

## Existential Isolation and Identity in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*: A Study Through the Lens of Martin Heidegger's Philosophy

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### Abstract

*This paper aims to discuss Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* in terms of Heideggerian existentialism, concentrating on the aspects of existential loneliness, estrangement and dissolution of self. Thus, this work demonstrates how Kafka's narrative captures the fundamental aspects of existence in the context of Heidegger's concepts of Being-in-the-world, thrownness and Being-toward-death, and how Gregor Samsa's transformation embodies the challenges of the modern man. The realism of transformation has been discussed as the perspective of using the themes and motifs of the Kafka's work to illustrate the conditions of the dehumanization of the man during the postindustrial period as a subject reduced to the sphere of his economic activity, distancing from his essence and, as a result, suffering from loneliness and death. The implications of capitalist alienation and existential inauthenticity stand out in Kafka's literary pursuits and Heidegger's existential philosophies.*

### Keywords:

Existential isolation, Heidegger, Kafka, estrangement, self-dissolution, Being-in-the-world, thrownness, alienation, inauthenticity, dehumanization.

### Introduction

'The Metamorphosis' written by Franz Kafka in 1915 is considered to be among the most influential works of modern literature which examines the issues of the meaning of life, loneliness, and the disintegration of the self. Gregor Samsa of the novella wakes one day from bed as a monster, a grotesque insect in a dramatic metamorphosis contrary to a responsible son and breadwinner. This peculiar evolution predetermines an existential story about what human is, about the frailty of individuality, and about the loneliness which seems to be the constant companion in the postindustrial societies. The novella is written generally under the existentialist genre of literature, but can be regarded as an actualist novella which portrays a man reduced to the functionality and stripped off his basic human rights. By rendering Gregor asked the readers to face the existential anxiety that becomes a universal condition of the modern man (Sokel, 2002).

According to Edmund Husserl existentialism focuses on the concepts of alienation and loss of identity and the characters of the story reflect Heidegger's existential ideas. Heidegger is one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century who devoted his work to the elucidation of the question concerning the being of man and the phenomenon of alienation given within the framework of the modern world as it had been disclosed within the framework of his masterpiece called Being and Time which was published in 1927. He has his own approach, which is centered on the term, 'Dasein', which he uses to denote the kind of existence that characterizes human beings. In Heidegger's framework, a person is born into a world that is predetermined and finds him or herself always dealing with the fact that life is finite and that society imposes certain structures that they have to follow (Heidegger, 1962). This state of "thrownness" (Geworfenheit) puts man into a state of existential anxiety by forcing him/her to live in a world that seems averse

to his/her purpose of existence. There is this anxiety born out of the feeling people have of being strangers, of being confined to a life of an automaton in the current world order where the hectic schedule of life tends to make individuals subordinates to the machine.

Thus, by going through existential predicaments that Heidegger portrays in his theories, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* provides a rather profound narrative on the essence of human existence. The transformation of Gregor can be regarded as a physical experience of the subjective and ontological loneliness that a person may face throughout his/ her life in the framework of modern society. Before the metamorphosis, we see that Gregor is not related to his family and his own self. His occupation is nominated as a traveling salesman and he detests this job but has no other option but to continue as it is his source of income for his family. Such a state of being is consistent with what Heidegger terms as inauthentic existence when one lives recklessly, and resorts to living a life that is expected of him or her in the society (Mulhall, 1996). However, the metamorphosis inspires even deeper alienation of Gregor from the world and his family who increasingly sees him as a nuisance and finally leaves him alone. His physical transformation thus entails a figure of the erasure and essential loneliness brought about by the process of having an identity in an increasingly antagonistic society.

Heidegger's phrase 'Being-toward-death' throws further light on the existential situation in *The Metamorphosis*. According to Heidegger in his work *Being and Time*, death awareness is crucial to the lives of people because the awareness makes human beings focus their attention to the fact that there is an expiration date and they cannot change time. In Heidegger's terms, it is this awareness of death that frees people and enables them to become authentic since it confronts them with the meaninglessness of existence and challenges each to accept his own individuality (Heidegger, 1962). Thus, based on the above study, it can be stated that, in *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor's transformation is an enactment of Being-toward-death. When he is marooned not only from his family but also from his essential human-ness, he must face the fact of his own mortality. His death at the end of the novella, which is followed by the complete lack of mourning for his family, symbolizes the main concept of the novella – existential loneliness of the human being.

