//THE UNKNOWABLE MEANING OF GOOD-EVIL, SELF, AND EXISTENCE IN KAFKA’S, VIAN’S, AND MURAKAMI’S LITERARY WORKS//

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SUMMARY: In this article, we will describe the sameness of existing in a meaningless world as it is expressed in the literary works of Franz Kafka, Boris Vian, and Murakami Haruki. Existence and meaninglessness will be analyzed as they are closely linked to the changing frontiers between good and evil as well as to the unknowable self. Existence and meaninglessness cannot be described without referring to existential categories, such as suffering, freedom, temporality, death, hope, and despair. Kafka was basically concerned with the unknowable meaning of existence. He interpreted the world in a Hobbesian way (the primacy of self-interest and search for power). But above all, Kafka’s hope in humankind remains the ultimate power people should use to fight existentially rooted meaninglessness. Vian rather focused on the unknowable meaning of good-evil and was closer to a Nietzschean transmutation of values. Murakami criticized the static frontiers between the real and the unreal. He unveiled the unknowable meaning of good-evil, self and existence. Like Bergson, Murakami was quite concerned with simultaneous durations and the meaning of temporality. Also, similarly to Sartre, Murakami was emphasizing existential freedom and the meaning of death. Kafka, Vian, and Murakami have thus widened the scope of the unknowable.

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Introduction

Could novels express basic dimensions of moral experience that cannot be described in philosophical treatises? According to Martha Nussbaum (2006: 47-48), reading novels makes our emotional intelligence and our moral imagination increasing. Even the best philosophical texts could not learn us what novels actually mirror from reality. Nussbaum analyzed Henry James’ *The Golden Bowl*. In that novel, James talked about morality: moral action involves higher levels of intelligence than immoral behavior (1972: 87). In his *Albertine disparue* (2001: 258), Marcel Proust claimed that even immoral persons are experiencing moral indignation: the object of moral indignation among moral and immoral personalities will not be the same. James and Proust did not agree with the consequences of immorality. However, James’ and Proust’s literary works express how novels could convey philosophical import. Through their characters’ life, James and Proust unveiled how morality and immorality are experienced by individuals. According to Jean-Paul Sartre (1969: 30-32), writers unveil the world and are thus projecting to change it. Writers are presenting the world in a way that readers cannot ignore it. Readers are responsible for what the world is actually becoming. Sartre’s dramas (particularly *Les Séquestrés d’Altona*) described basic sentiments (love, hate, fear) as they are arising from historical situations (Sartre, 2005: 251-252). Writers are thus accomplishing a philosophically-oriented and historically-based task.

Nussbaum (1990: 4-6) described two basic claims about the writer’s art. On one hand, any literary text has an organic connection between its form and its content. The import of the text is a set of thoughts and ideas, a worldview which is formalized in words and sentences. On the other hand, any literary text conveys some truth claims about human existence that cannot be fully developed in philosophical treatises. Literary text makes an intrinsic link between philosophical ideas and daily life. Both claims about the writer’s art could be observed in Henry James’ and Marcel Proust’s literary works. We will analyze Kafka’s, Vian’s and Murakami’s novels in taking such claims into account. We will unveil philosophical ideas as they permeate the structure and form of Kafka’s, Vian’s and Murakami’s novels. Novels express the basic link between being and communication as it is rooted in human quest for truth. Being is communication, and communication is being (Murakami, 2011b: 147). In a way or another, Kafka, Vian and Murakami criticized Truth-itself, and more generally, the thing-in-itself. Everything remains unknown since there is no-thingness. There is no in-itself. Essence does not exist. Truth is nothing but an existential quest. The existential search for Truth implies communicational exchanges. Truth is much more connected with the unknown than with knowledge. Searching for truth does not imply to widen the scope of our knowledge, but rather to seize the all-embracing unknowable.

