* 6, no. 1 (April 2019), 35).
41. Kafka, "The Burrow," Muir translation, 358.
42. In one of Kafka's early letters to Max Brod, dated August 28, 1904, he writes: "We burrow through ourselves like a mole and emerge blackened and velvet-haired from our [buried sand] vaults, our poor little red feet stretched out for tender pity" (in Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 17). *Maulwurf* (mole in German) and *krtek* (mole in Czech) are also used to designate a double agent. I don't claim that Kafka intended this resonance, simply that it adds another layer of meaning to the story. Peter Szendy, who also identifies Kafka's burrowing animal as a mole, exploits a wonderful homonymy in French between *taupe* (mole) and *topologie* (topology), coining the neologism *taupologie* to describe the burrow's contorted structure; see his *All Ears: The Aesthetics of Espionage*, trans. Roland Végső (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 53. There is, admittedly, one flaw in my hypothesis: moles have poor eyesight, and the first part of the story turns around the gaze.
43. Kafka, "The Burrow," Muir translation, 337.
44. Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991), 22.
45. Roberto Calasso, K., trans. Geoffrey Brock (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 158.
46. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, in *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 320.
47. See Peter Szendy, *All Ears: The Aesthetics of Espionage*, 55.
48. See Max Brod, "Nachtworte des Herausgebers," in Franz Kafka, *Beschreibung eines Kampfes: Novellen, Skizzen, Aphorismen aus dem Nachlass* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1980), 259.

49. Richard T. Gray, Ruth V. Gross, Rolf J. Goebel, and Clayton Koelb, *A Franz Kafka Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 27.
50. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," in *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (London: Penguin, 2006), 79.
51. Samuel Beckett, "The Calmative," in *The Complete Short Prose 1929–1989*, ed. S. E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 61.
52. Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. Idra Novey (London: Penguin, 2012), 183, 186. This novel is usually read as being in dialogue with "The Metamorphosis," the two connected by the figure of the cockroach, but its philosophical-poetical reflections on the system, as well as the voice, also place it in the orbit of "The Burrow."

CHAPTER 10

1. On Confucius, see chapter 1, "Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog."
2. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 318.
3. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 2001), 2:76.
4. Marthe Robert, *The Old and the New: From Don Quixote to Kafka*, trans. Carol Cosman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 26. Claude-Edmonde Magny similarly writes: "Kafka perceives, in the most trivial things, meanings we no longer perceive because we have let ourselves be blinded" ("The Objective Depiction of Absurdity," trans. Angel Flores, *Quarterly Review of Literature* 2, no. 3 (1945): 226).
5. Kafka, "Investigations," 326.
6. Sigmund Freud, "Parapraxes," in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 15:26–27.
7. Theodor Adorno, "Notes on Kafka," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 251.
8. Adorno, 251.
9. Charles Baudelaire, "The Good Dogs," *Paris Spleen: Little Poems in Prose*, trans. Keith Waldrop (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), 96.
10. Plato, *Parmenides*, trans. Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 364, 130c–e.
11. Kafka, "Investigations," 293–294.
12. Kafka, 294.
13. Kafka, 294.
14. Kafka, 294.
15. Kafka, 294.
16. Kafka, 294.
17. Kafka, 294.
18. Kafka, 295.
19. Kafka, 296.
20. Miguel de Cervantes, *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, in *Exemplary Stories*, trans. Lesley Lipson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 304.

21. E. T. A. Hoffmann, "A Report on the Latest Adventures of the Dog Berganza," in *Fantasy Pieces in Callot's Manner*, trans. Joseph M. Hayes (Schenectady, NY: Union College Press, 1996), 66.
22. Lucian, "The Dependent Scholar," in *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, trans. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 2:22.
23. Manuela Beatriz Mena Marqués, "El perro volante," in J. M. Matilla, M. B. Mena Marqués, *Goya: Luces y Sombras* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2012), 280, <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-flying-dog/84286cod-f68b-409c-af4c-6e2664d7ca40>.
24. Marqués, 280.
25. Leo Rosten, *The New Joys of Yiddish* (New York: Three Rivers, 2001), 210–211.
26. Rosten, 211.
27. Benjamin Harshav, *The Polyphony of Jewish Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 218.
28. Nicolas Berg provides a fascinating and comprehensive history of the term in his *Luftmenschen: Zur Geschichte einer Metapher* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); see his discussion of Celan, 153–204.
29. See John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 192.
30. On this point, see Iris Bruce, *Kafka and Cultural Zionism: Dates in Palestine* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 190. I cannot agree, however, that "the narrator dog takes their side since he has never seen a single one who exhibited such negative characteristics and continues to believe in them" (190).
31. Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 115. See Marthe Robert, *Franz Kafka's Loneliness*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Faber & Faber, 1982 [1979]), 13–22; Ritchie Robertson, *Kafka: Judaism, Politics, Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 273–279; and Iris Bruce, *Kafka and Cultural Zionism*, 188–195.
32. Kafka, "Investigations," 279–280.
33. See Iris Bruce, "'Aggadah Raises Its Paw against Halakha': Kafka's Zionist Critique in *Forschungen eines Hundes*," *Journal of the Kafka Society of America* 16, no. 1 (1992): 5.
34. See Bruce, *Kafka and Cultural Zionism*, 190–192.
35. Kafka, "Investigations," 295–296.
36. "Kafka never wrote the concluding chapter. But he told me about it once when I asked him how the novel was to end. The ostensible Land Surveyor was to find partial satisfaction at least. He was not to relax in his struggle, but was to die worn out by it. Round his death-bed the villagers were to assemble, and from the Castle itself the word was to come that though K.'s legal claim to live in the village was not valid, yet, taking certain auxiliary circumstances into account, he was to be permitted to live and work there." (Max Brod, preface to Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), vi.)
37. Alain (Émile Charter), "Les droits de l'homme," in *Esquisses de l'homme*, 4th ed. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1978), 228–229.
38. David Gordon White, *The Myth of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 12–13.
39. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 252, entry for January 8, 1914.

40. Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991), 52.
41. Kafka, "Investigations," 315.
42. Marie-José Mondzain, *K comme Kolonie: Kafka et la décolonisation de l'imaginaire* (Paris: La fabrique, 2020), 227–228.
43. Kafka, "Investigations," 296.
44. Kafka, 296.
45. Kafka, 278.
46. Kafka, 278.
47. Kafka, 293.
48. Kafka, 293.
49. Kafka, 297.
50. Kafka, 302.
51. Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 87.

CHAPTER 11

1. Gary Genosko, introduction to Marie Bonaparte, *Topsy: The Story of a Golden-Haired Chow* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1994), 1.
2. Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 550.
3. H. D., *Tribute to Freud* (Manchester: Carcarnet Press, 1985), 162.
4. See Christine K. Thompson, "Fido, Cat, and the Rat: Correspondence between Bryher, H.D., and Dorothy Richardson," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 22, nos. 1/2 (Spring–Summer, 1994): 68.
5. H. D., *Tribute to Freud*, 172.
6. Quoted in Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Freud: In His Time and Ours*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 243.
7. This and the following chapters rework some material from the fourth chapter of my book *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016).
8. Sigmund Freud to Marie Bonaparte, December 6, 1936, in *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Ernst L. Freud, trans. Tania Stern and James Stern (New York: Basic Books, 1960), 434.
9. Lou Andreas-Salomé, *The Freud Journal*, trans. Stanley A. Leavy (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 89.
10. See Rudolph Binion, *Frau Lou: Nietzsche's Wayward Disciple* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 97–98, 120.
11. Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 14:89.
12. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: Norton, 1992), 151.
13. Philippe Van Haute, "Death and Sublimation in Lacan's Reading of Antigone," in *Levinas and Lacan: The Missed Encounter*, ed. Sarah Harasym (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 107.
14. Joshua Cohen, preface to Franz Kafka, *He: Shorter Writings of Franz Kafka* (London: River-run, 2020), ix.

