

The Interpretation of Gregor's Transformation in The Metamorphosis from the Perspective of Existentialism

Keywords: Franz Kafka; The Metamorphosis; transformation; existentialism; interpretation

Abstract

The Metamorphosis is one of the greatest novels written by Franz Kafka in 1915, which depicts the surreal and absurd transformation of Gregor Samsa into a beetle. Existentialism is borrowed to help interpret the implications of Gregor's transformation. After the transformation, Gregor lives in hatred, dread, absurdity, hopelessness, helplessness and despair. He is isolated, estranged, alienated by his family and the society. Centering on Gregor's transformation, this paper discovers that the authentic existing situation of the underprivileged is entirely revealed in this novella; the pathetic dark side of the human existence is vividly depicted and presented via transformation by Franz Kafka, who meanwhile deeply explores the negative sensations of human existence.

Introduction

If one were to judge the worth of an author solely according to the amount of critical commentary which his works have generated, Franz Kafka has already earned his literary place beside Shakespeare, Goethe, and Cervantes. (Foulkes, 2020) Franz Kafka's enigmatic work has been the subject of an extraordinary degree of critical attention (Gray, 1962). The Metamorphosis (1915) is one of Franz Kafka's most frequently analyzed works of literature. This elusive story is renowned for its ability to inspire diverse, sometimes mutually exclusive interpretations. The Metamorphosis has come to be considered

a central enigma of the modern literary imagination. (Explanation of, 2020) The Metamorphosis is about a travelling salesman called Gregor Samsa who wakes up one day finding himself transformed into a human-sized beetle and whose transformation causes a lot of panic in his family, as finally leads to his tragic death. The Metamorphosis has often been read as yet another psychological book of Oedipus complex, in which Kafka works out his complicated relationship to his father. (Klingenstein, 2020) Many have explained the novella as a commentary on the human condition and the inherent sense of isolation in modern life. Other critics have suggested that the themes of The Metamorphosis reflect Kafka's sense of estrangement from his family, while still others have found the root of those themes in the young Jewish writer's exclusion from the anti-Semitic literary culture of central Europe. (Hartwell, 2020) Micah Sadigh's paper stresses the difficulties of embracing one's self amidst a world that prefers defining labels that wash away any semblance of uniqueness and individuality. (Sadigh, 362) The Chinese scholar Wang Jingming studies this novella from the perspective of Karl Marx's theory of labor alienation. (Wang, 76) Another Chinese master degree thesis paper by Shi Caixia focuses on the characteristics of the post-deconstructionism and other post-modernism. (Shi, 2007) The Chinese critic Jiang Lan's paper pays attention on illness as the narrative drive of the text of this novella. (Jiang, 158)

This tragic story about the death of a travelling salesman has multiple motifs including the absurdity, anguish, alienation, estrangement, indifference, cruelty, disappointment, despair of human beings, which belong to the categories of existentialism. The nineteenth century philosophers, Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, came to be seen as precursors of the existentialism movement. The themes Franz Kafka's novels have lot in common with existentialism. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger's 1927 Being and Time, an inquiry into the „being that we ourselves are”, introduced most of the motifs that would characterize later existentialist thinking: the tension between the individual and the „public”; a fascination with liminal experiences

of anxiety, death, the „nothing” or nihilism; the rejection of science (and above all, causal explanation) as an adequate framework for understanding human being; and the introduction of „authenticity” as the norm of self-identity, tied to the project of self-definition through freedom, choice, and commitment. Heidegger (1927) Existentialism was as much a literary phenomenon as a philosophical one. All the themes popularly associated with existentialism - dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, nothingness, freedom, commitment, and so on – find their philosophical significance in the context of the search for a new categorical framework. (Crowell, 2020) In a letter to his friend Oskar Pollak, Kafka writes,

I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound and stab us. We need the books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into a forest far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us (Kafka, 1977, p. 16).

Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is like an axe cutting into the frozen sea of human inner existence. His works have a strong influence on modern existentialism and literary movements.

