



## Sartrean Ethics and Emotive Nuisance in Kafkaesque World

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### Abstract

This study investigates the integration of Sartrean ethical principles in Kafka's literary works and challenges the usefulness of existentialist ethics. Sartre's Notebook for *An Ethics* (1983) argues that existentialism is a practical ethical theory that challenges the separation of theoretical and practical aspects. Warnock echoes this in *Existential Ethics* (1967). By examining key works by Sartre, including *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946) and *Being and Nothingness* (1943), the research explores the fundamental concepts of Sartrean ethics, which include freedom, bad faith, responsibility, and anguish. Sartre rejects absolute values, prioritizing subjectivity while acknowledging authenticity and good faith. Although Kierkegaard and Heidegger do not explicitly address existential ethics, they contribute to ethical concerns. The study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach, emphasizing Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology. The theoretical framework is based on Sartre's Ethics and Emotive Nuisance concepts. The epistemological position aligns with Heidegger's interpretive technique. In the Kafkaesque World, characters struggle with existential perplexity amid modern-age horrors, exploring the traumas of existence. The research develops systematic frameworks to understand the ethical standpoint of this world, where characters face entanglement in chaotic existential paraphernalia and emotive nuisance. Emotions linked to existential ethics are examined to clarify the impact of emotion on ethical conduct.

## Introduction

### Sartrean Ethics

Sartre (1905-1980) is the embodiment of existentialism, yet he wrote notable novels and dramas. *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946) is a renowned lecture by Sartre, in which he advocates authentic existence alongside freedom and responsibility. Then, man is characterized by his decisions and deeds. Man makes decisions at every instant of time, conscious of both his history and his uncertain future. The idea that existence comes before essence describes how humans identify themselves moment by moment rather than having a predetermined essence when they first enter the world.

Earnshaw (1973) argues in his book *Existentialism* that a herd has the flexibility to define itself since it is not pre-defined. He is nothing in and of himself, but he can be anything he wants—he just hasn't determined what that is yet. He is free to make his own decisions. Man makes decisions at every instant of time, conscious of both his history and his uncertain future. The idea that existence comes before essence describes how humans identify themselves moment by moment rather than having a predetermined essence when they first enter the world.

He claims that Sartre investigates the various facets of consciousness because it is unpredictable, opaque, and spontaneous. The consciousness of existence is produced by ontological consciousness. Sartrean ethics are perfectly feasible and capable of meeting all of an ethics' practical needs. A Sartrean ethics can give values, counsel a person on what is good and wrong to do, and permit the denunciation of certain actions and personalities.

Existential Ethics, much like ethics, is a systematic inquiry into the nature of right and wrong, yet unlike ethics, there are no intrinsic values attached to it. In Sartrean perspective, man has been thrown into existence,

condemned to be free. Man does not have any intrinsic set of moral values because the existential world is a godless world where there is chaos, bewilderment, and meaninglessness. Man will be bound solely by the norms of behavior he establishes for himself. His decision gives him freedom, but it also gives him the responsibility for his actions due to that freedom. Each action not only decides his existence but also influences the beings around him. As a result, by deciding for himself, he also chooses for the whole human race.

The burden of responsibility does not limit one's freedom but makes one an ethical being. However, conforming to pre-set values is not existentially right but wrong. Accepting notions other than the evolution of being (becoming) falls under the category of Bad Faith. There is a constant debate between good faith and bad faith regarding existentialism, as Joseph S. Catalano presents the discussion in his book *Good Faith and Other Essays* (1996) in a series of essays. Bad faith is exemplified when Mr. K is appointed as a lecturer, yet he assumes the role of lecturer and gives an excuse that he cannot help not being a lecturer. He is just playing a game and game of being a lecturer. Sartre labels it as Bad Faith because it is contrary to the concept of freedom and subjectivity.

Existentialism gives freedom to every person to make choices, as these choices will determine their being. Not choosing and surrendering to already established norms will be considered Bad Faith, which one must avoid because it will be unethical in existential ethics. Man is in a constant state of becoming and does not have a fixed being. Choices and actions will determine his being. In this way, man is not more than the totality of his choices. Nothing compels him to make confident choices.

Furthermore, there is no possibility of an objective value system without Divine. No value ever existed until the man was born. Indeterminism and the absence of a value system are all responsible for his actions and choices. In his choice, he must avoid Bad Faith. Good is defined through the actions of an individual being. It is up to the individual to choose ethics (Catalano, 1996).