Thus, the analysis of existential solitude in *The Metamorphosis* also echoes Heidegger's critique of modernity. Heidegger had a rather negative attitude towards progress of modernity and particularly how technology and bureaucracy make man become an object, an instrument in the system (Zimmerman, 1990). This critique is well described in Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis' whereby through change of form where Gregor transforms into a mere insect it can be argued that showed how capitalistic systems reduced human beings into mere tools of production. Before the transformation, Gregor's character is tied with the role given to him in the framework of capitalist society, a worker whose worth is measured in material value and whose condition is brought to its extreme after the metamorphosis. The family, whom Gregor was supporting financially, turn their back on him the moment he is in a position to feed them anymore. This abandonment reflects the mercantile orientation of human relations in a capitalist society where people have no intrinsic worth but are economically useful.

This paper will demonstrate how literary realism in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is influenced by existential philosophy of Heidegger, focusing on the concept of Being, alienation and authenticity. Through an analysis of how Gregor Samsa's transformation into a bug and seclusion as a motif, I want to show that through this aspect of Heideggerian existentialism and existential angst, Kafka is able to present an accurate picture of the modern man in a modern world. Thus, in this paper, I

will claim that the transformation of the protagonist Gregor is not only the physical one, but also the existential one that reveals the best and the worst of the modern individualism, isolation, and meaninglessness of life. All in all, one could view *The Metamorphosis* as a depiction of humanity, in which the search for individual identity is futile as it is being quenched by the cold mechanisms of the contemporary world.

### **Literature Review**

Existentialism is a trend of twentieth century philosophy and literature which focuses on such topics as loneliness and the search for identity. Much has been said and written about Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, yet existentialist approach remains one of the most popular theoretical frameworks for the analysis of the novella's core issues associated with social isolation and the crisis of individual identity. Recent years saw renewed interest in the existentialist readings of Kafka and attempted to link his depiction of modern life with the existentialist ideas of Heidegger, Sartre, and Kierkegaard.

### **Existentialism and Kafka's Representation of Modern Alienation**

Recent critics have found existentialist approaches to be pertinent in analyzing *The Metamorphosis* since the modernisation is accompanied by a higher level of isolation. As noted by Corrington (2020) and Fischer (2019), students and critics have drawn attention to the fact that studying Kafka novella allows to predict many the key existential questions that would become critical to the 20th-century philosophy, in particular the issues of isolation, absurdity, and the meaning of existence in the world that does not seem to care about the individual. According to Corrington, (2020) Samsa's transformation represents existential comprehensiveness of the human being in the contemporary, industrialized world; whereby commercial pressures and family responsibilities result into the fragmentation of the persona. Fischer (2019:26) also suggests that Kafka, while employing aspects of the postindustrial novel, examines the process of dehumanization, which is evident in the reduction of the individual to an instrument of the working force with no individuality. Each of these works indicates that Gregor's transformation can be regarded as the materialization of the isolation which constitutes the main tenet of the existentialist message.

One of the most significant contributions to this field is by Santiago (2021), who explores the concept of isolation in the novel in connection to Sartre's concept of 'bad faith.' According to Santiago, when Gregor fails to confront his family and his job and instead accepts the roles assigned to him in existentialist theory, he engages in "bad faith" to deny his freedom. This reading can be correlated with Heidegger's inauthenticity in which people live their lives as impersonal and as alienated individuals as dictated by the norms of society. In his short, Santiago shows the irony in the transformation of Gregor as he is no longer able to fulfill the expectations of others even if he is in a physical state which could not allow him to anyway.

