

**Paradox of Existence in Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* and
Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day***



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Paradox of Existence in Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* and Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

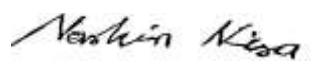
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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noshin Nisa", written over a horizontal line.

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Paradox of Existence in Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* and Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*

Abstract

Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* deal with the stories of people who are constantly in a fight between their own self and the version of themselves that is created by and for the world. *The Remains of the Day* explores the life of Stevens, whose authentic sense of existence is closely associated with what he does or shows to others. Kafka of *Kafka on the Shore* is fighting against a prophecy, something that he considers to be his ultimate fate, and is insecure of his freedom of choice. With Keiji Nishitani's theory of Nothingness, this paper aims to conclude an answer on what makes one's existence authentic, whether it is constructed by one's external world, or it is an innate sense of self free from external influence, and also, to what extent free choice can win over the dependence on fixed fate.

Keywords: Existentialism, Nothingness, Sunyata, Fate, Universality, Humanity

Chapter 1

Introduction

Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* consists of two protagonists, Kafka and Nakata. Kafka's journey is more on the focus, while Nakata's story parallels Kafka's. Nakata is a person who is dissociated from his sense of self, and the only way he can get closer to his existence is by getting the validation of the Entrance Stone. The quest of finding the stone not only gives him a purpose, but also forms his existence in association with people. Kafka is a young boy who has made his Oedipal curse his identity. His repressed trauma of abandonment has manifested into this fearful fate that torments him and diminishes his existence among people. Eventually, when he recognizes the trauma and releases the pain, he initiates his existence. Stevens, the protagonist of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, has also let his father's ideals and identity consume his own identity, resulting into stifling his own existence with an imposition of perfection. When he realizes the impossibility of perfection and releases his internal conflict of ideals, he also initiates his existence with a clean slate of compassion for people.

Keeping Jean Paul Sartre's ideologies of existence preceding essence, and choice or actions superseding fate (2), as the blueprint for Existentialism, Keiji Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness* emphasizes on the significance of the deeds of people defining a religion. *Religion and Nothingness* incorporates the nihilistic acceptance of meaninglessness of arbitrary choices, simultaneously acknowledging that people's free choices and actions eventually form the values of a universal religion applied to all, freeing from the box of self-centeredness. While Sartre put significance on humans' conscious choice and the universality of human nature, Nishitani points out the importance of the power of the larger universe, something that human-choice and universal human nature cannot control. The two novels in this research bring out a paradox of choice and action. While Kafka's choices were always influenced by his fixation on fate, Stevens' also chose to pursue a career given to him. In both cases, choices cannot be free from fate or a manipulation of a bigger reason. Nishitani's suggestion of embracing this helplessness of restrained individual independence provides a solution to this paradox. The solution is to not let the anxiety of self, or the compulsion of a preconceived notion, take over the consciousness. The ability to embrace the emptiness within, that is, the understanding that nothing matters other than the genuine communicative association with the surroundings, can solve the conflict of confusing existence.

For Stevens, butlership has been the only option available for him, and the journey gave him the direction of existence despite the flaws. Kafka's curse also pushes him into the adventure that leads him to the lesson of letting go. Their problem was that that they never lived for themselves, hence they never lived for others, as they were stuck in the boundary of rules and fate. When Stevens breaks down crying and realizes the futility of his obsession with perfection, and Kafka forgives his mother, they both get free from the anxiety of the ego's control, and embark into the path of Sunyata. By end of the stories, Kafka and Stevens decide to form relationships with people regardless the rules or the curse. In the question of the inside opposed to the outside, Stevens and Kafka's insides are important, as they themselves overcome the fear and pain specifically by acknowledging the rooted issue and trauma. It is significant that they are free from the inside, and are open to the experiences and interactions of the outside. Nothingness of inside brings about the liberation of Sunyata.

Research Objective

This research aims to speculate what makes one's existence authentic, whether it is constructed by one's external world, an innate sense of self free from external influence, or a balance between both. This paper also aims to understand the paradox of existence by comparing Keiji Nishitani's theory in regards to the two novels.

Research Questions

1. Is the characters' choice to defy their supposed fate ultimately the result of the fate's influence?
2. If one cannot really ignore neither of the inside and outside, then how can both be balanced into an ideal form of living?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This research aims to elaborate Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* with Keiji Nishitani's existential *Religion and Nothingness*. The literature review discusses the peer reviewed articles that are relevant to the topic of this research.

Silvia Chiarle associates the identity of the butler of *The Remains of the Day* with femininity, looking at the butler's extreme loyalty to his master as a marriage. Stevens is committed to the externally exposed performance of service to the extreme, while the master works as the male dominance in context of the butler's excessive feminine devotion. The researcher attempts to analyze Stevens' character with Freudian psychoanalysis of self-identification with a role model, to make the argument clearer. In Stevens' case, his father is his identifier. "Stevens nurtures for his father, since he attempts to model his life on that of his father: he chooses the same career and he works hard to achieve the dignity which, in his eyes, his father did" (Chiarle 9).

Jason M. Wirth's research is a comparative study between Melville's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* and Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore*. The essay discusses a "gap" (Wirth 1), that is the characters' distinction between their outward persona that is called as the mask, and their underlying self. The paper suggests that a character who has distinguished oneself from the persona and is presented separately is a hollow and empty character, but in a positive way. Here hollow signifies healing, which is provided by Murakami's Kafka (Wirth 12). The researcher concludes that the understanding of persona and true self is a cathartic revelation "that allows one to awaken not only to the productivity and impermanence of the self, but also to begin to heal the traumas that harden the self into the trap of a hollow character".

Wattanagun and Chotiudompant explore the struggle of finding one's identity for the various characters of *Kafka on the Shore*. This paper concludes that the protagonist Kafka's struggle of identity got solved with the clearer understanding of his memories. The writers also discuss the characters of Hoshino and Nakata and the association of their identities with consumerism. Hoshino's life conforms to the capitalist ideology, and Nakata represents the futility of the capitalist society as he struggles to make sense with the ideology of capitalism. Though Hoshino

embraces capitalism, he still feels empty, and eventually feels fulfilled when challenged by the emergence of magic. On the other hand, refusing to conform to the norm of capitalism, Nakata's identity gets formed by his alienation or separation from the consumerist norms.

Assil Ghariri analyzes the role of the phenomenon of persona in *The Remains of the Day*. The researcher observes that Stevens' journey in the story is a journey to his unconscious to reveal his real self by exploring the shadow and bringing down the persona. Carl Jung's theory of individuation is used here to analyze Stevens' character. Ghariri suggests that Stevens' loyalty to the Darlington Hall has been a situation of being a prisoner for him, and he allowed himself to be in this state because of the archetype of persona that makes him do the unwanted but the conventionally appropriate deed. "Stevens spends his life wearing the mask of greatness and to maintain the role of a great butler, he suppresses all his beliefs and feelings" (Ghariri 225). The researcher concludes that his real self is hidden in his shadow archetype which suppresses his desire to break free which forbids himself from doing. All the beliefs, thoughts and feelings that he feels ashamed or afraid of, are stored in his shadow archetype, although he makes sure that with each move and each word, he perfectly suppresses them (Ghariri 228).

