DEONTOLOGY AND CONSEQUENTIALISM: ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN JOSÉ SARAMAGO'S *ALL THE NAMES*

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Abstract: According to Immanuel Kant if an action is to have worth, it must be initiated from a sense of moral duty. While Aristotle states that moral virtue is an active condition that reveals itself through action, and goodness rests with the doer and not with the action itself. Meanwhile, José Saramago's novel, *Todos os nomes* (1997) [*All The Names*, 1999], questions matters of duty and morality, namely through the actions of a lowly clerk at the Central Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths. The plot of *Todos* revolves around Senhor José whose work and life are predicated by a registry represented by an archaic system that relies on dusty and stifling records. Despite this suffocating environment, the man becomes obsessed with an unknown woman, and throughout the novel, he tries to reconstruct a life of a nameless woman, trying to give her life and ultimately his own some worth. All the while, he finds himself vacillating between the ethical dictates of deontology that form the basis of the work ethic in the registry and consequentialism that allows him to practice a more humane morality through actions that he undertakes voluntarily.

Keywords: Deontology, consequentialism, moral duty, morality, ethics, *All The Names*

Resumo: De acordo com Immanuel Kant, para que uma ação tenha valor, ela deve ser iniciada a partir de um senso de dever moral. Enquanto Aristóteles afirma que a virtude moral é uma condição ativa que se revela através da ação, e a bondade reside em quem faz e não na ação em si. Entretanto, o romance de José Saramago, Todos os nomes (1997), questiona questões de dever e moralidade, nomeadamente através da actuação de um humilde funcionário do Registo Central de Nascimentos, Casamentos e Óbitos. A trama de Todos gira em torno do Senhor José, cuja obra e vida são pautadas por um registro representado por um sistema arcaico que se baseia em registros empoeirados e sufocantes. Apesar desse ambiente sufocante, o homem fica

obcecado por uma mulher desconhecida e, ao longo do romance, tenta reconstruir a vida de uma mulher sem nome, tentando dar valor à vida dela e, em última instância, à sua. Ao mesmo tempo, ele oscila entre os ditames éticos da deontologia que formam a base da ética do trabalho no registro e o consequencialismo que lhe permite praticar uma moralidade mais humana por meio de ações que ele empreende voluntariamente.

Palavras-chave: Deontologia, consequencialismo, dever moral, moralidade, ética, *Todos os Nomes*

In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* Immanuel Kant argues that if an action is to have worth, it must be initiated from a sense of moral duty, and the latter is "*the necessity of an action from respect for the law*" (Kant 15). In addition, the "objective necessity of an action from obligation is called *duty*" (Kant 51). Kant asks us to act only "*in accordance with that maxim through which you at the same time can will that it become a universal law*" (Kant 34). While, in *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that moral virtue, which he identifies as *hexis*, is an active condition that manifests itself in action (Aristotle 61-2). Aristotle argues that goodness rests with the doer and not in the action itself and in the way they conduct themselves when performing the act (Aristotle 61-2). The philosopher lists three essential conditions that necessitate the morality of virtue of an action: "The agent must act in full consciousness of what he is doing […] He must 'will' his action, and will it for its own sake […] The act must proceed from a fixed and unchangeable disposition" (Aristotle 61), and ultimately "it is the repeated performance of just and temperate actions that produces virtue" (Aristotle 62). In this paper, I argue that the novel, *Todos os nomes* (1997) [*All The Names*, 1999], by José Saramago interrogates matters of duty and morality, namely through the actions of a lowly clerk at the Central Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths. The plot of *Todos* revolves around Senhor José whose work and life are predicated by a registry represented by an archaic rigid system that relies on dusty and stifling records, a place which "reduces his life to a function rather than an existence, and it appears that he has no friends, only colleagues with whom he maintains distant relationships of no real substance" (Frier, "Righting Wrongs" 105). In spite of this suffocating environment, the man becomes obsessed with an unknown woman, and throughout the novel, he tries to reconstruct the life of the nameless woman, trying to render meaning to her life and ultimately his own.