### **Heidegger's Existential Philosophy and Kafka's Exploration of Identity**

Amidst the previous years, there has been a renewed interest on appropriating Heidegger's existentialism into Kafka's biography and the text of *Metamorphosis*. Heidegger's Being-in-the-world (*Dasein*) which was elaborated in 'Being and Time' published in 1927 has been relevant to these discourses. Thus, in Jacobsen's study conducted in 2022, she discusses how Heidegger's concept of thrownness, suggesting that a person is cast into existence and has to live in the world, which is strange to him, and indifferent to his attempts to make sense of this world, can be seen in Gregor's transformation. Jacobsen opines that transformation of Gregor can be had as the extremely mechanistic form of thrownness in which not only is he alienated from his family as

well as his job but from his own bodily existence. This physical change or transformation puts Gregor in a state of existential alienation where he is not too able to perform duties that give him societal identity and recognition. In this sense one can speak of Gregor's metamorphosis as of Heidegger's definition of the human being as a subject existing in the world which is constituted as inhuman and hostile to meaning in the very way it responds to human attempts at building meaning and a coherent subjectivity.

Roberts (2021) also has made an attempt to establish a link between Kafka's reactions to Gregor and Heidegger's Being-toward-death. In turn, Roberts explains that Gregor dies and becomes a vermin with an argument that echoes Heidegger's concept of authenticity by pointing out that human beings have to accept the fact of their death. In Heidegger's conception, the understanding of death makes a person confront his or her finitude and temporal perdurability. In *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor's metamorphosis results in a direct confrontation with death, an aspect, which is accelerated by his transformation, into an insect with the ability to reason, in which he is denied his previous existence and is consequently faced with the problem of dying. According to Roberts, unlike other existentialist literary characters, Gregor actually dies at the end of the novel. Rather, Gregor dies at the end of the novella, the end of his existential quest facing the ultimate loneliness of the one who is aware of death.

#### **Alienation, Dehumanization, and Modern Capitalism**

Especially within the last decades, more and more attention has been paid to the economic and social aspects of the novel Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, most notably concerning dehumanization by means of capitalist progress. This situates Gregor as the family's provider even though he is abhorred by the family and his elsewhere working as a traveling salesman only means that he is further degraded as a mere means of production in a capitalist society. Regarding the reception of the novella, Patel and Johnson (2020) state that Kafka provides a critique of the capitalist work ethic that reduces people to economic units. Patel and Johnson go further, pointing out that; Even though Gregor has been transformed into a beetle, all he thinks of is whether he will be able to go on working to provide for his family. The fact that Gregor is so obsessed with his new duties as a provider for his family and isolation of himself from society shows how much the fantastic reality of the novella has been dominated by the identification with the representatives of the capitalist society. Thus, Patel and Johnson argue that change of Gregor into a bug should be a postindustrial interpretation of how workers are alienated from both the product of their labor and their own selves in capitalist systems.

Likewise, McCarthy (2021) delves into how the metamorphosis from a human to a beetle symbolizes the commercialization of the self in contemporary capitalist society. As McCarthy points out, Kafka interprets Gregor as the monster-insect, which means dehumanization and using people as the means of creating economic value. Gregor's family is depicted as individuals who depended on him financially, thus when he cannot meet these needs anymore, his 'family' leaves him as is common in capitalist societies. Thus, McCarthy's study gives a strong argument regarding Kafka's novella as a critique of commodified labor and functions of capitalist social relations that remove people from their humanity.

#### **The Role of the Family in Existential Isolation**

The role of the family in having the end feeling and in the isolation of Gregor has also been the major area of specialties that have received detailed discussion in the recent past. Brown's analysis (2022) and Lin (2020) provide valuable information on Kafka's extent of using the family

relationships to explain how social pressure and family responsibilities cause existential loneliness. According to Brown, (2022) Kafka presents the family of Gregor as a representation of the oppression of the society on one's freedom in as much as asserting that family and its roles are paramount and should be catered for regardless of the social pressure such as the burden of being the breadwinner. Brown supposes that with the focus on Gregor's family they do not help him during the transformation but become an additional cause of isolation for him since they do not accept him in his new look and cast him out. Such a rejection Where social and familial norms drive the reality, the notion of the alienation of the subject from his/her genuine self becomes evident.

