

The “Kafkaesque” Interpretation of Human Devaluation

Isaqova Zamirakhon Rukhitdinovna

*Doctor of Philosophy (DSc), Professor, Namangan State University, Uzbekistan,
ms.zamiraxonisagova@gmail.com*

Odiljonov Shokhrukhbek Erkinjon o‘g‘lu

*1st-year student of the Uzbek language department, Faculty of Philology, Namangan State University,
Uzbekistan, Namdotalabasii@gmail.com*

Annotation: Complex topics such as the place of a person in society and the devaluation of the individual have always been in the spotlight of the world community. One of them is Franz Kafka, a Czech writer, a representative of the literature of the XX century modernism and existentialism. The article analyzes the philosophical and spiritual aspects of human devaluation through Franz Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis”. Through the transformation of the hero of the work, Gregor Zamza, into an insect, the loss of the value of the human person in society, the metamorphoses in family and social relations, as well as the bureaucratic system, economic dependence, family conflicts, and the denial of human dignity are symbolized. Through a retrospective approach to the issues of the status and value of a person in modern society, a social and philosophical study has been conducted on the conditionality of a person’s value in society, the connection of his devaluation with both external and internal factors, the causes, consequences, and impact of human devaluation on society, the complexities of a person finding his identity and preserving his dignity in modern society.

Keywords: Franz Kafka, metamorphosis, loneliness, self, personality, human value, devaluation, absurdity, bureaucracy, existentialism, suffering, separation, family relations, society, realism, symbolism, the meaning of life.

Introduction. The XXI century is a highly contradictory period in terms of rapid globalization and technological development, and the complexity of social relations. In such circumstances, the protection of human dignity and the fight against factors of devaluation are of particular importance. Given that the issue of human dignity is the moral foundation of any society, an important factor ensuring the rights and freedoms of each individual, the seriousness of the problem becomes even clearer. Because in a society where human rights are violated and devalued, concepts such as justice, equality and progress lose their meaning. These issues are raised to the level of a problem of the era in Franz Kafka’s (d. 1924) “The Metamorphosis”. The importance of the work for modern society lies in the fact that through the analysis of problems such as loneliness, devaluation, marginality, lack of rights, pragmatism, and soullessness, it serves to understand that man is the highest value in existence. This article analyzes the causes, consequences, and solutions to the problem of human devaluation in modern society through F.Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis”.

F.Kafka is one of the most unique writers of the XX century literature, was born in 1883 in Prague, Czech Republic. His father wanted his son to be a lawyer [1.6.]

However, F.Kafka’s interest in literature prevailed, and he followed the rule “my whole being is literature” [2.177.] and devoted his nights to creativity. F.Kafka did not become a writer suddenly or “innately”. His father, Hermann Kafka, was very strict and callous in raising his children, and considered his son’s involvement in books and literary exercises to be meaningless, weakness and frailty. His main

job was to accuse his son of incompetence and failure. A spiritual separation occurred between F.Kafka, who was naturally soft-hearted and emotional, and his father, who was cruel, resourceful, and never lifted his head from “work”. Thus, F.Kafka became isolated from his youth. He lived with his own world of dreams, his own world of imagination.

F.Kafka first studied at the gymnasium. In 1901-1905 he studied at the Faculty of Law of Prague University. In 1906-1907 he worked as a lawyer in the law office of the Prague City Court. Realizing that this job was beyond his capacity, in 1907 he got a job as an ordinary employee in an insurance company. This arbitrariness angered Hermann Kafka and turned away from his son. As with everything, there is a good and a bad side, the father’s “freeing” his son allowed F.Kafka to become a writer.

F.Kafka began writing stories in 1904. The tragic helplessness [3.196.] of man in the face of a fickle world is depicted with great skill in the works of Franz Kafka. In 1913, the writer’s collection of stories “Observation” was published. F.Kafka’s stories “The Judgment”, “The Stoker” were published in 1913 and the story “The Metamorphosis” in 1916. The writer’s collection of stories “A Country Doctor”, the story “In the Penal Colony” in 1919, the collection of stories “A Hunger Artist” in 1924. After F.Kafka’s death, his novels “America”, “The Trial”, “The Castle” and the collection of stories “The Construction of the Chinese Wall” were published [4.9.].

