

A Study of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*

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ABSTRACT

The story of *The Metamorphosis* is easily told. It is the story of a travelling salesman by the name Gregor Samsa who wakes up one morning transformed into a hideous and monstrous vermin; he of course retains the human faculties of thinking and feeling, he is held prisoner and hidden by his family in his room. Finally he slowly goes to his ruin and annihilation. From this bare and sketchy outline it is clear that like almost all other works of Kafka *The Metamorphosis* also has to be read not as an instance of realistic writing but as an allegorical piece. The story depicts a situation which should be seen as a poetic image which has an emotive appeal and immense interpretative possibilities. This Study attempts to examine Kafka's work from philosophical and psychological perspectives. Specifically the works will be seen as Existential and psychological allegories.

Keywords: Kafka, The metamorphosis, Existentialism, Psychology, Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Here the interest lies in examining *The Metamorphosis* in so far as it embodies some of the Existentialist notions. One such dominant idea in existentialism is alienation. In this story Kafka speaks about the near total alienation of the creature called the writer from other human beings. The story opens in the typical Kafkaesque manner.

When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin.

"What's happened to me?" he thought. It was no dream. [1]

Right at the outset thus the tone of the entire story is established. Of course in reality such an occurrence is an impossibility. Therefore the story has to be read as an allegory. The image of a man turned into an insect occurs first in Kafka's earlier story 'Wedding Preparations in the Country' from the period 1906-1907. The hero of this earlier piece Eduard Raban who is to be married but does not want to get married fantasises a division of him in two selves one the inner private one and the other the public self. The inner self, his real being, remains at home as a beetle and the public self duly clothed goes to the wedding. Raban of course is happy with his metamorphosis because he becomes self-sufficient and autonomous; he is almost in a position of the creator of his universe. But here Gregor Samsa is shocked out of his wits by the transformation. He can not acknowledge and accept the change in him. It is possible to argue that here Kafka has embodied the alienation of the writer.

It may appear somewhat extraordinary to claim that Samsa the vermin literally expresses the condition of being a writer. The link is provided in 'Wedding Preparations in the Country' where the following passage occurs.

As I lie in bed I assume the shape of a big beetle, a stag beetle or a cockchafer,

The form of a large beetle, yes. Then I would pretend it was a matter of hibernating, and I would press my little legs to my bulging belly. And I would whisper a few words. Instructions to my sad body, which stands close beside me, bent. Soon I shall have done — it bows, it goes swiftly, and it will manage everything efficiently while I rest.

Kafka's Awareness of the Sacrifice in Literature

The movement from the beautiful beetle to the monstrous vermin that Samsa becomes is Kafka's increasing awareness of the sacrifice that literature demands and the sense that writing does not always lead to exalted states of feeling but to a kind of living death. The entry for August 6, 1914 in Kafka's diary is in support of such a view.

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What will be my fate as a writer is very simple. My talent for portraying my dreamlike inner life has thrust all other matters into the background; my life has dwindled dreadfully, nor will it cease to dwindle. Nothing else will ever satisfy me. But the strength I can muster for that portrayal is not to be counted upon: perhaps it has already vanished forever, perhaps it will come back to me again, although the circumstances of my life don't favour its return. Thus I waver, continually fly to the summit of the mountain, but then fall back in a moment. Others waver too, but in lower regions, with greater strength; if they are in danger of falling, they are caught up by the kinsman who walks beside them for that very purpose. But I waver on the heights; it is not death, alas, but the eternal torments of dying. [2]

Similarly in his letter to Max Brod in 1922, Kafka writes:

But what is it to be a writer? Writing is a sweet, wonderful reward, but its price? During the night the answer was transparently clear to me: it is the reward for service to the devil. This descent to the dark powers, this unbinding of spirits by nature bound, dubious embraces and whatever else may go on below, of which one no longer knows anything above ground, when in the sunlight one writes stories. Perhaps there is another kind of writing. I only know this one, in the night, when anxiety does not let me sleep, I only know this one. And what is devilish in it seems to me quite clear. It is the vanity and the craving for enjoyment, which is forever whirring around oneself or even around someone else... and enjoying it. The wish that a naïve person sometimes has: "I would like to die and watch the others crying over me," is what such a writer constantly experiences: he dies (or he does not live) and continually cries over himself. [3]

