

**TYPES OF FREEDOM IN FRANZ KAFKA'S *THE METAMORPHOSIS*:  
AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE**



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**APPROVAL**

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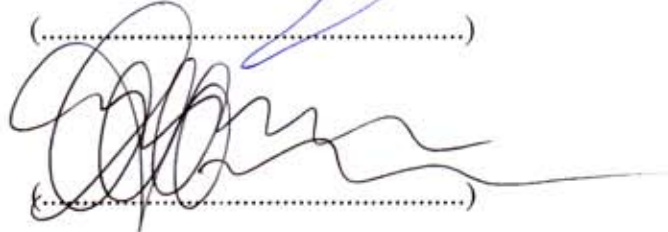
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I hereby confirm that the article entitled “**Types of Freedom in Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis: an Existentialism Perspective***” is an original and authentic work written by myself and it has satisfied the rules and regulations of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta with respect to plagiarism. I certify that all quotations and the sources of information have been fully referred and acknowledged accordingly.

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# TYPES OF FREEDOM IN FRANZ KAFKA'S *THE METAMORPHOSIS*: AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE

## Abstract

The purposes of this study are: (1) to identify the types of freedom in the novel, (2) to describe how freedom is depicted in the novel, and (3) to reveal the underlying reason why Franz Kafka addressed individual freedom in the novel. This study uses descriptive qualitative method. This method is intended to get a clear picture of the object to be analyzed. The data was collected in the form of words contained in the novel. The technique of data collection was note-taking. Based on the analysis, there are two types of freedom in the Franz Kafka's novels, namely *Freedom From* and *Freedom To*. Freedom described through characters, through setting and through style. Freedom is something that is expected by every individual without exception, because with the freedom every individual was capable of doing anything in life without the intervention of others. This studies also found that the world view of Kafka in creating *The Metamorphosis* novel was the of thought arising from the desire to be free from all the authoritarian acts.

Keywords: Types of freedom, Franz Kafka's novels, Existentialist Perspective

## Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) Untuk mengidentifikasi jenis kebebasan dalam novel (2) Untuk menjelaskan bagaimana kebebasan digambarkan dalam novel (3) Untuk mengungkap alasan Franz Kafka menyertakan kebebasan individu dalam novelnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Metode ini dimaksudkan untuk mendapatkan gambaran yang jelas tentang objek yang akan dianalisis. Data dikumpulkan dalam bentuk kata-kata yang terdapat dalam novel. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan metode mencatat sebagai metode pengumpulan data. Berdasarkan analisis, ada dua jenis kebebasan dalam novel Franz Kafka, yaitu Kebebasan Dari dan Kebebasan Untuk. Kebebasan digambarkan melalui karakter, melalui setting dan melalui gaya. Kebebasan adalah sesuatu yang diharapkan oleh setiap individu tanpa terkecuali, karena dengan kebebasan setiap individu mampu melakukan apapun dalam hidupnya tanpa campur tangan pihak lain dan setiap individu bebas pada apa yang menjadi pilihannya. Studi ini juga menemukan bahwa pandangan dunia tentang Kafka dalam menciptakan novel *Metamorfosis* adalah pemikiran yang timbul dari keinginan untuk bebas dari semua tindakan otoriter.

Kata Kunci: Jenis Kebebasan, novel Franz Kafka, Perspektif Existentialis

## 1. Introduction

The study on *The Metamorphosis* has been widely done based on different attractive issues and perspectives. There are nine previous studies that also analyze *The Metamorphosis*. The previous studies of *The Metamorphosis* that the present study found used three approaches, namely psychology approach, objective approach and expressive approach. There are six previous studies that used psychological approach, namely, Linda (2015), Sarah (2013), Happy (2016), Joachem (2013), Yunidar (2011), and Vita (2007). Another to studies were conducted by Anita (2014) and Dian (2013), based on objective approach and from expressive approach was conducted by Wiwid (2012)

Based on the review above, the previous studies are different from this study. This research focuses on the problem of how to describe the main characters is freedom in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* novel by using existentialist perspective. The

similarity of the research above is the method, descriptive qualitative and have similarities that both examine the same object of *The Metamorphosis* novel by Franz Kafka. The current research uses this type of freedom by using an existentialist perspective approach, because during this time there were no previous studies that discussed about it. So the present study entitled “Types of Freedom in Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*: an Existentialist Perspective”.