Meanwhile, he finds himself oscillating between the ethical dictates of deontology that form the basis of the work practices in the registry and consequentialism that allows him to practice a more humane morality through actions that he undertakes voluntarily.

The nameless in a chaotic place

In *Todos*, no one has a name, with the exception of the clerk, whose name José is possibly the most common of names.[1] Throughout the novel, he is referred to by the honorific title, Senhor; the narrator tells us:

> Apart from his first name, José, Senhor José also has surnames, very ordinary ones, nothing extravagant, one from his father's side, another from his mother's, as is normal […] However, for some unknown reason, assuming it is not simply a response to the very insignificance of the person, when people ask Senhor José what his name is, or when circumstances require him to introduce himself, I'm so-and-so, giving his full name has never got him anywhere, since the people he is talking to only ever retain the first part, José, to which they will later add, or not, depending on the degree of formality or politeness, a courteous or familiar form of address (Saramago 9).

From early on, we realize that names have no value in a place such as the registry, despite its obsession with records. It is ironic that Saramago's proper name was mistakenly conferred on him by a careless clerk, who gave the author his own surname possibly in a registry that resembles the one in the novel; the "civil functionary erroneously appended a family sobriquet to the birth certificate of the infant José de Souza" (Preto-Rodas 12). The boy's name was only discovered by the father when the child was nine, and this led the father to assume the same surname as his son (Preto-Rodas 12). In Saramago's novel, we also learn that it is "the numbers that count" (Saramago 194). Where the authority is concerned, people are mere numbers or meaningless letters, faceless individuals, whose existence is served best in the form of data held in the arcane archives of the registry, which believes "it is those names

[1] Orlando Grossegesse argues that "[I]t is obvious that this name was chosen intentionally, not bluntly affirming an autobiographical equation, explicitly denied by Saramago, but nevertheless triggering readings which imagine the author's identity as slipped into the protagonist's skin" (190).

and dates that give legal existence to the reality of existence" (Saramago 138). However, these paper records of the having existed will never account for lived experience along with its many complexities (Frier 244).

In addition, the registry is a place in which the individuals are alienated from one another and ultimately from meaning that they appear barely alive (Hogue 132). The monotonous nature of the work dehumanizes them as they evolve into robotic nameless entities, performing the same tasks *ad nauseam*. In the registry where all the names are kept, no one has a proper name, and the characters are referred to by the jobs or positions they hold. Their job entails that they "are always rushing from their desk to the counter, from the counter to the card indexes, from the card indexes to the archives, tirelessly repeating this and other sequences and combinations to the blank indifference of their superiors" (Saramago 2). To navigate the archives, one often requires the use of "Ariadne's thread" (Saramago 174). The reference suggests that this maneuver is what potentially allowed Senhor José to solve his ethical dilemma through the application of a logical argument that allowed him to symbolically escape the confines of the registry.[2]

The Central Registry, which symbolizes an obstinate bureaucracy, is also faceless even though it collects information about the living and the dead, but what is "really known about these citizens is incomplete and lacks context" (Yakel 408). The Central Registry with its dusty archives figuratively represents "a house of the dead" (Hogue 132), acting as "an instrument of both control and memory," presented by the author "as a mechanism of control, one that is both feared and revered among the populace" (Hogue 132). The government office with its inflexible routine lacks logic in its practices. Rules are set and adhered to without questioning and any digression from its practices is strictly discouraged. It is ironic that the place "simultaneously represents order and chaos […] it may imply visual order [but] the explorer within it has difficulty in exploring its paths, and this creates a sense of confusion and disorder" (Atkin 21). This unrelenting need for bureaucracy may not produce the desired results. Clerks follow the orders, even though the desired outcomes are chaotic. Moreover, the organization of the records lacks logic. We are told:

[2] Atkin sees in this allusion to the Cretan myth, an implication of a possible romantic reward for Senhor José (Atkin 22).

> The disorganisation in this part of the archive is caused and aggravated by the fact that it is precisely those people who died longest ago who are nearest to what is referred to as the active area, following immediately on the living, and constituting, according to the Registrar's intelligent definition, a double dead weight, given that only very rarely does anyone take an interest in them, only very infrequently does some eccentric seeker after historical trifles appear (Saramago 6).