The Origin of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*

To be a writer may be a splendored thing but it is also to be a dead creature from whom the living must flee and who is thus condemned to homelessness. In this connection it is interesting to look at the original German word used by Kafka for 'monstrous vermin' — *ungeheueres Ungeziefer*. *Ungeheuer* refers to the creature who has no place in the family, and *Ungeziefer* to the unclean animal, unsuited for sacrifice, the creature without a place in God's order. Kafka's vermin does not denote any insect of definite kind. If we envisage the creature in this way we would be repeating the same mistake that the cleaning woman makes when she calls Gregor "old dung beetle!" What sort of bug could watch, step by step, the approach of a man from behind him? At times Gregor may act like a beetle but for one moment when he goes into his sister's room and hears the music she is playing he is a pure spirit. Sometimes he behaves like a low sort of human being, a 'louse'; but at other times he is an airy flighty kind of creature. In the end he is not-this, not-that — a paradox, a creature not even of dust. He is a sign of that unnatural being in Kafka — the writer.

This equation is significant because through it Kafka affirms his existence as a writer. Unlike *The Judgement*, *The Metamorphosis* does not propose that the vermin is the father's creature. The origin of the metamorphosis remains unnatural and mysterious; the response of the father is to disclaim all connection with it. The father is not the source of this bizarre and precarious existence. Gregor is actually independently of him a vermin. This becomes clear at the end of the story when there is a narrative shift to omniscient point-of-view and we confront a dried up and inhuman corpse.

Gregor is his own vermin; his metamorphosis is "no dream". Once he becomes the vermin he expresses no desire to turn back into his original form. With some justification it is possible to argue that his metamorphosis is not entirely degradation for it makes possible his first experience of music. His newly awakened love of music does not open a way for him toward the unknown nourishment he has been secretly longing for but collapses into the pursuit of his sister and then into a death sentence. Thus the path of longing leads only to other longings. Gregor's experience of music has the same effect that it has for the hero of *Amerika*, who feels a sorrow rising in his heart as he listens to music. As Kafka said, "Art for the artist is only suffering through which he releases himself for further suffering." [4]

Existentialism and the Sense of Guilt in Literature

Another important concept in Existentialism is the sense of guilt. Guilt occupies a significant place in the Western literature. It emanates from the notion of the Original Sin. *The Metamorphosis* is inhabited by many biblical echoes. The notion of guilt that Gregor seems to experience is similar to the biblical notion of Original Sin. Adam and Eve ate the apple, but it is the rest of humanity that carries the guilt. As the biblical lore says, all human beings are guilty of a sin they have no control over. Therefore Gregor is guilty due to metamorphosis beyond his control. Gregor's guilt has an interesting psychological aspect. Taking into account the Freudian model of the family and Kafka's expectations of the family and his relationship with his father Gregor's relationship with the family and

especially the father acquires crucial dimensions. When the father seeks to drive the insect Gregor back into his room he begins stamping and hissing. Gregor notes that “the noise in his rear sounded no longer like the voice of one single father” (*The Metamorphosis*: 6) his father has become something greater than a human being, a force that drives him forward in sheer terror. Freud’s identification of the father with God is symbolically repeated here as Gregor’s father chases him back into his room and the company of the family resembles the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword. This scene is repeated in a slightly different form here.

