In what ways does ‘Metamorphoses’ relate to the world today?

The main character in ‘Metamorphoses’, Gregor, transformed into an insect one day. After the transformation, he experienced many things. I think this book reflects Franz Kafka’s deep mind and that Gregor is Franz Kafka himself. Through this book, I can find many things that relate to the world today.

Gregor thought that he was isolated from other people. ‘His many legs, which were pathetically thin compared to the rest of his bulk, flickered helplessly before his eyes.’ \(^1\) I think that ‘many legs’ represents Gregor’s complicated thoughts in his deep mind and that ‘the rest of his bulk’ stands for other people. Gregor felt very lonely and helpless, and he also did not know what to do. So, he felt helpless. On the other hand, the other people composed a large group and they may think that Gregor was weird. Nowadays, sentimental people may sometimes feel that they are lonely and different from others. Human beings’ minds are very complex and hard to understand. We may often feel sad owing to some trivial matters. At this moment, if no one finds ourselves unhappy, we may think that no one care about us.

Gregor felt that nobody wanted to understand and to listen to him. ‘Apparently his words were no longer understandable even though they were clear enough to

him, clearer than before, perhaps because his ear had become accustomed to
their sound.\textsuperscript{2} When he transformed into an insect, his entire family member cannot
understand his words. In Gregor’s deep mind, he felt disappointed and depressed
because nobody understood him. He just wanted to be understood and be cared by his
family. Kafka also wanted his family’s love, like Gregor. ‘The hearty man is
inclined, shrugging his shoulders and rather disdainfully, to gloss over how
intensely the sensitive man looks for confirmation of himself, and of his
innermost being, for faith and acceptance, to his own family and breaks down
when he feels that he isn’t understood in his own home.’\textsuperscript{3} Through this sentence, I
can find that Kafka was eager for his family’s love eagerly. He wanted to be loved by
his parents. His parents were all very busy, so they did not have much time to
accompany Kafka. We can see this from the following sentence. ‘As his mother was
busy all day in the warehouse, and his father couldn’t do without his
company-particularly for a game of cards-in the evenings either, Franz’s
education was entrusted chiefly to governesses and soulless schools.’\textsuperscript{4} His

\textsuperscript{2} Franz Kafka, The Metamorphosis and Other Stories (New York : Fine Creative
Media, 2003), p.15.

\textsuperscript{3} Max Brad, Franz Kafka : A Biography（New York : Da Capo Press, 1995）, p.34

childhood was full of loneliness. In the modern society, parents are all busy with their work. They have little time to keep company with their children. Thus, they may send their children to cram schools. Their children may spend a lot of time in the cram schools. By doing so, children may feel distant from their parents. And the relationship between parents and children is getting worse.

Gregor’s sister cared about him, but she was still scared to talk to him. ‘Once during the long evening, one of the side doors and then the other was opened a small crack and quickly shut again; someone had apparently had the urge to come in but had then thought better of it.’ In his sister’s deep mind, she also cared about him, and she thought the insect was not her brother. She wanted to see his ‘true’ brother, not a monstrous creature, and she was also afraid of seeing the insect’s disgusting behavior. People nowadays sometimes want to do something risky, but they always feel afraid that they may face difficulties during courses. So, they may hesitate to do anything to advance and just wait for someone’s help. Their hesitation may result in their regret in the future, like this story ending up with Gregor’s death.

We can see that Kafka is pessimistic through ‘Metamorphoses.’ At the end of the story, Gregor died. ‘It is clear that Kafka derived a great amount of his

knowledge of the world and of life, as well as his skeptical pessimism, from his experiences in the office, from coming into contact with workmen suffering under injustice, and from having to deal with the long-drawn-out process of official work, and from the stagnating life of files.\textsuperscript{6} Kafka was always felt annoyed and he also wanted someone to help him escaped from his world filling pessimism.

‘Franz had ask him‘ if he couldn’t somehow help me to get out of all this, and if he couldn’t take me somewhere where I could at last set my hand to something fresh.\textsuperscript{7} (He refers to a friend of Kafka’s boyhood, Oskar Pollak.) Through this, we can know how eagerly Kafka wanted to escape. Some people may sometimes want to escape from this chaotic world. They think that there are too many annoying troubles and little love in the world today. Most people nowadays always care about only themselves. Thus, the world is full of indifference.

‘Yes, but was it possible to sleep through that furniture rattling ringing?’\textsuperscript{8} Gregor was not able to sleep soundly owing to rattling sound. However, in my opinion, it is not rattling sound that disturbed Gregor. His mind was full of

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irritating matters. Therefore, he did not sleep well. In the modern society, people live convenient lives, but we have more unhappiness than people before. We are always worried about many things around us, like Gregor. So, we always cannot have a nice sleep.

In conclusion, although Kafka wrote this book in the year 1915 far from now, we can also see many similarities that relate to the world today, like isolation and indifference. After reading this story, I will show much love to my family and always care about people around me. I am convinced that the world will become harmonious if everyone care about others more.

Bibliography