Ethics seeks to establish more than accepted norms of behavior; it aims to inform us about how we act and how we should act. This pursuit of values is also on Sartre's moral agenda because it is part of everyday lives. Once again, however, he tries to make us see how we have forged not only accepted norms of behaviour but ideals for ourselves. For example, we create a world wherever we lie, yet we hold onto the idea of telling the truth. We want both, not out of sophistry, but out of comfort, and then, because we recognize the bad faith of our comfort, we want to go beyond. We begin to desire space and temporality in which our inventiveness is not a choice of lying or telling the truth but in which communication is of itself disclosure.

Thus, Sartre wants to unveil the adventure of moral creativity and grasp how we collectively shape new ideals out of old ones and how we then euerand maneuver beyond them. Indeed, we are inventive even in our attempts to escape being free. Strange creativity is present in bad faith, in the ways we individually and collectively forge the chains that bind ourselves to ourselves.

With all this emphasis on creativity, we seem to be admitting that Sartre has an absolute notion of freedom and that he absurdly claims that we can do whatever we want. This has never been Sartre's view, if, in fact, it ever has been anyone's philosophical view. Sartre has always claimed that human existence is thoroughly situational. To put the matter somewhat differently, our freedom is not merely embodied. Such a view implies a limited force being here rather than there; instead, freedom is the name we give to our individual and collective inventiveness. In the correct, this creativity is revealed in how our bodies interact and how our bodies touch matter and alter it into a world.

In Sartrean ethics, there is a complete absence of extrinsic moral authority. The weight of Sartrean ethics lies in the promise of salvation from absurdity, anguish, and chaos. Sartre asserts that one cannot comply with the standpoint of the whole. In Sartrean ethics, Subjectivity, Freedom, Bad Faith, and Other People, are key concepts. Sartrean ethics is not only metaphysical and normative but also applied because Sartre does not distinguish between theoretical and practical philosophy. According to him, his ontological assertions are theoretical and practical. So, the current study attempts to evaluate Kafkaesque World regarding Sartrean ethics.

### Literature Review

Kafka is a famous German writer who has been researched widely and mentioned that more than 10,000 research works had already been done by 1977. Although Brod released his important writings immediately after his death, rejecting his testament, Kafka did not enjoy much renown during his lifetime. However, enormous critical praise immediately followed his funeral. In refusing to have his literary works burned, Brod violated his buddy by allowing the world to study and enjoy the surrealistic portrayal of the predicament of modern man, who has any philosophical, spiritual, or theological foundations. Rhodes and Westwood (2016) focus on his novella, 'The Metamorphosis,' to unearth the tension between generosity and reciprocity in organizational settings from an ethical perspective. The main character, Gregor Samsa, transforms into a huge insect. Gregor's predicament shifts from page to page, and the reactions of the other characters influence his every action. Current research studies the novella from a thematic angle, and authors consider Levinas' philosophy in understanding and questioning the phenomenon of

reciprocity and generosity in the present plight of Gregor Samsa. According to Levinas, ethical relations do not amount to symmetry, as one is responsible for another without reciprocal consideration. When one is generous in the hope of reciprocity, the relationship is economical and not ethical. Levinas does not altogether reject the phenomenon of reciprocity as wrong, but he does not equate it with ethics. Levinas is afraid of totality, where the economy becomes everything.

Ryan (1999) presents a thought-provoking scholarly study of the novel that includes several new interpretations writers provide. Since Kafka's imaginary universe is difficult to comprehend, he notices Kafka's opposition to all those literary interpretations. Ryan claims that Kafka captured what was happening on a subliminal level. The inner and exterior selves are always at odds with one another. The dreamlike inner world hides and exposes the subconscious, which is the site of the ongoing struggle between the self and the outside world. Ryan covered the writings of Steinmetz, Bernheimer, Musil, Kurz, Walter-Schneider, and Keinleechner in his discussion, all of whom significantly contributed to our current understanding of Kafka.

Since the entirety of Alberes and Boisdeffre's 1967 book comprises incidents from Kafka's life related to his literary works, it offers a biographical explanation of the Kafkaesque global setting. They begin with A Letter to Father to tell the tale of Kafka's early years and his upbringing under his father's terrifying enchantment, which he could never escape throughout his life. Thus, throughout his novel, there are frequent allusions to the father and son's difficult existence. The book also reveals oedipal elements in Kafka's writings as they are examined psychoanalytically.