Rhian Atkin argues the main principle in the archive of the dead is chaos as records are thrown randomly rather than being filed in a systematic manner (21). Nonetheless, The Central Registry, which is presented as a "mechanism of control also embodies memory. It contains *all the names*" [italic in original text] (Yakel 407). In addition, the "regular demolition and rebuilding of the rear wall of the archive demonstrates an attempt on the part of the authorities to appear in control of the archive of the dead" (Atkin 21). However, in spite of all the names, names are not forthcoming in the novel, and neither is recognition, such as when colleagues respond to a greeting by a person automatically without even knowing "to whom they were speaking" (Saramago 18). Instead, the archive assumes a doubly spectral quality, with its mournful space in which spirits exist along impossible desires, permanently accommodated together (Boulter 118).

Challenging the order

In this dreary environment amidst the rigid laws, the narrator of the novel suggests that it is "indeed shamefully easy, to commit the abuses, irregularities and forgeries" (Saramago 2). In one of his first transgressions, Senhor José removes cards from the archives pertaining to celebrities whose lives he deems worthy. When he is not at his desk, he spends much of his time with his more than one hundred newspaper clippings of famous people; his collection is divided into two parts "on the one hand, the hundred most famous people, on the other, those who have not quite got that far, is in constant movement in that area which we normally refer to as the frontier" (Saramago 19). The collection he thus far amassed is according to the narrator "very much like life," as fame, we are reminded, "is a breeze that both comes and goes […] and just as a person might pass from anonymity to celebrity without ever understanding

why, it is equally common for that person, after preening himself in the warm public glow, to end up not even knowing his own name" (Saramago 19). Lacking any distinctive presence in his own life, Senhor José has to resort to the life of celebrities to give his life some meaning. His own hobbies are focused on appeasing his loneliness by collecting meaningless records of lives, without really knowing other human beings (Beaman 2018). His collection is also due to a "metaphysical angst, perhaps because [he] cannot bear the idea of chaos being the one ruler of the universe, which is why, using [his] limited powers and with no divine help, [he] attempt[s] to impose some order on the world" (Saramago 13). The epigraph of the novel states: "You know the name you were given, you do not know the name you have" (Saramago). Assuming control of his actions, Senhor José is a step closer to understanding what his name signifies. In reality, he is imposing new meaning to his common name through his actions. In addition, Senhor José proves that he:

> … knows more than just names [because] he is willing to transgress the bounds set by the unyielding bureaucracy that constricts and confines his existence, the bureaucracy that relegates his living bones to a tiny hovel leaning like an ancient tomb on the side of the impressive Registry building (Hogue 134).

Through his actions, he adds value to faceless people, and ultimately to his dreary existence.

Kant argues:

> For as to what is to be morally good, it is not enough that it conform to the moral law, but it must also happen for the sake of this law; otherwise, that conformity is only contingent and precarious, because the unmoral ground will now and then produce lawful actions, but more often actions contrary to the law (5-6).

As a clerk, Senhor José has always completed the bureaucratic tasks assigned to him meticulously, without hesitation or questioning. He conformed to the actions prescribed by the registry, believing that conforming to the law will result in ethical results. He also acted for the sake of the law. However, the card of the unknown woman presents itself as a sixth card in the

collection of five cards that he removed from the archives, unbeknownst to the clerk (Saramago 26). This discovery creates a disruption in both his judgement, routine and ultimately life. The sixth card, which belongs to "a woman of thirty-six, born in that very city, and there are two entries, one for marriage, the other for divorce," intrigues him (Saramago 27). Following his discovery of the card of the unknown woman, he becomes obsessed with her as up to this moment and as with all the names in the records of The Central Registry, "her name corresponds only to an absence" (Hogue 133). We are continually reminded that this vast storage system "can know names and dates but cannot know human beings" (Hogue 133). It is ironic that the woman remains nameless to the reader but not for Senhor José; however, "her status as "unknown" is directly related to the fact that […] Jose is unable to narrate the entirety of her story because he is missing important elements of it, the location of her body [and] the reasons for her melancholia" (Boulter 117). Even the paper on which the details of people are inscribed has a similar fate, occupying a place on a par with human life. The narrator reflects on the lifespan of a paper:

> It's true that not a day passes without new pieces of paper entering the Central Registry, papers referring to individuals of the male sex and of the female sex who continue to be born in the outside world, but the smell never changes, in the first place, because the fate of all paper, from the moment it leaves the factory, is to begin to grow old, in the second place, because on the older pieces of paper, but often on the new paper too, not a day passes without someone's inscribing it with the causes of death and the respective places and dates (Saramago 3).

Despite the meticulous details inscribed on the pieces of paper, this inevitable process of decay leaves no room for any form of humanity to endure. Faced with this fact, Senhor José strays from what is deemed proper, acting on his new obsession. He decides to become a repository of the lived life, stories and memories of those in the archives (Hogue 134). His transgression returns humanity to the cold numerical value assigned to human beings. Although Senhor José never meets the unknown woman, "his journey to know her is a bold proclamation that in spite of all anonymity and chaotic happenstances, this person matters, and in turn she makes [him] matter" (Beaman 2018). Investigating the details of the woman's life

leads "him and the Central Registry down a path that signals parallel changes" in both his life and in the practices in the registry (Yakel 407). Senhor José develops a new way of knowing, which is "based in narrative and relationships rather than in sterile words on dusty documents" (Hogue 134).

Senhor José has not only until this point lived a reclusive life ordained by the dictates of his job but also his life lacked any human compassion. Pursuing the trail to the unknown woman brought his life some meaning and a connection to another being. Kant argues that securing one's happiness is also a duty, albeit indirectly, and that "in a crowd of many sorrows and amid unsatisfied needs [it] can easily become a great temptation to the violation of duties" (Kant 14). Happiness may be the sum of our natural longings and leanings, and it "stands as the conditioned in the highest good [while virtue] may be unconditionally good" (Sweet 113). Therefore, for Kant "happiness completes virtue" (Sweet 113). Meanwhile, "[v]irtue without happiness appears to us as incomplete; we can still add to the goodness of virtue by adding happiness to it" (Sweet 114). Once the lowly clerk decides to investigate the life of the unknown woman, he is seeking happiness even though he is violating the dictates of his employer. The narrator tells the reader that "Happiness and unhappiness […] come and they go [and] the worst thing about the Central Registry is that they're not interested in what [people are] like, for them [they are] just a piece of paper with a few names and dates on it" (Saramago 170). The latter, which are built on a rigid form of deontology, are considered part of the natural order. In one instance as an example, the narrator reflects that a "clerk from the Central Registry never goes anywhere without his tie on, it's impossible, it's against nature" (Saramago 32). Yet, Senhor José breaks this law, as he strives to give the nameless woman a name, despite being aware of his new situation, "living on the brink of absolute disaster, the public exposure of irregularities in his professional conduct, the continual and wilful affront [,] he was in the process of committing against the venerable deontological laws of the Central Registry" (Saramago 163). Senhor José feels he is acting out of moral duty, which in a moral Kantian world "happiness arises necessarily from the universal exercise of virtue" (Sweet 118).

A threshold between deontology and consequentialism

The OED's defines deontology as the "science of duty; that branch of knowledge which deals with moral obligations; ethics," while consequentialism is an "ethical doctrine

which holds that the morality of an action is to be judged solely by its consequences" (Online 2022). Once Senhor José entered through "the forbidden door for the first time […] as if he had placed his foot on the threshold of a room in which was buried a god whose power, contrary to tradition, came not from his resurrection, but from his having refused to be resurrected," he took control of his fate, as he crossed the line between deontology and consequentialism (Saramago 15). Choosing to act and being consciously aware of his actions have rendered the latter some moral value. After all, the *miracle* that the Central Registry has succeeded in, is "transforming life and death into mere paper" (Saramago 152) [italic is mine]. Senhor José has until the moment of finding the card respected the rule of not using the dividing wall between the registry and his house, which is also part of the building; early in the novel, we learn that the house Senhor José lives in is part of the registry, but that this was not intentional:

> […] they did not choose him to be the residual repository of a bygone age it may have been a matter of the location of the house, in an out-of the-way corner that would not disrupt the new plans, so it was neither punishment nor prize, for Senhor José deserved neither one nor the other he was simply allowed to continue living in the house (Saramago 11).