This arbitrary confusion is a metaphor for Gregor’s life, and life in general where our ability to bring order into everyday situations only masks our inability to control the big picture. Unable to grasp this, Gregor attempts to lie back and relax, still believing in ‘cool reflection’ as something that can restore things ‘to their real and normal’ condition. The metamorphosis, then, forces Gregor to face the reality of being as a truth or as Kafka calls it another lie, which is the insoluble problem of his life. The climax of this part seems to be Gregor’s speech to the chief clerk as the latter is attempting to leave the apartment. He begs the clerk to stand up for him insisting that he is extremely dedicated and loyal and that he must provide for his family. He makes excuses, though at this point no excuses are necessary or helpful, and insists that he will get out of his difficulty and will work even harder when he returns. Gregor’s plea is utterly sincere, expressing his guilt, his desire to rejoin the economic order as a conformist. This speech is important, also for its absolute futility, since Gregor knows perfectly well that the chief clerk can no longer understand what he is saying and, furthermore, since even if he understood, it would make no difference at all. Gregor hates the job and wishes to escape it. His metamorphosis has given him the ability to do so. Finally, he can leave his job and the social order he dislikes, he can lie around in his room without concern for time and for debts. And yet he cannot accept his freedom because his guilt is stronger than the escape. Gregor is torn and his speech to the chief clerk shows him trying to plead his way out of his guilt and his freedom. This is the fundamental crisis that Gregor, as so many human beings in the modern age, must face. This crisis is the conflict between freedom and one’s responsibility to oneself on the one hand, and guilt and the demands posed by society and family on the other. One can not be free without guilt, yet one cannot fulfill one’s obligation to others and remain true to oneself. If escape from this predicament is impossible, Kafka, with his metamorphosis, provides an impossible escape. By becoming an insect, Gregor gains both his freedom and the right to avoid guilt. Since his freedom is forced on him, whether this transformation happens randomly on its own, or Gregor wills it on himself, is not important. What matters is that this transformation is the only escape from the trap that Gregor is caught in. By his transformation, Kafka creates different kinds of relations among the members of Gregor’s family. Gregor’s sister Grete, was initially the most sympathetic to Gregor’s situation. The evening following the transformation, she was thoughtful enough to supply Gregor with food, and when he rejected the first meal, she offered him spoiled food that she thought he might enjoy. Grete continued to feed and clean up Gregor even though she found the sight of him repulsive. Eventually, she did turn against his thought, deciding that ‘human beings cannot live with such a creature.’ She gave up hope and believed that she no longer had a brother. Gregor’s mother had much difficulty dealing with Gregor’s condition. In between her fainting spells, Mrs. Gregor showed love and concern for her son. Throughout most of the story, Mrs. Gregor does not give up hope for her son’s return. Gregor, the senior, reacted quite violently to the sudden change in his household. When he first glimpsed his son's new form, he attacked him with newspaper and later threw apples at him which caused Gregor serious injury. After Gregor’s metamorphosis, they begin to treat him as the vermin he has become. Gregor seemed to be waiting for his family to give up hope in him so he could end his life. “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.” (*The Metamorphosis*: 38) Following this quotation, Gregor dies.

Gregor’s transformation gives the family freedom and independence. Consequently, Kafka makes the anxieties, inner terrors, and cynicism of human life in form of Gregor’s metamorphosis. The only problem for all ‘others’ (beings) or perhaps his guilt is his being that ends up by his death. The fact of Gregor’s death giving the family the good, old days back gives the title a rich ambiguity. The metamorphosis occurs ostensibly within Gregor but at the end it does not remain confined to him only. After the death of Gregor, the father goes back to his work, the mother also no longer remains placid in life and the sister is going to be suitably married. Thus there is a change in the family also. Metamorphosis applies thus both to Gregor and the rest of the family.

A Psychological Analysis on Kafka’s Metamorphosis

According to Freud, people live in two selves simultaneously: conscious and unconscious. By the conscious Freud means thoughts and actions the manifest content of one’s life. He calls the unconscious the latent level. Freud says that there is a continuous effort to keep the desires unconscious or latent. Accordingly, there is a separation between a person and his unconscious mind, which is called alienation. Alienation generally suggests

depersonalization, self-estrangement, cultural estrangement, the sense of meaninglessness and powerlessness. Personalization is defined by Laing:

It is one of the forms of anxiety which is encountered by the ontologically insecure person. One no longer allows oneself to be responsive to one's feelings ...the people in focus here both tend to feel themselves as more or less depersonalized and tend to depersonalize others. [5]

Laing also argues about the alienation in respect of a self which is divided. He considers this mood a sign of paranoid schizophrenia, which is psychiatric disorder and is characterized by a loss of contact with reality. In this context Laing explains:

Schizoid ... refers to an individual the totality of whose experience is split in two main ways; in the first place, there is a rent (break) in his relation with world, and in the second there is a disruption of his relation with himself, he experiences himself in despairing aloneness and isolation; moreover he does not experience himself as a complete person, but rather as 'split' in various ways, perhaps a mind more or less tenuously linked to a body, as two or more selves ... such an individual can no more live in a 'secure' world than he can be secure in himself. [5]

