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## **The Element of Alienation in kafka's *the metamorphosis***

**A Paper Submitted to the Department of English, College of Human Sciences,  
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**by**

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## **Dedication**

**To my family**

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## Abstract

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1 Biography of the Author

Franz Kafka 1883–1924 was a German-speaking Bohemian writer. He was famous for his influential novels and short stories which have had a long influence on literature. Kafka was born in Prague, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (now in the Czech Republic). He was the eldest son of a middle-class Jewish family. Kafka studied law at the German University in Prague, and after graduating, he worked for various insurance companies. However, his true passion lay in writing. Kafka's writing is often characterized by themes of alienation, existential anxiety, and absurdity. His works often feature protagonists who are caught in absurd and surreal circumstances, struggling to make sense of the world around them. Some of his most famous works include *The Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle*. However, much of Kafka's writing was not published during his lifetime, and he gained little recognition as a writer during his lifetime. Kafka's health began to deteriorate in his late 30s, and he died of tuberculosis on June 3, 1924, in a place near Vienna. After his death, Max Brod, who is the close friend of Kafka, neglected Kafka's wishes to have his works destroyed; instead, he published and made Kafka's writing most popular. He is considered as one of the most influential writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Kafka's works still to be celebrated for their profound exploration of the human condition and remain highly regarded in the literary world.

## 1.2 Works of the Author

Franz Kafka is considered one of the greatest writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his work has had a significant impact on literature. Some of the best-known and most influential works of Kafka include: *The Metamorphosis* – This novella follows the transformation of a man named Gregor Samsa into a giant insect and explores themes of alienation, identity, and the absurdity of human existence. *The Trial* – This novel follows the protagonist, Josef K., as he is arrested and prosecuted by an opaque and enigmatic court. The story explores themes of guilt, justice, and the absurdity of bureaucracy. *The Castle* – This novel follows the protagonist, K., as he tries to gain access to a mysterious and elusive castle. The story explores themes of authority, power, and the futility of human endeavor. *A Hunger Artist* – This short story follows a performer who starves himself in a cage as a form of art. The story explores themes of isolation, suffering, and the nature of artistic expression.

These works, besides many others, appear Kafka's writing style which is unique and influential, and his ability to search the complexities of the human condition.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 Themes of Alienation and isolation

#### *The Metamorphosis*

In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, the themes of alienation and isolation are central to the novella's exploration of the human condition. The protagonist, Gregor Samsa, experiences profound physical and emotional transformation, leading to his estrangement from his family and society. This alienation is depicted in various ways throughout the story:

\_Physical alienation: Gregor's transformation into an insect immediately sets him apart from his family and society. His new form makes him unrecognizable and repulsive to those around him, leading to his physical isolation as he is confined to his room. The grotesque nature of his metamorphosis emphasizes his separation from his human identity and reinforces his sense of otherness.

\_Emotional alienation: Gregor's alienation extends beyond the physical as he becomes increasingly isolated from his family emotionally. His inability to communicate effectively and his family's repulsion towards him deepen the divide between them, highlighting the breakdown of relationships and the failure to connect on a meaningful level. The emotional distance between Gregor and his family underscores the profound loneliness and despair that arise from a lack of understanding and empathy.

\_Social alienation: Gregor's transformation also leads to his alienation from society at large. As he becomes unable to work and fulfill his societal role as a breadwinner, he is marginalized and dehumanized by his employer and co-workers. The indifference and dismissal he faces from those outside his family reflect the broader societal attitudes towards individuals who deviate from societal norms and expectations.

\_Self-alienation: Throughout the novella, Gregor experiences a deep sense of self-alienation and self-hatred as he grapples with his new identity as an insect. His internalized feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy further separate him from his own sense of self, leading to a profound existential crisis. Gregor's struggle to reconcile his human consciousness with his insect body reflects the universal theme of alienation from oneself and the search for identity and meaning in a world that often devalues individuality.

Overall, Kafka's exploration of alienation and isolation in *The Metamorphosis* serves as a poignant commentary on the complexities of human relationships, the pressures of conformity, and the existential loneliness that can result from being disconnected from oneself and others. The novella invites readers to reflect on the universal experience of seeking belonging and understanding in a world that can be indifferent and alienating.