"The Name 'Kafka': Evocation and Resistance in Haruki Murakami's 'Kafka on the Shore' by Betiel Wasihun, focuses on the significance of the protagonist's name Kafka, and what it symbolizes. Wasihun comprehends the name Kafka, a reference to Franz Kafka, as a symbol of something mysterious that is difficult to get a hold on. "Curiously enough, Kafka's execution machine dissolves into something very abstract, into somewhere 'all around' and yet not graspable" (Wasihun 1203). The elements of solitude and mysticism also function around the character named Kafka, which plays into the novel's magic realist aspects. "In Murakami's novel, Kafka or Kafka's fiction— mentioned here in the same breath—is presented as a 'mysterious solitude" (Wasihun 1204).

Maria Flutch draws on psychoanalytic literary criticism of *Kafka on the Shore* along Kristeva's line of intertextuality and intersubjectivity, focusing on the portrayal of women in the novel. The researcher concludes that the women in the novel are depicted with heterosexuality as the subjective normativity, that only focused on the male protagonist, comparatively sidelining the

development of the female characters that play an important role in protagonist's life, rejecting the scope of intersubjectivity in the novel. "However, both the liminal stage and the mainstream, 'real' space are dominated by a rather old-fashioned, Lacanian view of heterosexuality as the normal subjectivity, focusing on the male, homogeneous body as the ideal, limiting the applicability of the Kristevan approach" (Flutch 69). According to the researcher, both of the prominent female characters, Sakura and Saeki, exist in the story in relation and comparison to Kafka, how they make Kafka feel, and what Kafka is dreaming about, ignoring any insight of what they think of Kafka and their relations to him. In fact, the hyper-focused Kafka's living in his imaginary world where he thinks of sexually violating these women is threatening to them, and threat is utilized as a transformative tool for Kafka's journey.

Mathew Carl Stretcher discusses the quest for identity in the fictions of Haruki Murakami, especially the psychological journey of the unconscious, along with Lacan's vision of the self and the other. "Murakami Haruki's literature is grounded in the crisis of self-identity that results when the subject is irrevocably separated from the object, the self from the Other, the object of desire" (Karl 122). Associating Lacan's theory with Murakami's quest of self, especially in *Kafka on the Shore*, Kafka's journey has been of the series of attempts to adjust himself with the outside of the other, and not get consumed by the fearful discomfort of the other, by taking control of himself amidst the turmoil of the influential outside.

"Personal and Professional: Exploring the Father-Son Relationship in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*" by Kasturi Sinha Ray explores how Stevens' relationship with his father absorbs him so much that he is adamant in becoming another version of his father himself, willing to suppress any chance of authenticity of himself. "He is addicted to believing and remaining the same- an image of his father" (Ray 33). Stevens' profession of a butler is taken very seriously, but the aim of being the replica of his father's image is taken even more seriously by him, as he opts in negating the option of a personal life. "He simply wanted to be as 'great' as his own father. But unfortunately, the image had prevailed over the actual person." (Ray 35).

Sonali Thakkar looks into *The Remains of the Day* from a postcolonial point of view. Thakkar observes the novel's setting of July 1956 coinciding with the history of the Suez crisis, followed

by the imperialistic affirmations in the novel that suggests a colonial status syndrome. One instance is Stevens' sense of satisfaction with the realization of England's signature beauty that is unique to the specific country, making him feel superior in association with an imperial regime, also insinuating a disdain for the rest of the world. "These anxious invocations of national and imperial greatness might seem to invite a symptomatic reading that would identify the narrative's repression of Suez and imperial crisis" (Thakkar 91).

The existing researches conducted on *Kafka on the Shore* and *The Remains of the Day* have observed the texts mostly through the lens of psychoanalysis focusing on the father-son crisis of both protagonists. Other than psychoanalysis, *Kafka on the Shore* has been analyzed through the view of magic realism; the concepts of self-deception and self-identity have also been analyzed in *The Remains of the Day*.

Chapter 3

Existence in *Kafka on the Shore*

Chapter 3.1:

Kafka on the Shore of Self-Suffocation

The preface titled "The Boy Called Crow " provides the gist of Kafka's struggle in the novel. The boy named Crow is an imaginary friend who represents Kafka himself. It is almost like he is talking to himself. But the boy named Kafka is an outwardly braver perspective of himself to Kafka, as if he is interacting with a mirror, but the reflection is something that is better than him. Kafka's insecurities are projected on his excessive familiarity with his perceived fate. The persona of the boy named Crow also works as a coping mechanism to survive his struggles, and he religiously follows that persona. This persona and Kafka's conscious sense of self are perceived separately by him, because he has not reached the stage where he confronts the fact that his persona is actually himself. Parallely, his belief that only by running away from his home, and his father, will change him for the better, makes him overly dependent on a fixed idea of fate, rather than his choice.

“Sometimes fate is like a sandstorm that keeps changing directions. You change directions but the sandstorm chases you. You turn again, but the storm adjusts. Over and over you play this out, like some ominous dance with death just before dawn. Why? Because this storm isn't something that blew in from far away, something that has nothing to do with you. This storm is you. Something inside of you” (Murakami 5).

Kafka's comfort of an imaginary dark place of a body of water that is about to drown him indicates his inclination towards a silent destructiveness upon himself, which helps him to escape from the turmoil of his mind. His imagination of some sort of danger ingrained in his DNA implies that he seeks solace in the thought of an end of something that bothers him. This danger and the imagination of a devouring darkness also refer to his constant fear of a curse passed on to him from his father. His fixation on fate is his darkness that he cannot get himself separated from. This darkness symbolizes the fear that has paralyzed him into such a deep entanglement that he cannot get rid of it, simultaneously a distant point of catharsis that will release him from his inner troubles and free him into nothingness. This obsession of fate ingrained in his DNA indicates a consumption

of himself that prevents him from living freely. “Ego means self in a state of self-attachment.” (Nishitani 14)

“The world is a huge space, but the space that will take you in-and it doesn't have to be very big-is nowhere to be found. You seek a voice, but what do you get? Silence. You look for silence, but guess what? All you hear over and over and over is the voice of this omen. And sometimes this prophetic voice pushes a secret switch hidden deep inside your brain.” (Murakami 10)