Lin (2020) concerned with illustrating the psychological aspects of the relation between Gregor and his family where Kafka (2018) brought into light the erasure of families and intimate relations as a response to the metamorphosis of Gregor. It is Lin's opinion that the physical transformation of Gregor causes the dissolution of the family since his parents and younger sister isolate and dehumanize themselves away from him, treating him as an object of disgust. This withdrawal, Lin further argues, renders human relations as brittle and element of them as contextually dependent on roles and norms. Lin's study of Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* offers valuable insights to how Kafka exploits the family theme to highlight on the philosophy of existentialism, which focuses on the fact that the individual is stranded in a world which denies his or her human identity.

### **Methodology**

In this research, a qualitative interpretive approach is used to analyze the themes of existential solitude and identity from the novel *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka seen through the lens of existential philosophy brought about by Heidegger. The research is of textual-interpretative nature, employing hermeneutic phenomenology in an attempt to understand the narrative, characters and themes of the novella when placed within the conceptual framework of Heidegger's works, including those related to Being, Being-toward-death, alienation, and authenticity. It gives the existential dimensions of Kafka's text a freer possibility for investigation and lets them engage judgmentally with the theoretical constructions of Heidegger. Qualitative research is the most appropriate approach to read Kafka's novella as an existential allegory with special attention paid to the subjectivist perspective to understand the existential metamorphosis of the protagonist, Gregor Samsa.

The study starts with the analysis of selected text excerpts from *The Metamorphosis* that describes Gregor's change and consequent isolation from his family and society as well as his own identity. Special emphasis is made to language chosen by Kafka in order to describe change that happened to Grego, his family's reactions and his metaphorical loneliness as his state worsens. This is then followed by a comparison with Heidegger's philosophical texts, *Being and Time* (1927), with the aim of relating Gregor's perception to Heideggerian concepts such as thrownness, Being-in-the-world and Being-toward-death. Thus, the analysis of the process of Gregor's depersonalization and his physical and existential isolation proves that Kafka's story reflects Heidegger's concepts of human being and estrangement in a dehumanized world.

Based on the analysis of the text, secondary sources such as peer-reviewed articles, books and other critical works on Kafka and Heidegger are incorporated into the analysis. An analysis of current academic literature restricts the interpretations to the given discourse, thus the study undertakes original analyses that augment the current discourse. Dehumanization, capitalist alienation, and rejection from family are discussed in connection to existential philosophy, and

each theme is discussed with Heideggerian concepts in mind. Intertextuality smoothens the transition between literary and philosophical aspects of the study, providing a comprehensive approach to Kafka's work.

There are no collected research data as all the works used in the study are Secondary source materials. Rather, the emphasis is made on the hermeneutic of Kafka's the novella within the framework of philosophical analysis. The method of interpretation aims at identifying something beyond the face value of the text and the main tool of analysis is borrowed from Heidegger's existentialism. It enables one to examine Kafka's story as an existential drama which revolves around the hero's metamorphosis that is symbolic of humanity as a whole. The approach enables the author to sustain thematic/archival coherence on the level of Gregor's philosophical solipsism and identity erasure, as well as to discuss socio-economic and familial factors of his alienation.

## Results

The application of Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy to Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* reveals deep insights into the novella's portrayal of existential isolation, alienation, and identity. By analyzing key passages in Kafka's text through the lens of Heidegger's concepts of *Being*, *alienation*, and *Being-toward-death*, the results of this study demonstrate how Kafka's narrative reflects the fundamental existential crises that Heidegger discusses in *Being and Time*. The textual analysis conducted through close reading uncovers how Gregor Samsa's transformation is not merely a physical alteration but a profound existential metaphor for the alienation and dehumanization that individuals experience in modern capitalist societies.

