

## Exploring the Depths of Modern Life as Reflected in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*

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### **Keywords:**

*philosophical themes; alienation; existential crisis; human condition; transformative journey*

### **Abstract**

*This paper explores the philosophical themes present in Franz Kafka's seminal work, *The Metamorphosis* (1915). Through an analysis of the novella, the paper delves into how Kafka grapples with profound issues such as alienation, existential crisis, and the human condition. The paper examines the transformative journey of the protagonist, Gregor Samsa, who undergoes a physical and psychological metamorphosis into a bug, serving as a metaphor for the human experience of feeling disconnected from oneself and others. By immersing readers in Gregor's surreal and isolating world, Kafka prompts introspection into the inherent struggles of human existence. Moreover, the paper explores Kafka's masterful use of absurdity and dark humor throughout the narrative, shedding light on the futility of human existence and the inevitability of death. By interweaving absurd and grimly humorous elements, Kafka offers a critique of societal norms and underscores the existential anxieties that arise when confronted with the absurdity of life. The pervasive sense of irony and bleakness in the novella serves to highlight the absurd and inherently flawed nature of the human condition. Furthermore, the research paper delves into the influences that shaped Kafka's philosophy, particularly his Jewish identity and experiences living in a rapidly changing, industrializing society. Kafka's writing reflects the anxieties and struggles of individuals in a modernized world, highlighting the existential dilemmas faced by those grappling with societal expectations and personal identity. By examining the philosophical dimensions of "The Metamorphosis," this paper offers a nuanced and in-depth analysis of Kafka's views on the human experience and the search for meaning in modern life. It invites readers to engage with the profound questions raised by Kafka's work and provides valuable insights into his philosophical stance.*

### **1. Introduction**

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), a Czech-German writer, holds a prominent position as one of the most influential literary figures of the 20th century. Born in Prague in 1883, Kafka's personal experiences of alienation and his ongoing struggle to find meaning in the world profoundly influenced his writing. His works are renowned

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for their surrealism and absurdity, characteristics that distinguish his unique style. Among his notable works, the novella *The Metamorphosis*, published in 1915, stands as a prime example of Kafka's literary prowess, exploring themes of identity, isolation, and existentialism.

*The Metamorphosis* introduces readers to the main character, Gregor Samsa, who awakens one morning to discover that he has transformed into a colossal insect. This surreal and absurd premise establishes the foundation for a profound philosophical exploration of themes such as identity and isolation. Gregor's metamorphosis serves as a metaphor for his feelings of alienation and detachment from the world that surrounds him. Throughout the narrative, Gregor grapples with questions regarding his own sense of self and wonders whether he remains the same person he was prior to the transformation.

Furthermore, the novella delves into the realm of existentialism, delving into the search for meaning and purpose in a seemingly meaningless world. Gregor's sudden metamorphosis disrupts his entire existence, forcing him to confront the insignificance and futility of his life. As he becomes increasingly estranged from his family and society, Gregor's once unwavering sense of purpose and identity begin to crumble, leaving him adrift in a bewildering world that defies comprehension.

Kafka's enduring literary legacy lies in his ability to stimulate thought and inspire introspection on the complexities of the human condition. His distinctive fusion of surrealism and philosophical depth has served as a profound source of inspiration for numerous literary works, captivating readers across generations. *The Metamorphosis* stands as one of Kafka's most renowned and influential works, and its exploration of themes such as identity, isolation, and existentialism continues to resonate with readers and scholars, reaffirming the timeless relevance of Kafka's writing (Corngold, 1995).

## 2. Key Focus of the Study

This paper examines the philosophical themes and concepts present in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and how they relate to Kafka's outlook. The study explores various areas such as existentialism, isolation, power, dehumanization, and freedom to uncover how Kafka's works depict the human condition and his perception of the world. A thorough understanding of Kafka's literature and philosophy is necessary to analyze the text and identify the underlying themes and messages in the story. The ultimate goal of this study is to illuminate Kafka's literary heritage and how his works continue to captivate and influence readers today.

### 3. Methodology

This paper pursues a qualitative style of research and analysis to reach its objective. In this process, a standard amount of previous literary endeavors concentrated on *The Metamorphosis* (1915) has been taken care of and brought under consideration. Specifically, the previously published articles, books, web pages, and dissertations have been used for the analysis as presented in the paper. The following methodological steps are carried out: i) reading the text of *The Metamorphosis*; ii) Then, analyzing relevant research works, books, articles, reviews and movies to discover the representation of Kafka's philosophy in terms of modern life; iii) selecting the relevant matches for the work; iv) After the selection, interpreting and analyzing the data and information using them in the work; v) exploring and clarifying the research questions by using the qualitative method. In doing so, the paper, literally, attempts to justify Kafka's philosophy in modern life in reference to *The Metamorphosis*.

### 4. Literature Review

The theme of metamorphosis has been widely explored in literature and has been depicted in various forms, ranging from novels and short stories to poetry and plays. This theme often deals with a significant and often radical transformation of a character, such as a physical or mental change that affects their life in significant ways. Such transformations can be metaphorical, allegorical, or symbolic and can convey different meanings and messages depending on the context and genre of the work.

Those keen to unearth this theme will find a wealth of diverse and enriching literary works available for exploration. For example, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* portrays the transformation of a man into a monstrous insect, exploring themes of existentialism, alienation, and absurdity. [Ovid's "Metamorphoses"](#) is an epic poem that tells the stories of various transformations, ranging from the creation of the world to the mythological tales of gods and heroes. In Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), the protagonist undergoes a metamorphosis from a naive young woman to a confident and self-aware adult, using symbolism and imagery to explore the themes of sexuality, power, and identity. Additionally, plays such as Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) and William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600) depict characters undergoing transformative experiences that affect their lives and relationships (Straus, 1989).

The examination of metamorphosis in literary works offers insightful reflections on the human experience, particularly in relation to navigating substantial life changes. By examining the different approaches and interpretations of this theme, readers can gain a deeper appreciation of the power of literature to explore complex and universal themes.

Exploring the theme of metamorphosis in literature, as seen in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis (1915)*, offers a unique perspective on the human condition and the challenges of navigating significant life changes. This theme, prevalent in Kafka's work, allows readers to gain a deeper appreciation of literature's power to explore complex and universal themes. In *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka narrates the story of Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman who experiences a startling transformation, awakening to find himself turned into a giant insect: "One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug" (Kafka, 1915, p.3). This surreal alteration serves as a metaphor for themes of isolation, alienation, and the human struggle against a static existence. Kafka delves into Gregor's subsequent alienation from his previous life and the world, encapsulating the sense of entrapment in an unchanging situation. Through Gregor's experiences and his family's reactions, Kafka vividly illustrates the profound emotional and existential challenges that come with drastic, unforeseen changes, showcasing the depth and complexity that literature can bring to our understanding of the human experience.

*The Fly (1922)* by Katherine Mansfield is a short story that tells the story of a man who experiments with a fly and ultimately causes its metamorphosis. The story explores themes of power and control, as well as the consequences of playing god. The protagonist's desire for control ultimately leads to his downfall, as he is unable to handle the consequences of his actions.