15. The whole passage goes: “There is the fable, Chinese I think, literary I am sure: of a period on earth when the dominant creatures were cats: who after ages of trying to cope with the anguishes of mortality—famine, plague, war, injustice, folly, greed—in a word, civilized government—convened a congress of the wisest cat philosophers to see if anything could be done: who after long deliberation agreed that the dilemma, the problems themselves were insoluble and the only practical solution was to give it up, relinquish, abdicate, by selecting from among the lesser creatures a species, race optimistic enough to believe that the mortal predicament could be solved and ignorant enough never to learn better. Which is why the cat lives with you, is completely dependent on you for food and shelter but lifts no paw for you and loves you not; in a word, why your cat looks at you the way it does” (William Faulkner, *The Reivers* (Vintage: New York, 2011 [1962]), 119).

16. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Mitsou: Forty Images by Balthus*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1984 [1919]), 9–10.

17. Rilke, 12.

18. Rilke, 10.

19. Rilke, 12.

20. Rilke, 12, 13.

21. Dominic Pettman, “Electric Caresses: Rilke, Balthus, and Mitsou,” *Cabinet*, Fall 2015, <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/59/peyman.php>.

22. Rilke, *Mitsou*, 12.

CHAPTER 12

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot*, trans. Carol Cosman (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981), 1:137–138.

2. The line comes from Pierio Valeriano’s *Hieroglyphica sive de sacris Aegyptiorum litteris commentarii* (*Hieroglyphics, or Commentaries on the Sacred Letters of the Egyptians*), first published in 1556. It is quoted, without attribution, in Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), 323. I thank Sina Najafi for this reference.

3. Clarice Lispector, *A Breath of Life*, trans. Johnny Lorenz (New York: New Directions, 2012), 46, 51.

4. See Clarice Lispector, “Almost True,” in *The Woman Who Killed the Fish*, trans. Benjamin Moser (New York: Storybook New Direction, 2022).

5. Lispector, *A Breath of Life*, 51.

6. Sartre, *The Family Idiot*, 1:138.

7. Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925–1985*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 557.

8. Jacques Lacan, “Impromptu at Vincennes,” in *Television*, ed. Joan Copjec, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, October 40 (Spring 1987): 116.

9. Jacques Lacan, Seminar IX, *L’identification*, session of November 29, 1961, Staferla edition, <http://staferla.free.fr/S9/S9.htm>.

10. See, for example, Michael M. Roy and Nicholas J. S. Christenfeld, “Do Dogs Resemble Their Owners?,” *Psychological Science* 15, no. 4 (2004): 361–363; and Sadahiko Nakajima, “Dogs and Owners Resemble Each Other in the Eye Region,” *Anthrozoos: A Multidisciplinary Journal of the Interactions of People and Animals* 26, no. 4 (2013): 551–556.

11. Lispector, *A Breath of Life*, 50.
12. Lispector, 50.
13. See chapter 11, “Cats and Dogs.”
14. Gertrude Stein, *Everybody’s Autobiography* (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1993), 66.
15. For a detailed account of dogs’ olfactory sense, see Alexandra Horowitz, *Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know* (New York: Scriber, 2009), 74–99.
16. Virginia Woolf, *Flush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 86.
17. André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, trans. Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993 [1964]), 294.
18. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo in On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989), 326.
19. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI: Desire and Its Interpretation, 1958–1959*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 89.
20. Jacques Lacan, “C’est à la lecture de Freud. Préface à l’ouvrage de Robert Georjin,” in Roger Georjin, *Lacan, Cahiers Cistre* (Lausanne: L’Âge d’homme, November 1977), 13.
21. See Lacan, Seminar IX, *L’identification*, session of November 29, 1961.
22. See David Chidester, “Darwin’s Dogs: Animals, Animism, and the Problem of Religion,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 92, nos. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 2009): 51–75.
23. Lacan, Seminar IX, session of November 29, 1961.
24. Lacan, Seminar IX, session of November 29, 1961. Elsewhere Lacan denounces “the misunderstanding of attributing to me the doctrine of a discontinuity between animal psychology and human psychology, which is truly foreign to my way of thinking” (“The Situation of Psychoanalysis and the Training of Psychoanalysts in 1956,” in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006 [1956]), 404). Yet around the same time, in his fourth seminar, he distinguishes between humans and animals by arguing that animals are not wholly inserted into the realm of the symbolic: “the animal is able to accede to this sort of sketching out of a beyond-zone that brings him into highly particular relations with his master. Yet it is precisely because, unlike mankind, the animal is not inserted in an order of language with his whole being that this yields nothing further in the animal. The animal does, however, manage something as developed as telling the difference between some unintended whack on the back and being beaten” (*The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book IV: The Object Relation, 1956–1957*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2020), 180).
25. Lacan, Seminar IX, session of November 29, 1961.
26. For a review of recent scientific literature on this, see Stacey Colino, “Yes, Dogs Can ‘Catch’ Their Owners’ Emotions,” *National Geographic* (October 1, 2021): <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/premium/article/yes-dogs-can-catch-their-owners-emotions>.
27. I will leave aside here questions bearing on the philosophy of nature that have been raised regarding Lacan’s conception of the human-animal relation. For an interesting discussion of these issues, see Alenka Zupančič, *What IS Sex?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 84–93.
28. Benjamin Moser, *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 332. Lacan also speaks of the neuroticization of domestic animals, especially—another dog story—in relation to Ivan Pavlov’s reflex conditioning experiments. For a fascinating discussion of this, see Dany Nobus, “Anthroponotic Neurosis:

Interspecies Conflict in Clinical Animal Studies,” in *The Neurotic Turn: Inter-Disciplinary Correspondences on Neurosis*, ed. Charles William Johns (London: Repeater, 2017), 80–121.

29. This is how Heidegger formulates the problem of the genesis of language in Schelling: “Longing is the nameless, but this always seeks precisely the word. The word is the elevation into what is illuminated, but thus related precisely to the darkness of longing” (Martin Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), 127).

30. Lispector, *A Breath of Life*, 50.

31. Jacques Lacan, Seminar XII, *Problèmes cruciaux*, session of March 10, 1965, Staferla edition, <http://staferla.free.fr/S12/S12.htm>.

32. Lacan, Seminar XII, *Problèmes cruciaux*, sessions of March 10, 1965, and March 17, 1965.

33. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer’s Diary*, Volume 1: 1873–1876, trans. Kenneth Lantz (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 257.

34. See Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

35. Dostoevsky, *A Writer’s Diary*, Volume 1, 257–258.

36. *The Wire*, season 1, episode 4, “Old Cases”; first aired June 23, 2002.

37. Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. Breon Mitchell (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 231; Franz Kafka, *Letter to the Father*, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York: Schocken Books, 2015), 21, 51.

38. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, May 6, 1907, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 24.

39. Kafka, *The Trial*, 84, 195. Incidentally, the “dog howling in the courtyard” can be seen as a variation on the rule articulated by Rosecrans Baldwin that “novelists can’t resist including a dog barking in the distance.” See “Somewhere a Dog Barked,” *Slate*, June 17, 2010, <https://slate.com/culture/2010/06/pick-up-just-about-any-novel-and-you-ll-find-the-phrase-somewhere-a-dog-barked.html>.

40. Franz Kafka, “In the Penal Colony,” in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 140.

41. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 380, entry for August 7, 1917.

42. Kafka, 285, entry for June 11, 1914.

43. See Hugo Bergman, “Franz Kafka und die Hunde,” *Mitteilungsblatt der Irgun Olej Merkas Europa* 34/35 (September 3, 1972): 4. Bergman goes overboard in his defense, falsely claiming that the word “dog” had no negative connotations at all for Kafka:

The association of Jews and dogs in the contemptuous sense leads the interpretation in completely wrong directions. It was certainly far from Kafka’s mind. I must here refer here to our school experiences. I was a classmate of Kafka’s for twelve years and I believe that in these twelve years I never heard a word of contempt for dogs, neither from teachers nor from classmates. I have heard many stories about the dog’s loyalty, about his will to self-sacrifice, about the St. Bernard dogs that rescue people buried by avalanches in the Alps; when Kafka speaks of dogs, such words must have trembled in his soul. Contempt was completely far from his soul. The dog was for him the image of the creature itself, which “in a world darkened by others, must hasten toward death in an almost guiltless silence.”