Kafka, Vian, and Murakami described the sameness of existing from three basic existential perspectives: (1) the unknown frontiers between good and evil, and the meaning of truth and justice; (2) the unknowable self; (3) the unknown basis of existence. What-it-means-to-exist refers to existentials whose meaning remains unknown: interpretation and freedom, temporality and death, hope and despair. Kafka, Vian and Murakami used those three perspectives in order to define existential doubt as the ground of any meaning of life. Any meaning of life is basically subjected to existential doubt. As it is interpreted in a meaningless reality, the sameness of existing requires existential doubt. That’s why truth is never conceived as a given set of beliefs, values, virtues, rituals, and practices.
1. The Unknowable Meaning of Good-Evil

We can always check the truthfulness of our prejudices. If we do not check their truthfulness, then we will know absolutely nothing: our knowledge will then mirror our prejudices. Nothing more. In this way, things, persons, and phenomena will not be able to be what they are. An open knowledge implies the challenge to check the truthfulness of our prejudices and to get rid of unjustified prejudices. Our knowledge is nothing but the instrument of being: we know things, persons, and phenomena in order to be ourselves (Kafka, 2007a: 10). Knowledge is not an end in itself (Kafka, 2004: 65). However, every knowledge process is linked to prejudices about things, persons, and phenomena. Prejudices are connected with human knowledge (Vian, 2011b: 193). Prejudices are inherently linked to the knowledge process (Gadamer, 1976: 103-40). Prejudices are an integral part of truth as process and path (Murakami, 2011d: 41). Our quest for truth makes us uncovering the existential questioning about good and evil. Truth does not only have moral dimension. But morality is an existential quest that makes an integral part of our search for truth. What is a good-wrong action? Could we avoid wrong actions without undertaking right ones (Vian, 2011b: 31)? When we are focusing on rules and codes, we are losing our ability to be in relation with others (Kafka, 1957: 210; 1984: 34).

Is evil connected to the inability to feel empathy and compassion towards suffering people? Some people are more deeply affected by others’ suffering (Murakami, 2009c: 291, 387). Is evil still present in human heart, or is it something that could be externally guided? When evil has fully penetrated our heart, we do not need to believe in its power. Evil is then quite powerful and influential (Kafka, 2004: 39, 44). Evil does not have any self-knowledge. Evil knows what is good. When we are undertaking wrong actions, we are aware that such actions are contradicting the sense of goodness. But the good knows nothing about what is wrong (Kafka, 2009a: 178, 186). Through socialization processes, we have learned some parameters of good-evil. That’s why we are usually undertaking right actions and avoiding wrong conducts. Such habits partly hinder our moral questioning about the nature of good and evil (Vian, 1994: 69). While undertaking right actions, we cannot avoid every kind of evil that follows from morally right conducts. According to Vian, human will is basically mischievous (Vian, 2009: 88).

Morality is basically linked to truth and justice. On one hand, we must face the unknowable character of truth. We do not have access to Truth-itself (Kafka, 1984: 229). Then, what is the nature of lies, if truth cannot be defined and reached (Kafka, 2007a: 246)? Lie is the by-product of fear: we are afraid of ourselves as well as of others (Kafka, 2007b: 262). Any attempt to know Truth-itself is lie (Kafka, 2004: 60). Truth is always changing. Truth-itself as an eternal truth does not exist (Kafka, 2007b: 71). Any discourse, doctrine, or set of values, virtues, and rituals could convey some truths (Kafka, 2008: 559). But it could never be Truth-itself. There is no Truth-itself. Religious, spiritual, economic, social, or political ideologies can never claim to own Truth-itself. They are only conveying truth claims, that is, historically-rooted truths that could be contradicted by other truth claims. Being aware of our personal truth claims is the way to conquer our authentic powers. Everybody lives in-truth: everybody is searching for truth and is identifying given truth claims. But anybody can never own Truth-itself, since Truth-itself does not exist (Kafka, 2009a: 190). We cannot know what is true, because History is continuously rewritten. Past events can never be changed, even through rememberings (Murakami, 2011d: 444; 2011e: 284; 2014: 199, 208-209, 291, 328). History is always going on.

On the other hand, we must face the universal value of justice. In way or another, we are always connected to the social and political institutions of justice. Everything is related to justice. Institutions of justice never forget something that is socially and politically relevant (Kafka, 1957: 232, 254, 266). Everybody tries to rule over others. Human being tends to dominate others’ will (Kafka, 2005b: 367). Kafka seemed to be
influenced by an Hobbesian (egoistic) view on society and power (Hobbes, 1971: 198). Just effects do not necessarily follow from just motives (Murakami, 2011d: 418). Murakami referred to William Butler Yeats (1961: 112): "in dreams begins responsibility". Our responsibility begins with our thoughts, dreams, and ideas (Murakami, 2010a: 178-79, 187, 278). Our future actions and decisions are rooted in the world we are dreaming about (our world-dream). World-dreams could be consciously developed, as it is the case in social, political, economic, or religious-spiritual ideologies. World-dreams could also be unconscious.