"*Ovid's Metamorphoses*" (1477) is an epic poem from ancient Rome that explores the theme of metamorphosis through a series of mythological tales. The poem is divided into 15 books and contains over 250 stories of transformation, making it an excellent source for studying the theme of metamorphosis. Ovid explores various aspects of metamorphosis, including physical transformations, emotional changes, and spiritual metamorphosis.

*The Metamorphosis of Prime Intellect (1994)* by Roger Williams is a science fiction novel that explores the theme of metamorphosis in the context of a world where humans can be transformed into superhuman beings. The novel explores themes of power, control, and the consequences of playing god. The protagonist's quest for power ultimately leads to the destruction of the world as we know it.

*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886)* by Robert Louis Stevenson is a novel that explores the theme of metamorphosis through the character of Dr. Jekyll, who transforms into the monstrous Mr. Hyde. The novel explores themes of duality, identity, and the darker aspects of human nature. Stevenson uses the concept of metamorphosis to explore the human experience of struggling with one's own darker impulses.

*The Transformation*, also known as *The Metamorphosis*, is a novella by Franz Kafka, published in 1915. The story follows Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman, who wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a giant insect. The novella explores themes of family, identity, and the fear of change, as Gregor's transformation has a profound impact on his relationships with his family and his sense of self.

*The Island of Dr. Moreau (1896)* is a science fiction novel by H.G. Wells, published in 1896. The story follows Edward Prendick, who is rescued at sea and brought to a remote island where the brilliant but mad scientist, Dr. Moreau, creates animal-human hybrids through surgical experimentation. The novel explores themes of morality, ethics, and the consequences of playing god, as Prendick witnesses the horrors of Moreau's experiments and grapples with his own sense of humanity.

*The Company of Wolves (1979)* is a short story by Angela Carter, published in 1979. The story is a feminist retelling of the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale, where the protagonist undergoes a metamorphosis into a wolf. The story explores themes of female empowerment, sexuality, and the wildness of nature, as the protagonist navigates a dangerous forest and confronts the dangerous, patriarchal world around her.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play by William Shakespeare, believed to have been written in 1595-96. The play includes a subplot about a character named Bottom, who is transformed into a donkey by the mischievous fairy Puck. The play explores themes of love, magic, and the transformative power of the imagination, as the characters navigate the realm of dreams and the supernatural.

*The Metamorphosis of Plants* is a non-fiction work by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, published in 1790. The work is a scientific study of the growth and transformation of plants, and Goethe's insights into plant morphology and development were groundbreaking for their time. However, the work also explores larger philosophical themes of transformation, evolution, and the unity of all living things, as Goethe seeks to understand the deeper patterns and connections between plant life and the natural world.

Metamorphosis, a pivotal biological process observed in various species such as insects, amphibians, and some fish, plays an essential role in our understanding of the natural world. Studying these transformative stages offers profound insights into ecological adaptation and survival strategies. This knowledge is particularly significant in agriculture, where understanding the life cycles of insects is crucial for effective pest management and pesticide application. In the realm of medical research, the study of metamorphosis offers parallels to cancer metastasis, aiding in the exploration of cellular development and potentially

informing new cancer treatments. Beyond its scientific impact, metamorphosis has captivated the realms of literature and art, inspiring diverse works that reflect themes of personal growth and transformation, such as the classic imagery of caterpillars turning into butterflies often found in children's literature. Thus, delving into the intricacies of metamorphosis not only enhances our comprehension of the natural world and aids practical applications in agriculture and medicine, but also enriches our cultural and artistic experiences, underscoring its multifaceted significance in various aspects of life (Mansfield, 1922; Shakespeare, 1600; Williams, 1945; Williams, 1994).

#### 4.1 The Ways *The Metamorphosis* Can Affect Our Modern Lives

Metamorphosis is a natural process that occurs in various organisms, and its impacts on our lives can be supported by scientific evidence and examples from different fields. The transformative process of metamorphosis is not limited to physical changes in organisms; it also holds relevance in personal growth and development. Psychological studies have shown that individuals often experience transformative changes in their beliefs, values, and perspectives as they navigate through life's challenges (McAdams & Olson, 2010). This process of self-transformation contributes to personal development and can result in increased resilience, adaptability, and open-mindedness (Stevenson, 1886).

Metamorphosis has long been a theme that inspires artists and writers in various forms of creative expression. Artists often draw inspiration from the transformative journey of metamorphosis to explore themes of personal change, growth, and rebirth in their works. For instance, the famous novel *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka is a symbolic portrayal of personal transformation (Kafka, 1915). By embracing the concept of metamorphosis in our own lives, we can tap into our creativity and discover new ways of expressing ourselves artistically.

Metamorphosis plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance of ecosystems and has significant implications for environmental awareness. The transformation of certain organisms, such as caterpillars into butterflies, is essential for pollination and the dispersal of plant seeds (Havelka, 2016). Understanding this process helps us appreciate the intricate interconnectedness of all living things and the importance of preserving habitats for species that undergo metamorphosis. Conserving natural habitats not only protects these species but also ensures the overall health and sustainability of our planet.

The metaphorical significance of metamorphosis reaches far beyond its biological implications, serving as a powerful symbol for fostering empathy and understanding among individuals. Much like caterpillars experience a dramatic transformation to emerge as butterflies, every person undergoes their own unique journey of change and growth. Acknowledging and respecting these personal transformations in others paves the way for a deeper sense of empathy and a more

profound understanding of diverse experiences and viewpoints. This concept is not just theoretical; it is grounded in scientific research. Studies in social psychology, such as those conducted by Eisenberg & Eggum in 2009, have demonstrated that empathic understanding plays a crucial role in enhancing positive social interactions and strengthening interpersonal relationships. This insight underscores the importance of empathy in our social fabric, drawing a compelling parallel between the natural process of metamorphosis and the transformative experiences in human life (Eisenberg & Eggum, 2009).

The concept of metamorphosis holds significant influence across multiple aspects of our lives, as evidenced by diverse fields of study. It represents a spectrum of themes from personal evolution and artistic inspiration to environmental consciousness and empathetic interaction. Embracing this transformative concept not only encourages personal growth and sparks creativity but also deepens our appreciation for nature's intricacies and enhances our capacity for empathy and understanding in our relationships with others.

