

## Preface

Given the vast amount of Kafkian literature, it seems daring or even pretentious to come up with another book on this author. Here are some reasons why we still hope for reader's interest. Our book collects original articles approaching Kafka's work from the perspectives of several philosophical disciplines (ontology, epistemology, philosophy of language, ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of literature and aesthetics). Needless to stress, their authors' achievement cannot consist in a mere subsumption of the "Kafkian material" under the conceptual schemes of these disciplines: the very nature of this "material" would resist such a treatment. Hence the starting point cannot be theoretical aspirations stemming from the authors' long-term work in these disciplines but creative reading of Kafka's texts. On this basis, the articles collected in this volume offer original, sometimes polemically focused views both on Kafka's work and on influential interpretations or tendencies prevailing in the Kafkian interpretive tradition.

The thematic and methodological variety of the articles is no less noticeable than the diversity of the research profiles of their authors. They include detailed interpretations of particular works (*The Burrow*, *The Judgement*, the aphorism *Before the Law*, *The Castle*) as well

as thorough analyses of characteristic features of Kafka's texts: their fragmentariness (and resistance to closure); the function of elaborate explanations of the system and detailed situation analyses provided occasionally by Kafka's characters and, as the other side of the coin, permanent demonstrations of the unsurmountable limits of rationality and understanding; the role of animality and of the motif of „becoming-animal“ in the presentation of the states or situations in which Kafka's heroes find themselves; the specific nature and functions of indeterminacy and incompleteness in (and of) Kafka's fictional worlds, etc. A prominent role in some of these analyses is reserved for confrontations with other writers (such as Beckett, Bernhard or Balzac), with influential Kafka's interpreters (including Derida, Foucault or Deleuze), with a renowned adaptation of Kafka's work (Welles' movie *The Trial*) or with ongoing debates on related topics in various disciplines (current discussions about rationalizing explanations in ethics and theory of action, dealing with narrative gaps in the fictional worlds theories, discussions about the relevance of the law of the excluded middle in various kinds of discourse, the role of the concept of „noise“ in semiotics and information theory, the Quinean thesis of the inextricability of meaning as a model for dealing with other phenomena).

The editors highly appreciate the opportunity to publish a volume on Kafka's work in a publishing house located in the very centre of the Old Prague, where Kafka spent a substantial part of his life (his birth house is a two-minute walk from there and the house of his closest friend Max Brod is just across the street). We hope that the reader will feel this closeness to Kafka's world whenever she opens the book.

*The Editors*