Kafka applies symbolism and metaphors in this novella to express the absurdity, alienation and estrangement of man's existence. The metamorphosis has multiple symbolic meanings. Kafka is both a symbolist writer and an existentialist writer. Existentialism highlights the negative feelings of human beings, such as boredom/hatred, dread/horror, estrangement/alienation, absurdity, despair and so on. This paper centers on Gregor's transformation, intending to find out the authentic existence of human beings. Gregor's transformation is highly in accordance with the modern existentialism. The transformation reveals the authentic psychological existence of modern people. To interpret the implications of Gregor's transformation, the negative sensations of hatred, dread, estrangement and absurdity and despair could be found out, which are closely related to existentialism. It is just the transformation that makes him unemployed by his company, disgusted by his family, despised by the other, and finally discarded by the society. This paper attempts to make some interpretations of Gre-

gor's transformation from the perspective of existentialism. The argumentation develops into five major parts, including: I. Hatred and disgust; II. Dread and horror; III. Estrangement and alienation; IV. Absurdity and meaninglessness; and V. Helplessness and despair.

I. Hatred and disgust

According to Kafka's biography, from 1908 till 1922, he worked at the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute for the Kingdom of Bohemia. As an insurance officer, it is common for Kafka to meet some injured, disabled or badly-ill workers. He must have been impressed by the miserable life of those poor people without the guarantee of social security or insurance. The symbolic description of Gregor's transformation should be the reflection of the real condition of some poor people in need. Gregor's transformation symbolizes the terrible and incurable disease which makes him disabled and even distorted a lot. When he gets such a horrible disease which would cost a large sum of money to cure, and then his life is totally ruined. It is absurd to be caught in such a monster-like disease as nobody wants to be disabled or disfigured. It is the terrible disease that causes him to be unemployed, even though Gregor is so eager to return to work as usual. Gregor stands for those poor people who suffers a lot of prejudice, resentment, hatred and disgust. Twenty-first century approaches to the text draw upon disciplines such as disability studies and animal studies to create new readings of the story. James Metzger argues that there are a number of correspondences between the protagonist and the experience of the disabled: Gregor loses control of his body, has difficulty communicating with his family, feels guilt about his condition, becomes accustomed to his new body, and is oppressed by his family's incomprehension and rejection (Kuhlman, 2020, pp. 205–220).

After the transformation, Gregor loses his identity as a man, therefore, he loses his self and dignity. Gregor could not get the answer to „who I am”. All the other people regard him as a horrible monster instead of a man. The transformed Gregor encounters a lot of hatred. Ha-

tred is an essential part of existentialism. It is a negative part of human existence. In this novella, it is easy to find Gregor's boredom of his work, his father's hostility of him, his sister's disgust of him and the Charwoman's hatred of him.

1.1 Gregor's hatred of his work

In this novella, the travelling salesman Gregor Samsa hates his job very much. At the beginning of this novel, readers can see his hatred to his job,

„Oh, God”, he thought, „what a strenuous career it is that I've chosen! Travelling day in and day out. ... worries about making train connections, bad and irregular food, contact with different people all the time so that you can never get to know anyone or become friendly with them. It can all go to Hell!” (Kafka, 2).

These quotes show that Gregor's work is very exhausting, and he could not find the value of his work. Gregor has to get up very early every day at 4:30 to catch up the first train at 5'oclock. The job has exhausted him and he has been under enormous stress, anxiety and pressure every day.

If I didn't hold back for my parents' sake, I would've quit ages ago. [...] Once I've got together the money to pay off the parents' debt to him – that should take another five or six years – I'll do it for sure. Then I'll make the big break (Kafka, p. 2).

According to Gregor's real intention, he wants to quit years ago. He has no enough sleep. To be a travelling salesman is so boring and tiring that Gregor should already have given in his notice to the boss. He has made his resolution to resign from this demanding job five or six years after he has earned enough money to pay off his parents' debt to the boss. It is just the tiring job that has changed him into an inhuman animal-like robot. He could not bear such kind of work any longer. Gregor is under a lot of pressure, not only including the exhaustion of the travelling work, but also the heavy debt to pay off for his parents. He has to overwork and it finally strains and overwhelms him. The relationship between Gregor and his job is in extreme tension.