Everyone have their own way in life. And they need freedom to decide their way. When there is no prohibition to do something, that’s name freedom. The purpose of human life is to achieve happiness, whereas happiness cannot be achieved if one does not actualize it in an action, in the form of freedom such as freedom to act, speak, or think.

Humans are the only creatures that have the freedom to choose their own way of life and the ability to develop them so that freedom is the right to determine our own lives. According to Anna, D.N (2013, p. 232), “Freedom is a distinctive feature of man different from other beings in the world. Man can determine his own fate freely”. It is also stated by Champlin (2007, p. 3), “He that true freedom means self-determination or the freedom to create one's own identity.” According to Preble (2016, p. 2), “Human liberty is the foundation of a good and just society”. Therefore, according to Bober (2014) individual freedom also known as individualism means one person has the ability to be independent of them and each individual has virtues and importance. They all have equal right.

In the context of the relationship between government and citizens, freedom is more emphasis on the absence of state intervention or restrictions on the freedom of its citizens. Therefore, the freedom to have all the rights that have been arranged in human rights should be given by the state to all individuals that exist within its sovereign territory. Indeed, human freedom should be regulated in the law. But if it turns out a product such legislation contains discriminatory intervention, then the legislation should not be applied. This is because the dimensions of these freedoms will be constrained by regulations that can eliminate human freedom. And also the concept of political freedom is closely connected with the concepts of civil liberties and human rights, which in democratic societies are usually afforded legal protection from the state.

In this study, the researcher focuses on the problem of how to describe freedom from the main character in Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* novel. The problem statements of the study are as follows: (1) What are the types of freedom in the novel? (2) How is freedom depicted in the novel? (3) Why did Franz Kafka address freedom in the novel? The objectives of the research are as follows: (1) to identify the types of freedom in the

novel, (2) to describe how freedom is depicted in the novel, and (3) to reveal the underlying reason why Franz Kafka addressed individual freedom in the novel.

## **2. Research Method**

This study uses descriptive qualitative method. According to Bogdan & Taylor (1975, p. 1) “Qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data in the form of words, both written and verbal, and the behavior that is observed” and while Sumanto (1990, p. 6), stated that “Descriptive qualitative research is the research employing the method of collecting, describing, classifying and analyzing the data and then drawing conclusion”. This method is intended to get a clear picture of the object to be analyzed. Data collected in the form of words contained in the novel is not a number. The primary data source, the researcher adopts texts in Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* novel. While the secondary data sources, it consists of dissertation, thesis, journal, internet references, and other references related to the issue.

The technique of collection data, the researcher uses note-taking as a method of collecting data, they are as follows: (1) Reading *The Metamorphosis* novel written by Franz Kafka repeatedly; (2) Creating a synopsis of *The Metamorphosis* novel; (3) Taking notes of important parts from data source. After all data have been collected, the researcher used a technique literature, namely written sources. The data obtained in the study then described the data. Besides, it also gathered other data that is as a supporter, so relevant with the expected results. To analyze the data, the researcher applies descriptive analysis, in which firstly the data is collected, secondly described the data and then finally analyzed the data. The stages accepted by the researcher to analyze the data.