The door "that opened into the Central Registry was kept permanently closed that is they ordered Senhor José to lock it and told him that he could never go through it again" (Saramago 11). Due to his "methodical nature" and his blind respect of the law, the registry clerk has thus far obeyed the law, and as with his colleagues, he enters the building through the main entrance (Saramago 12). The incident of the card forces the clerk to question his habitual actions. It also introduces him to another form of darkness, as he becomes aware of "two darknesses separated by a skin," one he carries about him all the time that is not frightening and the black darkness of the archive, which can be eased by a torch light (Saramago 152).

The mingling of the dead and the living

In spite of the constraint of space and records being in proximity of one another, The Central Registry prides itself on its capability of separating the living from the dead, to ensure

"the cards and files of the recently dead [don't] come dangerously close to, and, on the near side [or] even touch the files of the living" (Saramago 142-3). For most of his career, the clerk has lived by the dictates of his work. Senhor José, like the rest in the registry, seems to be trapped in a highly structured system "designed to continually renew a sense of 'newness' without ever actually delivering anything new" (Hogue 122). Meddling through the cards and removing them from the archives disturbs the current order of the Central Registry. In addition, this action traverses the strict boundaries that so far existed between the living and the dead in the documents. The narrator questions this wisdom:

> Much as it pains me to say this and however scandalous it may seem to you, the matter that my thoughts called into question, much to my surprise, was one of the fundamental aspects of Central Registry tradition, that is, the spatial distribution of the living and the dead, their obligatory separation, not only into different archives, but in different areas of the building (Saramago 179).

Later in the novel, when the registrar suggests that the authority may consider a reordering of the archives, he stresses that any change should preserve the spirit, continuity and organic identity of the place; failing that, will result in "the collapse of the moral edifice which, as the first and last depositories of life and death," they should continue to represent (Saramago 177).

According to him and the system he blindly upholds, the Registrar stresses that the registry should continue its tradition of authority and organization, as this is required to interpret the world morally (Boulter 120). Crossing the threshold through the forbidden door and removing documents from The Central Registry poses a digression for an absolutist in deontology. On another note, Senhor José's action is more in line with moderate deontologists who believe that "if enough good is at stake it is permissible to infringe a right. Moderates believe in thresholds for rights, and they hold that if the threshold is met it becomes permissible to do what would otherwise be forbidden" (Kagan 179). Yet, he still feels he needs to justify his aberrant actions at least to himself; he suggests:

> Strictly speaking, we do not make decisions, decisions make us. The proof can be found in the fact that, though life leads us to carry out the most diverse

> actions one after the other, we do not prelude each one with a period of reflection, evaluation and calculation, and only then declare ourselves able to decide if we will go out to lunch or buy a newspaper or look for the unknown woman (Saramago 31).

In addition, surrounded by the archives is like being associated to the dead letter. The numbers and names can only exist in an inanimate state. Choosing to act upon the card of the unknown woman is not only his way of confirming an existence of a lived life but also "to validate his life by connecting with a more authentic existence" (Hogue 133), "as if it were a question of one invisible being seeking out another" (Saramago 126). Initially, he refused to accept the evidence of the death of the woman, preferring to think that "some careless, incompetent colleague must have misfiled the card" (Saramago 139). By taking the card out of the archives in order that he search for the woman, he is not only transgressing but he is also making a conscious choice for the land of the living, and he does this with such conviction that "he was even able to lie to himself and to maintain the lie with no sense of remorse," justifying to himself that "[c]hance doesn't choose, it proposes, it was chance that brought him the unknown woman, and only chance has any say in these matters" (Saramago 33, 36).