Psychological theories make more understandable the nature of a dream and its relation with the subconscious and the moment of awakening. There are several psychological theories about dreams. The oldest and the most well-known is Freud's psychoanalytic theory, defined in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in which he suggested that dreams are disguised symbols of repressed desires and therefore offer direct insight into the unconscious or real self or soul. Jung has described the unconscious as the unknown. He believes that everything we do not know falls into two groups of objects: those which are outside and can be experienced by the senses, and those which are inside and are experienced immediately. The first group comprises the unknown in the outer world, the second the unknown in the inner world. This latter territory is called "unconscious." Jung talks about the limits of unconscious. He says,

everything of which I was once conscious but have forgotten everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do, And all more or less intentional repressions of painful thoughts and feelings belong to the unconscious. [6]

According to Freud, dreams occur on two levels, the manifest level which is the action that goes on in dreams and the latent level which refers to the symbolic level of dream. The latent level is where an analyst may truly gain insight into a person's unconscious. The psychoanalyst examines the articulation of one's most private anxieties and fears by interpreting the latent level of dreams. Nightmares are dreams which contain frightening events and occur in stage four of sleep, which is very deep sleep. Once one awakens from a nightmare, one cannot make the transition from level four of sleep to level zero and consequently to awakening. In this context, Jung argues:

In the morning, when we awaken and return to consciousness we may bring with us a recollection of the wanderings of our imagination - we remember the dream ... as in our waking states real people and things enter our field of vision. [7]

Therefore in waking life one also continues to dream especially as Jung believes "When he is under the influence of repressed complexes." [7] Waking up, therefore, is dangerous, because of the possibility that the 'real self' traverses the frontiers into the realm of conscious life and so dictates its pattern. Such a thing is exactly what occurs in *The Metamorphosis*: the transformation of man into a vermin. In the early story "Wedding Preparations in the Country" the hero Raban sees a lady on the opposite side as he is standing on the street with the intention of going to the railroad station. She seems strange to all the passers-by as if because of a law. By 'law' Kafka understood nothing other than the force of collectively anonymous unknown occurrences hidden from the will and the intention of the individual— occurrences which alienate people from one another. This force is represented by 'one's work', by an existence in the 'office', an existence that splits man off into two spheres: an official one and a private one. In *The Metamorphosis* also we find the same division of self.

The Process of Alienation in Kafka's Metamorphosis

The first sign of alienation which happens to him is his reaction to his physical change. Gregor Samsa feels that he has been treated as a lowly insect and comes to feel that he is one: the story makes the leap from "I feel like an insect" to "I am an insect." [1] Whatever the causes, Gregor's feeling is rooted in the collapse of his nature between impersonal self (outside) and I (inner self). This collapse can be accepted in the realm of dream. For Gregor Samsa does not at all desire such a transformation into an animal. On the contrary it happens to him suddenly - a frighteningly incomprehensible and strange occurrence.

He is far from identifying his ego with a beetle. It is true that he too, precisely, is in a state of unresolved conflict between work and ego. Gregor vacillates between two spheres. On the one hand, he is ruled by the rational,

plan-making considerations related to his work: he wants to get up and carry on his business trip. "Just don't stay in bed being useless," Gregor said to himself. On the other hand, however, he curses his work, "the upset of doing business," [1] the 'torture of traveling,' and he ponders, "How about going back to sleep for a few minutes and forgetting all this nonsense." This "nonsense" refers to his metamorphosis into the beetle that inwardly he in no way accepts, but actually wants "to forget" in his sleep. Gregor can look upon the dream metamorphosis only as a negative phenomenon that disturbs his daily work routine. The beetle acquires frightful characteristics; it becomes a "monstrous vermin" that is of no help to him but merely hampers him. When Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning from unsettling dream, he finds himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin ... "what happened to me?" he thinks it was no dream. Gregor, thus, is in a waking state. The transformation that had taken place in his dream — characteristically in "unsettling" dream — suddenly overtakes Gregor upon his waking, as an incomprehensible occurrence that has "happened to him," something that he accordingly, did not want, let alone, long to happen. He shakes it off as "nonsense" and reflects for a long time and in detail upon his strenuous career, upon his relationship to the head of his firm and he considers whether "he can now still catch the seven o'clock train. [1]

It does not enter his mind at all that he could perhaps be hindered in his business trip by his transformation. At the outset this consideration is beyond the scope of his imagination. For him the metamorphosis is non-existent. He remains rooted in the realm of the impersonal 'one'. The "self" is a burdensome verminous bug, a monstrous creature of a nightmare that can not be real. In conflict with his job, he feels the estrangement, the missing "intimate" associations with people. What is more, he ponders on the idea that he would like most of all to "have quit long ago." Only his concern for his parents, who have to pay back a large debt they owe the head of his firm, has prevented him until now from having marched up to the boss and in Gregor's own words,

spoken my piece from the bottom of my heart! He would have fallen off the desk!... 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. [1]

