



The Metamorphosis

by Franz Kafka

ENG 205: Presentation One

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ETERNALLY THEMATIC

- The Metamorphosis is timeless because it speaks to the victimized subconscious of the average laborer and the tyrannical secular problems we face in a life of adversity. This story outlines the universal human reactions we have to the world and cyclical exposure of stressors that are seemingly inescapable:
- Anxiety, judgement, and fear of disappointment are shared cultural themes the human condition reflects across all cultures.
- Providing for your family and loves ones, against all odds and at all costs.
- Oppressive mastery from the ruling overlords, the slave masters we are forced to serve.



HISTORICAL INSIGHT

Franz Kafka wrestled with his full-time career in insurance and creative writing after hours.

- **His familial and parental relationships were oppressive.**
- **His romantic life suffered due to time constraints with his career and writing.**
- **His strife in life led him to struggle with suicidal ideation.**
- **These struggles were able to motivate the writer to transform that energy into something positive.**



CAPITALIST SPIRIT

The chief clerk represents the capitalist spirit, one which lacks empathy and is devoid of humanity.

- Illness is an intolerable and inexcusable for this spirit.
- Performance is the only measurable tool one's work ethic could be measured by.
- There is no other ethic than the work ethic.

This is exemplified when the chief clerk goes to Samsa's house to investigate why he missed the scheduled train. Through the closed door, he condescendingly speaks to Samsa, in front of his family, and even in the name of his family.

Kafka writes: "I had originally intended to say all this to you in private, but since you cause me to waste my time here for no good reason I don't see why your parents should not also learn of it. Your turnover has been very unsatisfactory of late; I grant you that it's not the time of year to do especially good business, we recognise that; but there simply is no time of year to do no business at all, Mr. Samsa, we cannot allow there to be." (Para. 19)

GRIEVING THE EGO



The events that take place in the Metamorphosis reflect some of the stages of grieving. Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Grieving does not only represent the stages a person goes through after losing a loved one, but it is also a process somebody goes through when a piece or aspect of themselves withers away.