On the run, Kafka meets Sakura who also believes in fate, but in a positive manner. She tends to find meaning in small things like meeting someone by chance. They believe that meeting each other is a part of their fate that gives meaning to their life “That things in life are fated by our previous lives. That even in the smallest events there’s no such thing as coincidence” (Murakami 31). However, the choice made by Sakura to approach Kafka, and Kafka’s choice to agree to interact with her, only their choices make the happening of fate possible. Later on, when Kafka feels attracted to the girl and fears that she could be his sister whom he is cursed to get sexual with, this situation is a result of his choice of reciprocating her approach. Kafka is running to escape from the same curse, making the choice of fighting his alleged fate. Ironically, a choice made by himself makes him feel closer to the actualization of the curse. “For the sake of argument, let's say all your choices and all your effort are destined to be a waste. You're still very much yourself and nobody else” (Murakami 184) Though there is no surety of Sakura being Kafka’s lost sister, his obsession with the curse and considering the curse as his ultimate destiny are now spoiling his experience of attraction to the opposite sex. Kafka escapes this fear by assuring himself thinking the name Sakura is too unusual to be his sister’s. This moment of escape gives him so much relief as he briefly accepts the arbitrariness of happenings. He assumes that he has dodged his cursed fate which makes him feel in control of his life. It may appear that he has consciously managed to not sleep with his sister who may or may not be Sakura. However, in reality, the randomness of Sakura’s name assures Kafka, not his deliberate choice. In fact, he still chooses to feel attracted to Sakura without proving if she is or isn’t his sister. His mental negotiation regarding his attraction towards Sakura blurs the distinction of fate and choice, because his conscious choice is influenced by fate. “The individual affair of each individual” (Nishitani 2)

Kafka wakes up with someone else's blood on his clothes. He immediately understands that some consequences are coming for something he definitely has done but cannot remember. If the deed he has done has been in his fate, which he believes to be the case, even his unconsciousness could not prevent him from fulfilling it, despite the lack of choice here. Kafka chooses to go to Sakura in his moment of confusion. He gets romantically involved with her despite the possibility that she might be her sister. They even talk about his sister during the exchange, proving that in this instance, Kafka is conscious of what he is doing, probably unintentionally but also intentionally fulfilling his fate of curse if Sakura is indeed his sister. Here, his conscious action is moving the narrative of his fate. On the other hand, the crime that he might have committed unconsciously is also believed to be a line of fate, and the vague idea of fate helps him survive the uncertainty and helplessness. As binding as it can be to be deeply invested in the idea of fate, his excessive belief in fate lets him keep moving despite the frustration of not knowing what to do. Kafka's unconscious state makes the potential of his choice vague. However, regardless of what happened in reality, Kafka's anxiety is derived from his inability to accept the arbitrariness of happenings and always obsessing over potential significance of something that could be freed into nothingness. Because of a sense of comfort and clarity, Kafka deems the Komura library to be the destined spot that he is fated to travel to, especially in the possibility of facing repercussions of something that he doesn't know if he has committed or not. So again, it is Kafka's choice to go to Komura library to get the comfort in need, regardless of the belief that it is his fate to go there. Oshima explains,

“In ancient times, people weren't just male or female, but one of three types: male/male, male/female, or female/female. In other words, each person was made out of the components of two people. Everyone was happy with this arrangement and never really gave it much thought. But then God took a knife and cut everybody in half, right down the middle. So after that the world was divided just into male and female, the upshot being that people spend their time running around trying to locate their missing other half” (Murakami 37).

This theory of Oshima indicates how certain people are fated to meet no matter what, aligning with Kafka getting drawn to Sakura despite the danger. Here, even if Kafka is fated to be with Sakura according to Oshima's believed notion of meeting the other half, regardless of the fate, it is Kafka's choice that brings him close to Sakura. At the same time, the looming influence of fate also pushes him towards the risk of engaging with her, as an unavoidable pull of the anxiety of the ominous.

As Kafka settles down in his refuge at the library, his insecurity resurfaces in the form of Crow who keeps reminding him to not feel at peace. His inner negative thoughts that are projected outside in the form of Crow are being thrown back to him in retaliation for the little solace he tries to find. Unless he learns to control Crow and take over himself, he cannot find peace, again, indicating that the conscious overcoming of the anxiety between the inside and outside is necessary for Kafka to achieve individual peace. In Oshima's library, Kafka learns the power of imagination, that everything starts with it being imagined. This learning scares him even more and makes him more vulnerable to the fear of a disaster upon him, considering how much Crow's words and his own thoughts affect him. "My father told me there was nothing I could do to escape this fate. That prophecy is like a timing device buried inside my genes, and nothing can ever change it. I will kill my father and be with my mother and sister" (Murakami 186). He gets more suspicious of himself wondering if he actually has committed a heinous crime resulting in the bloodstains on his clothes, the crime which he thought of and desired to do. How he was cautious in imagining Sakura naked is also significant to him, because merely a thought even if it does not lead to any action is a risk for the actualization of the curse for Kafka. This realization brings back the question of what is more significant to result into a consequence, the action that is rooted by the thought of the action, or the reliance on fate accepting that actions will unfold according to fate. It still remains a paradox because both Kafka's thoughts and the actions are leading him to a path that is presumed to be his destiny, making it difficult to distinguish between fate and free will.

According to Nishitani, when nihility overcomes itself, and nothingness negates nothingness itself, the freedom of Sunyata takes place (97). When Kafka takes a break from all the confusion of coincidences, he confronts the nothingness that has not yet overcome itself, and that is haunting him, because it still is not an understandable void to him, and he still attaches himself to the void. Nishitani refers to Buddhism, where the nothingness is the non-ego (33). Kafka is still controlled by the nothingness before becoming the non-ego, symbolized as the Crow. When he will have the awareness of self, that is the realization that the Crow or the ego is his himself, and that there is nothing behind himself other than his existence in association with people of the world, he will acquire Sunyata.

In his solitude in the woods, he also feels lonely and helpless, as if the lack of a certain goal for the time being has opened a new pit of darkness that he is sinking into. He has the opportunity to

rest in a void, but because the void is filled with the fears gripping his ego, he cannot attain the freedom of nothingness. This blurs the solidity of the curse that he is running away from, and insinuates the question if he is actually lonely to have grown up without a proper family, and is running away from the haunted-ness of the loneliness under the guise of the curse. Oshima finally puts a label into the darkness or the curse that Kafka has always known and feared, that is the Oedipal curse. However, this alleged curse can also be interpreted as a humane reaction to an adverse childhood that Kafka has endured. He grew up lonely, he missed his sister and mother whom he hardly knew. He wasn't loved by his father. The unaffectionate childhood implanted the feeling of darkness within Kafka which made sense to his perspective as a curse. He never had any experience of relationship with a female family member. Though the experience never existed, the absence of it has been hurting Kafka, as he feels abandoned. So, the complicated emotions of abandonment, hurt, and the need for familial affection has manifested into a complex form of sexual desire, which Kafka cannot ignore. Making sense of this complexity with the label of an inescapable cursed fate is what keeps things certain for Kafka in midst of his perplexed existence that is at a distance from the real cause of the torment. When he will be able to recognize the point of anxiety by letting go of the fixation on the cause, "fundamental uncertainty about the very existence of oneself and others" (Nishitani 16), he will achieve the fulfillment of nothingness.

Fate plays a trick with coincidences. In the library, Kafka meets Miss Saeki whom he suspects as his mother. Miss Saeki has had a history of pain in love. She used to be emotionally dependent on her boyfriend. She became devastated after he died. Coincidentally, when she met her boyfriend, he used to be the same age as Kafka now when he is meeting her with romantic attraction and the fear that she might be his mother. "Miss Saeki's life basically stopped at age twenty, when her lover died. No, maybe not age twenty, maybe much earlier.... The hands of the clock buried inside her soul ground to a halt then" (Murakami 146). Miss Saeki feels that meeting Kafka at his age at this point of her life is the mysterious work of fate, where both Kafka and Miss Saeki's situations align together, and the halt of her soul can be lifted. But for Kafka, it is his nightmare coming true with every step he takes to survive on his own. Here also, Kafka makes the coincidences important to make them align with the narrative of his supposed fate, to keep the confusing emotions less confusing for himself.