Kafka never wrote in the conventional sense as a religious writer, and there is little indication of his Jewish heritage in the imaginary world he created. Nonetheless, Sokel (1999) carefully considers several periods in Kafka's life and the literary milieu in which he lived before concluding that there were notable traces of Judaism in Kafka when he was twenty-nine, after 1911. Even though Kafka is not a Jew in the strictest sense, his writings contain the mark of his ancestors. Hmadan (2019) focuses on the patterns of Jewishness in Jackals and Arabs in this article. Engle (2019) investigates the Kafkaesque world through the lenses of religion, myth, and modernism. He identifies a reoccurring element of myth and religion in Kafka's modernist writings by analyzing his modernist works. Creighton (2019) has reviewed Allen's work and attempted to grasp Kafka's Castle. The identity of the Kafkaesque universe remained a mystery due to his observations of complex patterns that confound a conclusive interpretation of Kafka. Samolsky (1999) came at a similar result in his paper. In his piece, Samolsky examines historical events such as the Holocaust and does not limit his conversation to religious inclinations. He sees a connection between these real events and the fiction of Franz Kafka in this way. Additionally, he draws comparisons between Nietzsche's analysis of Nazism and the reactionary reading of it in the writings of Franz Kafka.

Buddhism is one of the numerous influences on Kafka. Numerous academics have discovered Christian and Jewish influences. Though Schopenhauer indirectly introduced Buddhism to Kafka, it did not directly impact him. Schopenhauer's philosophy became more continental due to his travels to the East and his extensive reading of Buddhist materials. In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa is one character that experiences this cycle of pain, death, and rebirth. The term "Samsa" also alluded to a close similarity with samsara, as Ryan (1999) examined this issue in his paper.

According to Ryan's (1999) theory, Samsa's spiritual aspect is shown since Kafka either intentionally picked this name for his main character or his unconscious agency may have had a part in it. By achieving moksha, or escape from Maya, one can transcend samsara (illusion). Samsa shares Maya's intense aims and desires, which grip one's thoughts. He worries about worldly issues that confine him and impede him from connecting with his spiritual self. On the other hand, Heller (1988) is not ready to accept the castle as an embodiment of religion or any mystical symbol. His essay *The Castle* affirms that the castle has nothing spiritual to offer. According to him, the castle symbolizes monstrous authority against which Mr. K is waging war which offers an existential explanation of the whole scenario.

In his 1967 piece *Kafka's Cage Image*, Foulkes presents an aerial perspective of Kafka's imagined universe. Kafka is not alone in thinking of the body as a cage; it is typical for many writers to view the body as a jail where the soul resides as a prisoner yearning for self-identification. Even though Kafka is utterly despairing and rejects all prospect of virtue, Plato maintains in his well-known fable of the cave that there is always room for kindness. Indeed, Kafka is a pessimist who cannot find any signs of hope in our world. In this piece, Foulkes approaches Kafka's made-up universe from a conceptual perspective.

Greenberg (2007) argues in his essay *Gregor Samsa and Modern Spirituality* that Gregor Samsa, the main character of *The Metamorphosis*, is experiencing financial hardship and has been compelled to limit himself to a simple animal self because of the monotony of his demanding routine. "Gregor's humanity has defeated in his private life as much as in his working life" (p.21). He wants to keep working and provide for his family despite his ennui. However, it is too late for him as he has already changed into an insect. Since he is nothing to everyone in his newfound status, he has already been reduced to nothing.

Remarking on *The Hunger Artist*, Sussman (2002) writes in *The Trial: Kafka's Unholy Trinity*, "The Huger (Starvation) Artist is a study of denial and self-control" (p. 57). He seeks to negate his earthly identity in order to have a deeper understanding of his spiritual nature. Starvation is the beginning of the becoming process and a process of rejecting materialism.

Leither (1958) in his essay *A Problem of Analysis: Franz Kafka's A Country Doctor*, declares the country doctor as an anti-existential hero who is unable to create his being. He cannot make decisions on his behalf, yet everything happens to him by fate. He does not even have a conscious notion of his present plight.

Olson (1957) in his essay *The Anguish of Nothingness in Modern Philosophy* points out existentialism, absurdism, and nihilism as philosophies generating discourse about nothingness with being. Walter (2007) in his essay *An Anecdote by Kafka: A Fratricide*, provides a linguistic interpretation of his short story *A Fratricide* and, from linguistic analysis, affirms the existential and nihilistic motives of Franz Kafka.

This literature analysis makes it clear that Franz Kafka is one of the most controversial writers in German history. His works are replete with symbols and allegories that may be interpreted in a variety of ways, making Kafkaesque World a place where all theories can be applied. Being a Janus-faced author, it is difficult to examine every aspect of his work since there are as many different viewpoints as different literary and philosophical philosophies. Numerous scholars have examined the Kafkaesque world from various perspectives, applying practically all theoretical frameworks from anthropology to political science, psychology, philosophy, and literature.