## **3. Findings and Discussion**

### **a. Research Findings**

#### **1) Types of Freedom in the Novel**

Freedom is an absolute achievement for man and no one has any desire to live freely, but from every freedom so everyone also has responsibility and responsibility in life, therefore freedom can also be limited to those who get oppression from others; and freedom can be chosen for people who have the power and free will of themselves. According to Erich Fromm in Kozaryn (2014,p.1) there are two types of freedom, namely Freedom From and Freedom To, “Freedom From is to be no slave, to live in a free country, to have no coercion, to be free from restrictions and impediments, and Freedom To is to be

able to choose, to control and direct one's own life". Freedom From is lack of obstacles; Freedom To is presence of control.

There are several types of freedom that will be discussed about Kafka's novel namely: the first is the *Freedom From* and *Freedom To*. *Freedom From* is freedom which has a restriction; *Freedom To* is freedom the right to choose.

a) Freedom From

Freedom is the right of every individual. Even though not everybody has their own freedom. For example, everybody wants freedom over himself; however, there are some limitations that require following the rules to make the person is not entirely having the right to him. Everyone cannot fully possess the soul and body because the *Freedom From* has limitations to his freedom; this is due to the human empowerment to do so. For example, every individual is not entirely free of self as well as physical freedom, social freedom, even economic freedom not entirely owned by the individual itself. Hence, this freedom is a limited freedom so that whatever will be done have limitations and cannot go beyond the will of man himself.

Kafka describes the main character, Gregor, as a hard worker who always do the best for his family by doing the job as a salesman to pay off family debts; this is done by Gregor to take responsibility as a protector for his parents and younger sister named Grete.

(1) Freedom in the Social Environment

The freedom of the main character has limitations in some respects, such as when in Gregor's working place. He has to do a lot of jobs and also does not have much time to interact with his colleagues. Even when other workers enjoy a relaxed life before leaving for work, he cannot feel it because if he doing such a thing then he will get problems from his boss.

(2) Freedom in the Family Environment

After the injustices that occurred in Gregor's social life within the work environment, he also gets rough treatment from his family, even Gregor get physical violence committed by people around himself. It can be seen from the beginning of *The Metamorphosis* novel by Franz Kafka described that Gregor is full of suffering and how his physical appearance has changed. It made Gregor felt like trapped in a gruesome form and unable to do anything he wanted, because of a terrible physical changed.



After finding himself changed, Gregor spends more time in the room and ponders the fate that now befalls him.

b) Freedom To

Every individual has been endowed with unlimited freedom. This statement may seem confusing since each individual has the obvious limitations on the freedom of choice. However, there is no freedom (in the true sense) without responsibilities; and responsibilities are impossible without freedom. Clearly, physical and social constraints cannot be ignored in the way we make choices. But this is a fact Sartre received so far. It creates no contradiction as long as freedom is not defined by the ability to act. Freedom is somewhat understood as characteristic of the nature of consciousness, namely spontaneity. Everyone has decision to choose one of these actions as a meaningful action. If someone has another choice, it is not just a spontaneous decision, but it has consequences for the purpose itself. To express this, Sartre presents his idea of freedom as much as making choices, and cannot avoid making choices.

**2) Depiction of Freedom in the Novel**

Freedom depicted by several stages: (1) through character, (2) through setting, and (3) through style. From these stages can be obtained how the picture of freedom in the novel by Franz Kafka. Kafka understands when to describe the main and minor characters in the novel to make the data clear and strong. Franz Kafka discussed it in the novel because it is important for every human being. Where freedom is an absolute achievement for man and no one has no desire to live freely, According to Erich Fromm in Kozaryn (2014, p. 1) There are two types of freedom, namely *Freedom From* and *Freedom To*, "*Freedom From* is to be no slave, to live in a free country, to have no coercion, to be free from restrictions and impediments and *Freedom To* is to be able to choose, to control and direct one's own life".

a) Through Character

There are several characters that are discussed in this novel Kafka include: oppressed characters, oppressor characters, indebted characters, and mean characters. By using the analysis some of these characters, it can be understood how the characters written by Franz Kafka become interesting in this novel.