The writer’s manuscript “Letter to My Father”, consisting of 103 pages, is the main source for psychoanalytic and biographical studies about F.Kafka, and was published in 1952 by the “Neue Rundschau” publishing house [5.90.]. In this letter, which is completely contrary to the Uzbek national mentality, F.Kafka accused his father of emotional violence and hypocrisy towards him. Such an open and sharp relationship is rare in Uzbek families, because in the Uzbek mentality, respect for elders, obedience to parents, and preservation of family relations are raised to the level of values. Nevertheless, F.Kafka’s lines “Dear Father, you have always been a great force for me. But I could not resist you. My life is determined by my relationship with you. You always criticized me and I could never please you. You always considered me weak and cowardly. But I was afraid of you and did not dare to oppose you. You were trying to control my life. But I was trying to escape from you. You never understood me. But I could not explain myself to you” [6.23-24.] clearly express the complexity of children’s relationships with their fathers, the father’s pressure on the child, and the child’s feeling of helplessness, regardless of the state, nation, and religion of F.Kafka, the universal nature of father-child relationships in many families, hatred towards a child left by a “stork”, and the impact on the human psyche.

F.Kafka contracted tuberculosis in 1917. As a result, he retired on disability in 1922. In 1923 he moved to Berlin. Due to his deteriorating health, he was forced to return to Prague. He died in 1924 at the age of 41 in the Kierling Sanatorium in Vienna. His grave is in the Jewish cemetery in Prague.

F.Kafka lived an “unsuccessful” life. He lived in poverty and destitution, even though he did not want to publish his works. Perhaps for this reason, even though he was engaged twice, the issue of marriage remained open. This is now another independent research topic. His works were published after his death by his close friend, Czech writer, playwright and critic, representative of the Prague School Max Brod (d. 1968).

Among F.Kafka’s works, the story “The Metamorphosis” (“Die Verwandlung”) [7.11.] was written in 1912. The work was published three years later, in 1915 in Leipzig, due to the impact of the First World War on the publishing process. The work has a unique plot, in which the events are revealed through exaggeration and symbolic images of man’s helplessness in the fight against ignorance and stupidity, using the example of the transformation of the hero of the work, Gregor Zamza, into an insect. F.Kafka “is a skilled narrator of the psyche of a submissive man in an alienated society, but not a guide showing ways to escape this situation” [8.579.]. In our opinion, the writer focuses more on revealing the problem and showing the contradictions in the inner world of man, so that the reader asks himself questions

during the reading process, reflects on his life and his place in society. The lack of a clear solution and leadership in the work is a sign of the uniqueness of F.Kafka's work. The writer gives man unlimited opportunities to find his own solution to the problem and make a decision: man must find his meaning in an "absurd" world. Perhaps that is why F.Kafka's works are among the top ten most popular works. It is also appropriate to pay attention to the fact that F.Kafka was a representative of the philosophy of existentialism that emerged in Germany at the beginning of the XX century [9.231.].

Existentialism is "a philosophical direction that pays special attention to man's existence, freedom and responsibility" [10.626.] and its essence is embodied in the principle that "man first comes into the world and then creates himself during his life, shapes his essence. In this sense, man is fully responsible for his choices and actions". In short, existentialism is dominated by the issue of existence and human existence. Since existence is outside of man, man cannot perceive existence. The main ideas of the philosophy of existentialism, such as the meaning of life, freedom, responsibility, "absurdity", alienation, fear, and death, form the essence of F.Kafka's works. In our opinion, as a result of the development of human thought, man's alienation from himself and society from himself, his inner world, individuality, spirituality, life and way of life, his encounter with restrictions and violence in choosing his own path, the loss of a sense of responsibility for his own life, the transition to a crowd-like lifestyle, immersion in meaninglessness and disorder, becoming a slave to things, fear of freedom and responsibility, and the loss of meaning in his life occurred. This process continues in modern society as well. Man is losing his inner nature and living in his outer nature, adapting to it. For modern man, his own opinion is not important, but rather, a person who is firmly attached to the idea of "what will people say?" seems to have forgotten why he is living. His own life is not of the slightest importance to him. What show business star had lunch with which mistress, which car he bought, which cosmetics he uses, and where he spends his holidays is a thousand times more important than a person's personal life. What can be expected from a person who discusses the life of a series character for hours, even though he has countless problems of his own? In the same sense, a person who has forgotten his identity is doomed to metamorphosis. Here, another aspect of the F.Kafka phenomenon is revealed. Every reader who reads the writer's work understands and thinks accordingly at the level of his worldview, knowledge and level. This is explained by the multifaceted nature of F. Kafka's works, the "condemnation" of a person thrown into the ocean of thought to think against stone-heartedness, tyranny, oppression and persecution.

