



TRAGEDY OF A LITTLE MAN BY KAFKA'S NOVEL METAMORPHOSIS

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Introduction

The novel *Metamorphosis* was written by Franz Kafka in 1912 and published in 1915. It tells the story of the tragedy of Gregor Samsa, who turned into a gigantic insect but still possessed a human mind. Here is a typical “little man”. A complete person is a harmonious combination of body and spiritual factors. If it is corrupted, then arises a question about reality and individual personality. But, this kind of situation permanently involves a tragedy with it: at first, on a personal level which is not easy to give explanation, then general psychology of the humanity and last a social one. The people want their family to love and support them during times of need but if the unable to develop this bond their family members, they tend to feel alone and depressed. Kafka describes the theme of alienation and its negative effect on people and their relationships with the people around them. After Gregor's metamorphosis, or transformation, he turned from a human being into a giant beetle which makes him more and more distant from the people in his life.

I. Tragedy in Personal level

The word tragedy became a popular type of drama in literature dealing with the problems of a central character, in some tragedies end in death, some in destruction, and some in chaos, but whatever the situation, the protagonist almost always accepts responsibility for his mistakes and fights for a larger cause. **At the individual level, the loss of intergenerational communication and continuity is a personal tragedy.** Usually, a person of importance and outstanding personal qualities, falls to disaster through the combination of a personal failing and circumstances with which he or she cannot deal. In *Metamorphosis* Kafka created

different kinds of relations among the members of the family which deals with the protagonist's tragedy in personal level.

The novel begins with the description of how Gregor Samsa awoke in his bed and discovered he had turned into a monstrous insect or vermin²⁰ [Lawson, 1960]. The author emphasizes the most horrible fact for Gregor is not becoming an insect, but how he had missed the train and being late for work “before it strikes a quarter past seven, whatever happens, he must be completely out of bed”. [Kafka, 1985: 9] The author's creative writing makes reader to search for deeper meaning in text.

In the *Metamorphosis* Kafka does not mention how and why does Gregor transforms all of a sudden into a vermin. He gets up from a troubled dream and he sees himself transformed into a horrible vermin. Let's pay attention to one of the commentators, Paul Landsberg's observes that when one fall asleep in an unfamiliar environment, they often experience a moment of confusion when one wake up, a feeling of unreality, and such experience can happen to the traveling salesman many times, given his way of life, which destroys every feeling of the continuity of being” [Barfi et al., 2013] (2, p.337). Here, human impressions still interfere with the new instinct of the insect. His physical appearance makes him confused but still, he thinks like a person. Gregor found changes in his voice when his family members called him. “Gregor was shocked when he heard his own voice answering; he hardly recognizes his voice that he had had before” (Kafka, 2018). Even the family

²⁰ Insect is symbol in English “insect” likewise lacks the emotional impact disgusting unpleasantness of Ungeziefer (in German), and the use of former imputes to Kafka a symbolic poverty.



members recognize his voice like an animal voice. A vivid example of misunderstanding, there is no even a desire to try to understand another person. Here, we also see a scheme of relations, the slightest deviation from which causes resentment and indignation. Everything should be as planned: a five-hour train, daily departures, business unrest and uncomplaining fulfilment of their duties.

After Gregor's appearance in a doorway, in his new form, everyone becomes shocked and father reacts in arrogance, hereafter they decide to keep him far away in a locked room. Gregor settles under his own photo of the times of military service, in which "a lieutenant is shown who laid his hand on the hilt of the sword and smiled carelessly, inspiring respect with his bearing and his uniform".[Kafka, 1985: 20] This is a contrast between the former appearance of Gregor - man and Gregor - insect. According to Sokel, the species of insect that Gregor changes into literally means a dirty bug, which, "[...] denotes a slovenly and dirty individual."[Sokel,1956] We can observe here the process of person's transformation into an insect, which leads the protagonist to break with his family, to become complete loneliness.