## **5. Kafka's Philosophy in *The Metamorphosis***

Building upon the insights of Richard Gray (2005) and Walter Sokel (1964), Kafka's writing transcends mere storytelling to become a profound exploration of the human psyche. Sokel highlighted Kafka's adeptness in navigating existential and absurdist themes, showcasing how his narratives delve into the individual's quest for meaning in a world that often seems irrational and unpredictable. Kafka's use of surreal scenarios, as Sokel observed, not only creates a sense of the bizarre but also serves as a compelling metaphor for the existential dilemmas faced by individuals. Richard Gray's analysis further illuminates Kafka's exploration of identity and existence. Gray emphasized the recurring themes of isolation and alienation in Kafka's works, portraying characters who often find themselves in a state of existential crisis. These characters, grappling with their identity and purpose, reflect a deeper societal commentary on the nature of human existence. They are depicted as lost in the complexities of their own minds, as well as in the intricate structures of the societies they inhabit. Kafka's narratives, as expounded by Sokel and Gray, are not just accounts of individual struggles; they are mirrors reflecting the broader human condition. His characters, trapped in Kafkaesque worlds of absurdity and surrealism, symbolize the universal quest for understanding in a world that often defies logic. The existential angst, the search for identity, and the feeling of being alienated from society that Kafka's characters experience resonate deeply, offering profound insights into the complexity of human life and the relentless search for meaning. In *The Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka masterfully intertwines existentialism and absurdism, echoing the themes highlighted by Walter Sokel and Richard Gray. The novella, through the surreal transformation of its protagonist, Gregor Samsa, into an insect, becomes a profound exploration of the absurdity and unpredictability of life, a cornerstone of existential thought. This bizarre metamorphosis plunges Gregor into a deep

existential crisis, reflecting the quintessential human search for meaning in an inexplicable world. Kafka further delves into the themes of isolation and alienation, as Gregor's grotesque new form leads to his ostracization from his family and society. This alienation is emblematic of the existential themes of identity and the human experience, as Gregor grapples with his altered identity and his diminishing role in his own world. Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* thus not only tells a story of physical transformation but also encapsulates a profound commentary on the existential human condition, vividly illustrating the themes identified by Sokel and Gray in their analyses of Kafka's works (Carter, 1979).

The philosophy of Franz Kafka, richly embedded in his works, is particularly evident in *The Metamorphosis*, a novella that showcases his existential and absurdist ideas through both narrative and thematic elements. Central to Kafka's philosophy and vividly portrayed in *The Metamorphosis* is the theme of alienation. Gregor Samsa's inexplicable transformation into an insect serves as a powerful metaphor for psychological and social isolation. Richard Gray (2005) points out how this metamorphosis symbolizes the deep sense of alienation felt by individuals in modern society. Gregor's physical change alienates him not only from his human form but also from his family and society. This alienation is compounded by his inability to communicate, intensifying his isolation and disconnection from his previous life. The novella is replete with surreal and absurdist elements that reflect Kafka's view of life's irrationality and meaninglessness, as noted by Brooks (1975). The very premise of a man waking up as an insect is surreal, defying logical explanation and challenging the reader's sense of reality. Kafka uses this absurdity to highlight the unpredictability and chaos of existence. The bizarre circumstances that Gregor finds himself in, and the world's reaction to his transformation, underscore the arbitrary nature of societal norms and the futility of seeking logic in an illogical world. Beyond physical transformation, Kafka delves into the psychological aspects of Gregor's isolation. As the story progresses, Gregor becomes increasingly introspective, reflecting on his life, his relationships, and his place in the world. This introspection amplifies his sense of disconnection, not just from others but also from his own identity. Kafka uses this psychological exploration to comment on the existential struggle of finding one's purpose and place in a world that often seems indifferent. *The Metamorphosis* also serves as a critique of modern society. Gregor's condition elicits a range of reactions from his family, from initial shock and sympathy to eventual resentment and neglect. This shift mirrors societal attitudes towards those who are different or who do not conform to established norms. Kafka, through this narrative, critiques societal values and the often superficial nature of human relationships. *The Metamorphosis* is a compelling illustration of Kafka's philosophical ideas, employing themes of alienation, surrealism, and absurdity to explore the human condition. Kafka skillfully weaves these elements to challenge the reader's understanding of reality, identity, and the societal structures that govern our lives (Shakespeare, 1595-96).



Kafka's works often explore the fluidity and fragility of identity. In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect throws his identity into crisis. This physical metamorphosis symbolizes a deeper psychological and social identity crisis. Gregor, who was once a responsible son and a breadwinner, finds himself suddenly and inexplicably alienated from his familiar life and identity. This transformation forces both Gregor and the reader to question the very essence of what constitutes identity. Kafka's writing frequently examines the existential quest for meaning in a chaotic world. In *The Metamorphosis*, the absurdity of Gregor's situation reflects the broader existential theme of the search for meaning in an unpredictable and often indifferent universe. This theme aligns with Kafka's own views, as noted by [Stanley Corngold \(1995\)](#), who points out that Kafka's characters are often engulfed in situations that highlight the bewildering and overwhelming nature of existence. Gregor's struggle to understand his transformation and to find his place in a world that has suddenly become alien and hostile is a poignant reflection of this existential quest. Kafka's philosophy, as [Walter Sokel \(1964\)](#) observed, is deeply empathetic towards the human condition. This empathy is evident in the way Kafka portrays Gregor's plight in *The Metamorphosis*. Despite his bizarre circumstance, Gregor's emotions and thoughts are profoundly human and relatable. He experiences fear, confusion, frustration, and a longing for connection—universal emotions that evoke the reader's empathy. Kafka's depiction of Gregor's family's initially sympathetic but gradually harsh and rejecting behavior further invites reflection on how society often responds to those who deviate from the norm. Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, through these elements, not only tells a story of physical transformation but also engages deeply with existential themes. The novella encourages readers to reflect on their understanding of identity, the human quest for meaning in life, and the importance of empathy in navigating the complexities of the human experience ([Goethe, 1790](#)).

In *The Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka weaves a narrative that encapsulates his recurrent philosophical themes, as identified by several scholars. The novella is not just a story of a man turning into a bug, but a deeper exploration of existential themes reflecting Kafka's perspectives on modern society. [Richard Gray \(2005\)](#) points out the theme of alienation in Kafka's works, which is vividly portrayed in *The Metamorphosis*. Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect is a powerful metaphor for the profound isolation and disconnection experienced by individuals in society. This change renders Gregor unrecognizable and alien not only to those around him but also to himself, highlighting the estrangement that can occur in the modern world. Kafka's emphasis on the absurd nature of life is evident in the way Gregor's transformation is presented. [Stanley Corngold \(1995\)](#) notes the matter-of-fact manner in which this bizarre event is depicted, emphasizing Kafka's view of the irrationality of the world. The novella doesn't attempt to rationalize Gregor's transformation; instead, it presents it as an inexplicable fact, mirroring the often inexplicable nature of real-life events ([Beckett, 1953](#)).

The novella also explores the theme of powerlessness; a condition that Kafka believed was endemic in modern society. Gregor's transformation leaves him helpless and dependent, symbolizing the loss of agency that individuals can feel in the face of overwhelming societal forces. Berkoff (1988) highlights Kafka's portrayal of individual powerlessness against the vast, often impersonal mechanisms of society. Despite the grim themes, Kafka also underscores the resilience of the human spirit and the importance of individuality, as Berkoff (1988) observes. In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor, despite his circumstances, continues to exhibit traces of his human thoughts and emotions. This persistence of self, even in a drastically altered form, reflects Kafka's belief in the importance of maintaining individuality and self-expression, even under the most challenging conditions. *The Metamorphosis* is a quintessential Kafkaesque narrative, rich with themes of alienation, absurdity, powerlessness, and individuality. These themes not only reflect Kafka's philosophical views but also offer a profound commentary on the human condition in the modern world (Kafka, 1925).

