

# Kafka and Existential guilt

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**Abstract:** *This paper unravels the dread of existential vacuousness explored in Kafka.*

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Absurdity enveloping the Modern-Existence creates a deep sense of Self-Incrimination evident in the Self-Effacing Sisyphean-labyrinth of Subjectivity in the incomprehensible texts like "A-Hunger-Artist" which explore the alleys of erupting Guilt within the psychotic mind.

An inherent sense of Guilt circumvents the attempts to "Meaning-Making" causing an Epistemological Dissolution. The inability to escape from the fugitive Guilt which overwhelms all levels of sociological, psychological and psycho-topographic existence; further resists a detour to alternative existence as in "The Penal Colony."

In "The Trial" the German Word "Schuld" involves multiple translations as- Guilt, Subjective feelings of Guilt and even Guilty Pleasure. Joseph K., interpellated by the court represents the Idea of "The-Bureaucratic-Man" and "Homo-Economicus" (1.)

The surreptitious sense-of-Guilt in "The Trial" is described, with all its absurdities, in an Epistemological uncertainty. "The Trial" tries to resolve the "Universal-Sense-of-Guilt." (2.) Spiro explains that the eeriness of the story has a kind of Dreamscape.

However the Guilt isn't just pervading the Mind's Universe, it is entrenched in the Ideologically-determined Power-Nexus of the Totalitarian-State.

The text dramatizes the manifestation of Guilt in the Modern-Existence. Existential sense of Guilt where living creates a neurotic disruption for Joseph K. and Guilt manifests also at the level of Ontology as Rallo May calls it; Guilt is as an ontological trait of human existence. Joseph K. vacillates between the phenomenological guilt and the actual guilt as the law doesn't evaluate the Existential Guilt.

The Ideological and State Apparatuses involve Guilt as a Societal Ideology to accentuate the state oppression through direct and self-internalized oppressions.

Spiro reiterates on Kafka's non-involvement with the Etiology of Guilt, K. represents an aura of Everyman or the "Keiner" meaning "nobody," involved in a Trial which never happens; Is the Trial a Guilt Trip or Is it the Trajectory of subjective dissolution in the wake of a powerful-illogical narrative which dislodges the sense of self-narrativisation, then Kafka's text too is within this Nexus of Guilt.

Knowledge or documentation parodies the canon, evident in the Legal-Pornographic notebooks of the Court.

Guilt resuscitates itself post the failure of all the Meta-Narratives and it outlives the being as in the case of Joseph K. The interminable-anticipation and pessimistic-determinism like in Waiting-for-Godot and between the incrimination and execution of K., the sense of guilt accentuates. The Teleology of Causation is brutally disintegrated by a non-causal Guilt governing the narrative.

Sexual-Guilt as a source and absolution governs the Textual-frame. The pathological-sexual-desire of K. for women progresses as Spiro concludes, from rational, FräuleinBürstner to Lilithian-disposition, Leni.

The Guilt is Oedipal too as Fräulein resembled his mother and "Guilty-Intimacy" with Leni shows a denied incestuous pleasure. The reverse of Gender-power-politics in K. becoming a prey to female-predatory-desires reintroduces Guilt-of-transgression with the ambiguity of a potential rape.

The Guilt is realized in K's urge to masochistically inflict self-punishment and in becoming a Scapegoat by self-flagellation as in the Whipper's-Scene. Guilt is pervasive even in the miniscule-components, textually-and-contextually.

The Mid-Life-crisis of K. in his Thirtieth-year enumerates his liminality of existence at the juncture of youth and its inevitable loss; guilt may be inherent to self-effacing sense of fragmented-identity.

K's self-defeating personality show an interiority conditioned by a sense of Guilt, pervading the Subject throughout. K.'s guilt is a reaction of his Humanistic-Conscience in his dissatisfaction with Sterile-lonely-Routinized-Modern existence.

Spiro reiterates on the "Sunday-Neurosis" of Modern-mindset when K. intentionally visits the Courtrooms on a Sunday to perpetuate the Routinized-life. The Guilt is inability to become an active-subject to sense-perceive the surroundings, K. couldn't become an agent like a flâneur. Guilt of Passivity pervades Kafka's self-narrativisation.

The institution of Macro-Micro power setups reverberate the state-power in family as an institution to accelerate the guilt of social-conformity, K.'s uncle plays that role.

The struggle is against generalized-guilt, against the-superego, the "Court" whose jurisdiction cannot be escaped through death or madness as it is a part of the personality itself. (3.) The text manifests a continuum of aspects of Guilt enveloping even the epistemic-ontological aspects.

Spiro insists that the Text enumerates numerous attempts to cope with guilt which unmistakably retreat back to the interwoven-structure of Power.

Cathedral as a space elaborates for Kafka, Modern man's dilemma in dealing with Guilt.

The Travesty of Scriptural absolution in the Parable-Allegory is heightened by K.'s isolated existence which solicits human interaction. The false-teleology and anticipated-salvation in the after-life only heighten his Guilty-anticipation and Existential-guilt without any fulfillment. Faith deludes the intellectual agency into the surveillance of the Power-mechanism. "The-Court-is-everywhere."

Psychoanalyses fails in the character of the Archetypical-Lawyer Huld and Leni who heighten the pathetic sense of Misplaced trust and Spiro relates them to the Freudian-concepts of "Transference and Counter-transference."The grotesque-pathological-bodily disease of Huld transferred by the patient fails to absolve the Guilt which is inherent in one's existence.

The Epistemic-and-linguistic-violence dissuades any progress of self-narrativisation to purge the Guilty via Catharsis. The self-conscious ideological-warfare like K. had in the Courtroom leads to a further distance in denying any prospects of a Trial.

Art fails to materialize the theoretical-absolution into Praxis. Titorelli artistically-manifests the release from Guilt without a possible amelioration of the same, the law is Ubiquitous.

George Steiner reiterates upon the "Talmudic" influence on Kafka. The "tristitia" of his "tragic-consciousness" and the physiological-Somatic aetiology of suffering from consumption led to a sense of culpability, persistent guilt. The pathologically self-consuming Guilt manifested in his art and being. K.'s Guilt is the overwhelming sense of Modern-scepticism and Sophist urge to dissuade an integrated worldview while the alternatives fail him.

The execution outside the city with K. as a Denizen proves the autonomous existence of Inter-subjective Guilt manifested inter-personally, it transcends the Textual-limits too. The chances of Resistance as in "The Penal Colony" are paradoxically lost in "The Trial."

"The Trial" both offers and denies a detour from the Discourse of Guilt as Guilt is not just extrinsic; it's a part of self-identification. The Modern probing of Meta-philosophies by Kafka questions, at a meta-level, the existence of the text itself. The text is Guilty of its own production-and-textualisation.

## References

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