Sartre (1980: 613-614) rightly said that I am always personally responsible for any war, either as soldier, or as radical dissident, or even as indifferent observer. Those three attitudes in face of war are rooted in different world-dreams: fighting for liberties (soldier), promoting peace (radical dissident), making business as usual (indifferent observer). In all cases, my world-dream makes me personally responsible for such war. Everybody is finite, imperfect being. That's why one's world-dream is continuously evolving and could become more and more consciously connected to daily life. As to its ultimate consequences, the world-dream of indifferent observers is the worst one. Imperfection requires uselessness (Murakami, 2004b: 10). What is imperfect is then perceived as useless. Indifferent observers are refusing existential predicament as it is mirroring human imperfection. Indifferent observers believe that human beings are not always (existentially) guilty. If it is the case, then there would not be any existential fate of guilt and condemnation following from an original sin (Kafka, 1957: 305, 343; 2007b: 217). Indifferent observers try to get rid of their existential guilt: they neglect their faults and put the emphasis on their self-interest (Kafka, 1957: 221). In some cases, indifferent observers are trying to safeguard their self-esteem. As Kafka (2005b: 267) said, if I am always treated as a dog, I am encline to believe that I am a dog. So, indifferent observers do not want to feel moral responsibility for social evils, political autocracies, economic crises, and even religious-spiritual distortions.

2. The Unknowable Meaning of Self

Living beings are existentially alone. Why is it so necessary to be alone throughout our existence? Human being is born, lives, and will die alone. However, such empirical fact does not have any philosophical ground. It is a phenomenon we must accept, as it is. Our existential loneliness makes us aware of others' existence. It makes us being-with-others (Kafka, 1992: 178). We are afraid to be alone, although (and perhaps because) our existential predicament implies to be-alone (Murakami, 2014: 22). However, we have very limited knowledge of others' self. We even do not know ourselves very much (Sartre, 1965: 329). That's why the notion of self seems to be unknowable (Murakami, 2014: 147, 322-323). Being-alone is closely linked to being-with-others. Both modes of being are connected to self-esteem. Everybody believes that he-she is able to have perfect realizations and self-accomplishment (Kafka, 2007c: 41). Self-esteem cannot be isolated from the full awareness of who-we-are (self-awareness). Self-esteem cannot be isolated from our self-confidence (Kafka, 2009c: 60; 2010: 132, 143). According to Murakami (2014, 21), we cannot measure our personal worth, since our self can never be measured. I am always the self that I am in the here-and-now (Murakami, 2011e: 158). My present self could be radically different from my prior selves (Murakami, 2014: 46). I could make a prior self coming back to life (Murakami, 2014: 354). However, it will be qualitatively different, since my situation in the here-and-now cannot be compared with the situation in which my prior self was born and has evolved.

Part of my consciousness cannot be known (Murakami, 2011a: 562, 593). May I isolate myself from my self and feel my suffering as the pain of someone else (Murakami, 2014: 49)? Is there an original self that tries sometimes to release itself from-the-bondage-of-myself? Is this original self able to manifest itself through my actions and decisions
The self is continuously changing and can never remain the same (Murakami, 2014: 59). We can change ourselves, since we do not always precisely know what is really important for us (Murakami, 2014: 153). But if there is an originary self, then it would be an inner structure that was already there, even before my birth (Murakami, 2014: 80). To what extent could my self-perception mirror my true self (Murakami, 2004b: 75-6)? Throughout our personal life, we are progressively unveiling our true self. In doing so, we are losing ourselves since our true self is a self which must always be modified (Murakami, 2014: 211). The self is not free to remain static: it is always changing. The true self is the project to be oneself. If we believe in a specific state of mind as being our true self, then we have lost the project to become who-we-are. Believing in static self does not change the changing nature of the self. I am my self, and nobody else (Murakami, 2010b: 271; 2012: 208). I am my own project-to-be that could never be confused with others’ project-to-be. Even if I believe that a given self is my true self, I cannot hinder my self to change. Such change will be either unconsciously realized, or consciously repressed. Against my will, my self is continuously changing.