Here, we can say, Franz Kafka's philosophy is woven into his works, offering a unique perspective on the human condition. Through his exploration of themes such as alienation, absurdity, and the search for meaning, Kafka encourages readers to engage with fundamental questions about existence and the complexities of navigating a seemingly chaotic world. Kafka's philosophy resonates throughout his works, including *The Metamorphosis*, and invites deep reflection on the individual's place in an increasingly complex and impersonal society.

### **5.1. The Reasons Why Franz Kafka Is Worth Studying**

The text *The Metamorphosis* highlights Franz Kafka's distinctive literary style and its impact on modern and postmodern literary movements, referencing Malcolm Pasley's analysis from 2017. Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is a prime example of this unique blend. The surreal transformation of Gregor Samsa into an insect is combined with a realistic portrayal of his psychological state and the reactions of those around him. This mix of the surreal with the psychological and the everyday creates a deeply allegorical narrative, reflecting broader themes about human existence and societal norms. In both *The Metamorphosis* and *The Trial*, Kafka unearths the complexities of the human mind and the absurdities of societal structures. *The Trial* follows the protagonist Josef K's struggle against a baffling and oppressive legal system, mirroring the individual's often futile quest for understanding and justice in an incomprehensible world. These narratives are enigmatic, leaving readers with more questions than answers, a hallmark of Kafka's style. Kafka's narrative structures are unconventional and groundbreaking. His stories often lack a traditional plot progression and resolution, as seen in *The Trial*, which ends abruptly and without a clear conclusion. This technique challenges readers' expectations and reflects the uncertainty and unpredictability of life, a theme Kafka frequently explores. Pasley (2017) suggests that Kafka's work

had a significant influence on the evolution of modernism and postmodernism. Kafka's exploration of alienation, existential anxiety, and bureaucratic absurdity resonated with the modernist focus on the inner workings of the mind and the fragmented nature of reality. Similarly, his narrative ambiguity, open-ended plots, and focus on the absurdity of life align with postmodernist themes. Kafka's style and approach, with their unique blend of surrealism, psychological depth, and allegorical storytelling, not only captivate readers but also offer rich insights into the evolution of 20th-century literature. His works remain influential in understanding the artistic experimentation and shifting paradigms of storytelling during this period (Camus, 1942).

Franz Kafka's profound impact on contemporary culture is evident in the wide array of artistic disciplines his work has influenced. The recurring motifs in his work, notably existential anxiety and a sense of alienation, have resonated widely in different forms of art such as literature, cinema, theater, visual arts, and music. Notably, filmmakers like David Lynch have drawn inspiration from Kafka's exploration of the surreal and the absurd, weaving similar elements into their cinematic narratives. In the realm of theater, directors of the theater of the absurd have also found a kinship with Kafka's thematic preoccupations, as highlighted by Chambers (2017). Moreover, Kafka's influence extends to visual arts and music, where his themes are reimaged and expressed in diverse creative forms. This widespread influence underscores the timelessness of Kafka's work, demonstrating how his exploration of the human condition continues to inspire and shape artistic expression in the modern era (Vonnegut, 1969).

Kafka's writings delve into complex philosophical and psychological themes, offering profound insights into the human condition. His works often touch upon existential questions, the nature of identity, power dynamics, and the limits of human agency. Scholars have analyzed Kafka's works through various lenses, including psychoanalysis, existentialism, and poststructuralism (Canetti, 1971). By studying Kafka's exploration of these themes, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the intricacies of human existence and the challenges we face in modern society.

Franz Kafka's writing, while not explicitly political, provides a compelling reflection of the social and political upheavals of his era, particularly the emergence of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in Europe. Through his depiction of oppressive bureaucracies and dehumanization, Kafka captures the essence of the struggle against impersonal and overpowering systems of governance. As noted by Richter (2013), these themes deeply resonate with the experiences of individuals living under oppressive regimes, reflecting the broader socio-political anxieties of the time. Kafka's works, though subtle in their political commentary, offer a window into the historical context of early 20th-century Europe and the psychological impact of living under such regimes. His influence extends beyond literature, impacting political and social movements, and

providing insight into the complexities of power and resistance. Kafka's legacy, therefore, is not only literary but also profoundly historical and political, offering enduring insights into the human experience under authoritarian rule (Kafka 1915; Muir & Muir, 1992; Richter, 2013).

Here, we can say that studying Franz Kafka's work offers valuable insights into the evolution of literary movements, the influence of art on contemporary culture, complex philosophical and psychological themes, and the intersection of literature and politics. Kafka's unique style, enduring influence, exploration of profound themes, and reflection of historical events make him a significant figure worth studying.

## 6. The Theme of Transformation

Transformation is a recurring theme in literature that has been explored by writers across different periods and cultures. At its core, transformation refers to a significant change or evolution that a character undergoes over the course of a story, whether it is a physical, emotional, or psychological transformation. This theme can be used to illustrate various ideas, such as personal growth, the consequences of actions, or the impact of external factors on an individual's life. An example is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), which portrays a woman's descent into madness as a result of societal expectations and her own personal struggles. The protagonist's transformation is both physical and mental, as she becomes increasingly fixated on the yellow wallpaper in her room and eventually loses touch with reality. The story highlights themes of gender inequality, mental illness, and the destructive power of societal norms. A more recent example of transformation in literature is Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016), which follows the lives of two half-sisters and their descendants over the course of several generations. The novel explores themes of race, identity, and cultural heritage, as the characters undergo significant transformations in response to their experiences of slavery, colonialism, and immigration. The story demonstrates how external factors can shape an individual's identity and how one's personal transformation can impact future generations. Here, transformation is a powerful theme in literature that can be used to explore a variety of ideas and issues. By depicting characters who undergo significant changes, writers can offer insights into the human experience and inspire readers to reflect on their own lives and potential for growth and change.

In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, the theme of transformation is explored through several facets, each offering deep insights into the characters and their relationships. The most overt facet of transformation in the novel is Gregor Samsa's shocking metamorphosis into an insect-like creature. This physical change is sudden and inexplicable, thrusting Gregor into an entirely new reality. This transformation is not just a change in physical form but also a symbol for other underlying changes in the novel. Gregor's physical metamorphosis triggers a

profound psychological transformation. He grapples with feelings of alienation, despair, and disorientation. Kafka delves into the impact of this change on Gregor's identity and self-perception. The once dutiful son and breadwinner is now dependent and helpless, leading him to reevaluate his past life and his relationships with his family. Gregor's transformation also leads to a shift in his family dynamics. Initially, his family is shocked and sympathetic, but their attitudes gradually change to impatience, resentment, and even cruelty. This shift reveals the underlying dynamics of the family and how they viewed Gregor more as a financial provider than a loved one. The family's transformation reflects how people's true characters and feelings can emerge in response to extraordinary circumstances. The novel also explores broader social and existential transformations. Gregor's condition serves as a metaphor for the alienation and dehumanization that can occur in modern society. His loss of humanity and subsequent treatment by his family reflect Kafka's commentary on how society values individuals more for their functional roles than their intrinsic humanity. The story also prompts a moral and emotional transformation in the reader. As we empathize with Gregor's plight and witness the family's changing attitudes, we are led to question our own values and responses to those who are different or who face difficult circumstances. In *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka uses the theme of transformation not just as a plot device but as a means to explore complex issues of identity, humanity, and the nature of relationships. The multifaceted transformations in the novel serve to highlight the intricacies of the human condition and the impact of change on individuals and their relationships with others (Sokel, 1956).