In the current study, Sartrean ethics has been considered a theoretical standpoint for analyzing the Kafkaesque world, as, before this, Sartrean existentialism has been discussed concerning the Kafkaesque world. The researcher finds a gap after that possible literature review.

### Methodology

For an in-depth examination of Sartre's existential ethics, the phenomenological technique, a qualitative research project, has been used. The collected fiction of Franz Kafka, which includes *The Castle*, *The Trial*, and *Amerika*, expands on this perspective. The qualitative approach will likely prove useful in developing the framework. The study will adopt an interpretive phenomenological approach. As the text is usually considered the product of the author's mind, phenomenology tries to dig deep into the writer's consciousness to demystify the deep structure underlying the surface structure. Yet, it cannot be equated with biographical criticism. The author's consciousness is woven into the text through style, symbol, and various patterns of imagery which can be traced back with the help of hermeneutic phenomenology. The phenomenological approach unfolds the gap between the real and perceived world hidden behind the puzzle of linguistics intrigues.

Existential Ethics is a branch of philosophy concerned with the study of ethics. Ethics is a central theme in existentialism and has been included in the philosophy's theorization constantly. This research analyses the place of ethics in Sartre's existentialist philosophy through a phenomenological examination of two of his seminal works in this field: *A Notebook for An Ethics* and *A Sketch for Theory of Emotion*, which will comprehensively comprehend the phenomena.

Sartrean's philosophy of ethics will enable the researcher to analyze different modes of being. In the presence of sinister and impersonal forces, when a being is striving for its existence, it confronts many existential dilemmas; existential is one of them. Existence in Kafkaesque World is not simple and accessible in the presence of oppressing forces. There is a constant battle between the individual struggle for authentic existence and pre-defined codes of society limiting one's authenticity by forcing one towards bad faith. In this way, the characters' choices and actions will be interpreted in terms of existential ethics. Keeping in view the phenomena of good faith and bad faith and authentic freedom in the light of different modes of consciousness will further explain different states of characters.

### Discussion

#### Kafkaesque World

Kafka (1883-1923) belonged to a middle-class Jewish family. Throughout his life, Kafka has minutely captured various stages of life on the canvas of a short story, and his entire life portrays the existential struggle to create his being in the midst of prevalent chaotic colonial rule in the outer world, while also experiencing a perplexed and bewildered state of affairs at home. He suffered from an oedipal complex, and his fictional work contains traces of his father's (Hermann Kafka) authoritarian and dictatorial personality. He was unable to break free from the labyrinth of his family. He attempted but failed to reconcile his connection with his father throughout his life. *The Metamorphosis* (1915), *The Judgment* (1913), *The Country Doctor* (1919), *The Castle* (1926), and several more literary works examine the complexity and contradictions that are forming in his father's connection with him. Writings are those tears of joy and sorrow that the young man longed to cry when leaning his head on his father's shoulder, he confesses in a letter to his father. Kafka (1953) says in his letter that "a veiled expression of the fact that something is



wrong in our relationship and that you have played your part in causing it to be so, but without its being your fault" (p.31).

As Gilman argues, the kafkaesque universe is a symposium of all twentieth-century literary trends; it encompasses the core ideas of many other literary groups as well as existentialist, modernist, post-modernist, surrealist, Dadaist, absurdist, and post-colonialist:

What is most remarkable about the bountiful interpretations and biographies is that every critic was right, and every biographer was right. Kafka turns out to be as much an expressionist as a Zionist, a mystic, a pre- and post-communist Czech, an existentialist, a post-modern, a post-colonist, and a (whatever he will be next month). (2005, p.9)

Throughout *The Trial*, *The Metamorphosis*, and *The Castle*, the protagonists are subjected to the trials and tribulations of existence. For them, there are noticeable signs of absurdity, obscurity, and meaninglessness in their everyday lives. In all these works, characters are constantly struggling for the solution of absurdity and bewilderment. While mysticism and meaninglessness are two extremes, other ways exist to understand the Kafkaesque world. Malcolm Bradbury (1976) addresses Kafka's writings under the topic of Janus-faced Novels in his book *Modernism*. In Kafka's dreamlike universe, entities strive to transcend all worldly duties in order to reach the pinnacles of the spiritual realm. "His literary authority is now spiritual also, particularly in a Jewish context," as Bloom (2007) notes (p. 11). *The Metamorphosis* is likewise discussed by Greenberg (2017), who remarks that "his {Gregor} story is about death, but death that is without a denouement, death that is merely a spiritually inconclusive petering out" (p. 19).