Compare this with Marthe Robert, who defends the story in exactly the opposite way, arguing that with the figure of the investigative dog Kafka literalizes the anti-Semitic slur: “Taking the insult literally, Kafka places it in a logical situation that reveals the infinite stupidity of the word and, at the same time, its bitter consequences for the insulted individual” (*Franz Kafka’s Loneliness*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Faber & Faber, 1982 [1979]), 14).

44. Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. Anthea Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 44.

45. I thank Frauke Berndt for this reference.

46. Franz Kafka, *Amerika: The Missing Person*, trans. Mark Harman (New York: Schocken Books, 2008), 202–203.

47. Kafka, *Diaries*, 245, entry for December 9, 1913.

48. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, December 31, 1912–January 1, 1913, and March 25, 1914, in *Letters to Felice*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, trans. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 135, 372.

49. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, April 13, 1913, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 95.

50. Drawing on the work of Caroline Spurgeon, Stephen Greenblatt provides an excellent summary of Shakespeare’s many negative references to dogs: “As Caroline Spurgeon observed more than seventy years ago, in a landmark study of Shakespeare’s imagery, dogs function in his work almost entirely negatively. He can effortlessly catalog their types—‘Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,/Hound or spaniel, brach or him,/Bobtail tyke or trundle-tail’—but they are all equally menacing: ‘Be thy mouth or black or white,/Tooth that poisons if it bite’ (*The Tragedy of King Lear* 3.6.21–25). In the tragedy from which these lines come, the villainous sisters, Goneril and Reagan, are ‘dog-hearted,’ a quality they share with the ‘hell-hound’ Richard of Gloucester and with the fathomlessly malevolent Iago (‘O damned Iago! O inhuman dog’). When in Shakespeare dogs are not snarling and biting, they are servile flatterers, like the most craven courtiers: ‘Why, what a candy deal of courtesy,’ Hotspur remarks of Bolingbroke, ‘this fawning greyhound then did proffer me!’ (*I Henry IV* 1.3.247–248). Such sickening displays of canine flattery must never be trusted: ‘When he fawns, he bites; and when he bites,/His venom tooth will rankle to the death’ (*Richard III* 1.3.288–289). Dogs, the clown Lance observes in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, lack all feeling. Everyone in his household is touched by Lance’s departure—‘My mother weeping, my father wailing, my sister crying, our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands’—except for their dog Crab: ‘He is a stone, a very pebble-stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog’ (2.3.5–9). Even a Jew, Lance remarks, would have wept at the parting, but Crab did not shed a tear” (“A Great Dane Goes to the Dogs,” *New York Review of Books*, March 26, 2009). For more on Shakespeare’s dogs, see Peter J. Conradi, *A Dictionary of Interesting and Important Dogs* (London: Short Books, 2019), 159–164.

51. Franz Kafka, “The Pit of Babel,” trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins, in *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 35.

CHAPTER 13

1. Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Double Garden*, trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (London: George Allen, 1914), 27–28.

2. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI: Desire and Its Interpretation, 1958–1959*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (London: Polity, 2019), 89. See the previous chapter, “The Curse of the Dog.”

3. Brunetto Latini, *The Book of the Treasure* [Li Livres dou tresor], trans. Paul Barrette and Spurgeon Baldwin (New York: Garland, 1993 [1260–1267]), 134.
4. Walter Benjamin, *Radio Benjamin*, ed. Lecia Rosenthal, trans. Jonathan Lutes with Lisa Harries Schumann and Diana K. Reese (London: Verso, 2014), 188, 187, quoting Ludwig Börne.
5. Billy Anania, “The Cop-Attacking Chilean Dog Who Became a Worldwide Symbol of Protest,” *Hyperallergic*, November 5, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/526687/negro-matapacos-chilean-protest-dog/>.
6. Miguel de Cervantes, *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, in *Exemplary Stories*, trans. Lesley Lipson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 251.
7. Cervantes, 260.
8. Cervantes, 301.
9. Rúben Gallo, *Freud’s Mexico: Into the Wilds of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 169–170.
10. Cervantes, *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, 254.
11. Cervantes, 266.
12. Cervantes, 266.
13. I thank Cynthia Mitchell for this formulation.
14. Cervantes, *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, 268.
15. Cervantes, 263.
16. This is the great theme of Maurice Blanchot’s reading of Kafka, which I will return to in the appendix.
17. Sigmund Freud to Martha Bernays, February 7, 1884, in *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Ernst L. Freud, trans. Tania Stern and James Stern (New York: Basic Books, 1960), 96–97.
18. Sigmund Freud to Martha Bernays, February 7, 1884, in *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, 97.
19. Sigmund Freud to Eduard Silberstein, March 7, 1875, in *The Letters of Sigmund Freud to Eduard Silberstein, 1871–1881*, ed. Walter Boehlich, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 97.
20. See James W. Hamilton, “Freud and the Suicide of Pauline Silberstein,” *Psychoanalytic Review* 89, no. 6 (December 2002): 889–909.
21. John E. Gedo and Ernest S. Wolf, “Freud’s Novelas Ejemplares,” *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 1 (1973): 315–316.
22. León Grinberg and Juan Francisco Rodríguez, “The Influence of Cervantes on the Future Creator of Psychoanalysis,” *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 65 (1984): 167.
23. See Rúben Gallo, *Freud’s Mexico: Into the Wilds of Psychoanalysis*, 172–173.
24. Cervantes, *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, 250.
25. Cervantes, 250.
26. G. W. F. Hegel, “Foreword to Hinrichs’ Religion in Its Inner Relation to Science,” trans. A. V. Miller, in *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 347–348.
27. Søren Kierkegaard, “The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle,” in *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 346.

28. Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et. al. (New York: The New Press, 1998), 2:276.
29. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufman (London: Penguin, 1982), 68.
30. Franz Kafka, *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*, ed. Jost Schillemeit (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1992), 515. I first came across this fragment in Roger Grenier’s lovely book, *The Difficulty of Being a Dog*, trans. Alice Kaplan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 31.
31. Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991), 11.
32. Franz Kafka, *The Lost Writings*, ed. Reiner Stach, trans. Michael Hofmann (New York: New Directions, 2020), 76–77; translation slightly modified. The original is published in Kafka, *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*, 381–383. The last sentence is without a period. I discovered this story thanks to the doctoral dissertation of Pastorelli Giuseppina, *L’immagine del cane in Franz Kafka* (2014), <https://flore.unifi.it/handle/2158/865906#.YVS2iGYzblw>.
33. Franz Kafka, “Investigations of a Dog,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 291.
34. Franz Kafka, “A Little Fable,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 445.
35. Gustav Janouch, *Conversations with Kafka*, trans. Goronwy Reed (New York: New Directions, 2012), 151–152.
36. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 292.
37. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), 1:179.
38. See chapter 2, “Kafka Swims.”
39. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 254.
40. Franz Kafka, “The Test,” trans. Tania Stern and James Stern, in *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 181.
41. “When I arbitrarily write a single sentence, for instance, ‘He looked out of the window,’ it already has perfection” (Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 38, entry for February 19, 1911).

CHAPTER 14

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1954), 182.
2. Franz Kafka, “Poseidon,” trans. Clement Greenberg, in *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 85.
3. Kafka, 85.
4. Kafka, 87.
5. Kafka, 87.
6. Kafka, “Prometheus,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *Parables and Paradoxes*, 83.