3. The Unknownable Meaning of Existence

If the meaning of existence is unknowable, then we could hardly claim that existential categories could be precisely defined. Insofar as we cannot know the meaning of existence, then any meaning of freedom, temporality, death, hope, and despair is basically mirroring a specific interpretation that has nothing to do with categorial import.

Interpretation and Freedom

Our perception of the world is not necessarily in accordance with reality (Murakami, 2004b: 52). What seems to be real is not necessarily real for me. Things, events, and phenomena could lose their reality. The real and the unreal are mixed together (Murakami, 2014: 8, 173, 234, 267). We are basically unaware of our existence (Kafka, 2009b: 26). What does it mean to truly exist (Murakami, 2011d: 491)? What-it-means-to-exist is an interpretation. Everything is an interpretation, a way to build up reality (Kafka, 2008: 298, 300). We should try to see reality as-it-is rather than deceiving ourselves (Kafka, 1957: 230). Some things, phenomena, and events cannot be grasped through reasoning and intuition (Kafka, 2007a: 275). They simply cannot be understood since we are always uncertain about their meaning. Throughout our life experiences, the way we interpret given things, persons, phenomena, and events is evolving (Kafka, 2007c: 185). Names we give to things, phenomena and events are interpretations. We would like to see things as they were before we have interpreted them. But thing-in-itself does not exist. Everything is appearance rather than reality (Kafka, 2009b: 25-6, 55). As Nietzsche (1967: 165, 301-02, 311) said, there is no thing-in-itself.

Human freedom is both a sublime feeling and a sublime illusion (Kafka, 2004: 66-7; 2007c: 189). Kafka clearly criticized the idea that human beings are supposedly not condemned to be free (Kafka, 2010: 137). Is the choice of freedom necessarily excluded (Kafka, 2007c: 197)? Is human freedom meaningless? Is it an expression of existential despair (Kafka, 1984: 26, 46, 140)? Sartre grounded his philosophy of freedom on Kafka’s principle of freedom. As it is rooted in human existence, freedom is process (Sartre, 1980: 559). Being-free means to take responsibility for our own existence upon ourselves. I am totally accountable for who-I-am here and now and for the self I will become. Existence would me meaningless without such existential responsibility for who-we-are-becoming. As Murdoch (1997: 115; 2015: 80-82) rightly said, Kafkaian meaninglessness is not equivalent to Sartrean meaninglessness. Kafka described a meaningless world, while safeguarding basic hope: K. wishes to find out meaning of life. Sartre rather believed that there is no meaning of life we should live for. There is only freedom, that is, our being-free. Freedom is our
secret garden, that is, our project-to-be. Being-free implies that I am my project-to-be (Sartre, 1964: 20, 47, 71, 73, 131, 202). My self has no substance. It is rather the project-to-be, that is, the continuous process of choosing potentialities-to-be (Sartre, 1965: 418).

Freedom implies independent thinking, that is, the capacity to think by oneself (Murakami, 2014: 75). Murakami even asserted that philosophical questioning opens the door to the ultimate state of freedom. To be free is having a free spirit. Having freedom of thought means that we are taking decisions and undertaking given behaviors and must take responsibilities upon ourselves (Murakami, 2014: 192-193). Being-free is possible without a given set of constraints. Freedom cannot exist without frontiers. We should be relatively afraid of reasonable limitations (laws and penalties, social disapproval) and absolutely ready to destroy unreasonable limitations. We must both respect and hate social-legal-political-religious constraints (Murakami, 2014: 76-77). Murakami referred to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1966: 50-2): "civilizations are born with regulations, and thus, with limitations to human freedom" (Murakami, 2010b: 429-30).

**Temporality and Our Having-to-Die**

Suffering is existentially grounded. We are suffering in the here-and-now (Kafka, 2009a: 208). Human relationships are based on mutual understanding, respect, and compassion (Murakami, 2009c: 196, 281; 2010b: 31). We are living in the here-and-now. We do not master the next instant. Time flow cannot be controlled (Kafka, 2007a: 65). According to Henri Bergson (2007: 41-64), without time flow, space would not exist. Space and time flow are interdependent. Time is measured by movement. Temporally-based movement exists for those consciences which can measure time flow. Measuring time flow implies to distinguish the inner time and the time of things, events, and phenomena. It is one thing to measure symbolic-conventional time, which tries to objectively represent time flow. It's quite another to observe felt-experienced time. One's experienced time is equivalent to his-her subjective perception of real duration. According to Murakami (2014: 79, 157), events and phenomena could make our perception of time flow completely disappear. Human being cannot rule over Time. He-she can only organize his-her personal duration (Murakami, 2014: 188).