b) Through Setting

The settings of places discussed in this thesis are two houses and offices. It explained that the house represents a free life for Gregor and vice versa. While the office is a place that makes Gregor feel intimidated and lack of freedom.

c) Through Style

Franz Kafka's writing style in *The Metamorphosis* novel is so complicated, but his authentic and original writing technique is his conscious choice and basic attitude in writing. "One morning, as Gregor Samsa was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that in bed he had been changed into a monstrous verminous bug". That is the opening sentences of *The Metamorphosis* novel or in its original title "*Verwandlung*", one of Franz Kafka's hard-to-understand works. By using the analysis sentence type, diction, and symbol, it can be seen how the style of writing of Franz Kafka about *The Metamorphosis* novel.

**3) Underlying Reasons of Addressing Individual Freedom**

In some parts, *The Metamorphosis* novels presents Kafka's outpour in view of the dictatorship of a country, a family and a father who make many decisions in the family. If true that literary works are not far from the author's life and social conditions, this is also seen in the work of Kafka. Kafka's childhood was under the Nazi banner that was then in power of Germany. The outbreak of the First World War in mid-1914 influenced the work of *The Metamorphosis* novel. In 1919 he also wrote an undisclosed biography entitled "*Brief an den Vater*", as a sign of how difficult a sensitive child lives between the authority of his dictatorial father, firm stance, with his sentimental and loving mother. The letter signifies a difficulty in Kafka's life with his father's excessive power, so Kafka tries to make a truth in his doubts in a sensitive defense of his. Kafka also alludes to some of the problems of modern human who are required to pursue the necessities of life with routine work as well as issues of human egoism.

The pressure that Kafka experienced from childhood to adulthood, go through on some ideas or more influential ideas on works. Almost in all of his works, readers will always be able to find a picture of a tragic story that is always packed with languages that seem dynamic. Kafka may not be a person who likes to be guessed, but even so Kafka never covers up the emotional burst that is always be

poured in each of his writings. Several situations like loneliness, injustice, and anxiety that felt throughout his life has packed in such a way to be able to solve all the pain.

Existentialist that became the world view of Kafka in creating *The Metamorphosis* novel is the fruit of thought that arises from the desire to be free from all the authoritarian acts that bind Kafka until the end of his life. The illustration of the disharmony of the relationship between Gregor Samsa and his father (Herr Samsa) in the novel is a representation of the self-in-the-same relationship with the father (Hermann Kafka). In addition, the coherence between the structure of literary works and the structure of society also expressed through the description of the isolation Gregor's received as a form of representation of Jewish society life at that time. Kafka also shows his opposition to the application of the economic system of capitalism which is considered to be very detrimental to the workers. He shows it through the depiction of suffering experienced by Gregor during his becoming a wandering fabric merchant.

As the function of the worldview as a liaison between structures in literary works and the structures contained in society, the existentialist that became the Kafka world view in *The Metamorphosis* novel also has a similar function. The impact of the disharmony of the relationship between father and son, the desire to oppose the economic system of capitalism, and the pressure arising from the isolation received by the Jews, led to a thought in which the existence of each individual is something to be acknowledged. Kafka as if to affirm that his existence in the midst of his environment is not something that should be denied.

The death of Gregor described by Kafka in the end of *The Metamorphosis* is a representation of freedom as the ultimate goal of existentialist. Free in this case means that Gregor no longer needs to feel the pain he had from his family. Through this novel, Kafka implicitly suggests that as human beings, society needs to increase tolerance and empathy so that harmony can be achieved. In other words, Kafka also hopes that in the future the existence of every individual in this world can become more acknowledged.

#### **b. Discussion of the Findings**

Kafka is a very talented writer, but his authentic and original writing techniques are a conscious choice and his basic attitude in writing. In each of his writings Kafka

tried to convey what was being thought at the time and immediately poured through the writing so as to produce the usual wild work.