Kafka learns that his father is killed, and the first step of his nightmare has come true. Though it is unlikely that Kafka has anything to do with the killing, he keeps fearing that according to the prophecy, it has to be him. The general destiny of Kafka's father getting murdered does come true. But Kafka's choice of action in it is still unclear.

Kafka and Miss Saeki have strange interactions with each other. The magic realism of the novel makes it acceptable that the younger alternate version or ghost of the middle-aged Miss Saeki has been visiting Kafka. "Just like when I'm in the middle of a deep dream" (Murakami 210). While Miss Saeki is fascinated by Kafka because he reminds her of her dead lover, Kafka is getting attracted to the young ghost of living Miss Saeki that he constantly gets visits from. At the same time, he also feels fascinated by the middle-aged Miss Saeki. In all these cases, the mutual attraction is both by choice and by the influence of the past or what is believed to be a fixed fate. Kafka and Miss Saeki, in a dream-like state, get into a sexual relationship, consensual from both sides. As for Kafka, considering his suspicion of Miss Saeki being like his mother, does go according to the curse. He has been fulfilling the conditions of the fate which he feared and ran away from. He made the choice of making the fated thing happen. The next day, his conversation with Miss Saeki implies that Kafka might have had a dream about Miss Saeki. But he still confesses to Miss Saeki that he is attracted to her. He confirms to himself every emotion and feeling is aligned with steps of fulfilling the prophecy, and his desires for Miss Saeki are also pushed by fate. The idea of this fate has accompanied Kafka for so long, that he is unable to validate his free will surpassing any prophecy.

Chapter 3.2:

Kafka's Self-Sufficiency

Now Kafka is on the line of paradox and conflict with the prophecy. He first wanted to run away from what he thought to be his gruesome fate. But now that he believes to have crossed the limits by presumably killing his father and sleeping with Miss Saeki who could be his mother, he feels that he needs to be in a sexual relationship with Sakura, his potential sister as well, to break free from the prophesy and gain peace. "Everything seems to be speeding up, rushing towards one destination" (Murakami 233). As always, even now, he chooses to enable the ways of the curse, both him and destiny leading each other. He is hopelessly perplexed that even Crow, his wiser

alter ego has left his side. His coping mechanism is not helping him in his torment. Either the alter ego has vanished as he is now directionless, or he is in the dreadful but important process of merging himself with Crow to restore a sense of direction. Kafka finally gets a hold on himself on his own, this time, without the help of an alter-ego, but becoming that alter-ego himself. This aligns with the self-sufficiency of Nothingness, when one embraces the power of choice and decides not to get controlled by the restrictive rules of the fearful self, and transforms from the inside to exist on the outside. “The negation of person-centeredness must amount to an existential self-negation of man as person. The shift of man as person from person-centered self-prehension to self-revelation as the manifestation of absolute nothingness- requires an existential conversion, a change of heart within man himself” (Nishitani 70).

He embraces himself as his savior, convinces himself with the logic that he had been devoid of his whole life. Kafka as the crow guides Kafka the heartbroken child who grew up believing that his mother didn't love him. Crow Kafka consoles human Kafka and advises him to move on from the fixation of a presumed curse or prophecy by forgiving his mother who left. Though he still hesitantly suspects if Miss Saeki is his mother, Crow Kafka decides it is important to understand that she was vulnerable too. Split in two parts within himself, young boy Kafka cannot fathom this advice and does not understand why love has to be so painful. “If there's a curse in all this, you mean to grab it by the horns and fulfill the program that's been laid out for you. Lift the burden from your shoulders and live-not caught up in someone else's schemes, but as you. That's what you want” (Murakami 343). This surreal exchange between two Kafka-s is a turning point and a beginning of the journey of healing for Kafka, though confusing and painful at first. His alter-ego submerging with himself attempting to make him realize the importance of letting go of the fixation itself indicates a progress associating his existence with tangible human nature and connections.

But before embarking on a complete healing process, in the woods, Kafka falls into the deeper illusions of his fantasies. As this novel is filled with magic realism, Kafka also goes through a magically real illusive journey where he finds both younger and older versions of Miss Saeki inviting him to stay in the vague place with her and assures him that now he will be all-right. It feels like a comfortable escape for him. But he chooses to leave this illusion, and finally saves himself by coming out of the fantasy as he gets rescued by Oshima's brother. After learning from

Oshima that Miss Saeki has passed away, Kafka lets go of the fixation thinking the whole process of him from learning about the curse to going through all the turmoil, ending with Miss Saeki's death, have been all predestined. "Mother, you say. I forgive you. And with those words, audibly, the frozen part of your heart crumbles" (Murakami 411). By being understanding of his mother's abandonment, he has been able to come out of the limiting box the supposed curse that dominated his essence with narrow subjectivity, and has initiated a universal humanism with a compassionate existence and communicative subjectivity. Kafka still has faith in destiny, because it is the only means for him to make sense of things that traumatize him. He still chooses to believe that Sakura is his sister, and Miss Saeki was probably his mother. He turns himself in to the police, and Crow comes back to tell him to rest. He has not unified with his alter-ego, but now the alter-ego is sympathetic and kind to him, which implies that he is kinder to himself and is able to let go of the pain, with the ego's ability to not be controlled by the anxiety of 'the supposed to be'. Kafka also stands on a balance between his excessive faith in fate and the freedom of choice. He utilizes his choice to accept whatever has happened by accepting them as pre-destinies. His reliance on destiny does not let him embrace the fulfilling freedom of nothingness, but he has initiated his existence of autonomy by accepting things as they are, even if they are fated, but without an additional weight of anxious anticipation, embracing his own version of Nishitani's freedom of nothingness. "True nothingness means that there is no thing that is nothingness, and this is absolute nothingness." (70)

Chapter 3.3:

Embracing the Helplessness of a Larger Reality

This paper aims to contemplate if there could be balance in between the extreme ends of the spectrum of existentialist theories examining *Kafka on the Shore* and *The Remains of the Day*. Kafka's story shows the negative effect of his excessive awareness on fate, which turns even his free-will into a choice made under the influence of predestination. However, this understanding of the fate of a curse gives directions to his empty life and creates meaning of something that he is totally ignorant of, despite the directions and meanings being misleading. Kafka's emptiness in life, the lack of familial affection and interaction with the opposite sex, prompted a correlation between his longing for affection from his mother and sister, and his heterosexual attraction

towards women, all resulting into a disturbed mindset of the curse of incest. His intense disturbance, working as his benchmark of fate, also becomes important for him to come in terms with his outward persona, to be more sympathetic towards himself, and to let go of the pain of abandonment with forgiveness. His intimate and personal journey eventually forms his existence when he chooses to release the strings of the curse. Hence, though free-will prevails following his internal transformation, this existence takes place because of the negotiation of his complex relation with his essence.

