

Thematic Concern in Metamorphosis!

Rumi as a Mystic Poet!

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Major thematic concerns in metamorphosis

Franz Kafka (3 July 1883 – 3 June 1924) was a German-speaking Bohemian novelist and short-story writer, widely regarded as one of the major figures of 20th-century literature. His work fuses elements of realism and the fantastic. Kafka was an existentialist writer. It can be concluded that Kafka's popularity with French existentialists is due to his work, **The Metamorphosis**, an example of existentialist literature. His existentialist characters wrestle with guilt and anxiety over their decisions in chaotic, meaningless environments. Jean-Paul Sartre credited Kafka as wanting to "*describe the human condition*". The metamorphosis is Kafka's most enduring work. It was published during his lifetime.

The novel starts when the protagonist, Gregor Samsa wakes up from his disturbed sleep, having overslept and still lying in his bed on a working day, reflecting on his dreary job as a travelling salesman, when he discovers that he has transformed into a monstrous vermin. He is shaken to the core but his family treats him well despite of them being scared of him. Slowly he starts enjoying his life in his new body but ironically his family wants to dispense with him now. Gregor understands that he is no longer wanted, stops eating and dies of starvation. His body is discovered by the charwoman, who alerts his family and then disposes off the corpse. The family is relieved and moves to a smaller apartment to save some money.

Kafka's *Metamorphosis* was a masterpiece and it had many themes. Most important of which are discussed below.

The Metamorphosis deals with an absurd, or wildly irrational, event. Gregor waking up one morning to discover that he has transformed into an insect is beyond the boundaries of natural occurrences. It is physically impossible to happen. Throughout the whole story, the reason of Gregor's transformation is not explained which shows **the absurdity of life**. The evidence is that Gregor has always been a good son and loving brother even taking the job he dislikes to feed his family. He is even planning to get his sister, Grate into a music school. There is no evidence that he deserved this fate. Rather, all the family members treat this incident as a normal occurrence as if it was as simple as catching a cold. All these elements together give the story a distinct overtone of absurdity.

When Gregor first wakes up as a vermin, he's more concerned about how his transformation will affect his ability to carry out his duties than the actual physical fact of having turned into a repulsive insect. At first, it seems as though Kafka is making a funny, absurdist allegory about the disconnect between the way we perceive ourselves and the way others perceive us. This is true on some level, but the **dichotomy of body and mind** in the story is deeper and more complex. Crucially, the difference between Gregor's human mind and animal body begins to fade as Gregor spends more time as an insect. Eventually, such as when he scuttles around frantically when his father frightens him, his thought processes seem human, but his conclusions are decisively insect-like. He struggles when his sister removes his furniture, which linked him to his humanity, but ultimately prefers the comfort of a bare room. Gregor's mind follows his body in its descent into insect-hood—his physical shape determines his behaviors and preferences. *The Metamorphosis*, as a whole, makes a case not just that the body and mind are linked, but also that the body is the

more powerful of the two. In Kafka's view, human reasoning is feeble and easily overcome by bodily realities

There is more than one **transformation** in the novella. Gregor's transformation is physical but Grete's transformation cannot be noticed immediately. After Gregor is transformed into a bug, he maintains his human intelligence and feeling, despite the pressing needs of his animal body. Gregor's behavior as an insect brings out how the other characters behave in an animalistic way. Their similarities demonstrate that human beings have an animal side that they cannot ignore. Grete transforms from a loving sister to being afraid to even look at Gregor but she still manages to bring him food and clean his room. But as time goes on, Grete grows older and her priorities change. It becomes easier for the family to ignore the fact that Gregor exists than to continue caring for him. But by the end, she gets exhausted and wishes for Gregor to die and stops bringing him food. His room is converted into a store room.

Guilt stems from family duty, and is Gregor's most powerful emotion. When he is transformed into an insect, Gregor is made unable to work by circumstances beyond his control. Despite the fact that his metamorphosis is not his fault, however, he is racked by guilt every time that the family mentions money or that he thinks about the pain that he has inadvertently inflicted on them by losing the ability to support them. Guilt, it turns out, is deadly, as Gregor realizes at the end that his life is the only thing keeping the family from a better life. He dies for them just as he lived for them: out of guilt.

Before his metamorphosis, Gregor is alienated from his job, his humanity, his family, and even his body, as we see from the fact that he barely notices his transformation. Gregor's family life after his transformation does not change drastically because his loss of relationship with the members of his family is nothing very new. It only takes his **alienation** from them to a new level. He is now physically detached from his family as opposed to the previous emotional detachment. Gregor feels completely alienated from his room and environment and, as a symbol of this, can't even see his street out the window.