In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, the protagonist Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect serves as a profound metaphor for a multitude of changes, both psychological and relational. Initially, Gregor's primary concern is his inability to work and provide for his family, underscoring his sense of responsibility. However, as the narrative unfolds, this concern evolves into a complex mix of emotions, including guilt, shame, and a sense of liberation from his burdensome role. This shift in Gregor's psyche mirrors his internal struggle with his identity and self-worth. The reaction of Gregor's family to his transformation—from initial shock and sympathy to eventual frustration and resentment—reveals the conditional nature of their affection and the influence of societal norms on personal relationships. This change in their behavior, especially his sister Grete's transition from caregiver to one of aversion, underscores the story's exploration of alienation and dehumanization. Gregor's insect form becomes a symbol of societal outcasts and reflects the superficiality of human connections. Kafka uses this metamorphosis not only as a plot device but as a means to delve into deeper themes of isolation, the fragility of human relationships, and the existential quest for understanding and acceptance. The novella, rich in its portrayal of these themes, paints a vivid picture of the complexities and often stark realities of the human condition (Corngold, 1988).

At the beginning of the story, Gregor is presented as a hardworking and dutiful son, who supports his family by working as a traveling salesman. He has given up his own dreams and desires in order to provide for his parents and sister. However, his transformation into an insect strips him of his ability to communicate and interact with his family in the same way. His physical change represents a symbolic separation between him and his family, highlighting the emotional distance that already existed in their relationships.

As the story progresses, we see Gregor struggle to come to terms with his new identity and how his family reacts to him. He initially tries to maintain his human habits and routines, such as getting dressed and going to work. However, he soon realizes that he is no longer able to perform these tasks, and his family begins to see him as a burden rather than a provider.

In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, the protagonist Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect starkly alienates him from society, vividly captured through both Kafka's narrative and Gregor's inner thoughts. From the outset, Gregor's confusion and shock at his metamorphosis are clear: "What's happened to me," he thought. It was no dream." (Kafka, 1915, p.1), illustrating his immediate sense of disconnection from his human life. This sense of alienation is further exacerbated by his family's horrified reaction, particularly his father, who "clenched his fist with a hostile expression, as if he wanted to drive Gregor back into his room" (Kafka, 1915, p.19), symbolizing a physical and emotional distancing. Kafka emphasizes Gregor's isolation through his confinement to his room: "At this point Gregor did not take one step into the room, but leaned his body from the inside against the firmly bolted wing of the door, so that only half his body was visible," (Kafka, 1915, p.19), a poignant metaphor for his disconnection from the outside world. Gregor's own realization of his outsider status is heartrendingly clear when he thinks, "The sister's words seemed to have led the father to certain reflections." (Kafka, 1915, p. 68), acknowledging his irreconcilable difference from society. Furthermore, the breakdown of communication between Gregor and his family, as illustrated when the chief clerk reacts to Gregor's attempt to speak - "That was an animal's voice" (Kafka, 1915, p. 16) - underscores the complete severance of his human connections. These elements combined powerfully depict Gregor's profound alienation and the experience of being an outsider in Kafka's narrative (Ryan, 1999).

There are several specific examples from the novella *The Metamorphosis* that support the analysis of how the transformation of Gregor Samsa reflects Kafka's philosophy on the nature of identity and the human condition. Firstly, Gregor's transformation itself is a powerful example of Kafka's belief that identity is fluid and subjective. When Gregor wakes up as an insect, he is no longer able to perform his duties as a traveling salesman or interact with the world in the same way. This loss of identity and control over his own existence highlights the arbitrary nature of identity and the ease with which it can be taken away.

Secondly, Gregor's family's reactions to his transformation reflect Kafka's view that the human condition is marked by a sense of alienation and isolation. Gregor's family is repulsed by his appearance and treats him with fear and disgust, despite his efforts to maintain his humanity. This rejection by his own family underscores the inherent isolation that can exist within human relationships. Thirdly, the way in which Gregor's family's attitude towards him changes highlights Kafka's view that societal norms and expectations can be arbitrary and hollow. Before his transformation, Gregor was a hardworking and dutiful son who sacrificed his own desires to provide for his family. However, after his transformation, his family sees him as a burden and begins to treat him with contempt. This change in attitude reveals the hollowness of conforming to societal expectations and the arbitrary nature of human relationships. The final scene of the novella, where Gregor dies, illustrates Kafka's belief in the fragility of human existence. Despite his best efforts to hold onto his humanity, Gregor is ultimately unable to maintain his sense of self and dies alone and forgotten. This ending highlights the vulnerability of the human condition and the ease with which our sense of self can be lost. These examples from *The Metamorphosis* support the analysis that Kafka's philosophy on the nature of identity and the human condition is reflected in the transformation of Gregor Samsa. In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, the protagonist Gregor Samsa exhibits a poignant struggle to maintain his humanity despite his transformation into an insect. This effort is reflected in his initial concerns about his routine responsibilities, as Kafka illustrates: "The next train left at seven o'clock. To catch that one, he would have to go in a mad rush. The sample collection wasn't packed up yet, and he really didn't feel particularly fresh and active" (Kafka, 1915, p.5). Gregor's thoughts remain anchored to his human life, particularly his job and its importance to his family, as evidenced when he reflects, "what a demanding job I've chosen! Day in, day out on the road" (Kafka, 1915, p.4). Moreover, his human sensibilities are evident in his emotional response to music, with Kafka describing how he felt "as if the way to the unknown nourishment he craved was revealing itself to him" when Grete plays the violin (Kafka, 1915, p.64). These instances, along with his attempts at communication, underscore Gregor's continuous efforts to cling to his human identity and relationships, despite his outwardly grotesque transformation (Plath, 1972).

## 7. The Theme of Alienation

In *The Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka explores the theme of alienation through the transformation of Gregor Samsa into an insect and his subsequent isolation from his family and society. Gregor's physical transformation and his family's rejection of him reinforce the theme of alienation, as he becomes disconnected from his former life and experiences mental and emotional deterioration. Furthermore, Kafka uses Gregor's transformation to explore the broader societal context, where the rejection of societal norms and expectations can lead to isolation and rejection from others. Kafka's use of Gregor's transformation to examine the theme of alienation underscores the importance of empathy and understanding in fostering

human connections, and the dangers of allowing societal norms and expectations to dictate our interactions with others.