In "The Metamorphosis", F.Kafka expressed the invisible face of oppression against man through an incredible scene of an environment alienated from man and hostile to man: Gregor Zamza wakes up one morning and realizes that he has become an insect. Realizing that what he previously thought was a dream is reality, he dies "disgustingly" in the form of an insect, even though he is an insect with human consciousness. In our opinion, F.Kafka was able to symbolically show social waste, social humiliation, social injustice, and the trampling of human dignity in the image of an insect man. Indeed, there was no need for Gregor Zamza to live as a human being, or, more simply, he was not required to live as a human being. He only needs to work, travel from country to country after work, communicate with people he does not know and does not know for work, and most importantly, finish his work, save the family from debt, and complete the household. In family relations, neither his opinion nor his participation is required. He is only limited to coming tired from the road, resting until the next trip, or locking himself in his room and dealing with small things. He is devalued as a human being. In short, he is only a provider: "they took the money from him with gratitude, and he gave it willingly" [11.43.]

A monotonous lifestyle, a whirlpool of meaninglessness completely changed Gregor Zamza's life, a metamorphosis occurred. He simply became a product of the required need – an insect. The coldness and insensitivity in F.Kafka's language, the avoidance of images and decorations, further intensified Gregor Zamza's tragedy. The same coldness (Why am I living?) and insensitivity (Who am I living for?) reign in his life. In our opinion, the tragedy of Gregor Zamza is not embodied in the fact that he became

a creature of society, but rather in the fact that there is no need to live as a human being in society. However, “the Zamza condition” is the fate of the majority of the common people [12.44.].

Today, the problem of “the Zamza condition” has not lost its relevance. Economic pressures such as globalization, technological development, unemployment, and poverty are forcing people to work even harder and sacrifice their personal lives. Many people are adapting to social demands and losing their individuality. They are simply a labor force with no right to choose or demand. Their personal needs, dreams and aspirations are ignored, leading to marginal moods in society, such as alienation, loneliness and depression.

Gregor Zamza had to do a job he didn’t like in order to pay off his father’s debts. In fact, the family had enough money, and Gregor’s dedication and sacrifice to his family, who was tied to work day and night, was in vain. It was a bitter truth that Gregor Zamza had never dreamed of: “pleased with unexpected caution and thrift ... Gregor learned in detail that a good investment had been preserved from ancient times, and that this money had increased over the years because the interest received had not been touched”.

Today, too, people are engaged in work they do not like in order to earn money. This negatively affects their mental health and afflicts them with the fate of “the Zamza condition”. which is an expression of alienation and depression. As F. Kafka said, “you are a problem. But there is no reader around” [13.109.], that is, a person lives entangled in his own life, his own problems, and there is no one to understand him, to listen to his pain.

The “metamorphosis” of “The Metamorphosis” is reflected in the fact that Gregor Zamza could not get rid of the provider syndrome even after turning into an insect, which shows how deeply rooted his personality was, that his mental state did not change even though his physical state changed, and that he still cared about his family and wanted to provide for them. He is ashamed that he is no longer able to provide for his family: whenever the need to earn money was mentioned, Gregor would always let go of the door he was holding on to and throw himself on the cold leather sofa, because he was burning in a fire of shame and pain [14.45.]. This further intensifies his suffering. This point is reflected in the true image of today’s man: “this situation shows that in modern society, people are so attached to their duties that they cannot give them up, even if they harm themselves” [15.23.].