1.2 Gregor's father's hatred of him

In the first part of the novella, when Gregor's appearance scares everyone, his father looks very hostile, clenches his hands, and seizes the chief clerk's stick to drive Gregor back to his room, stamping his foot at him, making unbearable hissing noise like a wild man. Even though Gregor has great difficulty to get through the doorway, his father cares nothing for him but to drives him forward. Finally, his father gives him a hefty shove from behind, which injures one of his legs badly. His father ignores his heavy bleeding, and slams the door with the stick. This event reflects Gregor's father's hatred and disgust towards him. The threat of stamping his foot, wildness of the hissing noise, the impatience to drive him back and the hefty shove exhibit that his father is very hostile to him, treating him like a sworn enemy.

At the end of the second part of the story, Gregor's father lifts his feet unusually high, threatening to stamp on him. His father runs after him in the room and Gregor lurches around in his efforts to muster all the strength for running. His father picks apples as missiles to bombard him, and one of the apples hit him and lodges in his back. The second injury makes Gregor lose his mobility permanently and causes his final death. His father's violence shows his extreme hatred and hostility to Gregor. You could not find out a little bit of tenderness of affection in his extreme strict father, who treats Gregor as an enemy instead of a family member. At the end of the story, he agrees to get rid of Gregor no matter that he is alive. His father seems like a violent tormentor or persecutor but not a father. In some sense, it is his father's hostility that leads to his death. In „Letter to His Father”, Kafka said that his father was always giant-like in every respect, and so appears the threatening father looming up in The Metamorphosis over his insect-son, who should be chastised and chased back into his room. (Thiher, pp. 98–130).

1.3 Grete's hatred of Gregor

At first, his sister shows some pity to him and takes care of him, but day by day for the abnormal chaos caused by Gregor, she could not endure him any longer and strongly suggests that the disgusting monstrous Gregor should be got rid of. Even though at the early stage of Gregor's transformation in the winter, Grete takes the responsibility to clean up Gregor's room and prepares food for him, while at the later stage of his transformation in the next spring especially when Gregor scares the three tenants, Grete loses her patience for Gregor and hitting the table, she says cruelly, „we can't carry on like this. I don't want to call this monster my brother. We have to try and get rid of it.... it'll be the death of both of you. I can't endure it anymore.” (Kafka, p. 29) This reflects Grete hates the transformed Gregor very much, condemns him to death, and resolves to discard him away. „This animal is persecuting us, it's driven out our tenants, it obviously wants to take over the whole flat and force us sleep on the streets.” (Kafka, p. 29) Grete becomes so ruthless that Gregor feels that he should pass away even more strongly than his sister.

1.4 The Charwoman's disgust of Gregor

When Gregor's sister is exhausted from going out to work, the family hires a charwoman to clean Gregor's room. This elderly widow with a robust bone structure isn't repelled by Gregor. She goes to open the door violently every morning and evening and calls Gregor with unfriendly words, such as „come on then, you old dung-beetle!” or „look at the old dung-beetle there!” (Kafka, p. 25) The word dung-beetle reflects that this charwoman thinks that Gregor is dirty, disgusting and hideous. One day, instead of being afraid of Gregor's slow and infirm movements, this charwoman even threatens to lift up a chair to slam down into Gregor's back. This reflects that this charwoman is extremely resentful of Gregor.

To sum up this sub-division, hatred is frequently shown in this novella. Gregor hates his exhausting job, while he is hated not only by

his father and sister, but the other people like the charwoman. Hatred is the authentic negative feeling of human existence.

II. Dread and horror

Fear reveals some region of the world as threatening, some element in it as a threat, and oneself as vulnerable. (Crowell, 2020) Kafka creates the atmosphere of horror in the first part of the story. Gregor's transformation provokes the feeling of horror. Existentialists pay much attention to the negative feelings or emotions such as anxiety, tension, pain, fear and so on instead of reason or value. (Flynn, 2020) Even though Gregor has no intention to hurt anyone, his horrible physical appearance scares everyone he meets. The chief clerk is panicked away, the maid is frightened to resign away, and his mother is shocked into a coma while his father is angrily provoked to beat him, the three tenants are annoyed to quit renting and the charwoman is challenged to abuse him.