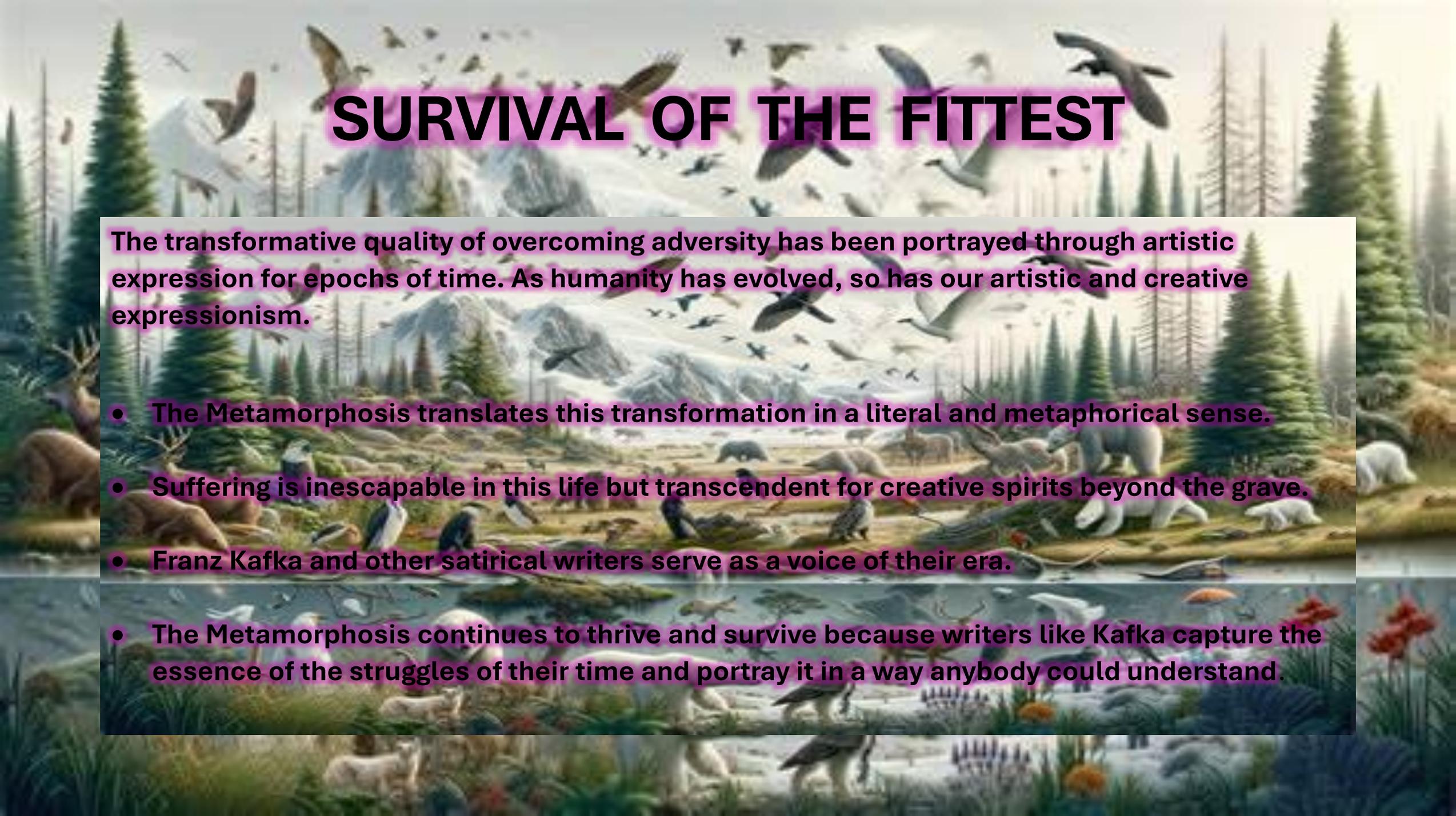
- Ego deaths have transformative qualities and are personified in literary classics.**
- Anthropomorphic qualities of this effect are granted to Divine aspects of religious and theological scriptures, stages of apotheosis from human to God-like.**

<https://realitysandwich.com/wp-content/uploads/RS-Ego-Death-and-the-Resurrection-of-the-Self-Featured.jpg>

LAYERS OF MEANING

The metaphorical symbolism in the Metamorphosis is layered throughout the story.

- Locked in a room and struggling to get out without moral or positive support.**
- Barricaded from responsibilities, causing a downward spiral of anxiety and claustrophobia.**
- The only way out of the room is from within.**



SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

The transformative quality of overcoming adversity has been portrayed through artistic expression for epochs of time. As humanity has evolved, so has our artistic and creative expressionism.

- The Metamorphosis translates this transformation in a literal and metaphorical sense.
- Suffering is inescapable in this life but transcendent for creative spirits beyond the grave.
- Franz Kafka and other satirical writers serve as a voice of their era.
- The Metamorphosis continues to thrive and survive because writers like Kafka capture the essence of the struggles of their time and portray it in a way anybody could understand.

ABOVE SAMSARA



• As long as the human condition, suffering, and adversity exists, creators will always prevail in expressing those trials and tribulations in unique and beautiful ways. As the Metamorphosis accomplishes this alchemical symphony of transforming struggle into a creative expression of appreciation, Franz Kafka is immortalized through his words. In this way, perhaps, he might have achieved the eternal goal of humanity, to escape the endless cycle of suffering and the human condition.

Citations:

- Kafka, Franz. "Metamorphosis." Translated by David Wyllie, *The Project Gutenberg eBook of Metamorphosis, by Franz Kafka*, The Gutenberg Project, 13 May 2002, www.gutenberg.org/files/5200/5200-h/5200-h.htm.
- Shulman, Dylan. "The Metamorphosis". Encyclopedia Britannica, 12 Feb. 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Metamorphosis>. Accessed 23 February 2025.