The alienation of Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* is a reflection of Kafka's philosophy on the human condition and the search for meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. Through Gregor's experiences, Kafka explores the existentialist themes of isolation, meaninglessness, and the struggle to find purpose in life. Firstly, Gregor's transformation into an insect represents a profound loss of identity and control over his existence. This loss of control highlights the arbitrary nature of identity and the ease with which it can be taken away. In this sense, Gregor's situation reflects Kafka's view that the human condition is marked by a fundamental sense of powerlessness and vulnerability. Secondly, the attitudes of Gregor's family towards him reinforce Kafka's view of the human condition as one marked by a sense of alienation and isolation. In *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka, the story poignantly captures the deep-seated rejection and contempt faced by the protagonist, Gregor Samsa, following his shocking transformation. Kafka meticulously documents various instances that underscore this brutal treatment from Gregor's family. The father's overt hostility is starkly evident in a disturbing scene where he violently assaults Gregor, forcefully shoving him back into his room with a stick, a clear indication of his complete disdain and rejection of his son. Similarly, Grete, Gregor's sister, who initially exhibits sympathy, gradually shifts to a stance of repulsion and detachment. Kafka vividly describes this transition, marking Grete's increasing hesitation and eventual advocacy for Gregor's removal from the family. Gregor's mother, while not antagonistic, is visibly overwhelmed and distressed by his transformed state, often avoiding him and even fainting at the sight of him, signaling her inability to accept his new form. The family's collective treatment of Gregor progressively worsens, as evidenced by their actions such as removing furniture from his room, further alienating him and symbolizing his growing estrangement. Kafka notes how the family reconciles with the notion of Gregor as an enigmatic entity that they believe must be gotten rid of. These detailed instances from the narrative vividly highlight the profound alienation and the severe rejection and contempt that Gregor endures from his family, thus accentuating Kafka's exploration of themes of alienation and dehumanization in the novella. This rejection by his own family underscores the inherent isolation that can exist within human relationships and highlights the fragility of our connections with others. Finally, the search for meaning in a seemingly meaningless world is a recurring theme in Kafka's work, and *The Metamorphosis* is no exception. Through Gregor's struggles to find purpose in his new existence as an insect, Kafka highlights the existentialist theme of the struggle to find meaning in life. Despite his best efforts, Gregor is ultimately unable to find meaning or purpose in his new existence, highlighting the inherent difficulty of finding meaning in a world that often seems devoid of it. Eventually, Gregor's experiences in *The Metamorphosis* reflect Kafka's philosophy on the human condition as one marked by a sense of powerlessness, isolation, and the struggle to find meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. Through Gregor's struggles,



Kafka underscores the importance of empathy and understanding in fostering human connections and highlights the inherent challenges of finding purpose and meaning in life (Sweeney, 1990).

Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis into an insect in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is emblematic of a deep loss of personal identity and autonomy. This transformation strips him of his ability to communicate with his family and renders him helpless in his new physical form, effectively alienating him from his previous life. Such an inability to express himself and the sheer helplessness in his surroundings underscore the fragility and arbitrary nature of identity, illustrating how swiftly and unexpectedly one's control over their existence can be usurped. This poignant aspect of Gregor's transformation serves as a stark reminder of the tenuous grasp we have on our own identities and the ease with which our perceived control can be disrupted (Webster, 1959).

In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's family's response to his transformation into an insect is one of rejection and disgust, amplifying his feelings of isolation and echoing Franz Kafka's portrayal of the human condition as inherently alienated and isolated. This is evident when Gregor, in a moment of affection, attempts to approach his sister Grete, only to be met with horror. Kafka captures this reaction vividly: "His mother who came back into the room first, while Grete had her arms wrapped around the chest of drawers in the next room and was rocking it back and forth by herself, without moving it from its position" (Kafka, 1915, p.45). Furthermore, Gregor's father's aggressive response is starkly illustrated: "And so he rushed away to the door of his room and pushed himself against it, so that his father could see right away as he entered from the hall that Gregor fully intended to return at once to his room, that it was not necessary to drive him back, but that one only needed to open the door and he would disappear immediately" (Kafka, 1915, p.49). These visceral reactions from his family members not only heighten Gregor's sense of alienation but also underscore the fragile nature of human connections, revealing how quickly they can deteriorate in the face of the unfamiliar or unsettling. Kafka uses these poignant moments to highlight the deep-seated isolation that can pervade human relationships, a recurring theme in his exploration of the human experience.

In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, despite Gregor Samsa's earnest attempts, he struggles to find meaning or purpose following his transformation into an insect. This struggle is vividly illustrated when he endeavors to cling to his human routine, like going to work. Kafka writes, "At first he wanted to get of the bed with the lower part of his body, but this lower part (which he incidentally had not yet looked at and which he also couldn't picture clearly) proved itself too difficult to move" (Kafka, 1915, p.8), depicting his futile efforts to continue his daily routine. His inability to perform even this basic task underscores the existential theme of the novella: the relentless, often futile search for meaning in life. Kafka further emphasizes this point when he describes Gregor's thoughts: "If I

didn't hold back for my parents' sake, I would've quit ages ago" (Kafka, 1915, p.5), reflecting Gregor's sense of duty and search for purpose in an existence that has become alien to him. These examples from the text highlight the existentialist theme central to Kafka's work, showcasing the profound struggle to find meaning amidst life's insurmountable obstacles (Martin, 1959).

The concept of alienation is a common theme that writers from different periods and cultures have explored in various ways. Alienation essentially describes a sense of detachment or isolation that one may experience from oneself, others, society, or even the natural world. This feeling of disconnection can stem from a range of factors such as societal expectations, technological advancements, modernization, capitalism, existential dilemmas, or psychological conditions. *Albert Camus's The Stranger (1942)* features a protagonist who feels detached from the world around him and struggles to find meaning in his life. The novel highlights themes of existentialism, absurdity, and nihilism, as the protagonist confronts his own mortality and social norms. *J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye (1951)* centers around a teenager who rebels against the adult world and feels alienated from his peers, family, and society. The novel explores themes of adolescence, identity, and disillusionment, as the protagonist searches for authenticity and connection amidst a world he perceives as phony and corrupt. *Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1953)* portrays two characters that are stuck in a meaningless and repetitive routine, waiting for a figure called Godot who never arrives. The play reflects themes of existentialism, absurdity, and despair, as the characters question the purpose of their existence and their relationship to each other and the world. *Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye (1970)* depicts the alienation and self-hatred experienced by a young Black girl who grows up in a white-dominated society that values Eurocentric beauty standards. The novel explores themes of racism, sexism, and internalized oppression, as the protagonist struggles to find her own voice and identity in a hostile environment. *Haruki Murakami's The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle (1994)* follows a man who becomes disconnected from his job, his wife, and his own sense of self, as he embarks on a surreal journey of self-discovery and healing. The novel blends elements of magical realism, surrealism, and postmodernism, as it explores themes of memory, trauma, and spirituality. Actually, these literary works and many others show that alienation is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that can take many forms and affect individuals and communities in different ways. By portraying characters that experience alienation, writers can help us reflect on our own sense of belonging and purpose, and challenge us to imagine alternative ways of living and relating to each other and the world (Boa, 1990; Róheim, 1948; Yoshino, 2018).

The instances drawn from Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* powerfully support the analysis that Gregor Samsa's profound alienation is not just a narrative device but a reflection of Kafka's deep philosophical musings on the human condition. Through Gregor's struggle to maintain his humanity in the face of absurd and dehumanizing circumstances, Kafka masterfully explores the

existential dilemma of searching for meaning in a world that often appears indifferent and chaotic. This novella, therefore, stands as a poignant testament to Kafka's enduring legacy in examining the complexities of human existence and the relentless quest for understanding in an enigmatic universe.