There can be no doubt that this conflict, between his occupation and his desire to make the final break and become self-reliant and independent, was the cause of his "unsettling dreams." Since the pressure of the moral obligation of his occupation prevails in this conflict, and since the fulfillment of his desire to become a self of his own is put off for five to six years, this desire must of necessity be felt as disturbing and as running counter to his work. The possibilities that offer themselves in the "dream" are simply to have the "self" remain in bed and freely and independently direct all the goings-on outside in the world, without being pounded to bits in the hustle and bustle of business which Gregor cannot accept. And the meaning of this terrible "metamorphosis" rests in the very fact that this "irremovable" self, the self that is "not to be got rid of," this reality of the ego that struggles against the impersonal "one", suddenly invades Gregor's concrete daily reality, too, in a shocking manner. The seemingly fantastic unreality of this "vermin" is actually the supreme reality from which no one can escape.

What is new in Kafka's creative writing and view of the problem is his realization that the 'Law' of man's alienation remains hidden from modern man. Man has become the slave of the unknown law of the impersonal 'one' to such an extent that he does not know about his own self or his inner life any longer at all, he represses it and cloaks it again and again by means of calculations. Gregor, it is true, feels extremely uncomfortable in his business life, he senses the conflict through and through, but he believes, in turn, that he can get the better of it by means of mere calculations of a business nature. He calculates that when he has saved the amount of money he needs for his parents, he can then at last make the 'final break' and take the leap, and get away from his business firm. But he has no idea at all of where he will actually leap, of what potential forms of existence he would like to actualize. His own inner being remains alien to him. It is for this reason, therefore, that Kafka gives it a form that is quite alien to him, the form of a verminous creature that threatens his rational existence in an incomprehensible manner.

The most gruesome aspect of Gregor's fate is not his metamorphosis. But the blindness with which everybody treats this transformation. Gregor will not admit it. "I'll get dressed right away; pack up my samples, and go." [1] His parents and his sister do not understand it. The self is what is absolutely alien, void and non-existent, not only in the world of business but also in the world of the family. To be sure, his mother and sister love him dearly. In a touching manner they try at first to improve his condition, to surmount their feelings at the sight of this vermin, to take care of him, to protect him, to see to the comforts of life for him, to preserve or once again evoke what for them was human and lovable in him. But the terrible truth of this short story is the realization that even the "most beautiful", most tender relations among people are founded on illusions. No one knows or suspects what he himself "is" and what the other person "is". Gregor Samsa's parents, for instance, never had any inkling of this conflict, of the 'sacrifice' that he was making for their sake; "His parents did not understand this too well; in the course of the years they had formed the conviction that Gregor was set for life in this firm." They had never dreamt that there was trouble brewing within Gregor, that something had been 'out of order' long before the eruption of this

inner sickness in the form of the metamorphosis. They did not know that the essential in man can actually be concealed, distorted and destroyed if he is provided with no more than the ‘necessaries of life.’ Now that the distortion assumes visible features, they are at a loss and feel their son to be a ‘foreign body.’

By the same token, however, Gregor had also been mistaken in his relations with his family. “What a quiet life the family had been leading;” Gregor said to himself. He believed he had to provide his family with a pleasant, contented, secure life by sacrificing himself, by selling himself to his business. Through his ‘sacrifice’ Gregor had distorted his own self. But his sacrifice was meaningless. In reality Gregor’s parents did not need the sacrifice at all. His father possessed more money than Gregor knew about. According to this interpretation, despite the negative meaning of sacrifice, it has a positive meaning too. When the beetle Gregor hears his sister playing the violin, there is this decisive statement. “Was he an animal, that music could move him so? He felt as if the way to the unknown nourishment he longed for were coming to light.” [1] Here the meaning of this transformation into an animal first becomes clear. The matter at issue is the “unknown nourishment” that does not exist on earth. As an animal he is at the same time more than an animal. His alienation had the purpose of awakening in him the ‘longing’ for this ‘nourishment.’ The final intent of Gregor’s metamorphosis into a beetle is the escape into freedom, that longing for man’s ‘unknown nourishment.’ However, as his longing for music and for the unknown nourishment has already shown, Gregor finally does nevertheless free himself from his enslavement to the empirical world. His death is not merely a meaningless annihilation, but a liberation or realization. Gregor says, ‘yes,’ to his own death. He dies reconciled with himself and with the world.