Gregor is unable to restore his dual self. He has nothing except to adapt, but even in these conditions, someone constantly rudely invades his world, which in this case symbolizes the room. He adapts to bug life, he eats garbage, learns how to crawl over walls and even becomes fond of hanging on his ceiling. But, at the same time, Kafka notices that, despite his new horrible appearance, he is still a human. He can understand others, and spends plenty of time standing near the door and listening to what the members of his family are saying. He feels they are disgusted by his appearance and are afraid to come into his room, except Greta.

Despite having transformed into an insect, Gregor is so preoccupied by his work as a traveling salesman and his parents' debt that he is unable to worry about his condition, his only thoughts are how he will get to work

and get his family back on solid financial footing. These thoughts continue throughout Kafka's novel, as Gregor thinks often about his family's debt and how they will live without him. Gregor is selfless²¹[Minar and Sutandio, 2017a: 126]. He feels himself his absence only provider, rather than a brother, friend or son. He is not able to assert his own power in his life. He sacrificing for his family, but to a point that is unhealthy for himself - the extent of his sacrifice is unhappy. He works hard at a job which he doesn't like, while none of the other family members work. Evidently, if Gregor is not selfish, he could leave a burdensome job. But, Gregor could quit a job, only after collecting enough money to pay back his parents' debt. When his metamorphosis makes it impossible for him to perform his job, his humanity, in the eyes of those closest to him, is threatened as well.

Speaking broadly, we can observe that nobody was interested in meeting with Gregor and the family members wanted to be away from him. Her sister regretted her behavior because she saw him as a stranger contrary we notice that in the text he loved his sister. He wanted her to perceive what she likes to do, especially with music. But, later she feels that Gregor is like a stranger and his appearance was disgusting for her. Though Kafka's creative writing we can observe Gregor's alienation in different stages reflects in the Metamorphosis. His physical change is the first alienation. Gregor loses his own living body features, voice and mobility and finally his life. Kafka illustrates how alienation comes from within an individual through Gregor's portrayal in the novel. The novel shows how Gregor is being estranged from the people around them because of the outer part of the individual, which is his physical appearance.

²¹selfless-in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "thinking more about the needs, happiness, etc. of other people than about your own" <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/selfless?q=selfless> (accessed 20 August 2019).



II. Psychological estrangement

A literary theme Psychological estrangement deals with depersonalization and derealisation and estrangement [Abrams, 2005] [Davachi, 2009:11] means the loss of a previously existed relationship between family members, through physical or emotional distancing. It may result either from direct interactions between those effects including violence, abuse, neglect, parental misbehavior or major life events such as poor communication. In *the Metamorphosis* after the main character transforms into an insect the perception of others about him makes him so estranged from himself and others. Perhaps the greatest consequence of Gregor's metamorphosis is the psychological distance it creates between Gregor and those people around him.

This is the fact that he has kept a human attitude to surrounding people to him. There is a change in feeling instincts in *the Metamorphosis*. We can see former love, attentiveness, and tact in the hero. Kafka describes that Gregor kindly attached to his family and does not want to give them unnecessary worries. But, if we look at the behavior of the family members, then, probably, we will have doubts about family members' feelings as a son and brother.

Gregor's sister cleaned his room, at the beginning it seems, it is not just a courtesy and even showed concern in a primitive level "to know Gregor's test", she finds out what he can eat and spread them in the newspaper. And mother cried: "Let me go to Gregor. He is my unfortunate boy! Don't you understand that I have to go to him?" (Kafka, 1985: 30) but contrary to fact, it seems that beyond outer manifestation, there is no genuine feeling. This is evidenced not by word or short term of gesture, but regular behavior, which becomes the norm and the attitude that in due course develop: the father pushes him into the room with a stick and throws apples into son, his sister threatens with his fist, the mother falls into a faint - everything is built on some kind of hilarious breakdown, an artificial game.