Accordingly, *chance* proposed to Senhor José that he has to forge a letter and break into the school of the unknown woman (italic is mine). Aided by "Twenty-five years of daily calligraphic practice beneath the vigilance of zealous senior clerks and demanding deputies had left him with complete mastery of fingers" (Saramago 43). This "first objective victory of his whole life […] an extremely fraudulent one" is an example of how "the ends justify the means" (Saramago 47). In his pursuit, Senhor José embarks on a journey that takes him to the unknown woman's neighbors, the girl's school and ultimately the cemetery. His search for knowledge of the woman parallels a descent into the underworld, which affects a profound change in his life, and allows him to "find the prospect of life where previously there was only death and a lack of real meaning" (Frier, "Righting Wrongs" 99).

In his quest, he befriends the woman's godmother who informs him that she is lonely and is grateful that she is now able to tell him the sad happenings in her life, which allowed her to get rid "of a great weight," and she asks him to visit her in the future (Saramago 173). In the novel, there exists "a continuous loving impossibility, indicating being unloved as a mark of modernity's mark" (Medeiros and Junior 230). In Saramago's *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* (1995)

[*Blindness* (1997)] and *A Caverna* (2000) [*The Cave* (2002)], the author shows us that "the only hope for humanity lies in the humans' ability to return to the core values of what being human entails" (Nashef 176). A common thread that runs through most of Saramago's novels is the need for a reexamination of the position of humanity (Frier, "Righting Wrongs" 98).

Establishing human contact is Senhor José's attempt at rescuing some of the lost human values; he assigns numbers to lived life. The clerk even carries the photo of the girl, which he stole from her school, believing that even though "no one has the right to carry off photos that don't belong to them, unless they were a gift, carrying a photo of someone in your pocket is like carrying a little bit of their soul" (Saramago 100). In his perverse way, he believes he is giving her life some worth, although he regards his new state as being "caught between several devils and the deep blue sea" (Saramago 111).

Gradually, the clerk does not see the value of the skills learnt at the registry; knowing all the recorded names have no human value:

> You've got a good memory, It's a fundamental quality for anyone working at the Central Registry, just to give you an idea, my boss, for example, knows by heart all the names that exist or ever have existed, all the names and all the surnames, What's the point of that, The Registrar's brain is *like a duplicate of the Central Registry* [my emphasis…] Since he's capable of making every possible combination of name and surname, my boss's brain knows not only the names of all the people who are now alive and of all those who have died, he would also be able to tell you the names of all those who will be born from now until the end of the world (Saramago 49).

This type of knowledge boosts the control exerted by the authority, as these inscribed names in the archives remain nameless. When he finds the young woman's school records, he feels that he has given her life: he reflects, "finally the record card which for some reason had got stuck to the others, So that it and the name it bore would not be forgotten, The name of the little girl I have with me" (Saramago 126). The narrator notes that from the point of view of an archivist, it is initially considered absurd to try and find the dead amongst the living, "since the latter, because they are alive, are always there before us, but it is equally absurd from the mnemonic point of view, for if the dead are not kept in the midst of the living, sooner or

later they will be forgotten" (Saramago 181). Early on in the novel, the narrator explains the human tendency of wanting to keep the dead and the living separate, because it has "long been known that death, either through innate incompetence or a duplicity acquired through experience, does not choose its victim according to length of life," but it has "indirectly and by different and sometimes contradictory routes, had a paradoxical effect on human beings, and has produced in them an intellectual sublimation of their natural fear of dying" (Saramago 7). In a number of Saramago's novels, death "develops into *the* feared future event, simply because of the system of everydayness created by humans, which prohibits its meaning to be unmasked" [italic in original] (Nashef 171). Senhor José attempts at masking its meaning. When he finds out that her card was erroneously placed amongst the living, the clerk visits the cemetery, which is described as identical to the Central Registry, its "façade […] is the twin sister of the Central Registry façade. There are the same three black stone steps, the same ancient door in the middle, the same five narrow windows above" (Saramago 184). As with The Central Registry, "the General Cemetery's unwritten motto is All the Names, although it should be said that, in fact, these three words fit the Central Registry like a glove" (Saramago 188). He finds out that the unknown woman had died two days ago "after the deplorable episode that had transformed a hitherto honest Senhor José into a criminal," and that she was buried in "the section for suicides" (Saramago 155, 192). Ironically, for Senhor José, having found evidence of her death makes it certain "that she'd been alive" (Saramago 194). Even though "Senhor Jose's search ends in apparent failure [this] is not as important as the lessons that he learns in the course of his investigations" (Frier, "Righting Wrongs" 106). Ana Clara Medeiros and Augusto Silva Junior argue that in *All the Names*, the "suicidal woman inhabits the investigative spirit of Senhor José [while the] book asks what death is, and what living is, and weaves an existence *in absentia*" [italic in original] (227). Similar to the registry, a once-lived life is only acknowledged by a number. The shepherd whom Senhor José encounters tells him that a "number is a number, a number is never wrong, […], if you took this one from here and put it somewhere else, even if it was at the very ends of the earth, it would still continue to be the number it is" (Saramago 208).