When Joseph K. in *The Trial* goes through multiple trials without any wrongdoing, it appears to be punishment itself hunting for a crime and reveals the silliness and meaninglessness of human existence. He runs to the altar after the book to escape the folly of existence; Alberes and Boisdeffre (1967) comment, "in *The Trial*, it is the individual who feels not only that he is fundamentally guilty" (p.64). Kafka (2008) narrates his tragic death as: "But the hands of one of the partners were already at K's throat... 'Like a dog!'" He said: It was as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him" (p.558).

For Joseph K., the novel's protagonist, life's meaningless vistas have been pre-ordained. Even though he was taken into custody, no specific cause has been provided. "Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K. for without having done anything wrong; he was arrested one fine morning" (Kafka, 2008, p.406). Even though he's not actually in jail, he has been obliged to carry out his normal daily routines since he's under arrest, definitely, but that does not prevent you from going about your business (Kafka, 2008). As a result of this, Joseph K's existential journey begins, in which he is granted the freedom to defend himself but is kept in the dark regarding the claims against him. Is there a reason why we were thrown into this world and have to live in it for the rest of our lives? Why don't we have a say in whether or not we exist? We're all trying to figure out the answer to this riddle, and there are a lot of intellectual people out there who are, too, but instead of being simple to understand, it's difficult and leads to alienation. When K. is in *The Castle*, it is clear that he is always trying to prove his professional identity as a land surveyor. His position as a land surveyor is called into question when he arrives, and the higher authorities are no longer willing to recognize him as such. As a result, he finds himself in the situation of having to reclaim his identity. He does everything legally and illegally to get out of his current predicament, but it's all in vain. Even a higher-ranking official from the castle, the mistress of Klamm, agrees to negotiate with him, but it fails. To learn more about what is going on in the castle, he tries to break through the castle's walls.

Because no prayer of K.'s has ever been heard by the Divine, if we consider the novel to be religious in nature and the castle to be a metaphor of divinity, then its central topic will be the death of God. He hoped that entrance to the castle (divine) would help him sort out his muddled thoughts, but no door was opened for him; instead, he was misled by a few false or unreliable authorities. This leads in perplexity and confusion since there's no God who can give you intrinsic meaning, but you have to build them through your struggle, and for that purpose, one must not aim his search toward something previously formed. If we take Amerson's conception of a state without gods as gospel, the castle is full of individuals who still yearn for the security that a godly ethic (or some other form of absolute ethics) may bring. We humans have yet to adapt to the fact that these old absolutes are no longer available if they ever were (Amerson, 1988).

Like K., Joseph K., and Gregor Samsa, Kafka's life is a perpetual search for his identity and existence. He experienced just a few moments of joy throughout his life. For the sake of his work, he gave up his marriage. Yet in his diary entry from January 19th of 1922, he acknowledged his need for a family and the joy of sitting next to a cradle with a kid opposing its mother. Felice broke up with him twice, but on his deathbed, he met Dora Diamond, who gave him a new lease of life. Dora was the promised cure for Franz; "she would bring her Eastern health to cure him of his western nervousness" (Gilman, 2005, p.124). Dora called herself Mrs. Kafka even after he died. Kafka was an energetic presence in his life, he nevertheless ended up as a bachelor like Sisyphus. Kafka in his diary describes that those who have no children, on the other hand, have a nagging sense that lingers with them, regardless of whether

they want it or not, every second of every day. Sisyphus was a single man at the time of his death (Kafka, 2008). Unlike Sisyphus, Kafka does not give up on finding purpose in his existence. As misogynist, he takes on the morals of his novels and embarks on his disastrous quest. For the sake of his literary profession, he gave up his desire for a family to focus on his work. *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and *Amerika* provide ample documentation of his battle to develop a personal set of values and ethical views on society, a struggle that parallels Nietzsche's *Übermensch* in certain ways.

### Conclusion

Every society has certain moral principles that regulate the conduct of its people. It is debatable whether Kafkaesque World has a divine entity. Yet, it is evident from previous research that existential philosophy plays a significant role in creating the chaotic atmosphere of Kafka's fictional world. Current research attempts to decipher the moral codes of the Kafkaesque world in light of existential ethics, particularly Sartrean ethics.

It is a contemporary debate whether Sartrean ethics is possible or not. Suppose it is, then what sort of morality will it propagate, and what will be a possible outcome in philosophy and everyday life? The current study will contribute to this debate, and it will be an addition to existing knowledge of Sartrean ethics.

Modern Man, devoid of religious and metaphysical roots, is a central figure in Kafkaesque World. This research project will not only explore the possibilities of existential ethics in a modern fictional world like Kafkaesque. Still, it will illuminate the ethical dilemma of a modern man who illuminates the ethical dilemma of a modern man baffled by existential anguish.

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