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. He remained in this state of empty and peaceful reflection until the tower clock struck three in the morning. He still saw that outside the window everything was beginning to grow light. [1]

It is no longer possible to understand this ‘self’ psychologically, as a determinable psychic state that can be explained in terms of the realm of feelings, wishes, hopes, dreams, striving, etc. Somewhat in the sense, perhaps, that in conflict with his business occupation there arises a series of ‘inner’ emotions, ideals, and goals which now represent, as it were, Gregor’s actual self which until now had been suppressed. Since Gregor has nothing but revulsion for the beetle such a sympathetic view of the metamorphosis is out of question. Besides, in that case, it would be altogether impossible to understand how such an inner life could assume, of all forms, the form of disgusting verminous insect. Even in the view developed by us, it is a matter of perversion of the self, since this self is suppressed or opposed by Gregor and must assume negative characteristics; therefore such a positive/sympathetic psychological interpretation is not possible. But the story makes neither a positive nor a negative statement about the transformation. The metamorphosis is not of spirit, mind, or character. And this is precisely Kafka’s contribution to the literature dealing with the dichotomy of man’s heart and mind. Psychological interpretations of the story have to take this into account. The beetle remains something “alien” that can not be made to fit into the human world. It is “The Other”, “The Incomprehensible”, pure and simple, beyond the reach of any feeling or imagining. That is why Kafka instructed his publisher to ensure that the illustrator did not draw any specific insect on the cover page for the vermin of Gregor is something that can not be drawn. It is not only from the view point of the pictorial art that the insect can not be drawn but also from the view point of imitative art. It is only then that the beetle image contains truth. In this sense truth and the self are identical. The “self” is inexplicable, pure and simple. The beetle embodies the world beyond our conscious as well as our unconscious imagination. The animal, although it is nothing but man ‘himself,’ is the absolute disaffirmation of the so-called ‘human world.’ The cleavage between the world in which Samsa lives and Samsa’s beetlehood is the cleavage between ‘imagining’ and ‘being.’ Since for Kafka the world beyond ‘imagining’ is in man himself, since there is no ‘beyond’ exterior to man, the ‘image’ the ‘parable’ of this beyond is necessarily an earthly image that is unearthly and that at the same time cannot be ‘drawn.’ The paradox of these circumstances is the reason why Kafka represents such beyond in the form of things or animals that incomprehensibly break into everyday existence, causing bewilderment and fright.

It is interesting to note the difference in the use of the beetle image with reference to Raban and Samsa. If the self is represented as the beetle, Raban saw the world from the vantage point of a tranquil self. To him the world naturally appears intolerable and disgusting. Samsa on the other hand wishes to remain in the world. For him therefore the tranquil self must appear as a terrible monster. That is why what for Raban is a beetle is for Samsa a monstrous vermin. Both the views can be defended as long as one remembers that for Kafka both together constitute human life. Kafka criticizes and affirms both. It would be wrong to interpret Kafka only through Raban’s or Samsa’s viewpoints. Both cross one another just as the names of both Raban and Samsa are cover names for Kafka himself. [4] Only when both the images of the beetle are taken into account will the full import of Kafka’s meaning become apparent.

The Metamorphosis is a good example for portraying the riskiest moment (awakening). Kafka said that man is confronted by a world of impossible dimensions and he cannot but despair of comprehending its overwhelming and mysterious forces in the best form of surrealism. All he can do is to test his own capacity for understanding the real self (unconscious). Each fateful confrontation of the antagonist, self (unconscious being) and world (ontology = the world of beings), brings with it hosts of mutually exclusive, indeed, paradoxical relations, riddles which seem to clarify but which eventually confound even further man's impossible task of penetrating the puzzling relations of his world. These "riddles" are philosophical and theological, psychological and social; they extend to all spheres of human existence involved in man's search

