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The Cause And Effect Of Modern Loneliness

In Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," the protagonist Gregor Samsa's amazing transformation appears to be both the cause and the effect of his loneliness. One morning, Samsa wakes up in the form of a giant bug. Due to his predicament, he is unable to continue with his normal day-to-day life as a traveling salesman. Previous to his transformation, he was a lonely workaholic with no time for family or friends. However, his transformation does not help him become more social, as now he is simply a monster to the rest of the world. Formerly the sole breadwinner of his family, Gregor becomes a burden as his father, mother, and sister must all find ways to earn money and sustain the household. Over time, the stress of having to take care of a creature such as him is too great for them, and Samsa, realizing this, starves himself to death to relieve them. Previous to his transformation, Samsa worked as a traveling salesman and focused entirely on his job, never making any time for a social life. When he started working and bearing the cost of the entire household, "the family... took the money with gratitude and he was glad to provide it, although there was no longer much warm affection given in return" (Kafka 13). Gregor slowly separated himself from other human beings, making him seem like a cold and uncaring workaholic. This loneliness was then expressed by his transformation from a human to a bug. This change allowed him to finally be with his family. This change is noticeable when Samsa takes his time to observe his family. "What a quiet life it is the family lead", said Gregor to himself, and, gazing into the darkness, felt a great pride that he was able to provide a life like

that in such a nice home for his sister and parents” (Kafka 10). However, the change also separates him from his family in a new way, as they no longer accept him as a human and a part of their family. Even his sister Grete, the only family member whom he remained marginally close with, stopped caring for him as she no longer saw him as her brother. She’s the driving force behind Gregor’s suicide, as he overhears her shout, ““You've got to get rid of the idea that that's Gregor. We've only harmed ourselves by believing it for so long. How can that be Gregor?’” (Kafka 26). Thus follows Gregor’s decision to let himself starve to death in order to relieve his family of his burden. It is Gregor’s loneliness that transforms him and then ultimately drives him to his end.

It is a common and misguided belief that technological advancements in communication only isolate users and negatively impact the quality of social interaction. Nevertheless, statistics from different studies show that interaction through technology does not correlate with decreased interaction in real life. Data from a National Geographic survey in 2000 shows that “face-to-face and telephone contact between community members continue, complemented by the Internet’s ease in connecting geographically dispersed people and organizations. Indeed, 91 percent of those who use email daily are high in telephone contact compared to only 57 percent who only rarely email” (Wellman et al. 154). Clearly, the usage of technological means of communication has not crippled our ability to interact in real-life, and, in fact, it has slightly enhanced our connection with others. Technology has not replaced real-life, it simple creates new and more personalized communities. This is not a loss, “but rather a complex, fundamental transformation in the nature of community” (Wellman et al. 161). The benefits of communication through technology also greatly outweighs any drawbacks it might have. This technology has made new

communities that span across the globe rather than within geographic boundaries. This global connection allows families to keep in touch with one another across oceans, brings news of world events to the public within seconds, and provides an enormous wealth of collective knowledge from all around the globe. Users of such technology have been “glocalized” and are “involved in both local and long-distance relationships,” thus making space another obstacle overcome with the help of technology (Wellman et al. 162). The numerous benefits of technology clearly make it an irreplaceable presence in the modern world.

Works Cited

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Works Consulted

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