Bergson (1992: 412-414) asserted that duration is the continuity between successive states of consciousness. Any state of consciousness is already a substantial change, when compared with the prior state of consciousness. Duration characterizes an evolving (changing) consciousness and self (Bergson, 1969: 2-4). There are multiple states of consciousness, and we could observe a basic unity between all of them (Bergson, 1934: 234). For everybody, duration is what he-she perceives as his-her own duration, that is, his-her historically-based development. As Bergson (1992: 412-414) said, the existence of duration is equivalent to one's awareness of his-her own duration. Every person has his-her own (unique) duration as it is experienced through inner life (Bergson, 1934: 234). Every evolving conscience has its own duration. However, there could be common moments (simultaneities) between such independent (individual) durations. According to Bergson (1992: 413-414; 1969: 9), the homogeneous time is the impersonal duration that makes such common instants possible. It helps us to measure time flow (Bergson, 1934: 228). Murakami (2014: 350) acknowledged the homogeneous time as something that could be perceived by every human being. Murakami (2014: 90) was more precisely referring to the homogeneous time, when asserting that two different temporalities have merged together. However, we cannot feel such existential-temporal merger without widening the scope of our perceptions. Murakami (2014: 100) referred to Aldous Huxley. According to Huxley (1977: 27), everything is in everything, the Whole is present in every thing. Perceptions cannot be really explained. They are morally neutral. Perceptions make us aware that everybody is an integral part of the Whole (Murakami, 2011d: 33; 2014: 101).
Murakami believed that the present is the progress of the past which is eroding the frontiers of future (Murakami, 2010b: 371). We only have access to interpretations of our past. And such interpretations are rooted in our here-and-now. According to Kafka, those who belong to the instant do not share the human (existential) predicament. Kafka thus mirrored Soeren Kierkegaard’s aesthetic life-view (Kierkegaard, 1992: 485-86, 520-28, 545-46, 559-60). Those who belong to the instant live in-suffering: the meaning of their life is constituted by the various ways to avoid suffering. Other people are unconsciously determined by their past and their future: they cannot distinguish the influence of their past in their present life. They cannot know if past dreams and projects will actually be realized in their immediate future. According to Kafka, we should let future sleeping: our future will awake at the right time and will be determined by unconscious-uncontrollable processes (Kafka, 1992: 51-2, 63; 2008: 12, 40).

Temporality is intrinsically linked to our having-to-die. Our empirical certainty that everything living being will die cannot make fear and anxiety totally disappear. We must understand what it means to exist, given the fact that we have-to-die. Understanding requires the extinction of fears (Murakami, 2010b: 542). Murakami referred to Joseph Conrad (Murakami, 2010a: 112, 115): our fear is rooted in our imagination (Conrad, 1946: 218-25). Fear is the basic emotion (Kafka, 2007a: 65). Fear is due to the fact that we become aware of the causes of given things, phenomena, and events (Kafka, 2007c: 61). Fear is the ground of unhappiness. Happiness presupposes the absence of fear, but not necessarily the presence of courage (Kafka, 2008: 531). Anxiety is ontologically rooted, since it is the full awareness of existential finitude (Kafka, 2008: 161). Every living being has to die, since it is perishable (Kafka, 2007c: 166). The cruelty of death is unveiled by the fact that an apparent final end provokes a real suffering (Kafka, 2009a: 224). The unavoidable death is within my self, as a having-to-die (Murakami, 2010c: 322). What does it mean to live with the certainty of our having-to-die (Murakami, 2014: 80)? Murakami (2014: 103) seemed to agree with Confucius (1979: Book XI.12): it is useless to think about phenomena (such as death) we cannot know. Although we would know the after-life, we cannot check to what extent our knowledge rightly mirror the uniqueness-multiplicity of the after-life dimensions.