A Philosophical Analysis on Kafka's Metamorphosis

Kafka recognized that in the ordinary course of life we are blind to those puzzles because we are unaware. Only a specific, peculiarly decisive event makes us aware of ourselves and challenges our capacity for understanding. The hero's transformation and the change in his relations to the world (his job, family and himself) involve significant cognitive changes. Kafka's way of exploring the paradoxes is to make Gregor confront his ontological self. Kafka considers the tragedy of *The Metamorphosis* in the form of his being (or unconscious). According to Kafka's philosophy, the only solution for this tragedy is death. This is the riskiest moment for the being that confronts the reality of his life which is the result of his being's relations with other beings. This transformation which emerges to the reality of his life happens in the awakening that is out of the control of the real self (unconscious). The story begins with shifts in cognitive relations and ends in a crucial change in the nature of the hero himself. Immediately after the awakening, only physical appearances and perspectives, however, seem to be changed while Gregor's essential self appears unchanged. With care and a great deal of fantastic realism, Kafka portrays shifts in spatial relations which suddenly circumscribe Gregor's movements and world. His bed is an immense obstacle. He can hardly reach the door-handle. His voice gradually transforms itself from a human voice to an animal squeak, while his memory and other mental faculties as a human being seem to remain essentially unimpaired. But more and more the trappings of humanity disappear, helped by the ill-concealed outrageous behaviour of his employer and his family. Transformation now affects Gregor more substantially; his vision adjusts to his new perspectives. The room seems too big. The furniture oppresses him. He prefers closed windows and dirt. His sister perceives him sitting in an animal-like trance. But these changes are not wholly generated from within Gregor's transformed shell. They are also conditioned by the world's reactions to his condition. The mortal wound inflicted by the father with the unfortunate apple provides a second shift in relations which affects the core of Gregor's self (being). The wound eats more and more deeply toward the centre of his self, his human consciousness and memory. Before this event, appearances in self-perception and in perceptions of him by others undergo important shifts but time continues to strike the hours with the alarm clock's exactness. Gregor's sense of time is almost unchanged. But after his last foray into humanity, his fatal wound, his last response to his sister's music, the real self begins to dim and with it his sense of time. This is the time of awakening which coincides with Gregor's obliteration.

Gregor's reduction to a real self (being, essence) and his consequent destruction are conditioned by a parallel change in the external world. These changes occur in response to Gregor's mysterious being that shows itself in a form of monstrous vermin. This change is the logical consequence of the Ego's failure to fulfill the longings of the Other, in that the latter (starved by the neglect ensuing from the ignorance of the former) actually manifests itself in a palpable manner - one which we can rationally ascertain and assimilate. It must be understood, however, that although subduction of the Other by the Ego is unattainable. This is clear in Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis into a 'monstrous vermin' the reality of which is quickly and unequivocally affirmed by Kafka, lest, we should be tempted to dismiss it as a dream- which could easily be mistaken for a random fancy of the mind or aberration of the thought process. The mutation, already consummated before his return from dream-in-sleep to consciousness-in-wakefulness is the materialization of the Other, which Gregor has tried to suppress in an attempt to live up to his externally-induced expectations of himself. In his new condition, Gregor can no longer ignore the fact that the condition of wage-slavery into which he had worked himself stemmed from a supposed collapse of the family's finances and unnecessarily outstanding debt to his hated employer.

CONCLUSION

Thus, with the loss of his world and of his position as bread-winner, which he unconsciously rejects in the course of the metamorphosis, Gregor loses the foundation on which his existence has been built up. The realization of this loss of foundation brings, with it both a deep feeling of anxiety and a bad conscience: the being that has lost

its foundation sees itself as “vermin”; the terrifying outward appearance is in itself the result of an unconscious self-punishment. In fact, Gregor-inside-the vermin dreads the anxiety and the bad conscience to the point that he eventually desires his own death. However, since Gregor is now the materialization of his unconscious or pure self, banishing the creature amounts to killing Gregor altogether, that is, a complete and sustainable manner of being necessitates the harmonious coexistence of the Ego and the Other and the suppression of either of the poles can only result in un-being. So in his death he is both extinguished and set free and it is parallel with the family's liberation. The father's assumption of authority by becoming a uniformed bank-messenger is the most obvious illustration and Grete's yawn of freedom neatly ties the story to the transformation of the beginning. Yet this very conclusion has pushed us to the point of absurdity - reached by the simultaneous creation and dislocation of a particular world in which contradictory solutions, like constriction and freedom, obliteration and awareness of existence, equally apply.

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