

# Philosophical context in franz kafka's metamorphosis

Profession, Writer



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Intro Kafka never fully embraced Zionism, and he remained ambivalent toward Judaism. He was more openly interested in anarchism and socialism, but was not committed to either philosophy because he refused to completely align himself with an established worldview. Modernism -Kafka was exposed to Modernism. -Modernism was a movement during the late 19th century and early twentieth century of scientific, technological and industrial development. Modernists shared a desire to create literature that was new and different. Their belief was to capture the reality of modern life and that rapid change cause uncertainty, disjointedness, and alienation. Kafka wrote about the absurdity of existence, the alienating experience of modern life, and the cruelty of authoritarian power. -The word Kafkaesque has passed into the literature to describe an unsettling, disorienting, nightmarish world that is at once both fearful and menacing in its ambiguity and complexity. Kafka's views on Humanity Speaking with his friend Max Brod, Kafka once explained that he thought human beings were trapped in a hopeless world. This belief never leaves Kafka's writing, and it is present in The Metamorphosis, where Gregor's only option, in the end, is to die.

Ironically, the story ends on an optimistic note, as the family puts itself back together. Existentialism -Kafka never studied philosophy but he was friends with several intellectuals and read works by famous philosophers. -Several people think of Kafka as an existentialist. -Existentialism is a 20th-century philosophical movement, which assumes that people are entirely free and thus responsible for what they make of themselves. -The early 19th century philosopher Soren Kierkegaard is regarded as the father of existentialism. - Franz Kafka was an important literary author in existentialism.

His story, which is surreal, is one of many modernist literary works that was influenced by existentialist philosophy. -The Metamorphosis advances the existential view of the responsibility of the individual to maintain a balance between work and leisure. If one chooses to devote their life entirely to work, they are no more than droning insects, yet if they devote their lives to leisure, they are no better off. -Gregor initially chooses society over himself, which in turn transformed him into the working drone he was. After his physical transformation, he is forced to reassert his focus to himself, and society abandons him.

Nietzsche and Kierkegaard -Kierkegaard and Nietzsche considered the role of making free choices, Kierkegaard's knight of faith and Nietzsche's Übermensch are representative of people who exhibit Freedom and define the nature of their own existence. -Nietzsche's ideal individual invents his or her own values and creates the terms under which they excel. -Gregor's monstrous insect form represents Gregor's radical refusal to submit to society's values like Nietzschean Übermensch. Martin Buber -Kafka was friends with philosopher and existentialist Martin Buber.

They would send each other letters and these letters were later published in Buber's The letters of Martin Buber: a life of dialogue. Together they discussed existentialism and were part of a literary circle. They were both Jewish and anarchists. -Shared existentialist rejection of achieving real satisfaction in life. Characters in Kafka's tales are left wanting something, needing a connection to the world that can never be made complete. Sigmund Freud -Kafka was familiar with the newly published works of

Sigmund Freud. -However, he was no Freudian disciple and wrote negatively of psychoanalytic theory. But Gregor's conflict with his father and the dream-like quality of the story relates to Freud's analysis of dreams and the Oedipal complex: - A subconscious sexual desire in a child, especially a male child, for the parent of the opposite sex, usually accompanied by hostility to the parent of the same sex. - All sons feel they are in competition with their father and often feel in a battle against the father. Father vs. Son in Metamorphosis -Gregor seems to have a difficult relationship with his father. His family rejects him, and his main enemy is his father, who wants to kill him. When Gregor's father sees Gregor in his insect form, he shakes his fist at him and glares at him fiercely. Later he attacks him with a newspaper and a walking stick, and, bombards him with apples, causing him serious injury. - He also makes sarcastic comments, suggesting for instance that Gregor's room is untidy. -It also turns out that he has deceived Gregor about the family finances, thus extending the length of Gregor's employment at the hateful traveling salesman's job. -He also does not seem particularly appreciative of the money Gregor has been bringing in. Gregor's disappointment over the lack of appreciation is one of the few critical thoughts he thinks about his father. -He also thinks briefly that the money his father hid from him could have been used to free him from his job sooner, but he quickly dismisses the thought by saying that no doubt his father knew best. -Basically Gregor's father abuses him, but he suppresses his angry responses and accepts his downtrodden state. Marx and Kafka - Karl Marx believed alienation is a result of capitalism. - Kafka was influenced by his political philosophy of Marxism. A Marxist would read Gregor's inability

to work as a protest against the dehumanizing and alienating effects of working in a capitalistic society. -Gregor Samsa, the protagonist, signifies the proletariat, or the working class, and his unnamed manager represents the bourgeoisie. -The conflict that arises between the two after Gregor's metamorphosis, which leaves him unable to work, represents the dehumanizing structure of class relations. -Finally, the results of Gregor's inability to work is abandonment by his family and death. -The words he chooses to describe his job, "torture," "worrying," and "miserable" show his discontent with his job.

He says, "If I didn't hold back for my parents' sake, I would have quit long ago". It is only economic necessity that keeps him going to work everyday.

Historical Context -In 1912, when Kafka was writing "The Metamorphosis," Prague was a city of ethnic tensions, primarily between Czechs and Germans and between Czechs and Jews. -Economically, the late nineteenth century marked the climax of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. -Industrial development within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was not as advanced as in Europe but Prague was one of the most advanced and prosperous cities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, along with the prosperity created by the new industrialism came dislocation and disruption of the old ways, largely as a result of the shift of large numbers of people from the countryside to the city. Industrialization also meant the appearance of large numbers of jobs, for both factory and office workers, which was hardwork. And the school system enforced a system of routine learning that seemed relentlessly joyless—at least it seemed joyless to young Kafka, who hated

school, just as he hated his first full? time job. Long hours at boring jobs create alienation. And oppressive employers like Gregor's were normal.