7. Akaky Akakievich's surname, Bashmachkin, is a play on *bashmak*, shoe, and further underlines his lowly status.
8. Nikolai Gogol, "The Overcoat," in *Diary of a Madman, The Government Inspector and Selected Stories*, trans. Ronald Wilks (London: Penguin, 2005), 153–154.
9. William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 280.
10. Gogol, "The Overcoat," 144.
11. Gogol, 155, 157.
12. Gogol, 158.
13. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Books, 1981), 58.
14. "The Overcoat" was published in 1842 and "Bartleby" in 1853.
15. Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street," in *Melville's Short Novels*, ed. Dan McCall (New York: Norton, 2002), 27.
16. Gogol, "The Overcoat," 166.
17. Gogol, 165.
18. See Eric Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
19. Gogol, "The Overcoat," 164.
20. Melville, "Bartleby," 19.
21. Melville, 19.
22. Melville, 12.
23. Melville, 16, 18.
24. Melville, 24.
25. Melville, 16.
26. Melville, 20.
27. Franz Kafka, "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor," trans. Tania Stern and James Stern, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 198.
28. Kafka, 199.
29. Kafka, 199.
30. Kafka, 198.
31. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, July 5, 1922, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 334. This fantasy is one that deeply concerned Kafka; apart from this letter it also features in his last story, "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk."
32. Clarice Lispector offers this description of the neurotic logic of attachment: "It was as if I had organized myself inside the fact of having a stomachache because, if I no longer had it, I would also lose the marvelous hope of freeing myself one day from the stomachache: my old life was necessary to me because it was exactly its badness that made me delight in imagining a hope that, without that life I led, I would not have known" (*The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. Idra Novey (London: Penguin, 2012), 168).
33. Melville, "Bartleby," 13.
34. Kafka, "Blumfeld," 183.
35. Kafka, 183.

36. Kafka, 183–184.
37. I take this point from Clayton Koelb, *Kafka's Rhetoric: The Passion of Reading* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 35–36.
38. Kafka describes this photograph, which “shows a meeting between the Czar of Russia and the President of France” on a ship, at length. That Blumfeld “always had a taste for such imposing scenes” underlines his fascination with authority (188). The photograph refers to a specific historical event: on July 20, 1914, the battleship *France* arrived in Saint Petersburg, carrying French President Raymond Poincaré and his delegation for a meeting with Czar Nicholas II to shore up the Franco-Russian Double Alliance, one of the key events leading up to World War I. Apart from the famous diary entry, “2 August. Germany has declared war on Russia—Swimming in the afternoon,” this is one of the most explicit references to the war in Kafka’s work. For an insightful discussion of this photograph, see Carolin Duttlinger, *Kafka and Photography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 207–219.
39. Kafka, “Blumfeld,” 189.
40. Kafka, 188.
41. Kafka, 190.
42. Marguerite Duras, *Destroy, She Said*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Grove Press, 1970), 6, 9.
43. Kafka, “Blumfeld,” 194.
44. Gogol, “The Overcoat,” 142.
45. Gogol, 141.
46. The problem of symbolic offices and positions is central to Gogol’s fiction. To cite two key examples: in *The Government Inspector*, a visitor to a small Russian town is mistaken for an undercover inspector and exploits his newfound status with wildly comical results; and *Dead Souls* is concerned with an odd scheme to purchase purely symbolic entities, deceased serfs that are still officially recorded in property registers. On the other hand, the flipside of these empty and exchangeable symbolic positions are Gogol’s fantastical surplus objects: the overcoat, most notably, as well as the detached nose of an official that lives a life of its own, masquerading in the uniform of a higher-ranking official, in the story “The Nose.”
47. In Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*, the law-copyist character, often thought to be an inspiration for *Bartleby*, goes by the pseudonym “Nemo,” Latin for nobody.
48. Gogol, “The Overcoat,” 168.
49. Kafka, “Blumfeld,” 205.
50. Kafka, 184.
51. See Andrei Platonov, “The Anti-Sexus,” trans. Anne O. Fisher, and my introduction “Sex and Anti-Sex: The Monstrous Modern Couple,” *Cabinet* 51 (Fall 2013): 41–47, 48–53.
52. In fact, versions of the Anti-Cura have already been developed, like the Japanese PARO (personal robot), an animatronic baby seal marketed to hospitals for therapeutic use, or the mechanical pet dog “with sensors that allow it to pant, woof, wag its tail, nap and awaken; a user can feel a simulated heartbeat” (Paula Span, “In Isolating Times, Can Robo-Pets Provide Comfort?,” *New York Times*, September 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/26/health/coronavirus-elderly-isolation-robot-pets.html>). These robotic companions address a real problem and became more popular in times of pandemic. There is also fertile ground here for a science fiction scenario in which automated affective laborers become self-aware and demand ... what exactly? To be liberated from caregiving? To

be remunerated for their emotional work? Or maybe to form their own corporations? This prospect was raised by Ted Chiang in his novella *The Lifecycle of Software Objects*, which imagines the invention of “digients,” digital life-forms that learn from experience and creatively develop according to a dynamic AI engine. Though these living computer programs possess novel qualities, it’s not exactly clear what they are good for—that is, how the company can profit from them. The company decides to market them as virtual pets: “We’re going to pitch them as pets you can talk to, teach to do really cool tricks. There’s an unofficial slogan we use in-house: ‘All the fun of monkeys, with none of the poop-throwing’” (Ted Chiang, *The Lifecycle of Software Objects* (Burton, MI: Subterranean Press, 2010), 4). This brings us back to the immaculate version of the bachelor machine, the trouble-free companion you can kick around but will always be ready for fun. We could imagine Blumfeld being an early adopter of Chiang’s software objects.

53. Kafka, “Blumfeld,” 196, 195, 197.

54. Kafka, 196.

55. Kafka, 196.

56. As George Steiner once described the reader’s perplexity before Kafka’s parable “Before the Law”: “Helplessness seizes one face to face with this page and a half” (“A Note on Kafka’s ‘Trial,’” in *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978–1995* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 250.

CHAPTER 15

1. Nikolai Gogol, “The Overcoat,” in *Diary of a Madman, The Government Inspector and Selected Stories*, trans. Ronald Wilks (London: Penguin, 2005), 144.

2. Gogol, 144.

3. Gogol, 144.

4. Barthélemy Maurice, “Les deux greffiers,” *Gazette des Tribunaux*, no. 4868 (April 14, 1841): 593.

5. Franz Kafka, in *Kafka’s Selected Stories*, ed. and trans. Stanley Corngold (New York: Norton, 2007), 207, diary entry for February 15, 1920.

6. *Flaubert and Turgenev: The Complete Correspondence*, ed. and trans. Barbara Beaumont (New York: Fromm International, 1985), 134, 145, 165, 171; letters of December 8, 1877, November 10, 1878, August 9, 1879, and December 2, 1879.

7. Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (Funks Grove, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), 274.

8. Flaubert, 280.

9. Michel Foucault, “Fantasia of the Library,” *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 109.

10. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 330, entry for February 9, 1915.

11. Reiner Stach, *Kafka: The Decisive Years*, trans. Shelley Frisch (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 550. Richard T. Gray, Ruth V. Gross, Rolf J. Goebel, and Clayton Koelb concur: “In 1915, frustrated by his lack of progress on the never-completed ‘dog story,’ ‘Blumfeld, ein alterer Junggeselle’ (‘Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor’), Kafka remarked that it is ‘a fish barely breathing on a sandbank. I write my Bouvard et Pécuchet prematurely ...’” (*A Franz Kafka Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 92–93). On

the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari attribute the 1915 diary entry about “my Bouvard and Pécuchet” to “Investigations of a Dog”; see *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 [1975]), 39. Marthe Robert does the same, in *Livre de lectures* (Paris: Grasset, 1977), 20–21. This connection seems highly unlikely, since there is no evidence Kafka began writing “Investigations of Dog” in 1915 or earlier. What is clear, however, is that the idea of a dog story fired Kafka’s imagination, and he returned to it several years later with the tale of the philosopher dog.

12. James Conant helpfully restates the problem this way: “While Karl [Rossmann, in ‘The Stoker’] wavers and eventually succumbs to cowardice, the officer [of the penal colony] is steadfast and courageous. . . . Karl is warm and human; he is one of us. The officer is either a saint or a monster, possibly some combination of both. What would it mean to combine these two elements—to combine the warmth and wavering of Karl’s humanity with the officer’s faith that there is not only a goal but a way and that he knows it?” One can understand Kafka’s annoyance with his dog story from this perspective: Blumfeld seems to combine the worst of both, wavering human weakness and a cruel lack of humanity. See James Conant, “In the Electoral Colony: Kafka in Florida,” *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 696.