The digital world is governing the present era, when human mental discovery and intellectual potential have reached countless and amazing levels. However, humanity is not able to match the digital world in terms of consciousness, thinking, worldview, spiritual perfection, and moral maturity. If we look at the issue from the prism of the heyday of Sufism – the X centuries, it becomes clear that humanity is going backwards quite a bit, and if this process continues in this way, it is inevitable that it will end with dangerous consequences such as spiritual poverty, lack of thinking, moral degradation, and genocide. As F.Kafka said, “They were given the right to choose to be kings or heralds of kings. They wanted to be childish heralds of kings. Therefore, there are only heralds, they run around the world. They convey messages that have lost their meaning to each other because there is no king” [16.109.].

The lack of a leader in society, people’s avoidance of independent thinking, their willingness to obey only blindly, the lack of an important idea and purpose in society is an expression of people being limited to spreading meaningless [17.111.]. and ineffective information.

“The Metamorphosis” is literally about man’s transformation and loss of self. “Whoever in the world loves his relatives does not do injustice any more or less than those who love only themselves; there is only one question: is it possible to love a loved one?” [18.112.]. These thoughts require very complex and serious philosophical reflection. Human life is determined by a certain choice. If a person loves his loved ones and at the same time does not love himself, he does injustice to himself. Because a person must value himself, take care of himself, and be fair to himself. If a person only loves his loved ones

and forgets himself, he will harm his mental health. If a person only loves himself and forgets his loved ones, he will do injustice to them. Because a person must show love to his loved ones, support them and take care of them. If a person only thinks of himself, it will harm his social relationships. Therefore, a person must see himself and his loved ones equally. It is not easy to maintain this balance. You have to love your loved ones. But this should not be at the expense of forgetting yourself.

Another aspect that caught our attention while reading the work is that Gregor's sister, who loved and respected him yesterday, now hates him and does not even want to see his face. This situation shows how strongly changes in a person's appearance affect his inner world and relationships: Gregor realized that his sister still did not want to see his face and would never be able to do so, and that it required great perseverance from his sister not to run away from this place even when she caught sight of a small part of his body that was visible from under the sofa. [19.46.].

F.Kafka's writing skills are beautifully expressed in many points. Gregor Zamza, who has turned into an insect, cannot manage to crawl. So his movements are limited. This is the first point. Scraps are no longer delicious. Even though his needs have changed, he is deprived of the opportunity to satisfy new needs. This is the second point. He made it a habit to climb on the wall and ceiling to express his feelings, and got used to hanging on the ceiling because he could breathe freely and his body was slightly shaking. This is the third point. Surprisingly, he could not use all the opportunities that were characteristic of an insect. He could not fly even though he had wings. Gregor Zamza's inability to fly even though he had wings is the highest point of his tragedy. This situation is an expression of the futility of his desire for freedom, his alienation from his nature, his limitation by society and family. In our opinion, wings are a symbol of freedom, change and opportunity. But Gregor cannot use these opportunities, he has wings, but he cannot fly, because there are chains that bind him to the ground. These images further intensify Gregor's tragedy, convincingly reflecting his alienation in society and in his own nature. Gregor's inability to fly further intensifies his tragedy, showing that he is alienated both in society and in his own nature. He has turned into an insect, but even as an insect he cannot use his opportunities. His life is meaningless and futile. This is the basis of F.Kafka's existential philosophy.

A typical expression of human devaluation is Gregor Zamza's deteriorating mental state, his loss of hope in life, his eating food only for entertainment, his fading interest in life, his lack of desire to live, his thinking that the dirtiness of his room is the reason for his loss of appetite, his attempts to deceive himself, and his avoidance of understanding his condition: "Gregor now ate almost nothing. When he passed by the food prepared for him, he would only put a piece in his mouth for entertainment, keep it there for several hours, and then spit it out. At first, he thought that his appetite was being "suffocated by the dirtiness of his room" [20.60.]. These lines can be assessed as an indication of the continuation of his mental and physical decline, the "journey" of devaluation.

It is surprising that Gregor Zamza retained his human consciousness, even though he had physically turned into an insect: "If music pleases him so much, is he a monster? It seemed to him that a path was opening before him to a food that he had been dreaming of tasting. He had an increasing determination to approach his sister, pull on her skirt, and signal her to enter his room with her violin, because no one here can appreciate his sister's violin playing like him [21.63.]. Look, music awakens warmth in Gregor Zamza's heart, it creates a desire for life in him. He wants to get closer to his sister and listen to her music together, as in the old days. This shows that he is still human, that human feelings exist. But, at the same time, this passage serves to intensify Gregor Zamza's tragedy. While he retains his human nature while turning into an insect, the real tragedy is that his relatives and people around him are moving away from human nature and reaching the point of disgust and hatred for him.

