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What is the significance of the main character Gregor's transformation into a giant insect in "Metamorphosis" by Kafka?

Franz Kafka is the author of a novella titled "Metamorphosis", created in 1915. The narrative centers on Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman who is transformed into a gigantic insect. While his family is shocked by his look and unsure of what to do with him, Gregor strives to comprehend and adapt to his new shape. Gregor grows more alone and unable to converse with people as the reality of becoming an insect gets to him. Isolation, alienation, and the dehumanization of contemporary society are all issues that the novella touches on as the time passes by and he ends up dying alone in his room as his family feels relieved of not having to deal with his presence anymore. Gregor's transformation reveals the author's opinion on society pressures, individual identity, and personality in the face of conformity.

The story's examination of alienation and identity is quite strong. As a result of his change, Gregor becomes an outcast and is no longer able to contribute to society in the same way, as demonstrated by Kafka. In addition to highlighting the value of empathy and compassion for individuals who are marginalized, the narrative provides a critique of how society views those who are different or disabled.

The meaning of the main character Gregor in Kafka's "Metamorphosis" becoming a giant insect has been subject to several interpretations. Firstly, it can be interpreted as a personal remark on Kafka's own struggles with existential anxiety and the degrading impacts of contemporary society. Since he must put in a lot to maintain his family, Gregor's life is demonstrated to be controlled by his employment as a salesperson. The metamorphosis might be seen as an expression of the pressure that Gregor is under due to the requirements of his career and the expectations of his family.

Gregor's transition is also a critique of capitalism's dehumanizing impacts and how labor can take over a person's life. The narrative demonstrates how Gregor's family first depends on him for financial assistance; yet, after he is not able to help his family anymore, they reject him and see him as a burden. And, since he increasingly loses contact with his human identity, he becomes more and more separated from people around him since no one can understand or relate to him, struggling to fit in with society's standards while also feeling lost and alone. It turns into a feeling of detachment and helplessness towards his family due to the transformation into an insect. He no longer possesses the feeling of belonging in the human world and is despised even by his own family.

Another possible interpretation is the metamorphosis of Gregor representing suppressed emotions that he is unable to express in his life, such as worries, concerns, or wants. His insect appearance is both familiar and strange, giving a sensation of anxiety and discomfort. This is what is explained in Freud's psychology with the idea of the uncanny. The term "uncanny" refers to the sensation of unease or discomfort that develops when something appears to be both strange and yet familiar at the same time, as well as a sense of dread or horror. The author

explored this idea linking it with the return of repressed ideas and anxieties of the main character.

Different from other interpretations, this one consists of a metaphor for Gregor's transformation. The alteration of Gregor into an insect as a representation of disease or incapacity. Gregor's shift affects both his relationship with his family and his sense of self, much to how a serious sickness or physical limitation may fundamentally alter one's vision of the world and interpersonal interactions. The tale also serves as an analysis on how society views individuals who are unique or have a disability. Due to his change, Gregor is now an outcast and unable to function in society as before.

The narrative demonstrates how societal marginalization and exclusion frequently affect those who are different. The way his family responded to his metamorphosis may be a reflection of how stigmatizing and marginalizing society is toward persons who are different. His family is initially shocked by his metamorphosis, and as he gets more and more transformed, they find it difficult to understand and take care of him. Kafka utilizes the metaphor of Gregor's insect-like body to examine issues of social exclusion, alienation, and the fear of otherness that frequently accompany sickness and disability. The insect-like body Gregor occupies is a potent emblem of his bodily and mental suffering.

Overall, the characters' responses to Gregor's change are especially troubling since they treat him only like a bug rather than as a human. The investigation of Gregor's mental condition and his progressive separation from his prior human existence is one of the story's most intriguing elements. Kafka uses Gregor's change to illustrate how society views those who are different or who fall short of expectations.

I remember the week we had a discussion about “Metamorphosis” by Kafka. Back then, I remember myself thinking that the transformation into an insect was a metaphor. Personally, I believed that this tale was a cultural observation. How someone is so important to someone else while they are serving them, but once they are unable to do so any longer, they lose their worth. I interpreted his "turning into an insect" as a metaphor for the transformations that we all go through throughout time, ones that are not always encouraged by our family. In the instance of the narrative, they treated him so poorly following his adjustments that he worried he was losing his "sense of self" however, in my perspective, he was always there, but as individuals adapt and grow, he was doing the same thing.

As I'm writing this analyses and I had more time to dive deeper into the tale, I would say that now I believe is a critique to Kafka's own struggle with anxiety and modern society, which makes even more sense when I realized that his work is under the week of “Modernity”. It is a very intense and thought provoking story that makes us brainstorm the world we live in nowadays. The interesting thing of it all is that his work from 1915 still resonates with our society nowadays, bringing up the point that even with the time passing by, we will still face a lot of changes along the way and will have to adapt towards them, but even the changes being different, the societal issue itself is the same. And, it's something that we have to work on as a society, otherwise it will still be resonating to future readers of this story in 100 years.

Although it is very unfortunate that we are still facing the same issue as a society years later, that also proves how incredible Kafka's skill as a writer is. In summary, reading “Metamorphosis” by Kafka is an amazing experience. It makes you use your imagination and critical thinking, while representing important and serious issues in society that have to be talked about.

Resources

Puchner, M., Akbari, S. C., Denecke, W., Fuchs, B., Levine, C., Lewis, P., & Wilson, E. R.

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