13. *Flaubert and Turgenev: The Complete Correspondence*, 91, letter of July 25, 1874.

14. Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre, “Sartre parle de Flaubert,” in *Essais sur Sartre: Entretiens avec Sartre (1975–1979)*, ed. Michel Sicard (Paris: Galilée, 1989), 165.

15. ChatGPT furnishes an eminently Bouvard-Pécuchetian answer to the prompt “How is the novel Bouvard and Pécuchet like ChatGPT?,” including its claim of superiority over the novel:

“Bouvard and Pécuchet” is a satirical novel by the French writer Gustave Flaubert, published posthumously in 1881. The novel tells the story of two copy-clerks, Bouvard and Pécuchet, who decide to abandon their jobs and devote themselves to the pursuit of knowledge. They embark on a series of experiments and investigations, but their efforts invariably end in failure and absurdity. In some ways, “Bouvard and Pécuchet” can be seen as a precursor to the idea of an artificial intelligence like ChatGPT, which is also designed to accumulate knowledge and generate responses based on that knowledge. Like Bouvard and Pécuchet, ChatGPT is also capable of providing information and insights on a wide range of topics, but its responses are ultimately limited by the quality and scope of the data it has been trained on. However, there are also significant differences between ChatGPT and the characters of Bouvard and Pécuchet. Unlike the human protagonists of the novel, ChatGPT does not have the capacity to experience frustration or disappointment when its efforts fall short. Instead, it simply processes the available data and generates a response based on that data, without any emotional attachment or investment in the outcome. Additionally, while Bouvard and Pécuchet are portrayed as bumbling amateurs who are in over their heads, ChatGPT is a highly sophisticated tool that is constantly being refined and improved by its developers.

16. Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, 59.

17. Flaubert, 207.

18. Flaubert, 209.

19. On this encounter with the death, see Paul-Laurent Assoun, “L’ignorance passionnée. Bouvard et Pécuchet saisis par la psychanalyse,” in *Analyses et réflexions sur Gustave Flaubert: Bouvard et Pécuchet* (Paris: Ellipses, 1999), 109. Assoun also connects the hole in knowledge with Bouvard and Pécuchet’s encounters with female sexuality.

20. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 315.
21. Kafka, 299.
22. Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, 51.
23. Kafka, "Investigations," 287, 286.
24. As Flaubert explains to Turgenev in a letter dated July 25, 1874, "If it's done briefly, with a concise, light touch, it will be a more or less witty fantasy, but will lack impact and verisimilitude, whereas if it's detailed and developed, it will look as though I believe in my story, and it can become a serious and even frightening thing" (*Flaubert and Turgenev: The Complete Correspondence*, 91).
25. Guy de Maupassant, *Étude sur Gustave Flaubert*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Guy de Maupassant* (Paris: L. Conard, 1908–1910 [1884]), 19:104.
26. On the "pit of Babel," see chapter 12, "The Curse of the Dog."
27. See the collection of monks' complaints in "Marginalized," *Lapham's Quarterly*, <https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/communication/charts-graphs/marginalized>.
28. Johannes Trithemius, *In Praise of Scribes*, in *Writing Material: Readings from Plato to the Digital Age*, ed. Evelyn B. Tribble and Anne Trubek (New York: Longman, 2003 [1492]), 470.
29. Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, 280.
30. Flaubert, 41.
31. Flaubert, 272.
32. Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. Mark Harman (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 17.
33. Kafka, 184.
34. Kafka, 183.
35. Kafka, 178.
36. A detail in "The Overcoat" speaks eloquently to this displacement. To drive home the intensity of Akaky Akakievich's copying pleasure, Gogol goes on at length about how he was indifferent to all the usual amusements of office workers, like going to the theater, window shopping, flirting with girls at parties, visiting friends' apartments for a game of whist, sipping tea, smoking pipes, and above all gossiping about the latest scandal or telling stories. Gogol underlines that "a Russian can never resist stories" ("The Overcoat," 145). If Akaky can always resist stories, does this mean he is not a real Russian? Or is this "shitty" little avenging clerk the most Russian of them all? Gogol's story about the life and death and afterlife of a natural born civil servant—arguably the greatest and most influential story in Russian literature—is that of a world where paperwork has superseded storytelling.
37. Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, 205–206.

CHAPTER 16

1. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 299, 300.
2. Kafka, 300.
3. Kafka, 299.
4. Kafka, 299.
5. Kafka, 300.

6. Kafka, 300.
7. Kafka, 300.
8. Kafka, 300.
9. Franz Kafka, "Give It Up!," trans. Tania Stern and James Stern, in *The Complete Stories*, 456.
10. Gregg Houwer, *Into the White: Kafka and His Metamorphoses* (Leuven: Acco, 2010), 21.
11. Herman Uyttersprot, "Fr. Kafka, de «Aber-Mann»," *Tijdschrift voor Levende Talen* (1954): 457.
12. Uyttersprot, 455.
13. Maurice Blanchot gives another description of Kafka's self-undermining or self-deconstructive writing: "There is a primary assertion, around which secondary assertions are arranged, that support it as a whole, all the while initiating partial reservations. Each reservation leads to another that completes it and, linked to each other, all of them together make up a negative structure, parallel to the central one, that keeps going on and ending at the same time: having reached the end, the assertion is at once completely developed and completely withdrawn; we do not know if we are grasping the outside or the inside, whether we are in the presence of the building or the hole into which the building has disappeared" ("Kafka and Literature," in *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 23).
14. Uyttersprot, "Fr. Kafka, de «Aber-Mann»," 457.
15. Franz Kafka, "The Trees," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 382; emphasis added.
16. Franz Kafka, "The Burrow," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 347–348; emphasis added. I have changed the yetes in this passage to buts, following the German aber.
17. Uyttersprot, "Fr. Kafka, de «Aber-Mann»," 457.
18. Horst Steinmetz, "Das symptomatischer aber" in *Suspensive Interpretation: Am Beispiel Franz Kafkas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 110.
19. Steinmetz, 117.
20. Franz Kafka, "Before the Law," trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 3; emphasis added.
21. Franz Kafka, "The Watchman," trans. Clement Greenberg, in *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 81.
22. Franz Kafka, "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk," trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 373–374.
23. Kafka, "Before the Law," 4.
24. Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991), 87.
25. See chapter 13, "Authority: A Canine Perspective."
26. Franz Kafka, "The Sudden Walk," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 397–398.
27. This sudden leaping over the obstacle, as opposed to gradually approaching and overtaking it, recalls Lacan's line about Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the tortoise: "It is quite clear that Achilles can only pass the tortoise—he cannot catch up with it." Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore, 1972–1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 8.