The shepherd also uses this logic to justify his action of exchanging the numbers on the graves, because the General Cemetery has "a labyrinth, You can see when something's a labyrinth," of "the invisible kind" (Saramago 208). He also tells the clerk that to show respect for humanity is to be able "to weep for a stranger" (Saramago 209). He adds that "people who

commit suicide do so because they don't want to be found" (Saramago 209). In the novel, the shepherd violates the "the system's carefully structured labyrinth simply by moving numbers marking fresh graves so that the gravestones are erected over the wrong bodies," but the "information system that controls and designs the visible labyrinth cannot even be aware of this switch," as the knowledge only exists in his mind (Hogue 136). The shepherd's body as he moves amongst the graves becomes "a randomizing force" (Hogue 136).

By the same token, Senhor José decides to do the same for the unknown woman; even though, her preference was probably not to be found as we were advised by the shepherd, the clerk decides to exchange the numbers. He takes the number that was placed in the suicide section of the cemetery and places it on a better grave, and once this "exchange was made, the truth had become a lie" (Saramago 211). Even though the woman is now bones buried in the ground "and although Senhor José explores her life not because she is important but so that her name will not be forgotten, he finally ensures that her true name will not be attached to her bones" (Hogue 135). Indeed, he has assigned some dignity to her death and in turn to her life. When he spends a night in the cemetery shielding his body in a hollow tree, which represents at once the emptiness of his own life and possibly the coffin that awaits him, he symbolically, like Orpheus, returns from the underworld after glimpsing the woman of his pursuit in the kingdom of death, even though he was unable to resurrect her (Frier, "Righting Wrongs" 106). Although, the clerk begins "determined to build an authentic monument to an ordinary person's memory, he ends by undermining the authenticity of all monuments," in both the Central Registry and in the cemetery (Hogue 135). In both places, the archive evolves into a place in which records and history can be falsified and fabricated in order to preserve the integrity of individuals (Boulter 116).

Conclusion

Crossing the threshold that separates his house from the registry and his fall to the ground when he broke into the school are two markers that denote the final shift in Senhor José's ethical stand. For Kant, "[m]oral goodness is not attained when we act in order to procure a specific outcome [though] at the same time Kant insists we have ends that are duties and are necessary for us to pursue" (Sweet 108). An integral aspect of Kant's theory is that "human beings, in their efforts to be good and to do good, must be moved to act through

nothing but the thought of the good itself" (Sweet 3). In spite of his transgressions, with his deeds and pursuits, Senhor José has acted for the sake of human virtue; he wanted to bestow meaning on a nameless woman. Heading back to the archives, which represents the beginning and end of his quest, implies that the center is the knowledge gained about himself through his search of the unknown woman (Atkin 24). However, complete knowledge about the self and other will always remain elusive (Atkin 24). Towards the end of the novel, the senior registrar and the clerk decide that the woman's card should be part of the section of the living, not only extending her life but also granting her life some meaning. The moral virtue resulting from Senhor José's endeavours is manifested through his actions, and not through the method with which he conducts himself. His ethical dilemma is not only resolved but has also elicited a more humane morality.

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