**Hope and despair**

Our doubt is existentially rooted and cannot be avoided (Kafka, 1984: 201, 219, 224, 259, 272; 2007c: 189). Doubt and belief are by-products of human mind. Human being needs grounds for thinking and acting, although such grounds are continuously evolving. If we accept that the world is a world of ideas (intellectual world), then we get certainties and lose hope (Kafka, 2009a: 189, 194, 197). There is hope because the fact of existing makes uncertainties arising. If there would not be any uncertainty, then hope would be impossible. That’s why doubt is existentially rooted. We cannot avoid despair, since despair is an integral part of human existence. Despair means that there is no issue. There is no way to find out any inherent meaning of human existence. However, we can never know if the despair in which our being has been thrown is actually justified. Despair is provoked by our fate. Despair could give birth to the courage to take despair upon ourselves: something could get out of nothingness (Kafka, 2008: 320, 412, 520, 539-40). We always try to communicate something that cannot be explained, that is, truth (Kafka, 2007b: 261-62). According to Max Brod (1962: 271-72, 276), Kafka believed in something indestructible within human heart and soul. That’s why Kafka’s interpretation of human existence tends to be optimistic. According to Kafka, human existence is made of despair, decreasing self-esteem, and frail hope, said Brod. Kafka believed that hope could overcome despair. The courage to take despair upon ourselves can only be rooted in our hope. In similar way, Murakami was referring to the energy of despair (Murakami, 2014: 353).
According to Murakami (2014: 94), we cannot distinguish subject and object. Something universal is overcoming every particular thing, event, or self (Murakami, 2014: 95). Fedor Dostoyevsky (2004: 59-60) believed that human being has created Gods, and Gods have abandoned him-her to his-her existential predicament (Murakami, 2010a: 120). According to Vian, we cannot remain clear-headed, while believing in God (Vian, 2009: 43). God is then the delight of the superfluous. If God would be useful, God would be an object besides other objects we could use in our daily life. What is useless has an infinite worth. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, God is dead: we have collectively killed God. Since the death of God, we are perceiving ourselves as an infinite nothingness. We do not have any other ultimately sacred and powerful being. Nietzsche believed that the death of God is the most historically important event, although people cannot easily grasp its direct and indirect consequences. The death of God has to be accepted and recognized by peoples and individuals (Nietzsche, 1982: 169-171). The disappearance of God from History does not mean that human being becomes a pure nothingness. Rather, human being is called to become the Overman.

The Overman is characterized by free spirit, that is, a spirit which is not subjected to traditional virtues and reason. The Overman is the meaning of human being, as it is rooted in life processes. The Overman realizes a transmutation of values-virtues. Nothing that has been interpreted as being true is inherently true, since traditional virtues are denying any worth to life processes. The Overman’s morality does not presuppose that something is ultimately true. Rather, it is emphasizing life processes as the center of human life. Thus, every action promoting life processes is morally justified (Nietzsche, 1985: 22-29, 323, 331, 347). According to Nietzsche, reason and (traditional) virtues are phenomena of human degeneration, since they fight life processes. That’s why they provoke existential nausea. Sartre (1966: 34) interpreted existential nausea as the awareness of our own finite existence. Existing means being-there, and thus not-to-be-necessary. We are afraid of existing, since we know our being is superfluous. Every action makes us more aware of our existential finitude. Existential nausea is provoked by the permanent awareness of such unavoidable finitude (Sartre, 1966: 185, 224, 238, 242).

Conclusion

Boris Vian and Murakami Haruki were quite influenced by Franz Kafka’s works. According to Murakami, Kafka did not describe human predicament, but rather the complex mechanisms of existing (2010b: 77; 2012: 275). Human predicament is always the same (Murakami, 2004b: 164; 2011b: 61). Kafka, Vian and Murakami have divergent opinions about the way some components of human existence should be interpreted. Kafka was basically concerned with the unknowable meaning of existence. He interpreted the world in an Hobbesian way (the primacy of self-interest and search for power). But above all, Kafka’s hope in humankind remains the ultimate power people should use to fight existentially-rooted meaninglessness. Vian rather focused on the unknowable meaning of good-evil and was closer to Nietzschean transmutation of values. Murakami criticized the static frontiers between the real and the unreal. He unveiled the unknowable meaning of good-evil, self, and existence. Like Bergson, Murakami was quite concerned with simultaneous durations and the meaning of temporality. Like Sartre, Murakami was emphasizing existential freedom and the meaning of death. Kafka, Vian, and Murakami have thus widened the scope of the unknowable.
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