28. This saying was first reported by Max Brod, in “Der Dichter Franz Kafka,” *Die Neue Rundschau* 32 (November 1921): 1213.
29. Siegfried Kracauer, “Franz Kafka: On His Posthumous Works,” *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995 [1931]), 277.
30. “A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us” (Franz Kafka to Oskar Pollak, January 27, 1904, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 16).
31. Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 52.
32. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 405, entry for January 24, 1922.
33. Jacques Lacan, Seminar XVI, *D’un Autre à l’autre*, session of June 25, 1969, Staferla edition, <http://staferla.free.fr/S16/S16.htm>; I cite here the unpublished Cormac Gallagher translation. See chapter 3, “The Drive to Philosophize.”
34. François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2006), 207.
35. Rabelais, 207.
36. From Charles de Bovelles’s *Gargantua Proverbiorum Vulgarium Libri tres* (1531); cited in Kathryn Banks, “Metaphor, Lexicography, and Rabelais’s Prologue to *Gargantua*,” in *Movement in Renaissance Literature: Exploring Kinesic Intelligence*, ed. Kathryn Banks and Timothy Chesters (Cham, CH: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 88.
37. Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 208.
38. Rabelais, 206.
39. The parable of the bone marrow is included in Brod’s edition of the story, and the Muirs’, Wortsman’s, and Strazny’s translations, and omitted from Corngold’s, Crick’s, Hofmann’s, and Lundberg’s, which follow the critical edition.
40. Kafka, “Investigations,” 291. A history of the bone marrow metaphor cannot go without mentioning the crucial reference in the letter from Hamann to Herder, dated August 8, 1784, and quoted by Heidegger in his essay on “Language”: “If I were as eloquent as Demosthenes I would yet have to do nothing more than repeat a single word three times: reason is language, logos. I gnaw at this marrow-bone and will gnaw myself to death over it. There still remains a darkness, always, over this depth for me; I am still waiting for an apocalyptic angel with a key to this abyss” (Martin Heidegger, “Language,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 189). Hamann here anticipates the twist of Kafka’s dog, that the “substantial marrow” is not the perfect nourishment but a poison, the abyss.
41. Kafka, “Investigations,” 302.
42. Iain Bamforth, *A Doctor’s Dictionary: Writings on Culture and Medicine* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2015), 113.
43. Jean Genet, *The Balcony*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Grove Press, 1966), 75.
44. Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), 469.
45. Franz Kafka, “The City Coat of Arms,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 434.
46. Kafka, 433.

47. Franz Kafka, "The Coming of the Messiah," trans. Clement Greenberg, in *Parables and Paradoxes*, 81.
48. Kafka, 81.
49. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 23.
50. Kafka, "The Coming of the Messiah," 81.
51. On this fundamental formula, see chapter 1, "Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog," and chapter 5, "The Philosophy of Food."

CHAPTER 17

1. "By a process of development against which it would have been useless to struggle, the word 'psycho-analysis' has itself become ambiguous. While it was originally the name of a particular therapeutic method, it has now also become the name of a science—the science of unconscious mental processes" (Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 20:70). Hereafter SE.
2. Sigmund Freud, "Psycho-Analysis," SE 20:265.
3. Sigmund Freud, "The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest," SE 13:165–190.
4. Sigmund Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis*, SE 20:246.
5. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), 33.
6. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, 1969–1970*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007), 20–23; *Seminar XXVII Dissolution*, session of March 18, 1980, Staferla edition: <http://staferla.free.fr/S27/S27.htm>; *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII: The Sinthome, 1975–1976*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 108.
7. See Eric Santner, *Untying Things Together: Philosophy, Literature and a Life in Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).
8. Eugen Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation: The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method*, trans. Ronald Bruzina (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 8; original emphasis.
9. It was Maurice Merleau-Ponty who undertook the project of a phenomenology of phenomenology, and Lacan's return to Freud could also be considered a psychoanalysis of psychoanalysis—both these great intellectual endeavors involved self-reflexive turns, and radical reinventions, of their respective fields. Merleau-Ponty argued that the very motor of phenomenology lay in its failure to complete its transcendental turn, in a kind of opacity inherent to embodied consciousness, and the later discussion between Merleau-Ponty and Lacan essentially consists in a debate over the nature of this opacity or blind spot.
10. See Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XXI, Les Non-Dupes Errent*, session of April 9, 1974, Staferla edition, <http://staferla.free.fr/S21/S21.htm>.
11. See Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. Idra Novey (London: Penguin, 2012), 189.
12. "There was a time when metaphysics was called the queen of all the sciences, and if the will be taken for the deed, it deserved this title of honor, on account of the preeminent importance of its subject. Now, in accordance with the fashion of the age, the queen

proves despised on all sides” (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A. W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 99).

13. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 3.

CHAPTER 18

1. Franz Kafka, “The Truth about Sancho Panza,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 179.

2. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 13:92. Hereafter SE.

3. Sigmund Freud, “A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis,” SE 17:143.

4. Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, SE 23:197.

5. Walter Benjamin, “Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death,” *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007 [1934]), 140.

6. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin, 1996), 8.

7. Robert Wexelblatt, “On Sidekicks,” in *The Posthumous Papers of Sidney Fein* (Claremont, CA: Pelekinesis, 2018), 384.

8. J. P. Hodin, “Franz Kafka: Reflections on the Problem of Decadence,” in *The Dilemma of Being Modern* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1959), 10.

9. Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991), 47.

10. On the quixotic suicide, see chapter 1, “Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog.”

11. Franz Kafka, “The Cares of a Family Man,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 429.

12. Enrique Vila-Matas, *A Brief History of Portable Literature*, trans. Anne McLean and Thomas Bunstead (New York: New Directions, 2015), 35.

13. Eric Santner refers to the field of “Odradek studies,” the “new science of constitutively errant objects,” in *Untying Things Together: Philosophy, Literature and a Life in Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 121.

14. See chapter 13, “Authority: A Canine Perspective,” on Kafka’s story of the involuntary runaway dog Caesar.

15. Franz Kafka, “Investigations of a Dog,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 316.

16. David A. Lines, “Happiness, Renaissance Concept of,” in *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Marco Sgarbi (New York: Springer, 2019), 1462.

17. Claude Romano, “Eleutheria,” in *The Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin, trans. Steven Rendall, Christian Hubert, and Jeffrey Mehlman, trans. ed. Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra, and Michael Wood (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 250–251.

18. Emil Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (Chicago: HAU Books, 2016), 263.

19. See chapter 1, “Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog.”

20. On this phrase, see chapter 7, “Critique of Recognition.”

21. Kafka, “Investigations,” 286.

22. Kafka, 286.

23. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans. Edith Grossman (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 937.
24. Cervantes, 458.

CHAPTER 19

1. Saul Friedländer, *Franz Kafka: The Poet of Shame and Guilt* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 4; Robert Kauf, "Franz Kafka," *Colloquia Germanica* 10, no. 4 (1976/1977), 308; Stanley Corngold, *Lambent Traces: Franz Kafka* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1, quoting Ritchie Robertson. For a contrary view to Corngold and Robertson, see Paul Goodman: "It would be absurd to look for system in the tentative formulas of Kafka; yet he is systematic enough. But he is inconsistent; in the most important issues he contradicts his strength and would mislead" (*Kafka's Prayer* (New York: Hillstone, 1947), 53). Paul North, on the other hand, speaks of Kafka's "system of non-knowledge," following Georges Bataille, and his "systematic asystematic" style, in *The Yield: Kafka's Atheological Reformation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 8, 229.
2. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 208.
3. Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 7.
4. Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 34.
5. I borrow the characterization "philosophical thriller" from Alberto L. Siani, "Art and Politics at the Origin of German Idealism: The 'Oldest System-Program of German Idealism,'" in *Handeln und Erkennen. Beiträge zur Ästhetik, Ethik und Phänomenologie, Festschrift für A. Gethmann-Siefert*, ed. Alain Patrick Olivier (Hagen: FernUniversität Hagen, 2010), 51.
6. See chapter 1, "Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog."
7. For a detailed account of this history, see Frank-Peter Hansen, "Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus": *Rezeptionsgeschichte und Interpretation* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989).
8. G. W. F. Hegel, "The Earliest System-Program of German Idealism," trans. H. S. Harris, in *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 111.
9. Hegel, 112.
10. David Farrell Krell, *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 3.
11. Friedrich Schlegel, *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*, trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 86; translation slightly modified.
12. Kafka's new mythology may be understood in two ways. First, in terms of the new myths he created, like the epic bureaucratic quests of Joseph K. in *The Trial* and K. in *The Castle*; to quote Claude-Edmonde Magny: "Few modern writers have the power to forge myths capable of rousing in us the violent emotions which the myths of the ancient religions arouse. Kafka is such a writer" ("The Objective Depiction of Absurdity," trans. Angel Flores, *Quarterly Review of Literature* 2, no. 3 (1945): 211). And second, in the way he rewrites and reimagines old myths. I will focus mainly on the latter.
13. Franz Kafka to Robert Klopstock, June 1921, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 285.

