

# THE CRISIS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE IN KAFKA'S METAMORPHOSES DIRECTORATE OF THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IN ERBIL

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**ABSTRACT--***The paper investigates Franz Kafka's Metamorphoses (1915) which presents the reader with a case of failure that leads to death. This novel tells the story that embodies the crisis of human existence, and clearly indicates a division that occurs as a result of accumulations, separating consciousness and subconscious. In other words, the novels in its general content is based on the idea of misery, lack of hope, and life changing upside down, and with its protagonist, Gregor Samsa turning into an insect. The paper attempts to discuss the depth of the existential message that Kafka ideas which indicate that there is no benefit from human existence in its various manifestations, because it is nihilist, worthless, and meaningless.*

**Keywords--** death; human existence; failure; sacrifice

## I. INTRODUCTION

Franz Kafka was born on **July** 3, 1883, near the Old Town Square in Prague, and is the son of a German-speaking Czech family. He lived a troubled life, under complicated family and emotional circumstances, which was reflected in his literature, and his view of life and the people around him. He was very different with his father, and their differences took on various dimensions, some of which are related to going to church, and some that are related to writing. His troubled relationship with his father became more apparent through his book: "A Message to the Father" and it is mentioned in the book that he was deeply influenced by his father's despotic personality.

Kafka was moody, restless, sleepless, crazy, and patient. He wrote a lot but tore, and burnt most of what he wrote. He suffered from family problems, and above all he was an obscure writer, and his literary product was known only to his family and some friends and colleagues, but after he died he turned into one of the best writers in the twentieth century..

His works ranged between the short story, novels, letters, in addition to articles and press interviews, and his works were not limited entirely because he was moody and irresponsible when it comes to keeping what he wrote. His relationship with the work ended as soon as he finished it. He was entertaining himself by setting fire to those writings, and this is what he himself clearly stated in his memoirs in March 1912, on October 15, 1921, and in January 1922, and despite his troubled and temperamental personality, he wrote works which are classified as scary, terrifying, nightmarish and the best of all absurd. One of his most famous letters was "A Letter to the Father" and wrote some letters in Czech, including that he wrote to his lover Melina. He "has become part of the English vernacular that described the alienation and exclusion of the individual"(Kaplan, 1914, p, 115).

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His works are among the best subjective works in the world, and they dive into the depths of the human soul, stripping them, displacing them from each cover, and covering them with dark colors, and then depicting the existential human journey as a journey into the unknown, nothingness, or absurdity. Absurdity, blackness, and uselessness is what made his works critical and nightmarish by critics and specialists.

The story was published in 1915 and belongs to absurd literature and deals with topics related to modernity, and its original title was several translations from German into Arabic such as (mutant, metamorphosis, massive worm, transcription ...) due to the absence of a term that accurately corresponds to the German term ... a story It deserved to be a book episode today

## II. RESULTS

Kafka's monster moves smoothly between the amazing, the ordinary, the funny, the horrific, the cosmic and the personal, it reminds us all of the necessity of accepting the beast that lives inside each of us, and which our mental health and the salvation of humanity may depend on

His novel, *Metamorphoses*, the protagonist, Gregor Samsa, turned into a huge cockroach in a normal and monotonous morning. He expresses the troubles his life has caused as a result of this frightening transformation. His family and direct manager at work abandoned him. Gregor Samsa did not find a logical explanation for the people abandoning him, so he moved inside his room, posing troublesome questions to himself: "What happened to me? What happened to me?" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p.1) He did not find an answer to these questions until he died under the maid's broom.

At the beginning and end of the novel, the human tragedy appears as a normal thing, and the reasonable thing appears as a rare occurrence, and the absurd is that it is normal and may happen at any moment. The novel begins in depicting human misery more than normal, and puts the fate of man in a template. It is based on the element of surprise. "Gregor Samsa woke up one morning to disturbing dreams, finding Kafka as he found himself transformed into an awful, terrible insect" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p.1). With this horrific absurd passage Kafka brings us to the corridors of his dark gloomy world, as if he desires to say that there is no point in life, no benefit from living, everyone will lose their humanity in the midst of this absurdity, at some point we will become the opposite of what we want.