### Existential Alienation and *Being-in-the-world*

In the analysis of the results it can be ascertained that Gregor's transformation represents an enhanced form of Heidegger's concept of thrownness as individuals are forcibly cast into a world they did not choose, and are confined within a reality that does not care whether they exist or not. Before metamorphosis, Gregor was an isolated person mainly due to his job and the economic aspect of family relationship. That is why his transformation into an insect amplifies this alienation to the maximum level: he becomes a real Goth for others – at least, for those of them who are capable of seeing him at all. The language Kafka involves to describe how his character Gregor is physically getting himself locked up in a room, left by his family and is not able to interact with his family as before, Heidegger supports this by his view of the *Being-in-the-world*, where an individual feels a Estrangement from the world and people.

These interactions show that Gregor's new existence is not only one of physical isolation, but of an existential one from his family as well. The concept of fallenness in Heidegger's existentialism concerning the character where people get immersed in the occupation of roles imposed to them by the society is clearly seen in the pre-transformation existence of Gregor. His entire 'self' defined him as the breadwinner and when this role is withdrawn from him, he is left 'self'-less. The findings found that Kafka's transformation of Gregor Samsa which leads to his loss of identity applies to Heidegger's perception of modernity, Whereby people became estranged from their true selves because of societal and economic factors.

### Dehumanization and *Being-toward-death*

Another conclusion that was made while using Heidegger's work to analyze the novel is that Gregor's metamorphosis represents *Being-toward-death*. The research shows that through

changing his subject into the monstrous insect, Gjontek functions encourages characterization's essence, which puts Gregor in front of dealing with one's mortality in some measure. Heidegger describes the concept of thanatology as knowing that one will die is fundamental to the existence of humans, and the portrayal of the physical deterioration of the protagonist named Gregor in the novella, affirms this notion. The fact that Gregor no longer can go on with the work, his family spitting him out, his attempts to withdraw from the world surrounding him all point out towards the directions of death – both the physical sense and the existential one.

The outcome also holds the fact that this existential journey ends in the death of Gregor at the end of the novella and the fact that he is left all alone to die, even by his own family. This abandonment can be regarded through Heidegger's ontological perspective as exercising the understanding of Being-toward-death where Gregor has to come to terms with the fact of his frailty and instability of himself. His death is not just a symbol of a brutal murder, however much brutality could have been involved, but it is a symbol of existentialism, a symbol of the human condition in a world that does not recognize the individual as an end.

### **Critique of Capitalism and Familial Alienation**

The results also reveal how Kafka's criticism on the modern capitalism is just as Heideggerian on the alienation in modern society. In the story of metamorphosis Kafka portrays the reality of the capitalist work relations where a person is nothing but a mere value of the economy. Gregor's metamorphosis into a non-human form also holds a symbolism of how the capitalist society dehumanizes people and turns them into mere economic entities as evidenced from this study. Such a plot that describes Gregor's desire to keep working even having become a bug is closely related to Heidegger's notion of inauthentic existence where people are prisoners of roles.

Further, the Sigmund Freudian psychoanalysis of the Samsa family uncovers the business-like reality of people's interactions in a world dominated by financial exchange. The Gender Benjamins say that Gregor's family, who rely on him for the financial support initially, turned away once it became clear that he can no longer provide for the family. This rejection is in line with Heidegger's assertion that in modern society people are alienated not only from their own selves but also from people. The family itself instead of being supportive in Gregor's metamorphosis acts as a representation of rationality and materialism that does not care about the person, but the income they get from him, which amplifies Gregor's sense of alienation.

### **Inauthenticity and the Failure to Achieve Authentic Selfhood**

Finally, the conclusion to this analysis brings a realization that Gregor's metamorphosis metaphorically symbolizes his lack of a possibility of becoming a real human being. In the entire novella, Gregor is portrayed as an individual who is Restricted by the cultures of both his family and workplace. This is about conformity which according to Heidegger refers to inauthentic existence whereby individuals become what society wants them to be. According to the findings of the study, Samsa still remains the provider role even in his transformed self shows his inability to change and search for a true self.