There is another incident, through by taking his furniture out of his room her sister

gets rid of his last connection to reality and the outside world. Both women gather their courage and go inside. Gregor hides under the bed, watching his belongings being carried out. But, it hurts him to see how he is being deprived of a normal living place, and finally, it damages him so much that he comes out of his refuge to defend the last object a portrait of a woman, which is hanging on the wall. His sister wipe-outs his memories through the removal of his furniture and no longer views him as her brother, but as a disgusting insect with no human quality.

The family member's concern is to keep him away from them and others, by locking him in the room. The member of the family are not able to understand Gregor's needs and his feelings. They become hopeless in considering him as earlier Gregor. In one scene, when the chief clerk had visited to find out reasons for Gregor's absence for work, he meets Gregor as transformed into an insect. While the chief clerk was running away Gregor tries to stop him. He realized that it was out of the question to let the chief clerk go away in such a mood if his position in the company was not to be put into excessive danger. We can observe that was something his parents did not understand very well. His parents thought Gregor was trying to harm the chief clerk. There is one another incident where Gregor comes to appreciate her sister playing violin when the guest had visited to their house but everybody misunderstand Gregor's intention of coming out of his room. So, we find a wider gap between Gregor and the rest of his world in terms of understanding the needs of Gregor.

Thus, after Gregor's transformation into an insect, "people did not understand his words any more, although they seemed clear enough to him, clearer than previously, perhaps because his ears had gotten used to them." [Kafka, 1985: 17] However, Gregor disappointed and depressed in his deep mind because he wanted to feel the people understand and to listen to him. But, nobody understands him. Only he needed to be understood and be cared by his family. It is the fact he stays almost exclusively in the room with his door closed and has no contact



with other people. Gregor's metamorphosis separates him from the human race as it makes him no longer human. Essentially, he has become totally isolated from everyone around him, including those people he cares for like his sister Grete and his mother.

III. Social rejection

However, social rejection can occur when an individual is deliberately excluded from a social relationship. Although individuals are social beings, some level of rejection is an inevitable part of life. [London et al., 2007] It includes such as interpersonal rejection and also, familial estrangement.

A person can be rejected by individuals or an entire group of people. Kafka's novel *Metamorphosis* is based on the subtlest image of the change of feelings within the family. As the mother and sister lose hope of the reverse transformation of Gregor, his father's hatred for him grows. Gregor kept his personal feeling and thinking. Realizing that nobody is interested in his state mind and nobody wanted to know – whether he understand others? He has no social life and little happiness. But, what is proven through his transformation is that the rest of the family is perfectly capable of work. As a matter of fact, they thrive despite Gregor's infirmity. Gregor's transformation into an insect is a sign of isolation, alienation, conflict with family and society.

In the Kafka's novel the metamorphosis occurs both in the first sentence of the text "As Gregor awoke one morning and found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" and in the last scene of the story, which describes Grete's transformation into a woman blooming and stretching toward the family's "new dreams" [Kafka, 1985, 77] once Gregor has been transformed into garbage. The image of the gender neutrality emerges when Gregor is referred to as a "thing" an "it." **At beginning scene of the novel Gregor** falls off the bed with a knock, the manager behind the closed door of the next room says: "Something has fallen there". (9) At the end scene "It's dead," the charwoman announces. "It's lying here dead and done for!" [Straus, 1989: 660] Here, "something" - so the people do not say about

animate creature, hence, Gregor's human existence from the point of view of the external, business world is completed. Gregor sacrifices for all the family and home world is also rejects him [Nuopponen, n.d.]

Gregor understand that he is not need to anybody any more. More he felt his uselessness in his parents' house and he became weaker. It's very hard to feel that you are not like everyone else, and therefore even your relatives turn away from you. It is painful to realize that you complicate and make the unbearable life of your loved ones. But, it's even more painful to think that they hate you, not even wanting to see an ugly creature. Greta's words are finished him that he whom loved so much: "We must try to get rid of him [...] If it were Gregor, he would have realized long ago that it's impossible for human being to live with such a creature, and he would have gone away of his free will". (49) Gregor realized needless to anyone in the whole world. Lying in darkness, he "remembered with love" about his family. He was now even more than a sister, convinced that he should disappear. So, he lay until the bells on the tower struck the third hour of the morning and his thoughts were pure and meek (51).