At first, Gregor's family was sympathetic but they were relieved and happier after his death. The story portrays shifting roles of **sympathy and responsibility**. The family's loss of sympathy for Gregor stems from the trouble he's caused them financially and the way he has embarrassed them in front of guests, but the biggest block to their sympathy is his loss of his human shape and behavior. Grete is the character with the most sympathy for Gregor, but even she reaches her limit after the disastrous violin concert. She is so desperate to get rid of him that she refuses to believe that it was her brother and characterizes him as rude and selfish. At first, Gregor was the one with the weight of three more people on his shoulders but later, the family takes care of Gregor after his metamorphosis only so far as duty seems to necessitate. He is kept locked in his room and brought food.

In the end, his room is barely cleaned and his sister no longer cares about what food she brings him. Her actions are routine, as she only wants to do enough that she can claim she has fulfilled her duty. When she decides she has had enough, she insists that their duty to him has been fulfilled:

"I don't think anyone could reproach us in the slightest," she says as she suggests that they need to get rid of him

Rumi as a Mystic Poet

Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi famous as Rumi, a 13th century Muslim poet, jurist, theologian and Sufi mystic, born in Balkh and died in Konya, now in Turkey. Known as Maulana and Maulawi (master), he is regarded as one of the greatest Sufi spiritual masters and poets, famous for his epic Masnavi-i Manavi ("Spiritual Couplets"), which widely influenced mystical thought and literature throughout the Muslim world. Upon his death, his followers, and his son, founded the **Mevlevi Order**, also known as the **Order of the Whirling Dervishes**. Rumi met many of the great Sufi poets. For example, as a young boy he met the **Sufi Master, Fariduddin Attar**. However the most important turning point in Rumi's life was when he met the wandering dervish **Sham al- Din**. Rumi saw in Sham a divine presence. This meeting and their close mystical relationship were instrumental in awakening Rumi's latent spirituality and intense devotion. It was at this point Rumi abandoned his academic career and began to write his mystical poetry.

Behind all Rumi's poetry is the essential theme of the **longing and searching for union** with the divine. His poetry was a reflection of his own inner consciousness. Ironically Rumi said that no words could adequately explain the experience of mystical union. Rumi's influence has spread across nations and ethnic divisions. His poems have been widely translated into most of the world's languages and have influenced literature hugely, specially Persian, Turkish, Urdu and Pashto.

Sufism, or Tasavwuf, is the inward mystic philosophy, the spiritual dimension that the great mystic poets have followed. It considers the Holy Prophet Muhammad as the perfect being who exemplifies the morality of God. Sufis belong to different orders, congregations, formed around a grand master. These strive for perfection of worship.

Classical Sufi scholars have defined Tasavwuf as "a science whose objective is the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God". It is the "repentance from sin, the purging of contemptible qualities and evil traits of character, and adornment with virtues and good character."

Devotion to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is an exceptionally strong practice within Sufism. Rumi attributes his self-control and abstinence from worldly desires as qualities attained by him through the guidance of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) . Rumi states,

"I 'sewed' my two eyes shut from [desires for] this world and the next – this I learned from Muhammad."

Sufi whirling originated and is still practiced by the Sufi Dervishes of the Mevlevi order. It is a dance through which dervishes aim to reach the source of all perfection. This is sought through abandoning one's egos, personal desires, listening to the music, focusing on God, and spinning one's body in repetitive circles, seen as a symbolic imitation of planets in the Solar System orbiting the sun.

While studying Islamic theology the spiritual practice involved meditating on Rumi's poetry. Themes emerged that paralleled the emotional and spiritual journey. His poetry spoke to the struggle with releasing what constricts from opening up to the sacredness of each moment. His words conveyed that earthly troubles dissipate as you allow God to live through you, and to not define yourself by what is 'out there'.

“The poetry of Rumi spoke of endeavour to live in
the earthly and spiritual realms simultaneously. The beauty of
his devotion offered peace and hope.”

Rumi's poetry resonates with the perennial thirst for the soul's knowledge and the desire to surrender to the will of God. It also speaks of personal challenge to break through prisons of doubt and aloofness by returning to the truth of spiritual nature and connection to God.

A new rule, a new law has been born:
break all the glasses and fall toward the glassblower.

When Rumi died his body was interred and a shrine, the *Green Tomb*, was erected over his place of burial. His epitaph reads

‘When we are dead, seek not our tomb in the earth,
but find it in the hearts of men’.

In conclusion, Rumi's mystical poetry represents an inward journey of spiritual ascent through mind and love to the Perfect One. In this journey, the seeker symbolically turns towards the truth, grows through love, abandons the ego, finds the truth and arrives at the Perfect. The seeker then returns from this spiritual journey, with greater maturity, to love and to be of service to the whole of creation without discrimination.