14. Kafka, 285.
15. Franz Kafka, "The Coming of the Messiah," trans. Clement Greenberg, in *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 81.
16. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 394, entry for October 19, 1921.
17. Franz Kafka, "Paradise," trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir, in *Parables and Paradoxes*, 33.
18. Franz Kafka, "Aphorisms," in *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*, trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 206.
19. For a detailed reading of this last variation on the fall, see Hans Blumenberg, *St. Matthew Passion*, trans. Helmut Müller-Sievers and Paul Fleming (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021), 69–70.
20. Franz Kafka, "Alexander the Great," trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir, in *Parables and Paradoxes*, 95.
21. Franz Kafka, "The New Attorney," trans. Clement Greenberg, in *Parables and Paradoxes*, 97.
22. Franz Kafka, "The Silence of the Sirens," trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 431, 432; translation slightly modified.
23. Franz Kafka, "Prometheus," trans. Willa Muir and Edmund Muir, in *Parables and Paradoxes*, 83.
24. Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991), 41.
25. See chapter 3, "The Drive to Philosophize."
26. On "The Burrow," see chapter 9, "The Burrow, or The Philosophy of Enjoyment."
27. Mladen Dolar, "The Burrow of Sound," *differences* 22, nos. 2–3 (2011): 130.
28. Dolar, 122.
29. Dolar, 137.
30. Jean-Claude Milner, "Platon, interprète de Kafka," in *La puissance du détail* (Paris: Grasset, 2014), 74.
31. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1258, 55c.
32. Milner, "Platon, interprète de Kafka," 75.
33. Milner, 77.
34. Franz Kafka, "The Cares of a Family Man," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 428.
35. Milner, "Platon, interprète de Kafka," 80.
36. Milner, 80.
37. Milner, 81.
38. Milner, 82.
39. Hannah Arendt, "'What Remains? The Language Remains': A Conversation with Günter Gaus," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 1994), 12. Arendt's line echoes Paul Celan's "It, the

language remained, not lost, yes in spite of everything” (“Speech on the Occasion of Receiving the Literature Prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen (1958)” in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, trans. John Felstiner (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001), 395). I thank Stephen Ross for this reference.

40. Walter H. Sokel, “Freud and the Magic of Kafka’s Writing,” in *The Myth of Power and the Self: Essays on Franz Kafka* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 152.

41. Jacques Lacan, “The Neurotic’s Individual Myth,” trans. Martha Noel Evans, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 48 (1979 [1953]): 410. It was Claude Lévi-Strauss who first employed the term “individual myth” in his 1949 essay “L’efficacité symbolique” (“The Effectiveness of Symbols”), included in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

42. Jacques Lacan, *Transference: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VIII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), 302.

43. Lacan, 302.

44. The family of Oedipus is marked by the curse pronounced by Pelops, king of Pisa, on Oedipus’s father, Laius, for abducting and possibly raping Pelops’s son Chrysippus—although in other accounts, the roots of misfortune stretch even further back. Regarding this ancestral curse, Lacan comments:

One does or does not approach Atè, and when one approaches it, it is because of something that is linked to a beginning and a chain of events, namely, that of the misfortune of the Labdacides family. As one starts to come close to it, things come together in a great hurry, and what one finds at the bottom of everything that goes on at every level in this family, the text tells us, is a μέριμνα, which is almost the same word as μνήμη, with an emphasis on “resentment.” But it is very wrong to translate it thus, for “resentment” is a psychological notion, whereas μέριμνα is one of those ambiguous words that are between the subjective and the objective, and that properly speaking give us the terms of signifying speech. The μέριμνα of the Labdacides is that which drives Antigone to the border of Atè.

Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: Norton, 1992), 264.

45. For Lacan’s reading of Claudel’s *Coûfontaine* trilogy (*The Hostage, Crusts, and The Humiliated Father*), see Jacques Lacan, *Transference: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VIII*, 265–325.

46. Hermann Broch, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal and His Time: The European Imagination, 1860–1920*, trans. Michael P. Steinberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 128.

47. Broch, 128.

48. Jacques Lacan, *Desire and Its Interpretation, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI (1958–1959)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), 425.

49. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac, 1988), 189.

50. Marguerite Duras, “The Black Block,” in *Practicalities*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 27.

51. Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, 411, entry for February 3, 1922.

52. See chapter 1, “Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog.”

53. Marthe Robert, *Le puits de Babel* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1987), 93.

54. Samuel Beckett, quoted in Israel Shenker, “Moody Man of Letters,” *New York Times*, May 6, 1956, section II, 1. See note 65 of chapter 1, “Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog.”
55. Hegel, “The Earliest System-Program of German Idealism,” 110; original emphasis.
56. Gilles Deleuze situates Kafka at the pivot between disciplinary and control societies: “In disciplinary societies you were always starting all over again (as you went from school to barracks, from barracks to factory), while in control societies you never finish anything—business, training, and military service being coexisting metastable states of a single modulation, a sort of universal transmutation. Kafka, already standing at the point of transition between the two kinds of society, described in *The Trial* their most ominous judicial expressions: apparent acquittal (between two confinements) in disciplinary societies, and endless postponement in (constantly changing) control societies are two very different ways of doing things, and if our legal system is vacillating, is itself breaking down, it’s because we’re going from one to the other” (“Postscript on Control Societies,” in *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 179).
57. See chapter 2, “Kafka Swims.”
58. Hegel, “The Earliest System-Program of German Idealism,” 111.
59. Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Penguin, 2004), 455.
60. See Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, 394, entry for October 19, 1921.
61. I borrow the phrase “heteronomy without servitude” from Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 152.
62. Franz Kafka, “Investigations of a Dog,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 291.
63. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies and The Sonnets to Orpheus*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage International, 2009), 51.
64. See chapter 2, “Kafka Swims.”

CHAPTER 20

1. Franz Kafka, “Investigations of a Dog,” trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 290.
2. Kafka, 315.
3. Kafka, 292.
4. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1218, 614d.
5. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 371, entry for October 8, 1916.
6. Walter Benjamin, “Some Reflections on Kafka,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 145.
7. Miguel de Cervantes, *The Dialogue of the Dogs*, in *Exemplary Stories*, trans. Lesley Lipson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 268.
8. Franz Kafka, “A Life,” trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, in *He: The Shorter Writings of Franz Kafka*, ed. Joshua Cohen (London: Riverrun, 2020), 62.
9. Warren Motte, introduction to *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature*, ed. Warren Motte (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive, 1986), 22.

10. Kafka, "Investigations," 289–290.
11. Gustav Janouch, *Conversations with Kafka*, trans. Goronwy Reed (New York: New Directions, 2012), 115–116.
12. Siegfried Kracauer, "Franz Kafka: On His Posthumous Works," *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995 [1931]), 270.
13. Tracy McNulty, *Wrestling with the Angel: Experiments in Symbolic Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 263.
14. McNulty, 264. This is also Mladen Dolar's conclusion, in *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 188.
15. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, May 6, 1907, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 24.

CHAPTER 21

1. Franz Kafka, *The Office Writings*, ed. Stanley Corngold, Jack Greenberg, and Benno Wagner, trans. Eric Patton and Ruth Hein (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 280.
2. Franz Kafka, "My Neighbor," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 424.
3. Erich Heller, "The World of Franz Kafka," in *The Disinherited Mind: Essays in Modern German Literature and Thought* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 202. Stanley Corngold titled his study of the interpretations of "The Metamorphosis," *The Commentator's Despair*.
4. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, November 1, 1912, in *Letters to Felice*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, trans. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 21.
5. Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910–1923*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Martin Greenberg with Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 124, entry for November 21, 1911.
6. Kafka, 224, 225, 233, 238; entries for July 21, 1913, July 21, 1913, October 15, 1913, and November 20, 1913.
7. Kafka, 225–226, entry for July 21, 1913.
8. Kafka, 322, entry for December 15, 1914.
9. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, July 7, 1913, in *Letters to Felice*, 287.
10. Franz Kafka, *Letter to the Father*, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (New York: Schocken Books, 2015), 64; translation modified.
11. Kafka, *Diaries*, 231, entry for August 21, 1913.
12. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, August 14, 1913, in *Letters to Felice*, 304.
13. Kafka, *Diaries*, 163, entry for January 3, 1912.
14. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), 28; Sigmund Freud, "The Development of the Libido and the Sexual Organizations," *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 16:323.
15. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, July 5, 1922, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 333.
16. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, December 22, 1912, in *Letters to Felice*, 119.