In this novel Kafka presents us with a terrifying paradigm for literary writing, and takes us as a dark portal for self-expression and its psychological and social contradictions, and thus offers a unique kind of narration based on exposing the human psyche, revealing its false truth, and its permanent and persistent inability to do anything about one's unknown fate which no one knows about it. Kafka tells us through his "mischief" that our fate will be dark, nihilistic, and useless. Kafka's novel of transformation is the story of metamorphosis which presents the reader with a case of failure that leads to death, a story that embodies the crisis of human existence, and clearly indicates a division that occurs as a result of accumulations, separating consciousness and subconscious. If a person wakes up from his sleep and shakes his dreams out of his imagination, he finds himself transformed into an ugly insect whose trembling limbs tremble in his desperate attempts to rise from his bed. It is not easy and more difficult for us to live with our imagination with that human-insect with all the details of his miserable new life through

precise and clear phrases describing a real world full of nightmares and psychological struggles that express the anxiety, isolation, and marginalization of the human being of the twentieth century...

When Gregor Samsa wakes up from his sleep to find himself transformed into a giant insect Gregor's cold reactions shock readers, but he feels that this metamorphosis is not shocking. It deludes the reader with the truth of this nightmare and the tragedy of Gregor who cannot understand the negative attitude of the family towards him.

the biggest problem after his transformation is that he still cares about his family's needs and dreams and still thinks about others more than he thinks about himself. "He thought back on his family with deep emotion and love. His conviction that he would have to disappear was, if possible, even firmer than his sister's" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p 38)

Samsa is only terrified of the idea of having trouble working, not of realizing his physiological transformation, and he does not even make any endeavors to determine the cause and try to fix it. Gregor says: "Well, I haven't given up hope completely; once I've got the money together to pay off my parent's debt to him- that will, probably take another five or six years – I'm going to do it without fail. Then I'm going to make the big break. But for the time being I'd better get up, since my train leaves at five". (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 1) As for the characters of the novel, they generally treat the incident as something unusual and disgusting but not terrifying or impossible to happen. Most of them focus on the issue of adaptation rather than escaping from Gregor. The family members do not seek any help or advice. They seem more inclined to feel disgraced and disgusted. The maid was not surprised to see Gregor, but was just annoyed by his cleanliness and messing around with the arrangement of the house. These unusual reactions contribute to the absurdity of the "monster" insofar as they are not surprised at the minimum about the absurdity that afflicts their world.

Gregor's transformation completely alters his outward appearance, but leaves his mind unchanged, which creates a kind of discord and absence of harmony between mind and body, and establish a settlement between the two parts. Gregor cannot help but think what would his family and friends say when they see him after his transformation. He is, "eager to learn what the others, who were now so desirous of his presence, would say when they saw him" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 41). As Gregor begins to get used to his new body, he takes his mind to change according to his physical needs, but he is, nevertheless, unable to bring harmony between them. Slipping little by little into an insect, he loves dark, narrow places like those under his sofa, and enjoys crawling against walls and ceilings.

### III. DISCUSSION

Nevertheless, Gregor's humanity does not disappear entirely, which makes him feel a bit of a clash that peaks as his sister moves furniture out of his room. Gregor agrees in principle with the idea of providing more space for him to move around, but upon realizing that the properties that represented his previous life as a human provide him with emotional relief as well, he stands here before two options with which he realizes that he can obtain both physical and psychological comfort and must abandon one of them. He realizes his inability to restore his humanity, psychological comfort.. His sister and mother worked to help him, and he had mercy on the father who, despite his attack twice, did not propose to get rid of him. However, the pressures generated by Gregor's existence wiped out feelings of family sympathy..Gregor's physical and emotional shift from his family and humanity in