Kafka described in great detail the bullying of his father over the poor creature that his son turned into. And it seems to me that in describing the physical pain of his unhappy hero, the writer tried to show his moral catastrophe. I think that these "ugly spots" were not formed on the door and incurable wounds opened up in Gregor's clean soul. And not the body of the hero was bleeding but the soul that felt at the same time refused to understand the behaviour of the father, sister, and mother.

Perhaps, each of us has such moments, when you feel yourself no needs to anybody. Many of the psychologists call this tragedy of a little man in the modern world [...] I probably agree with this statement. After all, it's so hard to find real, live people, with whom you can share your thoughts, listen to other people's problems and not to feel alone. It seems that the main character of this novel had both parents and a sister, whom he helped



financially. But, why in such a difficult time he was left alone? This question is easy to answer: it is important not material assistance, but the ability to give good advice in a difficult hour for a person, to support morally. This is what he needed after the transformation into a vermin. Gregor, having lost his human form, preserved a living human soul under a hideous shell. Gregor, from the first minute of his transformation up to the end, even inside himself, does not rise up, and not demand his rights. On the contrary, he feels guilty, tries not to come near his family, not to frighten them, not to shock them and secretly hopes that someday he will regain his former appearance and become useful to the family.

Conclusion

Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* shows how the protagonist is being estranged from the people around them because of the outer part of the individual, which is his physical appearance. Generally, Gregor is a "little

man". He readily agrees that it is to blame, it is unclear how, but it is to blame for the fact that he lost his human form. How humbly did he accept his fate as a little imperceptible human, just so humbly took Gregor and loneliness, pain and death. Almost the protocol accuracy with which Kafka describes the scene of death is more shocking than the volumes of high and lofty words. Suddenly, on the morning of the usual day, he realized that he, Gregor, was no more existed. And everything disappeared: a loving family disappears, work, the goal of life - everything for which he lived for and fought. He became helpless. Now he cannot earn money, he cannot talk, he feels disgusting. But this is not his tragedy. He was left alone, alone in the whole world - this is the tragedy of the hero. Each of us has people we love, there are people who love us, and there are people who we need. Gregor Samsa, also had such people, but with him a misfortune happened and all turned away from him.

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Obloqulov D. F. *Kafkaning "Aylanish" romanida kichik odamning fojiasi. Ushbu ishning maqsadi Kafkaning "Evrilish" asarida Gregorning fojiasini ko'rib chiqishdir. Asar - bu kichik insonning dramatzatsiyasi, Gregorning ichki dunyosi, Kafka tomonidan tasvirlangan dunyo ongsiz dunyosi. Biz bu erda bizning ezilgan irodamiz, hissiyot va mojarolarning ongsiz dunyosini aniqlashimiz mumkin. Nega u yolg'iz va tushkunlikka tushishga moyil? Gregor bahaybat*



hasharotga aylandi. Uning yaqin atrofidagi insonlar bilan munosabati va odamlarning salbiy ta'sirining sababi nimada? Nega u oiladagi moliyaviy muammolar uchun o'zini aybdor his qiladi? Ushbu maqola shu kabi savollarga javob berishga qaratilgan.

Облокулов Д. Трагедия маленького человека в романе Ф.Кафки "Превращение".

Целью данной работы является рассмотрение трагедии Грегора по роману Кафки «Метаморфоза». Роман - инсценировка маленького человека, внутренний мир Грегора, мир, который изображен Кафкой, - это мир бессознательного. Здесь мы можем определить бессознательный мир наших подавленных желаний, чувств и конфликтов. Почему он склонен чувствовать себя одиноким и подавленным? Грегор превратился в гигантское насекомое, в чем причина негативного влияния людей и их отношений с окружающими его людьми? Почему он чувствует себя ответственным за финансовые проблемы семьи? Цель этой работы - ответить на эти вопросы.