17. Franz Kafka, "Aphorisms," in *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*, trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 206.
18. "There are two main human sins from which all the others derive: impatience and indolence. It was because of impatience that they were expelled from Paradise; it is because of indolence that they do not return. Yet perhaps there is only one major sin: impatience. Because of impatience they were expelled, because of impatience they do not return" (Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991), 15).
19. Kafka, *Diaries*, 404, entry for January 23, 1922.
20. A whole book has even been devoted to the subject of Kafka and noise: Jürgen Daiber's *Kafka und der Lärm: Klanglandschaften der frühen Moderne* (Münster: mentis, 2015).
21. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, July 15, 1916, in *Letters to Felice*, 474.
22. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, September 8, 1916, in *Letters to Felice*, 496.
23. Kafka, *Diaries*, 104, entry for November 5, 1911. "Great Noise" was published in *Herderblätter* 1, nos. 4–5 (October 1912): 44.
24. Gregg Houwer, *Into the White: Kafka and His Metamorphoses* (Leuven: Acco, 2010), 26.
25. For example, Slavoj Žižek explains his own (neurotic) strategy of writing precisely as a way of avoiding writing: "Up to a certain point, I'm telling myself, 'No, I'm not yet writing. I'm just putting down ideas.' Then, at a certain point, I tell myself, 'Everything is already there. Now I just have to edit it.' So that's the idea: to split it into two. I put down notes; I edit it. Writing disappears" (Astra Taylor, dir., *Zizek!* (New York: Zeitgeist Films, 2005)).
26. Louis Begley, *The Tremendous World I Have Inside My Head, Franz Kafka: A Biographical Essay* (New York: Atlas & Co., 2008), 43–44.
27. Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 47.
28. See chapter 19, "A New Mythology."
29. Houwer beautifully explains this: "Kafka is not allowed to enter 'the gate of his vocation.' But he is also not allowed to abandon the gate and continue with a normal, non-writing, life. He is forced to wait before the gate—to cultivate his call as a writer, the very cultivation being his writing. Kafka's writing is an expression of the impossibility of the fulfilment of the promise that forever keeps drawing him back to his desk. His is a writing in which the fictitious characters cultivate the imbalance, because only in that way can the writing go on and the promise be prolonged. As soon as it stops the author is again left to himself, forced to face his own failure" (*Into the White*, 31).
30. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, January 14–15, 1913, in *Letters to Felice*, 156.
31. Kafka, 156.
32. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, July 5, 1922, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, 333.
33. Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, January 14–15, 1913, in *Letters to Felice*, 156.
34. Franz Kafka to Ottilie Kafka, first half of June 1921, in *Letters to Ottilie and the Family*, ed. N. N. Glatzer, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 73.
35. Marcel Proust, *Letters to His Neighbor*, trans. Lydia Davis (New York: New Directions, 2017), 46, 56.
36. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, June 30, 1922, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, 329.
37. Kafka, *Diaries*, 414, entry for February 15, 1922.

38. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, end of May/beginning of June, 1921, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, 283.
39. Kafka, 281.
40. Franz Kafka, "The Burrow," in *The Complete Stories*, trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, 343, 349.
41. For the ultimate development of this theme, see Mladen Dolar, "The Burrow of Sound," *differences* 22, nos. 2–3 (2011): 112–139.
42. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 264.
43. Franz Kafka to Max Brod, January 13, 1921, in *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, 249.
44. Kafka, *Diaries*, 384, entry for September 19, 1917.
45. See Stanley Corngold, *Lambent Traces: Franz Kafka* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 11, 16, 44, 81, and *passim*.
46. Claude-Edmonde Magny, *Les sandales d'Empédocle: Essai sur les limites de la littérature* (Boudry: Editions de la Baconnière, 1945), 286. Michael Holland notes this mistake and its significance for Blanchot in his essay "Writing as Überfluss: Blanchot's Reading of Kafka's Diaries," in *Understanding Blanchot, Understanding Modernism*, ed. Christopher Langlois (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 167.
47. Maurice Blanchot, "Kafka and Literature," in *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 21.
48. Emmanuel Levinas, "On Maurice Blanchot," in *Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996 [1976]), 131.
49. Gilles Deleuze, "Anti-Oedipus and Other Reflections," Seminar of June 3, 1980, trans. Graeme Thomson and Silvia Maglioni, <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/antioedipus-and-other-reflections/lecture-2>, p. 5.
50. Blanchot, "Kafka and Literature," 22.
51. Deleuze, "Anti-Oedipus and Other Reflections," 5.
52. See Wouter Kusters, "On Understanding Madness: A Paradoxical View," *Philosophical Psychology* 36, no. 8 (2023): 1533–1539.
53. Maurice Blanchot, "Reading Kafka," in *The Work of Fire*, 8.
54. Heidegger writes: "Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein. Thus death reveals itself as that possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped [unüberholbare]" (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962 [1927]), 294; original emphasis). Levinas corrects Jean Wahl's misinterpretation of Heidegger regarding this crucial point: "Death in Heidegger is not, as Jean Wahl says 'the impossibility of possibility,' but 'the possibility of impossibility.' This apparently Byzantine distinction has a fundamental importance" (Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987 [1947]), 70).
55. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 284; original emphasis.
56. See Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 70–71; and *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979 [1961]), 235. For a profound commentary on Levinas's reversal of Heidegger's philosophy of death, see Rudi Visker, *Truth and Singularity: Taking Foucault into Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1999), 246–250. I would add to Visker's analysis that Levinas's critique of Heidegger on death and finitude is a pivotal moment in

- the development of twentieth-century French philosophy that was taken up and developed in different (and not necessarily compatible) ways by Blanchot, Deleuze, and Lacan.
57. Franz Kafka, "The Hunter Gracchus," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 228.
 58. Blanchot, "Kafka and Literature," 20.
 59. Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, 18. See chapter 1, "Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Dog."
 60. As reported by Kharms's biographer Valerij Šubinskij. See Gudrun Lehmann, "Franz Kafka und Daniil Charms. Versuch einer Annäherung," *Zeitschrift für Slavistik* 3, no. 58 (2013): 276–277.
 61. Marc De Kesel uses this image of Baron Munchausen pulling himself up by his own hair as an exemplary figure of the psychoanalytic (Lacanian) subject, in *Het münchhausen-paradigma: Waarom Freud en Lacan ertoe doen* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2019), 12. See also Paul Watzlawick, *Münchhausen's Pigtail, or Psychotherapy and "Reality": Essays and Lectures* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 179–206.
 62. Blanchot, "Kafka and Literature," 23; Houwer, *Into the White*, 31.
 63. For Kafka's new causality, see chapter 3, "The Drive to Philosophize."
 64. Franz Kafka, "Advocates," trans. Tania Stern and James Stern, in *The Complete Stories*, 451.
 65. Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog," trans. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir, in *The Complete Stories*, 292.
 66. Robert Wexelblatt, "Complaining Before and After 1984," *Iowa Review* 16, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 1986): 87.
 67. Elias Canetti, *Kafka's Other Trial: The Letters to Felice*, trans. Christopher Middleton (London: Penguin, 1974), 31–32.
 68. Kafka, *Diaries*, 367, entry for July 20, 1916.
 69. Kafka, *Diaries*, 321, entry for December 13, 1914; emphasis added.
 70. Pascal Amphoux, Martine Leroux, et al., *Le bruit, la plainte et le voisin: Tome 1 Le mécanisme de la plainte et son contexte* (Grenoble, FR: CRESSON, École d'Architecture de Grenoble, 1989), 264–265.
 71. Blanchot, "Kafka and Literature," 24.