general denounced him in what he calls "prison." But the sequence of the events of the story shows that the feeling of alienation actually preceded the process of transformation, especially as Gregor hoped in the morning that he would transform the void of his life and the superficiality of the relationships he lived by working as a perpetual trader. The insect expresses Gregor's innermost inner self, who refuses to be subjected to the miserable life of the protagonist in his quest for money. Gregor is seen as the only provider for the family but when he is transformed he is seen as a useless entity which further isolates him. Gregor feels that his work as an insect is more troublesome than human work, but going to human work in an insect's body requires someone's help like mother; father; or sister. Kafka better describes the scene as an insect lying on its back cannot move from the bed in a room with the door locked from the inside, but in return it cannot ask for help; fearing that the rest of the human family will discover that someone has turned into an insect. He moves, "Slowly, still feeling his way clumsily with his antennae, which he was just now beginning to appreciate, he heaved himself over to the door to see what had happened there" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 53)

His sister, Grete, helps him at the beginning and takes care of him when she provides him with all kinds of food he likes but later she dehumanizes when she takes the furniture of his room outside. Gregor thinks that "nothing should be taken out of his room; everything must stay as it was; he could not dispense with the good influence of the furniture on his state of mind; and even if the furniture did hamper him in his senseless crawling around and around, that was no drawback but a great advantage." (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 117)

The world in this sense is a "human" room. But rooms are always "inside" the walls, not outside. What has no walls is not a human room. The meaning of human habitation is the interior. - It is this interior that was destroyed or wiped out when Gregor Samsa woke up and found himself transformed into an insect, although a huge insect. Mr Samsa also alienates him when he sends him to his room to prevent his interaction with any human. He treats him like a worthless insect. It is the exterior that he must, from now on, dwell in by means of a nonexistent interior. Gregor appears more sympathetic character, he closes "his eyes to avoid seeing his squirming legs" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 25). The narrator says: "Despite all his tribulations," the narrator reports, Gregor "was unable to suppress a smile at the thought" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 33)

Not only is his shape changed but also his voice which wakens his ability of communication with others: "The words he uttered were no longer understandable, apparently, although they seemed clear enough to him, even clearer than before, perhaps because his ear had grown accustomed to the sound of them" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 99.)

Gregore insists that his room must stay the same it was before his transformation. He believes that the pieces of furniture are his only connection with reality. According to Nabokov, "he clings to human memories, human experience" (1982, p. 17) Wherever a person lives or sleeps, the place turns into a room. But what is new is that the world of the insect is not habitable. It is not possible to return to sleep as an insect after it has awakened as humans. And he cannot sleep on his right side because the insect does not turn, the insect has no right, and does not spin around itself, in order to inhabit itself more comfortably. The insect sees the world in a dorsal way, so that every meaning for itself is vertical, and it is not acceptable to negotiate with humans and their customs. And when a person feels the limits of an animal in his body, it remains for him only to close his eyes to the area of the human being in it

What Kafka emphasizes is the transformation, and the results of this transformation on family. There is no other option for Gregor here except to adapt to his new life. His suffering stems from the suffering that he causes to his mother and sister. Gregor Samsa could not stand the hissing sound which his father made. He emphasizes: "If only his father had stopped that unbearable hissing! It made Gregor lose his head altogether. He was almost completely turned around when, constantly on alert for that hissing, he made a mistake and turned himself back again a little" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 53)

His sister sometimes calls him an animal and angrily accuses him of wanting "to take over the whole apartment and make us sleep in the street" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 105) Therefore it is his sister who inhumanly locks him "inside his room" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 107) Samsa's inner unhappiness and physical discomfort as a commercial traveler in addition to "the dehumanizing effect of his job due to the always changing human contacts, which never lead to close personal relations." (Span p. 43)