Why Gregor is feared by anyone? For no one trusts him. The „other” is to be feared, as he cannot be trusted by anyone. (Kirschner 2012, pp. 214–229).

2.1 The dread of the chief clerk

It is the chief clerk who first sees the appearance of the transformed Gregor. He exclaims a loud „oh”, sounding like the sighing of the wind, pressing his hand against his open mouth and slowly retreating as if driven by a steady and invisible force. The chief clerk is panicked a lot and flew away as soon as possible:

But the chief clerk had turned away as soon as Gregor had started to speak, and, with protruding lips, only stared back at him over his trembling shoulders as he left.... It was only when he had reached the entrance hall that he made a sudden movement, drew his foot from the living room, and rushed forward in a panic. ...his shouts resounding all around the staircase. (Kafka, pp. 9–10).

2.2 The horror of Gregor's mother

Gregor's mother is the second one to see his transformed body and be scared suddenly. She is extremely panicked by Gregor's horrible appearance. The following citations reflect her horror at Gregor's transformed appearance:

Then she unfolded her arms, took two steps forward towards Gregor and sank down onto the floor into her skirts that spread themselves out around her as her head disappeared down onto her breast." [...] „but then she suddenly jumped up with her arms outstretched and her fingers spread shouting: „Help, for pity's sake, Help!" [...] That set his mother screaming anew, she fled from the table and into the arms of his father as he rushed towards her. (Kafka, p. 8–10).

At the end of the second part of the story, when Gregor's mother sees Gregor's enormous brown patch against the wall paper, she becomes fainted again. „and before she even realized it was Gregor that she saw screamed, „Oh God, oh God!" Arms outstretched, she fell onto the couch as if she had given up everything and stayed there immobile. (Kafka, p. 20).

2.3 The dread of the maid servant and the three tenants

According to the story, on the very first day the maid servant has fallen to her knees and begged Gregor's mother to let her go without delay. She leaves within 15 minutes, tearfully thanking Gregor's mother for her dismissal as if she had done her an enormous favor. This reflects the servant is extremely frightened by the monster-like Gregor, even though she is not very clear of what has happened to Gregor.

The three gentlemen are also frightened by the disgusting appearance of Gregor and one of them shouts like thunder and stamps his foot and threatens to quit the renting for the repugnant conditions and even claims compensation for their damages.

In short for this sub-division, the sensation of dread or horror is overflowing in this novella. Kafka creates the atmosphere of horror through the depiction of people's sense of dread of Gregor. Nearly everyone

is frightened and scared by Gregor's distorted body except himself. Dread is also the authentic embodiment of human existence.

III. Estrangement and alienation

In the story, Gregor is estranged, alienated and isolated by everyone. He has no good relationship with anybody. He is lonely without others' love, care or affection. His relationships with the boss, the company and the family are extremely abnormal. What does self-consciousness mean without relationships? Utter loneliness! „The I consciousness" cannot be fully formed without a „You". Without a „You", the motivation for the search for and the discovery of meaning is curbed, if not completely halted. (Buber, 1996). Estrangement and alienation make Gregor extremely lonely without any intimate relationship. Kirschner reminds that those individuals „... identified as „other" are ... marginalized, excluded or demonized." (Kirschner, 2012, pp. 217), which is exactly what is happening to Gregor. Kafka's Gregor has no friends, no companions, no any intimate acquaintance to confide in. The families could not understand him, even though he could understand and consider for them. In fact, no one understands or cares for him.

3.1 Gregor's relationship with the boss and the other staff

The boss cares only about the profits and business orders instead of the employees' health and welfare. Gregor makes explanations to the chief clerk, pleading him not to take sides against him. The following citations show his predicament in the office:

Nobody likes the travelers. They think we earn an enormous wage as well as having a soft time of it. That's just prejudice but they have no particular reason to think better it.so that we can very easily fall victim to gossip and chance and groundless complaints, ... and that's when we feel the harmful effects of what's been going on without even knowing what caused them. (Kafka, p. 9).