Co-protagonist Nakata represents the dissociation of consciousness rather than the push and pull of choice and fate, because he has no control over his condition to begin with. He got into a coma and lost all his memories after waking up due to some illness stricken to him during the war. This could symbolize the devastating aftereffects of any kind of war, and Nakata's condition of mind-body dissociation could be a symbolism for the wounded soul as a victim of war. In Nakata's case, his belief in a fate or the lack of it did not make a difference, because those who made the choice of war already had established the impact of their destructive choice on Nakata resulting in his condition. However, Nakata develops a dependency on fate with the idea of the Entrance Stone, believing that his mind, as a separate entity apart from himself, is guiding him to find this stone. Nakata refers to himself in the third person as a sign of dissociated consciousness. However, he understands that his consciousness had been adrift somewhere, especially when he was in a coma. So, there must be a consciousness subdued inside him which he is unable to acknowledge unless it gets the promise of a validation and a goal to get that validation.

“It might sound strange to put it this way, but it seemed like the real Nakata had gone off somewhere, leaving behind for a time the fleshy container, which in his absence kept all his bodily functions going at the minimum level needed to preserve itself” (Murakami 62).

The discomfoting out-of-place feeling he gets in his mind after waking up from the draining coma, now makes him consider his mind to be a separate entity with separate autonomy ordering him to follow the destiny of finding the stone. As he feels like an empty container whose consciousness is outside, a blind belief on whatever explanation comes in his disassociated condition is something that helps him make sense of himself and the world, and to believe in something out of the nothing, just like Kafka made sense of his sufferings with the explanation of the curse. He definitely has an

ignored consciousness, with which he makes the choice of finding the Entrance Stone. He forms the notion of the stone's prophecy to make his existence survive. Nakata can agree with Sartre's theory of existentialism the most. Even though Nakata is having to rely on the idea of a prophecy due to his situation, he makes the choice of believing in some kind of fate to make meaning. He is in the action of looking for the stone, and that action is now the backbone of his current existence more than his original essence. Nakata's situation shows that having an idea of what one is supposed to be or do helps them to make the choice of action and create their existence in the world. He had no direction other than his comfort on the Entrance Stone, which helps him live with a purpose until he dies in his sleep, believing that he has been on the route of finding himself and his purpose.

“There are a lot of things that aren't your fault. or mine, either not the fault of prophecies, or curses, or DNA, or absurdity. Not the fault of Structuralism or the Third Industrial Revolution. We all die and disappear, but that's because the mechanism of the world itself is built on destruction and loss. Our lives are just shadows of that guiding principle. Say the wind blows. It can be a strong, violent wind or a gentle breeze. But eventually every kind of wind dies out and disappears. Wind doesn't have form. It's just a movement of air.” (Murakami 311).

This statement of Oshima summarizes Nishitani's idea of nothingness of essence and collective existence, as well as the suggestion of setting the essence free by embracing the helplessness of a larger reality, and consciously existing in the world as it is along with the choices of right and wrong. Nishitani subverts the popular Freudian model of id-ego-superego or Jungian model of shadow-ego-persona, suggesting that it all comes down to the acceptance of nothingness of the self or the ego, and the persona of generating experience that leads to the union with God, the God that resides in Existence. For Nishitani, the term 'persona' refers to the individual's reformed awakened self with the enlightenment of overcoming nihilism, a transformed self that perceives and appreciates things as they are, freed from the shackles of what anything or anyone is supposed to be from a subjective box of personhood, accepting the universality of experience and existence, becoming an individual with rebirth (33). Contrary to the traditional psychological theories,

Nishitani claims that the id or shadow must be realized as nothing, the ego must be let go, and the persona or the role we play is the only authentic phenomenon because only the persona or our role is connected to existence (70).

If Nishitani's theory of the conscious mind's acceptance of the internal nothingness is applied on Kafka from *Kafka on the Shore* and Stevens from *The Remains of the Day*, it shows that when both of them consciously looked into the truth of the supposed fate and the standard of perfection they have been hanging onto, and understood the futility or nothingness of the sufferings they have been causing to themselves, they finally create a new persona that is healthy and open-minded, unlike the previously suffocated persona. In Nakata's case, his practical condition forces him to get close to the nothingness, as he admits that he is an empty container without the purpose of finding the stone fueled by a voice of consciousness separate from him. His condition is an accidental inbuilt circumstance of embracing the subjective nothingness, because he has been disassociated from the ability of subjectivity. His aim of gaining the stone is both his coping mechanism to fill in the void of disassociation, and the persona mentioned by Nishitani that gives him the purpose of survival and existence. As Nakata has lost the capacity of personhood, he has successfully established his existence in the form of his self-proclaimed prophecy, already free from the binds of personhood.

Chapter 4

Existence in *The Remains of the Day*

Chapter 4.1:

The Remains of the Day Filled with Preconceptions

The novel starts with Stevens' narration explaining why he is going on a trip to see around the country, it is because his employer Mr. Farraday has told him to. Right from the beginning of Stevens' first-person narration, he admits that the choice he has made to get a break and enjoy some time for himself is only because his employer has given him the chance, not because Stevens himself wanted it. He confirms that he believes everything that Mr. Farraday tells him to do as his firmly determined responsibility to follow. So much so that his own enjoyment is dependent on the employer's allowance. Stevens lives through heavy reliance on the ideals of his job and the words of his employer, instead of authentic experience of living. The only times Stevens utilizes his autonomy is either when it is for the betterment of his service towards Farraday's house, or when it is something trivial. He thinks that the house is understaffed, so he wonders if Miss Kenton wants to join as a staff. He carefully chooses the things to wear and carry for his journey. Even after the confirmation of him going, Stevens' wants reassurance from Farraday and brings up the topic again. Stevens' dedication to his job is a reflection of his desire of perfection which he lets control himself, letting his essence be manipulated by an idea of perfection which he is yet to overcome. He is stuck in his constant anxiety of living up to the standard of perfection. "When a man chooses an existence for his "self, " he chooses at the same time an image of what he believes man ought to be. In choosing himself, he is "thereby at the same time a legislator for the whole of mankind" (Sartre as qtd in Nishitani 31). From an Existentialist point of view, Stevens' deeds are not contributing to his existence for humankind, but are only feeding the self-centeredness of his essence.

Whatever little choices Stevens' have been making are to align with his strict ideal of being his master's server. With the mention of Miss Kenton, Farraday teases Stevens, which makes him awkward, as later on, he thinks to himself that Mr. Farraday's American style of bantering is vulgar. Stevens, a devoted English butler, is not only dedicated to the service of his master, but

also to the English etiquettes with a tint of a superior feeling in friction with his employer's nature of bantering which irritates Stevens. "It is quite possible, then, that my employer fully expects me to respond to his bantering in a like manner, and considers my failure to do so a form of negligence. This is, as I say, a matter which has given me much concern" (Ishiguro 15). Stevens' conflicts are often in relation to his perfectionism of his job and the English-hood. He reveals that he cannot socialize with other butlers anymore, because Farraday does not host guests that often. It indicates that Stevens is lonely. But what he makes himself bothered about is that he cannot discuss his work-life dilemma to his fellow butlers. He is looking for companionship, but he is too rigid to actually form human-connections. His desire for companionship is also catered to his fixation on the job. The lack of discussion about work is believed to be a bigger problem than his loneliness, because his ideology tells him that work is supposed to the end all be all, and not his personal life. He still acts hesitant to go on vacation and enjoy his free time. He has forced himself to believe that any inconvenience must be rooted in the hindrance of his work which he does not want to sustain.