The fact that, in Kafka's story, Gregor attempts to speak to his family, despite the fact he is immobile, represents his last attempt to remain the man he was but is in vain. The implication of the results is that an existential death and a symbolic death are to be expected when an individual does not successfully escape the deterministic roles prescribed to him by society, and Gregor, therefore, dies an existential and symbolic death hence the theme.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study offer a rich, Heideggerian interpretation of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, particularly in how existential isolation, dehumanization, and the dissolution of identity are depicted in the novella. By applying Martin Heidegger's philosophical concepts—especially *Being-in-the-world*, *Being-toward-death*, and *authenticity*—we gain deeper insight into Kafka's exploration of modern alienation and the human condition. This discussion synthesizes the results with existing scholarship to highlight how Kafka's narrative aligns with and amplifies Heidegger's existential ideas.

### **Existential Alienation and *Being-in-the-world***

Heidegger's concept of *Being-in-the-world* can be defined as an existential concept that is based on the views stating that humans find themselves in existence and act in a world that is neutral to them. As illustrated in this paper, it is clear that in *The Metamorphosis*, physical change of the main character of the novel, Gregor Samsa embodies this process of alienation. In the same way, Gregor is socially and family-wise marginalized and equally, he does not even own his own body and identity. This is in concordance with Heideggerian argument that people practically fail to be themselves because of society's imposed roles and the impersonal character of modernity (Heidegger, 1962). The metamorphosis into an insect is the most radical of the expressions of *Being-in-the-world*, where Gregor increasingly realizes that he is alienated from the world.

Previous works have posited that Gregor suffers from Heideggerian alienation which is best seen in his seclusion. For example, Fischer (2019) notes that Kafka's novella is about how the society in the modern world is built on capitalist principles and people are made into objects that are valued in terms of their output. The life that Gregor had before transforming into an insect is utterly boring, almost meaningless, focused on his career as a salesman – a career he hated – because of the financial responsibilities he had for his family. His transformation reduces him to this role and thus has no identity in the society even among his family, this isolates him. This is in accordance with Heidegger's concept of the fallen profile explaining how people end up immersed in the societal roles to the extent that they lose their authentic selves (Corrington, 2020). Suffering from what could be best described as existential anxiety, Gregor's alienation is therefore more than just a result of his procoked physical appearance.

The findings of this investigation therefore develop upon prior interpretations to reveal the manner in which Gregor's transformation embodies existential thrownness—the state in which characters are precariously located in a world that they have to experience without having a clear course to follow. The *Salmacis* is not only the change of the physical state of Gregor but a purely semantic symbolism of the annulment of the self-determination and self-direction thrown into the alien world that is defined as abandoned by Heidegger, 2022. This extends our analysis of Kafka's prose narrative to an understanding about existential dimensions.

### **Dehumanization and *Being-toward-death***

The study also shows how metamorphosis can be understood in the light of Heidegger's existential concept of *Being-toward-death* where one must accept death in order to be alive. Traditionally, physical ugliness symbolizes the certainty of death through the mortality of one's physical body, which is evident in the metamorphosis of Gregor where he is alienated from the human world through his insect developing body. This is why according to Heidegger awareness of the inevitable death is necessary in order to reach authenticity, because it draws people's attention to the finiteness of their lives and makes them responsible for themselves (Heidegger, 1962). Thus in view of the above discussion it can be said that SAMSASA or the confrontation with death is

well depicted in *The Metamorphosis* through Gregor's progressive isolation and physical disintegration. Desensitization of his family to his condition symbolizes death, and the fact that every person has to die alone in a world with no regard for individuals.

Following this interpretation, Roberts (2021) posited that Heidegger's Being-toward-death manifests physically in Gregor. That's why such an attitude of Gregor's family to his final death is typical – existential loneliness, described by Heidegger. That is due to the fact that Gregor never managed to live a genuine life before his metamorphosis: accepting a job transforming him into a mere bread winner and generally ignoring his self's needs and wants, Gregor cannot face his own death as well. This results in his physical and existential breakdown or his slow process of degeneration as he cannot continue to perform the roles expected of him by his family as well as the society.