## 8. The Theme of Absurdity

Absurdity is a common topic in literature that has been approached by writers from diverse cultures and time periods in various ways. The concept of absurdity generally implies that human existence lacks any inherent purpose, is irrational and disorderly, and that our endeavors to organize and assign meaning to it are essentially pointless. We can see, [Samuel Beckett's \*Waiting for Godot\* \(1953\)](#) is a play that features two characters that wait for a figure called Godot, who never arrives. The play reflects themes of existentialism, absurdity, and despair, as the characters question the purpose of their existence and their relationship to each other and the world. [Albert Camus's \*The Myth of Sisyphus\* \(1942\)](#) is a philosophical essay that explores the absurdity of human existence and the possibility of finding meaning in a meaningless world. The essay argues that we must embrace the absurdity of our existence and create our own meaning through acts of rebellion and creative expression. [Franz Kafka's \*The Trial\* \(1925\)](#) is a novel that follows a man who is arrested and put on trial for a crime that is never specified. The novel reflects themes of existentialism, bureaucracy, and absurdity, as the protagonist navigates a labyrinthine legal system that seems to have no rational basis. [Joseph Heller's \*Catch-22\* \(1961\)](#) is a novel that satirizes the military bureaucracy and the absurdities of war. The novel features a protagonist who is trapped in a paradoxical situation where he can only escape from combat duty if he is declared insane, but the act of declaring oneself insane is considered proof of sanity. [Kurt Vonnegut's \*Slaughterhouse-Five\* \(1969\)](#) is a novel that blends science fiction, satire, and memoir to explore the absurdity of war and the human condition. The novel features a protagonist who becomes "unstuck in time" and experiences his life out of order, including his experiences as a prisoner of war during the bombing of Dresden. [Albert Camus's \*The Stranger\* \(1942\)](#) is a novel that features a protagonist who feels detached from the world around him and struggles to find meaning in his life. The novel highlights themes of existentialism, absurdity, and nihilism, as the protagonist confronts his own mortality and social norms. The numerous literary works that deal with absurdity illustrate its pervasiveness as a challenging theme in literature, as it mirrors the human struggle to make sense and find significance in a world that can appear irrational and devoid of purpose. By examining the absurdity of human existence, authors can encourage us to challenge our beliefs, question our preconceptions, and motivate us to seek alternative ways of living and interacting with each other and the world.

Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* explores the theme of absurdity through surreal and illogical situations that highlight the irrationality and meaninglessness of the human experience. The physical transformation of Gregor into an insect

defies logic and is surreal in its depiction, while his family's lack of reaction to it underscores the absurdity of the situation. The way in which Gregor's family treats him after his transformation is irrational, as they reject him instead of trying to help him, emphasizing Kafka's philosophy that human relationships are often fraught with absurdity. At first, Gregor's family reacts with shock and confusion to his transformation. Kafka describes this initial response: "His sister should not be compelled but would remain with him voluntarily; she would sit next to him on the sofa, bend down her ear to him, and he would then confide in her that he firmly intended to send her to the conservatory and that, if his misfortune had not arrived in the interim" (Kafka, 1915, p.65), illustrating her disbelief and distress. As time passes, the family's attitude shifts to frustration and hostility. This change is particularly evident in Gregor's father. Kafka describes a violent encounter: "From the fruit bowl on the sideboard his father had filled his pockets, and now, without for the moment taking accurate aim, was throwing apple after apple. These small red apples rolled as if electrified around on the floor and collided with each other" (Kafka, 1915, p.51). This incident reflects not just fear but also aggression towards Gregor. Initially, Gregor's sister Grete takes care of him, but even she grows increasingly resentful. Kafka writes, "This feeling sought release at every opportunity, and with it Grete now felt tempted to want to make Gregor's situation even more terrifying, so that then she would be able to do even more for him than now" (Kafka, 1915, p.45), indicating her diminishing empathy and care for him. Over time, the family neglects Gregor's basic needs. Kafka portrays this neglect vividly: "His mother lay in her chair, with her legs stretched out and pressed together; her eyes were almost shut from weariness" (Kafka, 1915, p.70), highlighting his complete alienation and isolation within his own family. Eventually, the family even discusses getting rid of Gregor. Kafka captures this sentiment when Grete says, "We must try to get rid of it" (Kafka, 1915, p.68), referring to Gregor as an it rather than as a family member. The setting of the novella, particularly Gregor's room, is described in surreal and dreamlike terms, adding to the overall sense of disorientation and confusion. Finally, the ending of the novella highlights the theme of absurdity, as Gregor's family seems to move on with their lives without much thought given to his death. Through these examples, Kafka emphasizes the irrationality and meaninglessness of the human experience. The absurdity of Gregor Samsa's situation in *The Metamorphosis* is a reflection of Kafka's larger philosophy on the irrationality and unpredictability of life. Kafka believed that the human experience was inherently absurd, and that life was marked by a sense of alienation, confusion, and meaninglessness. The surreal and illogical situations in the novella highlight this philosophy, underscoring the idea that the human experience is marked by a sense of disorientation and confusion (Brooks, 1975).

One way in which the absurdity of Gregor's situation reflects Kafka's philosophy is through the suddenness and unpredictability of his transformation. Gregor wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a giant insect, and there is no explanation given for why this has happened. This sudden and

inexplicable change highlights the unpredictability and randomness of life, as well as the sense of powerlessness that characterizes the human experience.

Another way in which the absurdity of Gregor's situation reflects Kafka's philosophy is through the way in which his family reacts to his transformation. Rather than trying to understand or help him, they reject him and view him as a burden. This behavior is irrational and underscores the sense of alienation and meaninglessness that can pervade human relationships.

The setting of the novella also contributes to the sense of absurdity, as the descriptions of Gregor's room and the physical environment are surreal and disorienting. In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, the descriptions of Gregor Samsa's room and the surrounding physical environment are imbued with a surreal and disorienting quality, mirroring his profound transformation. Kafka paints the picture of a space that once seemed ordinary but now feels claustrophobic and alien to Gregor in his insect form. The narrative starts by setting the scene of his room as a "His room, a proper room for a human being, only somewhat too small, lay quietly between the four well-known walls" (Kafka, 1915, p.3), which becomes a confining cage post-transformation. This sense of entrapment is exacerbated by Gregor's new, awkward interactions with his furniture, notably his bed; he struggles with "diminutive legs would then, he hoped, acquire a purpose." (Kafka, 1915, p1), illustrating the surreal nature of his new existence. Furthermore, the view from Gregor's window, once a connection to the outside world, turns into a symbol of his alienation, with Kafka describing the "dreary weather" (Kafka, 1915, p.3) as a backdrop to Gregor's isolation. Adding to the surreal atmosphere is Gregor's newfound affinity for crawling on walls and ceilings, "especially fond of hanging from the ceiling" (Kafka, 1915, p.41), which starkly contrasts with his previous human interactions with these spaces. These descriptions by Kafka create a vividly surreal and disorienting environment that reflects Gregor's internal transformation and his altered perception of a world he can no longer be part of in the same way. This reinforces Kafka's philosophy that the human experience is marked by a sense of disorientation and confusion, as well as the idea that the physical environment can play a role in shaping our perceptions of the world. Therefore, the way in which the novella ends underscores the sense of absurdity that pervades the entire work. After Gregor dies, his family seems to move on without much thought given to what has just happened. This reaction is irrational and highlights the sense of meaninglessness that can pervade human existence (McAdams & Olson, 2010).