"I would say that it is the very lack of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart" (Ishiguro 24). As Stevens enjoys the beauty of countryside England, he emphasizes on the restraint of the scenic beauty, the plain restraint which symbolizes Stevens' own devotion of being a strict and formal butler of England, which he admires. His perception of existence is evidently inflexible and is heavily dependent on the idea of what is supposed to be. He is obsessed with how proper the nation of England is supposed to be, so he is focused on making himself like and admire a scene of beautiful nature if the beauty expresses restraint. He also follows some definitions or ideals for the dignity of a good butler that he wants to uphold. These ideals are inspired from stories of butlership Stevens heard from his father who was also a butler, all of which implicate an extreme amount of devotion towards service to the point of it being unhealthy. One of the stories involves Stevens' father tolerating the lack of courtesy of some people until they insult his master, which made him lose his cool but also continue working after he put them down with a stare. The other two stories reflect the devastating effects of too much professional devotion, one of which contains a butler risking his life by killing a tiger on his own, cleaning the remains, and seamlessly moving on with his daily work. Another one includes Stevens' father himself having to serve a guest of his master because of whom Stevens' father had to endure the loss of his son. These stories imply that in any adverse situation, even if it is personally traumatizing, a good butler should never think for

himself and always prioritize his service and loyalty for his master. “A great harmony among all things in the universe that brings them into being and sustains them in mutual dependence and cooperation” (Nishitani 8), this harmony is not being supported by Stevens’ ideals, because he is not only out of harmony with the world, he is also determined to betray himself and his own feelings to satisfy the desire for perfection.

“And now let me posit this: “dignity” has to do crucially with a butler’s ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits. Lesser butlers will abandon their professional being for the private one at the least provocation” (Ishiguro 36). These ideals of a good butler themselves eliminate the scope for choice of personal betterment for a butler over his employer. Stevens religiously follows these ideals, and rejects the possibility of any choice to deviate from these binding self-imposed rules. He wants his existence as a butler to be filled with the dignity and greatness of restraint, deliberately blocking any space for his individuality and emotionality. Stevens’ dedication to his work simultaneously follows Sartre’s notion of one’s deeds and accountability of choice being their existence and not anything predestined, and contradicts Sartre’s advocacy of choice. Stevens’ deeds and responsibilities encompass his whole existence, and he ignores the possibility of an alternate personal existence. On the contrary, he is so focused on how a butler is supposed to be a great one, that he leaves no room for choice and personal accountability. His obsession with the extreme professional perfection is the desire he aims to achieve by perceiving through the reflection of his father’s ideal. In the process of submission to this desire, he has suppressed his essence into a shell of rules, not genuinely contributing to a larger scale of humanity as Nishitani suggested (8).

“Of course, if two members of staff happen to fall in love and decide to marry, it would be churlish to be apportioning blame; but what I find a major irritation are those persons – and housekeepers are particularly guilty here – who have no genuine commitment to the profession and who are essentially going from post to post looking for romance. This sort of person is a blight on good professionalism” (Ishiguro 41).

Stevens puts his standard of butlership not only on himself, but on others as well. He believes that resigning from the profession of a butler for something personal like marriage is irritating. However, he chooses not to find Miss Kenton irritated for leaving for marriage after a long time

of service in the house. Instead, he sympathizes with her thinking that she might be lonely. Even his sympathies are aligned with the profession making him believe that Miss Kenton's choosing her personal life must make her want to come back to work. Stevens' emotional rigidity is also passed on to him from his relationship with his father while he was alive. He inherited such strict professional devotion from his father who used to remain extremely formal and workaholic even in the pain of old age. Stevens' father had been adamant of being able to work even when he wasn't physically fit. The possibility of reducing his work was laughed off and ignored by him and Stevens. Even their conversations as father and son were devoid of emotions, and they conversed formally, completely merging their personal identity into their work identity.

During the last moments of Stevens' father, also when the house was busy with guests and the butlers had a lot to do, Stevens' father finally became emotional and called Stevens a good son, though not in regards to his emotionality as a good son, but in regards to a good learner internalizing the ideals of a blindly devoted butler. Even Stevens got emotional and shed tears for his father, but brushed the tears off calling them the result of tiredness of work, obeying his father's morals despite being emotionally tolled. Stevens' father eventually died the same day, and when Stevens was grief-stricken, he chose to complete his duties of serving the guest instead of mourning, believing that his father would want the same from him. In following what he believed his father wanted him to do regardless of the father in question being dead, Stevens suppressed his humane emotions, and completed what he was supposed to do. That's his fixation on his strict rule of professionalism stopping him from processing emotions. Furthermore, engulfed by the notion of professional development and the myth of a butler's dignity to achieve greatness ingrained in him by his father, midst of the traumatic experience of the busy day of his father's death, Stevens is happy to have achieved a professional milestone by suppressing his emotions and performing his duties in the moments of adversity. "For all its sad associations, whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph" (Ishiguro 92). In the dedication for existence of deeds over the essence of predetermination, Stevens has been letting the predetermination of rules overtake his existence and completely diminish his essence of human emotionality. "A world cold and dead, governed by laws of mechanical necessity, completely indifferent to the fact of men." (Nishitani 48)

Nonetheless, Stevens' shows a major contradiction of his ideal as a butler and the standard of dignity. "A 'great' butler can only be, surely, one who can point to his years of service and say that he has applied his talents to serving a great gentleman – and through the latter, to serving humanity" (Ishiguro 96). So, he admits that a butler's dignity comes with the record of serving a great man, which eventually indicates serving humanity. But he has denied working for Lord Darlington after he shifted to Mr. Farraday's place. "I may not have thought further why it was that I had given the distinct impression I had never been in the employ of Lord Darlington. For surely, there is no real doubt that is what occurred" (Ishiguro 100). He denied this information, not being certain why he did that, but he also admits that the denial was because he was ashamed, because he wanted to protect the pleasantness of his image as a butler from the record of serving a gentleman with a faltering reputation. "It is hardly my fault if his lordship's life and work have turned out today to look, at best, a sad waste—and it is quite illogical that I should feel any regret or shame on my own account" (Ishiguro 114). This diminishes Stevens' claim of serving humanity with butlership as he denies Darlington's individual humane imperfection before the standard of greatness. Furthermore, he takes Darlington's bad reputation as a threat upon himself, not in an empathetic way, but in a selfish way, only thinking about what serving Darlington would make Stevens look like. This also raises the question, whether, according to Stevens, the loyalty of a butler should lie with those who are served, or only the identity of a butler matters separately. It also reverses Stevens' duality between essence and existence, and creates further contradiction.