All the family rely on Gregor including his "parasitical father," (Flores and Swander p.62) Samsa is trapped in his job and is forced to work there as a slave so as to pay "off some more of his father's debts to the chief," (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 33) Gregor Samsa knows that he needs to work some more five years to pay off all the debts of his father. He dreams of the day when he is free from family's debts and economic worries. For the family, Gregor is no more the provider of the family but he becomes just a burden they all wish they get rid of. Mr. Samsa no longer sees the insect as his son and wastes no time in dehumanizing him: "He seized in his right hand the walking stick that the chief clerk had left behind on a chair, together with a hat and great coat, snatched in his left hand a large newspaper from the table, and began stamping his feet and flourishing the stick and the newspaper to drive Gregor back into his room". (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 103) His sister refuses to see him as an insect: "You must try to get rid of the idea that this is Gregor. The fact that we've believed it for so long is the root of all our trouble". (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 134)

Gregor's change in appetite displays his dehumanization which ultimately leads to his isolation. He refuses to sustain his own life with "that kind of food" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 51) which he has been satisfied with before. Gregor's foods now become, "old, half-rotten vegetables" as well as bones from his family's supper, "coated with a white gravy that had solidified" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p. 59) Kafka dehumanizes Gregor through changing his food selection and desires; this only more separates him from his family and the human race, leading him to a place of isolation. Samsa's desire is "to find in life the 'food' which lifts [his] inner man above the banality of existence." (Span, p. 73) He alienated by his family and "left more and more to his own devices," (Pfeiffer p. 55) later comes to have "an instinctive clear-sightedness which makes him see his true position in all of its inescapable actuality." (Pfeiffer 55)

Samsa finds in dreams an escape from his daily work and responsibility so as Kafka finds in writing away which enables him to release and escape the pain, fears, sorrows, sufferings and despair he feels inside home where he comes to feel that he is a failure or even zero in front of the tyrannical, authoritarian presence of the "gross giant," (Idres p. 87) forceful father "who had fought his way up from a miserably impoverished childhood to become a relatively prosperous merchant." (Idres p. 87)

Kafka did not tell us why the hero of his story (the mutant) turned into an insect.. Even though he was not evil until he deserved such a tragic fate, rather he was kind and full of beautiful human feelings. Kafka draws this picture full of sadness, misery, frustration and death as a measure in the end.

Finally, the maid enters his room and finds him dead. She treats him with the broom in her hand, like any other household waste. She goes to the news to his family, saying: "I saved you from that thing in the room!!!" She adds: "Come take a look, it's croaked; it's lying there, a total goner" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p 109). And the maid treats him with contempt and disdain, as any waste in the house unworthy to be placed anywhere but in the garbage bin in the dirtiest place in the house. The maid's inhumanity is more expressed when she says: "you don't have to worry your heads about how to clear out that trash [i.e., Gregor's corpse] next door. It's all taken care of" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p 113)

The family did not suffer his death. They see Gregor as dead, so when he actually does die, they show no concern or care. Rather, they felt relieved, as if a heavy burden had been removed from their shoulders. They got rid of that thing that stayed in the room for a period of time: "Mrs. Samsa and Grete bent over their letters again, as if preoccupied; Mr. Samsa, who perceived that she was eager to begin describing it all in detail, stopped her with a decisive hand" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p.138). His final death completes his final transformation. His death is expected: "his head involuntarily sank down altogether, and his last breath issued faintly from his nostrils" (*Kafka's Metamorphoses*, 1915, p 109). This tragic death makes him appear less human and an insect more. By allowing Gregor to transform into a worthless insect, Kafka portrays how others truly view his human existence.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper there is no a reasonable cause or justification for such a dangerous transformation that has occurred suddenly and without introductions, unless Kafka wants to deliver a message to the reader that he who controls this world is not wise or that life is not based on logic and reason, or he wants to record his objection to the way things are managed in this life, otherwise why would he draw this grim picture of us to a person who could be any of us waking up from his sleep in the morning to find himself in the same picture in which Gregor found himself waking up from his sleep in the morning. This novel could be seen as a cry of protest against the world that seemed as if it had no heart, no mind, no conscience; a world that did not pay attention to the contents and meanings as much as its attention to forms, a world controlled by a messy and mysterious force and a world in which there is no (God), merciful, compassionate; a world devoid of faith and rife with rebellion and skepticism.

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