These citations prove that the other workmates treat Gregor with much unfair prejudice and jealousy for he has more soft time and enormous wage than them. When Gregor arrives back home exhausted from a trip, he could not receive any understanding or care but harmful gossip and groundless complaints. Gregor could not feel any warmth in the company.

3.2 Gregor's relationship with the families

Before transformation, Gregor had done great contributions to his family, working day in and day out at work, exhausting himself to travel everywhere to get orders, getting success with extreme diligence, pulling the family out of the difficulty condition after his father's bankruptcy.

So, then he started working especially hard, with a fiery vigor that raised him from a junior salesman to a travelling representative almost overnight, bringing with it the chance to earn money in quite different ways. Gregor converted his success at work straight into cash that he could lay on the table at home for the benefit of his astonished and delighted family. (Kafka, p. 15).

In this flashback, Gregor laments that all he has left are memories. These citations reflect that Gregor has worked hard to earn money to support his family, helping the family have good times. Gregor offers most of his money to cover the family living expenses, only keeping little for himself. He has a secret plan to send her sister to a musical school to develop her musical talent. He also hopes to accumulate enough money to help his father pay off the debts and then he would free himself from his arduous job. After his transformation, he loses the ability to go to work and fills with hot shame and regret for his inability to help the family. He is still concerned with the family's coming difficult life. He worries that the money accumulated is not enough for the family's normal living expenses, and father is too old and clumsy to work, mother too ill, and sister too young. When Gregor falls down, who could support the family?

This money, however, was certainly not enough to enable the family to live off the interest; it was enough to maintain them for, perhaps, one or two years, no more. [...] His father was healthy but old, and lacking in self-confidence..... Would Gregor's elderly mother now have to go and earn money? She suffered from asthma and it was a strain for her just to move about the home, every other day would be spent struggling for breath on the sofa by the open window. (Kafka, 16)

In one word, Gregor has sacrificed himself a lot to help the family lead a better life. He loves his families without any complaints or hesitation. He is very considerate and tender with his sister. When the three tenants show indifference to his sister's violin performance, he is eager to tell her to enter his room to protect her self-esteem for only he could appreciate her musical talents.

From above it proves that Gregor is a noble hero for the family. What is the reward for him after his transformation? There is extreme tension between Gregor and his families. When Gregor's mother firstly sees his transformed appearance, she is so frightened that she screams out „Help, for pity's sake, Help” and flees into the arms of her husband. Gregor's father also gets panicked and with a stick and newspaper he drives him to his room, stamping his foot at him. In the second time when Gregor's mother sees him, she screams again, „Oh God, oh God!” and faints into a coma. His father is so strict with him that he intends to stamp on him. After running after Gregor several round, he flings an apple at Gregor and it injures him permanently. Even though at the beginning of Gregor's transformation, his sister shows pity on him and helps him clean the room and feeds him, after several months, she could not endure him any longer, especially when Gregor comes into the living room to protect her self-esteem from being hurt by the three arrogant tenants when her performance is neglected by them, but she says ruthlessly „we can't carry on like this. I don't want to call this monster my brother, all I can say is: we have to try and get rid of it”. (Kafka, p. 29) These words show that Grete makes the determination to abandon him and the parents agrees to do so. How cruel and ruthless the families become! Nobody wants to see him anymore. Even though Gregor has been working hard for the family, after his transformation, he gets no warm care, love, or sympathy.

thy. Instead, he is alienated, estranged, isolated by the families, and finally disgusted, injured and abandoned by them who he loves and cares so much. After the transformation, the relationship between Gregor and his family is in extreme tension. There is a sharp conflict between his dreadful monstrous appearance and the family's dread, panic and hatred. It symbolizes the conflict between Gregor's becoming family's burden and the family's poor financial condition which could not afford Gregor's medical service and care. Another conflict is Gregor's inner psychological one between his inability to support his family and his strong sense of guilt, shame and regret. Even though he has no intention to frighten or hurt anyone, yet everyone is scared, disgusted, panicked by him.