"Our individual actions get to be truly "absolute" activities only when they originate from the horizon that opens up when man breaks out of the hermit's cave of the ego and breaks through the nothingness at the base of the ego; only when they become manifest from a point at which the field of consciousness, where actions are said to be "Of the self, " is broken through, while all the time remaining actions of the self (Nishitani 35)".

In Stevens' case, his hermit cave of the ego binds him inside his image of a perfect butler who cannot be affected by Darlington's bad reputation. But, if he claims that the acts of service to the employer are the priority, then him caring about his pleasant image of butler more than his previous loyalty to Lord Darlington is in a contrary stance. It makes it unclear where Stevens stands, and what he actually believes and finds significant. It also proves that his conflicting internal essence

is making his outward existence void. His actions are not broken through his self, in Nishitani's analogy, and are not coming from a field of consciousness, but from a confusing notion of an inflexible standard.

More of Stevens' double-standards come out with his narration of the past when he used to work for Darlington. While he was Darlington's employee, his loyalty to his employer surpassed his morality, making him tolerant to antisemitism and discrimination towards Jewish maids, which also surprised Miss Kenton. Here, Stevens makes a difference by not making a difference and choosing to stay silent against something immoral. At the same time, Stevens' essence as a loyal butler surpasses his choice of a moral existence.

“The fact is, the most established, respected ladies and gentlemen were availing themselves of the hospitality of the German leaders, and I can vouch at first hand that the great majority of these persons were returning with nothing but praise and admiration for their hosts. Anyone who implies that Lord Darlington was liaising covertly with a known enemy is just conveniently forgetting the true climate of those times” (Ishiguro 111)

Stevens' uncertain position with morals, compulsion and expressiveness of emotions takes another turn, when he tries to justify Lord Darlington and his friends' association with the Nazis, but also admits to Miss Kenton that he only pretended to not care about the injustice to the Jewish maids, making Miss Kenton exclaim in anguish why Stevens always has to pretend. “I am sure that is so, Miss Kenton. However, we must not allow sentiment to creep into our judgment. Now really, I must bid you goodnight...” (Ishiguro 119). This was his matter-of-fact tone of normalizing an unjust behavior. After this incident, even though he feared that Miss Kenton might leave, he was still buried in distress in this situation out of professionalism. “What's done can hardly be undone. But it is at least a great comfort to hear his lordship declare so unequivocally that it was all a terrible misunderstanding. I just thought you'd like to know, Miss Kenton, since I recall you were as distressed by the episode as I was” (Ishiguro 123). Years later, he finally admits that it bothered him too, surprising Miss Kenton, and generating a pitiful regret from her for Stevens', the regret of how much Stevens has been deceiving himself through all the years for rigidity of how a butler should act. The outward recognition of Stevens' constant pretension in situations and his absence of answer to Miss Kenton's exclaiming question further prove that Steven cannot control what he

feels, but he forces himself to act in a certain way, leaving himself in between something unclear. Again, only focusing on a fixed idea of his essence as a butler, not caring about his existence as a social human. On the surface, pretension is his firm choice. He even admits thinking that any butler who forms opinions against their employer is not a good butler. Despite this belief, his choices are hardly from a place of certainty, but from a vague idea of what is taught to him as the rule. Stevens' understanding that he has been uncertain is in fact a step closer towards nothingness that leads to the existential freedom from self-attachment (Nishitani 16).

Stevens confirms that he suffers from indecisiveness. His interactions with Miss Kenton make his indecisiveness more visible to himself. In the past, when Miss Kenton and Stevens worked together, he once noticed Miss Kenton crying, and considered going to her to make her feel better. "Having left her to be alone with her grief, I realized out in the corridor that I had not offered her my condolences. I believe I may have been a little confused about this matter; that in fact this fragment of memory derives from events that took place on an evening at least a few months after the death of Miss Kenton's aunt." He was considerate for a moment, but chose to change his decision and continued serving his employer's guest, with the justification that serving men who would change history was more important than soothing a crying person. He keeps justifying his emotional insensitivity by leaning on the division of imposed priority, and choosing to forego certain choices as a justification of preconceived ideas. Though Miss Kenton has been disappointed at Stevens for his excessive robotic nature, she also makes fun of him and lets him know that she makes fun of him, understanding that Stevens has feelings deep down which he cannot process and acknowledge, or feels like he should not acknowledge. Stevens does not acknowledge the gap between his preconceived perception and the reality of what he consciously understands. He also is too engulfed in the imposed seriousness of some fixed ideals that prevent him from embracing the natural flow of the universe that he has been a reluctant part of. He gives priority to the supposed important people of his employer, by ignoring a person who he is connected with. "All things that are in the world are linked together, one way or the other. Not a single thing comes into being without some relationship to every other thing" (Nishitani 149).

Chapter 4.2:

The Day Rests in Epiphany

“Behind a person there is nothing at all, that is, that "nothing at all" is what stands behind a person” (Nishitani 70). Stevens’ narrative of firmness takes a turn when he acknowledges the nothingness inside him by realizing that he has always loved Miss Kenton. With this realization of futile rigidity of living and the acknowledgement of the emptiness of absorbing unnecessary seriousness, he understands that most of the seriousness is in vain without genuine human-connections. Finally, he is not ignoring what he has been ignoring all this time, and outwardly acknowledges that his heart is breaking. Miss Kenton is married to someone else. While Stevens was with her at the Darlington’s, he avoided being emotionally vulnerable with her. He was so submerged in his essence of a butler, that he avoided creating his existence as someone who could love. Now, with the realization of the lost opportunity of love, existence of choice has slipped out of his hands. “And you get to thinking about a different life, a better life you might have had. For instance, I get to thinking about a life I may have had with you, Mr. Stevens” (Ishiguro 192). This epiphany of unrequited love triggers a surge of emotion in Stevens, and he sees his uncertain ideal of determined organized existence fall apart. He sits down with a man, another butler, and they share their thoughts. Stevens breaks down in tears, admitting that he has been feeling insufficient and unable to satisfy his master. Stevens’ initial sense of pride as a righteous butler somewhat derived from Darlington’s own mistakes from the blame of which Stevens was protected, as he believed.

“He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least.....All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can’t even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that?” (Ishiguro 196). This previous feeling of comfort in his identity as a butler is now bothering Stevens, because even though Darlington was imperfect, Stevens blindly believed, or at least made himself believe that he was perfect. Now he is accepting that Darlington, as a human was indeed imperfect, and Stevens’, as his butler, is not at fault for anything in his employer’s life. His responsibility was to interact with his employer, but not to ensure the high standard of perfection of someone else. In the present, with Mr. Farraday, Stevens cannot keep the shell of perfection intact, because the errors are happening due Stevens’ orthodox rigidity. Nishitani’s confusing

suggestion that true nothingness means that there is no thing that is nothingness (70), works as an advice for Stevens to look at the disappointment in a hopeful way to get rid of attachment to something that does not matter anymore. Stevens calms down, decides to get better, this time after a transformation of the confrontation of the illusion, genuinely making the choice of getting along with his employer, instead of being stuck in a master-slave dynamic. Now he is merging his personal consciousness with the outward persona of a butler, and is letting the external perception of existence affect his internal identity or essence. This is his conscious self verifying the issue of anxiety, recognizing the gap of inability to achieve a certain standard, and accepting the possibility that he can live with a complete existence without the added pressure of the unrealistic standard of perfection.