This study also affirms that Gregor's death can also be regarded as the ultimate failure in the pursuit of an authentic Being as postulated by Heidegger. One can find here the parallel to Heidegger's inauthentic existence described by Mulhall (1996:106) as a Dasein's subjection to a realm of the ready-made that denies its possibility of being in its freedom. After the metamorphosis, Gregor still tries to work and support his family, proving that he failed to accept the new reality. His death thus embodies the failure to transcend the other's inauthentic roles in his life.

#### **Capitalist Dehumanization and the Loss of Identity**

Thus, the interpretation of Kafka's criticism of capitalist civilization that underlies this study corresponds to the line of research that sees *The Metamorphosis* as an allegorical representation of the degradation inherent in modern forms of employment. Through the example of Gregor's transformation Kafka's novella demonstrates that the identity of a person in a capitalist society is constructively reduced to worker function. Patel, Jaswant, and Dusty Johnston (2020) have pointed out that Glasperfelder's metamorphosis into an insect is the final and the most significant step of dehumanization within the framework of capitalist nuts. The transformation robs Gregor of not only his function as a breadwinner but also turns him into a nonbeing for his family who begins to see him as a parasite once he becomes one.

This paper's findings show how Kafka employs the metamorphosis of Gregor to lampoon how capitalist society isolates people and dehumanizes them. Heidegger has the concept of fallenness in this regard, which refers to the tendency of people to plunge themselves into the tasks assigned to them 'by the They,' which is the overall social setting or community. Before the metamorphosis happens, Gregor is tied to his monotonous nine-to-five job that he hates because he believe the only way to support his family. This is in conformity with the Heidegger notion that capitalist regimes bend the lives of people making them to lead inauthentic lives in as much as they have to work (Zimmerman, 1990).

Dehumanization, evident when Gregor is transformed into an insect, shows that people value their fellow human beings in a business-like fashion, typical of a capitalist society. In the Samsas' family when Gregor is not able to provide for the family any more, the family loses care for him and starts perceiving him as shameful. This is Heidegger's critique of modernity where humans are reduced to mere machines which are supposed to contribute to the generation of wealth for their owners or employers (Fischer, 2019). Consequently, the subject elucidates that the depiction of Gregor's family by Kafka is symbolic of how capitalistic systems prey on human society, and result in the negation of humanity; or in other words relations become a business.

### **Inauthenticity and Failure to Achieve Authenticity**

In conclusion, the research shows that Gregor's existential authenticity is the key to tracing Kafka's existentialist message. As we can see in the novel *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor is a man who does not assert himself, but follows the orders of the family and the employer. This is according to what Heidegger referred to as inauthentic existence whereby the people abandon their individuality and become just but a number in the society (Heidegger, 1962). Another proof of Gregor's involvement in those inauthentic roles is the fact that he cannot become the master of his own personality and free his soul even after the physical metamorphosis.

Santiago (2021) points this as a form of deception or what existentialists refer as 'bad faith' where Gregor is in denial of his freedom, fully submits to the imposed roles by other people. According to this interpretation, Gregor's metamorphosis is an attempt by the author to present the hero with an opportunity to escape the roles he plays and lead a proper life but he fails to do so. Despite the transformation Gregor has gone through, he still identifies himself with being a breadwinner for his family, signifying his incapacity to accept his nature, and thus failing to adapt to a new status of a metamorphosed insect. This inability to exist genuinely causes his steady emotional and physical decline and his death and therefore points at his existential dread.

### **Conclusion**

Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is a powerful portrayal of existential solitude that presents the feelings of angst which people suffer in societies that are dominated by modern capitalist power relations. In the metamorphosis Kafka depicts the reader how the modern labor systems objectify the man and how the society turns an individual into nothing. Analyzing such existential concepts as "Being-in-the-world" and "Being-toward-death," this work identifies deep existential problems that the novella of Kafka raises. Gregor becomes a monstrous insect not only in a physical way but also symbolically throughout this story, where he has come to explore death, loneliness and the impossibility of attaining one's true self. In conclusion, it can be stated that *The Metamorphosis* is a profound philosophical reflection on the meaning of human existence, freedom, and dignity in the context of despair and alienation of modern European society.

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