His mother fears him a lot, his father hates him very much and his sister finally shows no pity on him. The author mentions Gregor's injuries several times, which represent the torments he suffers. These injuries are caused by his cruel father. There is an extreme tension between Gregor and his father. At the end of the first part of the story, the author mentions Gregor's injury, „one flank scraped on the white door and was painfully injured, leaving vile brown flecks on it.” (Kafka, p. 11) And „Then his father gave him a hefty shove from behind which released him from where he was held and sent him flying, and heavily bleeding, deep into his room”. (Kafka, p. 11) After this incident, „he limped badly on his two rows of legs; one of the legs had been badly injured...” (Kafka, p. 12) At the end of the second part of the story, the author mentions Gregor's second injury?“as his father had decided to bombard him. He had filled his pockets with fruits...threw one apple after another...another one hit squarely and lodged in his back.” And „because of his injuries, Gregor had lost much of his mobility-probably permanently.” (Kafka, p. 22) In the second injury, the apples seem like bullets from the police, which are shot into his back and eventually kill him. No one helps to remove the apple lodged in Gregor's back and it remains there as a visible reminder of his injury. No one treats him as a member of the family. All the family abandons, disgusts and ignores him.

It seems that Gregor finally dies of hunger and the injury caused by the apple missile. In fact, it is the family's indifference, cruelty, cold-bloodedness and abandonment that kills Gregor at last rather than the transformation. Even at the last minute of Gregor's death, he still thinks back of his family with love and emotion. But nobody cares about his death. After his death, his family seems to be relieved a lot with much pleasure. When the family heard of his death, Mr. Samsa, „let's give thanks to God for that”. (Kafka, p. 31) He crossed himself, and the three women followed his example. Gregor's sister condemns Gregor to death when he upsets the boarders with his third and final emergence from his room. „We must try to get rid of it,” she says. As if to indulge and oblige his family one more time, Gregor dies during the following night and is thrown out into the garbage by the charwoman the next morning. (Klingenstein, 2020) How ridiculous it is that they never show any sign of sadness or grief for Gregor's death. Nobody mourns him. Reversely, when his corpse is cleaned, the family takes the tram to the countryside to have a holiday to relax themselves. Without the burden of the transformed Gregor, it seems that the family is going to have a promising better future life.

To sum up this short sub-division, the estrangement is also another essential motif of this novella. Gregor's relationship with everyone has been estranged and alienated after his physical transformation. It is estrangement that makes Gregor life lonely, disappointing, and distressing. Because of the estrangement, he has been isolated from the society. His life is confined within the prison-like room without the normal family and social connections.

IV. Absurdity and meaninglessness

According to existentialism, the most famous idea is irrationality/absurdity. Human existence might be described as 'absurd', and many existentialists argue that nature as a whole has no design, no reason for human existing. Spiritually speaking, the achievements of the natural sciences also cannot provide value and meaning for human ex-

isting. Unlike a created cosmos, people cannot expect the scientifically described cosmos to answer man's questions concerning value or meaning. Absurdity is thus closely related to the theme of 'being on its own'/existing, and anxiety (or anguish) is this fact of human beings. The *Metamorphosis* is shrouded in metaphors that have much to do with the human condition, particularly the absurd (Begley, 1997, pp. 253–262).

According to the story, Gregor's life turns so meaningless and absurd. Everyone has transformed physically or spiritually and lives in dilemma. After this transformation, Gregor could not find anything meaningful or valuable to keep his living. Before the transformation, Gregor's life is regarded meaningful and valuable for his successful career, while after the transformation, he is viewed as nothing and abandoned by his families and society. Only death can resolve all the problems and dilemma. At the end of the story, the *dénouement* is Gregor's tragic death which brings relief and pleasure to the family instead of grievous mourning or sadness. Meaning has meaning when there is at least a rudimentary level of commitment to something or someone, best described in the writings of Kierkegaard as a quality that ensues the ethical mode of existence (Kierkegaard, 1987). Gregor loses his commitment to his families, while his families lose the commitment to him. When no one takes responsibility, no one has got the value of life. In this sense, after the transformation, no one's life is meaningful.