Novel *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka's has a relationship with the Austrian-Hungarian Prague community, according to Mastuti, L.D (2015, p 62) "In the 19th century to the 20th century, Europe underwent a massive revolution marked by revolution France, the industrial revolution in Britain, and Germany which began to improve the map of its power by nationalizing the surrounding areas". It proves that in each character's novel is reflected in Prague society at that time. As Wellek and Warren (1962, p. 89) state that "Literature has also a social function, which cannot be purely individual. Thus a large majority questions raised are, at least ultimately or by implication, social questions of tradition and convention, norms and genres, symbols and myths". Here can be seen clearly how Kafka wrote his novel that is still affected by the events around him, just as revealed by Wellek and Warren (1962, p. 90) also state that "literature is a mirror to the current social situation, it depicts some aspects of social reality".

The novel reflects its social conditions and everyday habitual that heading toward manners. This made the countries of Eastern Europe (then part of the Soviet Union) struggling to compete with the new powers of the European rulers, an era in which modernism begins to replace the belief system of God with a recognized power of science. Loyalty to the monarchy system was the foundation of the rulers in Europe began to fade and it affects the destruction of trust among people who have not been able to adjust to the new changes. This made the Jews ultimately victimized by political propaganda by anti-Semitic groups there. According to Sulhanudin, M. (2010, p, 4) *The Metamorphosis* novel by Franz Kafka, which will be examined in this study, was published in a modern European society situation in a crisis of nihilism. The absurdity of modern society's life is sharply criticized in the novel. The micro social practices that support Kafka's work are not only family, but also the organization where the author spends his adult life.

For the Austro-Hungarian community in particular, which became part of the social depiction in *The Metamorphosis* novel, in the early 20th century the people of that region were divided into the majority of anti-Semitic and Jewish minorities. Jews, who even centuries before had experienced the ups and downs of life in Europe because they are not recognized the existence because they are not classified as a native and not a descendant of the blue-blooded society, in the ending get recognition

to live there precisely in the 19th century period with various requirements. Jews were allowed to develop their economic enterprises in Europe but they were not yet entitled to the right of political freedom and to obtain legal certainty.

Referring to the previously described explanation, the social condition of the Prague (Austria-Hungary) community as reflected in *The Metamorphosis* novel is also inseparable from the enslavement of human beings as a result of the increasingly widespread economic system of capitalism which became the basis of the application of industrialization in Europe. The theme of industrialization and the impact of the existence of the economic system is the basis of the story idea that oversees the development of the path until the conflict arises that involved the main character.

In *The Metamorphosis* novel is told that Gregor Samsa, the protagonist in the novel by Kafka is a figure enslaved by his work. Gregor is a person who always cares about the family and will do anything to make his family happy. Even Gregor does not care whether Gregor actually enjoys his work as a traveling merchant or not, is always forced to work extra hard like a money search engine to meet the needs of his family every day.

Franz Kafka describes the freedom seen in his work entitled *The Metamorphosis* showing clearly how his writings are written under the title *The Metamorphosis* which shows that their expressionism is the writers' performances using the motive of solitude and alienation to symbolize freedom. This can mean that every work of expressionism is a form of rebellion made in the soul of the writer that in real life he cannot do.

Existentialist that became the world view of Kafka in creating *The Metamorphosis* novel is the result of his thought that arises from the desire to be free from all the authoritarian acts that bind Kafka until the end of his life. The illustration of the disharmony of the relationship between Gregor Samsa and his father (Herr Samsa) in the novel is a representation of the self-in-tying relationship with his father (Hermann Kafka). In addition, the coherence between the structure of literary works and the structure of society also expressed through the description of the isolation Gregor's received as a form of representation of Jewish society at that time. Kafka also shows his opposition to the application of the economic system of capitalism which is considered to be very detrimental to the workers. He shows it through the depiction of suffering experienced by Gregor's during his becoming a wandering fabric merchant. Mastuti, L.D (2015, p 82)

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Freedom is a sign and expression of human dignity, because human freedom is called autonomous self, which takes its own attitude. The existence of such freedom, humans can be burdened with moral obligations, and human beings must be responsible for action based on that freedom, because freedom has a positive meaning in a deliberate action with a specific purpose. Therefore, existential freedom can be interpreted through the actions of a person to determine himself.