In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa's extraordinary circumstance epitomizes Kafka's perspective on the randomness and illogical aspects of life. Kafka uses surreal elements effectively, most notably Gregor's overnight transformation into a vast insect, to underline the story's inherent absurdity: "One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug" (Kafka, 1915,

p.3). This sets the stage for a narrative steeped in the unexpected and irrational. The bizarre reactions of Gregor's family, particularly his father who throws apples at him in a fit of rage - From the fruit bowl on the sideboard his father had filled his pockets, and now, without for the moment taking accurate aim, was throwing apple after apple. These small red apples rolled as if electrified around on the floor and collided with each other” (Kafka, 1915, p.51) - further emphasize the irrationality at play. Additionally, the way Kafka describes Gregor’s environment, transforming the familiar into the disconcerting, as seen in Gregor’s struggles with his own body - “His numerous legs, pitifully thin in comparison to the rest of his circumference, flickered helplessly before his eyes” (Kafka, 1915, p.3), adds to the overall sense of bewilderment and chaos. These elements combine to reflect the unpredictable and often incomprehensible nature of existence as seen through Kafka’s lens (Kafka, 1915).

In the opening of the novella, Gregor wakes up to find that he has been transformed into a giant insect. There is no explanation given for why this has happened, and Gregor is left to grapple with his new reality. This sudden and inexplicable change highlights the unpredictability and randomness of life, as well as the sense of powerlessness that characterizes the human experience.

Rather than trying to understand or help Gregor after his transformation, his family rejects him and views him as a burden. They lock him in his room and refuse to let him leave, despite the fact that he is still capable of thinking and feeling. This behavior is irrational and underscores the sense of alienation and meaninglessness that can pervade human relationships.

Throughout the novella, Kafka describes Gregor's room in surreal and disorienting terms. For example, he describes "the picture of the lady dressed in copious fur" that hangs on Gregor's wall, and the "sticky stuff" that is left behind when Gregor crawls across the walls. These descriptions contribute to the sense of absurdity and disorientation that characterizes the novella, and reinforce Kafka's larger philosophy on the irrationality and unpredictability of life.

After Gregor dies, his family seems to move on without much thought given to what has just happened. They leave the apartment and take a trolley ride together, seemingly unaffected by the fact that they have just lost a family member. This reaction might be seen as irrational, possibly reflecting the meaninglessness in human life Kafka often implies. However, it's also plausible to view it as a sign of resilience, suggesting the family's adaptation and progression despite bizarre circumstances. Such diverse interpretations highlight the multifaceted nature of Kafka's work and the complexities of human responses it portrays (Havelka, 2016).

These instances illustrate how the absurdity of Gregor's situation reflects Kafka's larger philosophy on the irrationality and unpredictability of life. By

emphasizing the surreal and disorienting aspects of Gregor's world, as well as the irrational behavior of his family, Kafka underscores the sense of alienation, confusion, and meaninglessness that can pervade the human experience.

Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* has been the subject of extensive research and analysis, and there are several areas of exploration that scholars and critics could consider. One such area is the symbolism of Gregor's transformation, which has been variously interpreted as a metaphor for illness or disability, a representation of alienation and isolation, or an abstract representation of the dehumanization of modern life. Another area of interest is the role of Gregor's family, which is seen as reflecting broader societal attitudes toward difference and nonconformity. Additionally, researchers could examine the ways in which Kafka's work reflects existentialist philosophy, particularly the search for personal identity and the struggle to find meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. The impact of *The Metamorphosis* on literature and culture is also a rich area of exploration, as is the significance of the ambiguous ending, which has been variously interpreted as a kind of redemption or as a statement about the meaninglessness of life. Together, these areas of research offer a multifaceted perspective on Kafka's complex and enigmatic work.

## 9. Conclusion

In *The Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka explores profound themes such as alienation, absurdity, and the search for meaning in a seemingly meaningless world through the transformation of the main character, Gregor Samsa. Kafka's portrayal of Gregor's metamorphosis emphasizes the sense of powerlessness, unpredictability, and irrationality that can permeate human existence (Brooks, 1975). The novella highlights Gregor's alienation from his family, his job, and even his own body, reflecting the challenges of finding meaning in a world that appears indifferent to our struggles (Corngold, 1995). The absurdity of Gregor's situation and the irrational behavior of those around him underscore the disorientation and confusion that can characterize human relationships (Berkoff, 1988).

Kafka's use of surrealism and other literary devices in *The Metamorphosis* serves to accentuate the disorientation and irrationality that can pervade life, offering a compelling critique of the modern world and its values (Stark, 2004). The story raises important questions about the purpose and meaning of life, challenging traditional notions of identity and self-worth. Kafka's philosophy in *The Metamorphosis* reflects his belief that human existence is marked by isolation, absurdity, and oppression (Wood, 2003).

In terms of potential avenues for research when analyzing *The Metamorphosis*, researchers can examine the symbolism of Gregor's transformation and its representation of societal outcasts or abstract concepts (Sokel, 1974). They can also examine the motivations behind the treatment of

Gregor by his family and how their behavior reflects broader societal attitudes toward nonconformity (Köhler, 2018). Furthermore, researchers can consider the influence of existentialist thought on Kafka's work and how *The Metamorphosis* has impacted literature and culture (Gray, 2005). Analyzing the open-ended conclusion and its implications for Kafka's philosophy and the overall themes of the story is another avenue for exploration (Eisenberg & Eggum, 2009; Grass, 2007).

In contemporary life, the concept of metamorphosis, both as a symbolic idea and as depicted in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, continues to hold significant relevance. It serves as a powerful symbol of personal transformation, growth, and adaptability in the face of new circumstances (Narvaez *et al.*, 2019). Embracing the concept of metamorphosis empowers individuals to navigate challenges, celebrate their uniqueness, overcome limitations, adapt to change, and embrace ambiguity. It reminds individuals that transformation and self-discovery are ongoing processes, encouraging them to approach life with curiosity, open-mindedness, and a willingness to explore new possibilities (Fredrickson *et al.*, 2008). In fine, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* explores profound themes that resonate with the complexities of human existence. By examining the novella's themes of alienation, absurdity, and the search for meaning, researchers can deepen their understanding of Kafka's philosophy and shed light on the broader implications of his work.

### **Acknowledgment**

The author is thankful to Miyan Research Institute, International University of Business Agriculture, and Technology (IUBAT).

### **Conflict of interest**

There is no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work, as declared by the author. In addition, the author has witnessed all ethical concerns, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publishing and/or submission, and redundancy.

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