At the beginning of the narration, Stevens looked down upon Mr. Farraday's nature of bantering with him, considering it something that wasn't supposed to happen in the butler-employer relationship. Now, Stevens' agreeing to banter with Mr. Farraday to please him more indicates that he is choosing the autonomy of his existence and coming out of the binds of deterministic essence of butlership. His external perception of existence as a butler and the internal essence as an emotionally active human merge together as he realizes how he has been suppressing his existence with a superficial notion of essence. The realization works as an epiphany that gives birth to his new personhood, in which he decides to live through active human relationship and with spontaneity, without being fixated on rules and predestined meaning. His subjectivity, now, is not limited to his essence, but is spread towards his existence of universality, indicating his ability of compassion and open-mindedness, as opposed to his previous strictness of being. He attempts to embrace Nishitani's idea of fulfilling nothingness where he accepts his profession as merely a job that involves work and interaction, rather than a high benchmark with imposed significance.

His job as a butler kept Stevens bound to this idea of predetermination halting his movements and freewill of creating his own existence by choice. Unlike Kafka, whose obsession with his fate eventually led him to a conclusion with freedom, Stevens has restricted himself with his obsession with what he is supposed to be. "The hard reality is, surely, that for the likes of you and I, there is little choice other than to leave our fate, ultimately, in the hands of those great gentlemen at the hub of this world who employ our services" (Ishiguro 197). By the end, he is still stuck in his butler's job, his livelihood is still dependent on his wealthier employer who is like an authority

figure. But he becomes authentically connected with his butler's identity by releasing his spontaneous emotions, and by understanding that this is a job to earn survival, not an ideal to blindly follow at the cost of individuality. "An indifference of love. It is a non-differentiating love that transcends the distinctions men make between good and evil, justice and injustice." (Nishitani 58). He actively compromises with his rigidity, and the conscious decision to make adjustments to the rules alleviates the authenticity of his existence.

Chapter 4.3:

Fulfillment of Sunyata

Nishitani discusses the problem of nihilism, that is, nihility brings humans to a directionless point without the answer to the question of why one exists to begin with, helpless with the infinite choices of making their own destiny, also hopeless with the awakening of meaninglessness. This is where the paradox of existentialism occurs. The benchmark of the 'supposed to be' is indeed binding to the free flow of actions. But in which directions the actions can go form a series of coherent events is uncertain without a safety-net of the benchmark. The profession of a butler has been an available option for Stevens which he took. Without that option, he either could be something else, or he would be directionless. Nonetheless, he chose to be a butler to follow his father's footsteps and to become perfect in his father's eyes, not for himself. Kafka and Nakata went on the journey which they thought was fated to them, and in the process, Kafka got liberation, and Nakata got a purpose in his emptiness. For Stevens, though he has wasted a huge chunk of his life following a strict path, eventually, in this path itself, he understood the value of flexibility. So, the question remains, if a mixture of fixedness and flexibility is better than the utter voidness of nihilism's freedom.

"On the field of Sunyata, all things are in a process of becoming master and servant to one another. It enables us for the first time to conceive of a *force* by virtue of which all things are gathered together and brought into relationship with one another, a force which, since ancient times, has gone by the name of nature" (Nishitani 149).

Nishitani suggests that the solution to the existential paradox is love that does not differentiate between human-made standards of practicality, a mindset to appreciate whatever comes along the way without the obsession of giving it a bigger meaning, accepting the arbitrariness and the free

flow of flexibility with undifferentiated love, which can also be understood by the concept of Sunyata. Nishitani suggests Sunyata to get liberated from the void of nihilism, where everything is free from the assigned significance of some imposed grand meaning, and is merely what it is. Kafka and Stevens, after a lot of turmoil, learn the lesson that Kafka's curse and Stevens' job are given much more significance than what is deserved, that Kafka's curse is not a curse but a manifestation of loneliness, and Stevens' job is not an unchangeable destiny but just a job which doesn't need to consume his whole life. This lesson could have saved them from all the sufferings, but the journey made it fruitful and earned. "This means that man is no longer merely personally in the world. As a being who is both completely material and completely biological, he is ruled by the indifferent laws of nature" (Nishitani 50). While Sartre believed that chosen action is the absolute existence for humans, Nishitani acknowledges the powerlessness of choice and the necessity of giving in to that power of the bigger universe, something that cannot be helped by choice or actions. Accepting that powerlessness frees one from the torment of fixation. Kafka's trauma of abandonment cannot be helped, but how he overcomes it with his choices is important. Similarly, Stevens' past cannot be changed, but what he does now after the transformation of disillusionment is important. Sunyata is the point where the emptiness of nihility negates itself, and then nihilism becomes valuable with awakened enlightenment, making life full again with a different healthier perspective. Kafka and Stevens go through the death of their restrained selves, now reborn with a new life.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Compassion for the universal humanity and kindness for the existence of all individuals can be understood as the blueprint by William Shakespeare. Shakespeare's stories encouraged the universal acceptance of humanity often by portraying the brutal consequences of the self-centered rigidity and the lack of acceptance. One of Shakespeare's most renowned and vastly read and adapted plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, is not only a love-story and a tale of rivalry, but also a cautionary tale of conservativeness that cost two young lives. Romeo and Juliet's families hated each other for no specific reason, other than their self-centered contest of becoming the only elite of the town. They were so consumed by their attachment of the superior feeling and were so habituated in the practice of othering, that they were left with no compassionate individuality of themselves that could empathize with another human being. They could never recognize the nothingness inside them, let alone achieving Sunyata. Romeo and Juliet, on the other hand, being as immature as they were, did recognize the value of existence in relationship to others. Their individualities were fulfilled enough to love another person and accept the other person's individuality as well. They acknowledged the nothingness of self-centered personhood, and filled each other's nothingness with love, resulting into a much fruitful existence with the desire for companionship. They lost their life as they could not grow enough to achieve Sunyata by accepting the loss of a lover. But in a different way, they may have achieved Sunyata in their own unique way, as they embraced each other as one another's world, and rejected the narrowminded rest of the world, leaving a lesson of acceptability, love, and humanity.

The ideology of living with individual satisfaction along with letting others live in a satisfied way is the result of positive nothingness and Sunyata derived from *Kafka on the Shore* and *The Remains of the Day*. Understanding the universality of human nature and being considerate to the individuality of others are contributive to the fulfillment of one's own individuality as well. Stevens lets himself go from the shackles of self-centered rules, and embraces his individuality in relation to people, by admitting that he has loved Miss Kenton, and agreeing to genuinely communicate with Mr. Farraday, also by accepting that Darlington has had flaws. Kafka also lets himself go from the restrictions of a painful hidden trauma, and embraces himself spreading the kindness further among others. He decides to forgive his mother, and he wants to reach out to

Sakura, this time, without the pressure of the curse, but with the intention of an authentic connection. Both of them have come out of the boundary of attachment to an anxiety, and have taken the steps of living for and with the humanity.

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