4.1 Everyone's transformation

The others' spiritual transformation makes life lack affection, warmth and hope, which fling Gregor into hell. Nobody could understand his anguish and misery which results that he has no way to communicate with anyone. Gregor gets no comfort, care or consolation but isolation, disgust and rejection. In this novella, Gregor is transformed physically, while the other people including the chief clerk, Gregor's parents, his sister, the house-maid, and the three tenants are all psychologically or spiritually transformed. Even though Gregor

loses his physical health, he still maintains his normal humanity loving his families and being considerate for his beloved, while the other people especially his families lose their spiritual health, losing their humanity, love and care for ill Gregor. After the transformation, everyone changes his/her attitude towards Gregor. In everyone's eye, Gregor is regarded as not a man, nor a brother, nor a member of the family any more, but a disgusting beetle, a horrible monster, an inhuman animal, an outsider, a stuff, at last trash and corpse. Gregor's life becomes so absurd and meaningless in this way for nobody treats him as a human. You cannot find warmth and gentle affection from the other people in the story, which makes the society appears cold and cruel like a hell. Even after the death, the families show no sign of sadness or grief for his death. Nobody mourns him. Reversely, the families take a tram to the holiday to have a holiday to relax themselves. With so much ruthlessness and cold-bloodedness, Gregor's death is so pathetic. Therefore, Gregor seems to die of despair, indifference, hatred and mental anguish rather than the terrible disease or physical injury.

4.2 Everyone being in dilemma

As for Gregor, he is in the conflict between the disability and his desire to return to work to support his family. In other sense, he lives in the dilemma between his incompetence and the desire to resume the family love, affection and happiness. He wants to avoid the disability, but he can't; he wants to approach the recovery of the family love, but he can't as well. This avoidance-approach dilemma renders his life pointless. The parents and the sister lives in the conflict between the abandonment of Gregor and the sustainability of the future family survival. They have to give up Gregor in order to keep survival in the future days. The dilemma is that if they keep Gregor existing in the family, it means they cannot keep survival; for the family's survival, they have to abandon Gregor's existence, which seems cruel and ruthless to Gregor.

In short for this sub-division, absurdity is another important motif of this novella. Absurdity means nothingness and meaninglessness. After Gregor's transformation, his life turns absurd and meaningless. Everyone has been transformed physically or spiritually. It seems that everyone in this novella lives in dilemma, which makes everyone's life appear absurd. It is absurd for Gregor to have been transformed into a beetle; it is absurd that his families are resentful of him, and nobody takes him to see the doctor even though the hospital is on the other side of the street.

V. Helplessness and despair

It is said that existentialism is a philosophical school of despair. In this novel, Gregor is incapable of everything. He has no ability to recover from the transformation, and improve the family's pathetic financial situation, or change the family's attitudes towards him. Nobody helps him or understands him. Therefore, he lives in helplessness, hopelessness and despair. In fact, the transformed Gregor is confined to his own room which seems more like a jail which means he loses his freedom. According to the existentialism, freedom or free choice could help people find their value of meaning of existence. (Heidegger, 1927) However, Gregor could not get the value of his existence for being without freedom. No health, no freedom, no hope, no help. Only despair and death.

5.1 Gregor's inability to dominate his fate

Gregor could not control his own fate; on the other hand, it is the unknown fate that dominates his fate. Therefore, Gregor becomes so helpless, hopeless and vulnerable.