Gregor Zamza's transformation from a human to an insect leads to his physical, social, and spiritual isolation. Gregor's metamorphosis forces him to rethink who he really is: "The severe wound that had tormented Gregor for more than a month (no one dared to remove the apple, and it remained in his body

like a memento), this severe wound, despite his current sad and disgusting appearance, reminded even his father that Gregor was still a member of his family, that he could not be treated like an enemy, but that it was necessary to endure him, just endure him, without hating him, according to family duty" [22.55.]. The changes in Gregor Zamza's relationship with his family are shown so skillfully in the work that the severe wound inflicted by the apple, on the one hand, is a symbol of Gregor Zamza's complete isolation from society and his family, and on the other hand, it indicates that his father's Gregor Zamza is still a member of the family, that he should be treated not with hatred, but with patience, that is, the feeling of duty and responsibility in the family is a "cement" that unites people even in the most difficult situations.

The work ends sadly. The hero of the work, Gregor Zamza, dies "disgustingly". Gregor Zamza's death is the end of his endless suffering, the end of his sacrifice for his family: "He hardly felt the rotten apple behind him and the wound around it, which had managed to become covered with dust. He thought of his family with kindness and love. He also believed that he should disappear from here even more firmly than his sister had said. He was in such pure and calm thoughts until the clocks in the tower struck three" [23.68.]. The fact that Gregor Zamza gropes in the dark, cannot move due to the abundance of things thrown haphazardly into the room, and the disappearance of the pain that was piercing his body shows his readiness for death, his lack of fear of death, and the fact that he still thinks of his family with kindness and love expresses that he does not regret the sacrifice he made for them. The fact that he believes that he should disappear from here even more firmly than his sister said embodies his love for his family, his willingness to sacrifice himself for their happiness.

Death is one of the greatest fears for man, but at the same time it is an integral part of life. It encourages us to appreciate life and enjoy every moment. But there is another issue: death reveals the true nature of man and those around him. The hypocrisy of his sister, who hated him and reached the point of giving him up yesterday, reveals his true face: "he has lost so much weight. After all, he hasn't tasted anything for a long time. No matter what food we brought him, he wouldn't touch anything" [24.69.]. We assess Greta's saying "he has lost so much weight" and showing compassion for Gregor Zamza as an attempt to hide her true feelings. The father's arrogance, disrespect for his son's dignity, lack of a sense of gratitude, and readiness to destroy his son's memory are clearly visible in his selfish words: forget the past now, think about me too. [25.72.]. It follows that Gregor Zamza's life has turned into a mirage. No one appreciated his sacrifice for his family and work. Everyone went their own way. Even though Gregor Zamza, who worked tirelessly for the well-being of his family all his life, is forgotten, the family's life continues in a different spirit. Their abandonment of the house where they lived with their children – that creature, their exchange for a new apartment, their discussion of future plans, are based on the ideas of forgetting the past, striving to start a new life, and new opportunities emerging even after death. It is worth repeating once again that how quickly Gregor Zamza's memory is forgotten confirms how worthless his sacrifice for his family is.

Conclusion. Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" calls for deep reflection on the importance of human potential in modern society, the causes and consequences that lead to its devaluation. The tragedy of Gregor Zamza is a symbolic expression of society's attitude towards man, its failure to value his dignity, and its view of him only as a "creature" or "force" that brings benefits. In modern society, too, many people are unable to realize their potential, lose their identity under the pressure of society, and turn into "Gregor Zamza" and this process continues continuously. Every era has its own "Kafka" its own "Gregor", its own "Greta", its own "tenants".

If human dignity is not valued in society, if they are not given the opportunity to realize their potential, any help will be useless until they give meaning to their own lives. If a person does not value himself, does not give meaning to his life, no one can help him. Therefore, in order to build a humane society,

first of all, each person must take responsibility for his own life and get rid of the fate of “the Zamza condition”.

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