In *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka also explores the theme of psychological alienation, revealing the inner conflict and confusion that accompanies Gregor's physical changes.

As Gregor comes to terms with his new insect form and the reaction of his family, he undergoes a profound psychological transformation marked by feelings of loneliness, despair, and fragmentation. One aspect of psychological alienation is Gregor's loss of agency and autonomy.

He becomes increasingly dependent on his family for care and nurturing and loses control over his own life and destiny.

This loss of agency reinforces his feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, further exacerbating his feelings of isolation and alienation.

Additionally, Gregor's psychological alienation manifests itself in a decline in his self-esteem and identity. Rejection and disgust from his family and society causes him to question his own worth and humanity.

He struggles to reconcile his past self with his current insect form, and struggles with guilt, shame, and self-loathing.

This internal conflict reflects the existential crisis that accompanies his transformation and highlights the psychological damage caused by alienation.

Furthermore, Kafka explores the theme of social alienation through the lens of the pressure of social expectations and conformity.

Gregor's changes disrupt the family status quo and reveal the underlying tensions and dynamics of their relationship.

The family's reaction to Gregor's changes reflects the harsh judgment and rejection faced by those who do not conform to societal norms.

Her inability to accept Gregor as he is highlights the harmful effects of social conformity and how society's expectations can marginalize those who do not fit neatly into prescribed roles.

Overall, Kafka's exploration of psychological and social alienation in *The Metamorphoses* highlights the universal struggle to maintain self and connection in a hostile and unforgiving world.

Through Gregor's journey of transformation and isolation, Kafka invites readers to grapple with the complexities of human relationships, the challenges of self-acceptance, and the universal yearning for acceptance and understanding in a world marked by alienation and isolation.



In addition to psychological and social alienation, Kafka also deals with the theme of family alienation in *The Metamorphoses*. The Samsa family's strained relationship changes dramatically after Gregor's transformation, revealing deep-seated resentments, emotional distance, and breakdowns in communication that were smoldering just below the surface. One aspect of his family estrangement is the breakdown of communication and understanding between Gregor and his family. As Gregor struggles to express his feelings and needs in his insect form, he becomes increasingly isolated and misunderstood by his family. Her inability to empathize with his situation leads to further feelings of alienation and alienation, highlighting the difficulty of connecting with her loved ones in times of crisis. Furthermore, the theme of family alienation is illustrated by the changing dynamics within the family. Before his transformation, Gregor was the family's main breadwinner and caretaker, shouldering the burden of the family's financial needs and desires. However, after his transformation, his roles are reversed as he becomes dependent on his family's care and support. This role reversal reveals underlying tensions and resentments within the family, leading to the breakdown of family bonds and increasing alienation among members. Furthermore, the family's reaction to Gregor's transformation reveals the fragility of family bonds and the limits of unconditional love and acceptance. The family is initially shocked and horrified by Gregor's new appearance, but their sympathy and empathy are soon replaced by frustration, resentment, and neglect. Her inability to accept and care for Gregor when he needs him highlights the complexity of family relationships and how alienation can strain even the closest bonds. Overall, Kafka's examination of family alienation in *The Metamorphosis* highlights the complex dynamics of family relationships, the challenges of empathy and understanding, and the profound effects of alienation on individuals and their loved ones. Through the lens of the Samsa family's struggle to navigate their new reality, Kafka invites us to consider the complexity of family bonds, the fragility of human relationships, and the universal yearning for connection and acceptance against a backdrop of alienation and alienation.

Gregor's sense of self-alienation is compounded by his inability to reconcile his former human identity and abilities with his current insect existence.

He has internalized the negative assumptions and prejudices of his family and society at large, leading to deep-seated feelings of shame and self-hatred.

Additionally, Gregor's sense of self-alienation is compounded by feelings of isolation and loneliness as he grapples with the loss of meaningful connections and relationships that once defined his sense of self and identity.

Through Gregor's journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance, Kafka introduces readers to the complexities of human existence, the struggle to maintain a sense of self in the face of alienation and social pressure, and the universal nature of self-identity and self-acceptance.