After the transformation, Gregor often lives in fantasies. Fantasy offers much indispensable data as it often offers glimpses into a possible future, the world of possibilities, that which can be realized and actualized (Heidegger, 1962) But in fact, his fantasies could not become true. Gregor could not control his physical body. He is transformed in

to a beetle against his own will. He hopes to keep healthy and working as usual to earn money to help his parents pay off the debts and help his sister to attend a musical school, but he could not do so any more. This physical transformation is out of his control. For his family's survival, he has to work hard as a travelling salesman and subsequently the overwork overwhelms him. After his transformation into a beetle, he is not able to control the physical movements. He could not move freely for this huge size of his form. He has no ability to improve the family's financial situation. It is his regret and shame that he could not help his elderly parents to live a peaceful and happy life or help his sister to realize her musical dream. What's worse, he has no ability to control other's response to his transformation. Even though he has no intention to frighten everyone, everyone is scared of him and becomes estranged from him. He wishes to return to work, but his transformation prevents him and anticipates his unemployment. He wishes to be close to his family, but the family confines him to his own room and isolates him. He wishes not to provoke his father, but his father turns much angrier and injures him twice. Gregor even loses his say in the arrangement of his room. When one of the rooms is rented out to the three gentlemen, other junk things have been put into Gregor's room and leaves no room for him to move about freely. Gregor loses the ability to control his own fate. Finally, he loses much of his ability, hardly sleeps at all either night or day, and almost entirely stops eating. In this environment, he lives in helplessness, hopelessness and despair. He is also full of shame and regret for his incompetence to help the family and becoming the family's burden. The only choice waiting for him is death.

5.2 No one's responsibility for the tragedy

Nobody takes responsibility for Gregor death, which seems so absurd, hopeless and disappointing. Even the hospital is on the other side of Gregor's house, his families never send him to see the doctor. Why? The soaring expenses of medical care and service frightens his family.

The real horrible monster should be the high prices of hospitalization. In this sense, with the incurable horrible disease Gregor has to wait to die in despair and anguish for no one could afford the hospitalization. The ill Gregor becomes the huge burden of the family, as makes the families lives in anguish. Even the families wish Gregor could die as soon as possibly for it could diminish and terminate his physical anguish. Yet, the hospital should also be innocent. So, who causes the soaring expenses of medical service? When the answer isn't easily got, and nobody takes responsibility for his death, the existentialism reveals, exposes and proves that man is so helpless, hopeless, disappointing and distressing.

To sum up this short division, Gregor is helpless, hopeless and despaired after the transformation. He has no ability to dominate his life and fate. Without hope and help, Gregor's life is rushing to death.

Conclusion

The metamorphosis displays the conflict between Gregor and his families over the transformation. Before and after the transformation, Gregor gets totally opposite treatments which exhibit the cruelty of existence. Even though Gregor is transformed physically, he still possesses the human consciousness, which makes him aware of the spiritual anguish from his families transformed attitudes to him. Especially Gregor's sister hurts him most for she is his most intimate one in the world, but she finally condemns him to death. What makes Gregor suffer most is that after the transformation, he loses the identity as a man and receives the inhuman treatments hereafter. The novella exhibits the spiritual anguish and misery of Gregor's existence after the transformation. As Kafka's great novella, *The Metamorphosis* should be the best embodiment of existentialism. With the help of existentialism, it is easier to interpret the meaning of Gregor's transformation. Gregor's authentic existence situation has been fully presented in this novella. His transformation symbolizes the real situation of the disabled, the injured, the badly-ill people, who live in hatred, dread, es-

trangement, alienation, absurdity, helplessness, hopelessness and despair. It is very absurd that nobody shows concern, care, sympathy, or affection to those underprivileged people like Gregor in the real society. His transformation implies that he is not a member of the family any more, but an outsider, an enemy, a stranger, and even worse, an animal, a thing, and trash. This paper explores the implications of transformation from five divisions of existentialism, such as, hatred, dread, estrangement, absurdity and despair. From Gregor's story, his spiritual anguish and inner sufferings could be very sentimental and pathetic. The transformation may be caused by some terrible incurable diseases or horrible accidents, which would ruin a man's normal life. After such kind of transformation, he has been disgusted, hated and isolated by everyone. With this novella, Kafka intends to appeal for the social affection, love, compassion, and care for those struggling people like Gregor Samsa whose life is entirely ruined. Maybe it is very necessary and urgent to establish some better social security and insurance system to guarantee those people in need.

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