Literary works are forms that record social phenomena in the place and time of the authors of the circumstances in which literary works are produce. Reading a literary work is an inner meeting between the reader and the author. There is an intellectual struggle in it. The idea of a writer channeled through the story is not necessarily taken for granted by us as readers. The reader is also entitled to build his own perception. However, sometimes we also nod in agreement with what the author says and then we admire the brilliance of his ideas. In reading, there is an experience that cannot be expressed in words when our feelings are stirred up by conflict. Conflict in the novel is presented through narration and dialogue that enrich the language of the reader. The purpose of learning literature is to form a critical and creative attitude and sensitivity to the phenomenon of the life in the social environment of culture and nature. In addition, literature can foster the subtlety of character, strengthen the character of the nation, and increase interest in reading.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the research findings and discussion in previous chapter, the researcher draws the conclusion as follows. There are two types of freedom reflected in the novels *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. *Freedom From* and *Freedom To*, but *Freedom To* dominates in this novel because human freedom is referred to as autonomous self-determination, which takes its own attitude. Freedom is something that every individual wishes without exception, because with the freedom, everyone is capable of doing anything in life without the interference of others and the individual is free of what he

chooses. Freedom is somewhat understood as characteristic of the nature of consciousness, namely spontaneity. But there is more freedom. For all freedom everyone can choose the option that there is no reason there, the decision to choose one of these actions is a meaningful action. That is, choosing another is not just a spontaneous decision, but it has consequences for the purpose itself. To express this, Sartre presents his idea of freedom as much as making choices, and cannot avoid making choices. Actually, human have the freedom to choice in their life.

Freedom described through characters, through setting and through style. When to analyzed main characters and minor characters in the novels to make the data clear and strong. Franz Kafka addresses the in the novel because it was important to every human. Because freedom is an absolute achievement for man and no one has no desire to live freely, According to Erich Fromm in Kozaryn (2014, p. 1), there are two types of freedom, namely Freedom From and Freedom To, “Freedom From is to be no slave, to live in a free country, to have no coercion, to be free from restrictions and impediments; and Freedom To is to be able to choose, to control and direct one’s own life”. Several paragraphs indicate that most of the major character behaviors want freedom in life without any authoritarian life so that in everyday life will always create a life that always harmonious and peaceful.

Literary works are not far from the author’s life and social conditions; this is also seen in the work of Kafka. Kafka's childhood was under the Nazi banner that was then in power in Germany. The outbreak of the First World War in mid-1914 influenced the work of *Metamorphosis*. In 1919 he also wrote an undisclosed biography entitled “*Brief an den Vater*”, as a sign of how difficult a sensitive child lives between the authority of his dictatorial father, firm stance, with his sentimental and loving dear mother. The letter signifies a difficulty in Kafka's life with his father's excessive power, so Kafka tries to make a truth in his doubts in a sensitive defense of his. Kafka also alludes to some of the problems of modern humans who are required to pursue the necessities of life with routine work as well as issues of human egoism. Existentialist that became the world view of Kafka in creating *The Metamorphosis* novel is the fruit of thought that arises from the desire to be free from all the authoritarian acts that bind Kafka until the end of his life. The illustration of the disharmony of the relationship between Gregor Samsa and his father (Herr Samsa) in the novel is a representation of the self in the same relationship with the father (Hermann Kafka). In addition, the coherence between the structure of literary works and the structure of society also expressed through the description of the

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