

# Alienation in Selected Continental Texts

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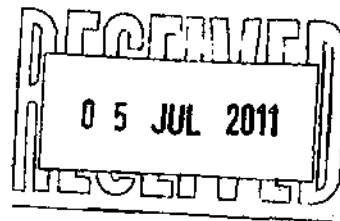
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# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction



Like death or abandonment, alienation is a deeply rooted feeling experienced by human beings. As social creatures, humans have the need to identify themselves as one of a group, whether that group is a family, a culture or a religion. The experience of alienation is one of violation of person's need for acceptance. When a person is not accepted by a society, he becomes an outsider to everyone around him (Hughes, 2004).

Alienation is a recurring theme in continental literature. The idea of self-alienation has played a crucial role in modern thought from German classical idealism to Marxism and Existentialism. It was first encountered in the thoughts of Wilhem von Humboldt, Hegel, and subsequently viewed in Feuerbach's and Marx. "This idea always implies the individual's estrangement from his humanity or human species being, from the individual's membership in the human species. The individual is estranged from himself insofar as he is alienated from his essential nature as a human being" (Bloom, 2007).

Many masterpieces of continental literature are concerned with the theme of alienation. The term 'alienation' was introduced in the modern literary era and modern writers have explored the theme of alienation through their writings. Modernism is the period of technology and machine and it simply separated human being from others. In his *Manuscript Economic and Philosophic Manuscript*, Karl Marx (1964) defined "alienation as emotional isolation or dissociation from others" (45). It is found that most of the principal characters of continental texts are consistently alienated. We see them undergoing experience of isolation from society.

All characters are victims of capitalist society. These characters are separated from their loved ones both physically and psychologically (Faulkner, 1965). This study seeks to find out some 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century continental writers' concern for alienation and show how they dealt with the theme. These writers focus on personal alienation from tradition and history, from family life, including heterosexual norms and values, as well as from consumer culture. In terms of theme, we might say that modernists intentionally play with this theme.

The researcher has studied four continental texts and tried to explain how they gave place to this theme in their works. The texts analyzed are Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864), Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886), Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), and Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942). All these novels have been studied carefully in order to depict the theme of alienation. This study adopted the Marxist theory of Alienation to explore the theme of alienation in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century continental writings.

~~This paper, necessarily limited in scope, will focus on the mentioned texts. They will be studied separately. The exploration of the theme as the common grounds of the four books has not been attempted though. These four texts, spread throughout the modern literary era, seem to present alienation from different perspectives. Thus, the chosen texts give a wider view of the concept.~~

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Background of the study

Alienation is a very widely, and loosely, used concept, which originated in its modern form with Marx. One of the pioneers of the term 'alienation', Marx (1964) defines it as "the separation of things that naturally belong together, or to put antagonism between things that are properly in harmony" (45). He also refers to the social alienation of people from aspects of their 'human nature' (45). He believes that "alienation is a systematic result of capitalism". Marx put alienation at the heart of a radical critique of capitalism (Marx, 1964).

Marx's theory relies on Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), which argues that ~~the theory of alienation has alienated~~ the characteristics of the human being. Hegel and Feuerbach were ~~the main intellectual~~ people who guided Marx's concept of alienation (Fienkilstien, 1965). The ~~theory of alienation was often~~ used to understand as well as to evaluate economic, historical, and ~~political developments. Economic, political, and social theories in the middle to late nineteenth~~ century were ~~put forward in the Communist Manifesto and also Das Kapital~~ by Karl Marx written in conjunction with Frederick Engels (Giddens, 1971). Both Marx and Engels were German exiles living in Great Britain and aiming to promote communism. Karl Marx was prompted to form his theory of alienation by his examination of the economic, social, and political developments brought about by the industrial revolution, especially in Great Britain. Marx contended that the new industrial process was alienating the bulk of the masses from the owners of the emerging capitalist system (Hadden, 1997). As is well known, Feuerbach, Hegel and English political economists exercised the most direct influence on the formation of Marx's theory of alienation. The concept of alienation belongs to a vast and complex problematic, and

has a long history of its own (Giddens, 1971). Marx also adds that in human history there are many forms of alienation. He saw these as having been brought to their highest level in capitalism, the latest and most developed form of class society. Marx (1844) identified four specific ways in which alienation pervades capitalist society:

*The product of labour:* First, in wage labor the worker produces a *product* that is immediately alien to him/her in the narrow sense, as it is the property of the capitalist.

*The labour process:* The second element of alienation Marx identified is a lack of control over the process of production. We have no say over the conditions in which we work and how our work is organized, and how it affects us physically and mentally.

*Our fellow human beings:* Thirdly, we are alienated from our fellow human beings. This ~~alienation arises in part~~ because of the antagonism which inevitably arises from the class ~~structure of society~~. ~~We are alienated~~ from those who exploit our labour and control the things we produce.

~~Our human nature:~~ ~~The fourth element is our alienation from what Marx called our being.~~ What makes ~~us human~~ is our ability to consciously shape the world around us. Human beings are social beings. ~~We have the ability to act collectively~~ to further our interests. However, under capitalism that ~~ability is submerged~~ under private ownership and the class divisions it produces. All of these are **interconnected**, and for Marx they all stem from the capitalist productive system, and especially **from its practice of the division of labours**.

## 2.2 Definition of the term of 'Alienation'

Alienation in any society would make a person feel helpless and alone. The term alienation appears early. The Latin source is the noun "alienation", which means to draw away,



to separate, to do something else (Schacht, 1970). Alienation is the separation from other people, society, or work. Psychiatrists consider alienation a blocking or dissociation of a person's feelings (Marino, 2004). Some philosophers believe that alienation is produced by a shallow and depersonalized society. Fourth-century theologian Saint Augustine (1964) wrote that due to its sinful nature, humanity was alienated from God. In 1965, Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud wrote that alienation resulted from the split between the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. French social theorist Émile Durkheim (1962) suggested that alienation stemmed from a loss of societal and religious tradition. Existentialists saw alienation as an inevitable part of the human condition.

According to Eric and Josephson (1962), alienation is meant to be a mode of experience in which a person experiences himself as alien. He does not experience himself as the center of his world or as the creator of his own acts, but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself, just as he is out of touch with any other person. He, like the others, is experienced as things are experienced: with the senses and with common sense, but at the same time without being related to oneself and to the world outside.

The frequent use of alienation as a centering theme is due to the fact that it is common to all humans. Alienation is a feeling of not belonging. This feeling can be physical, mental, religious, spiritual, psychological, political, social, or economic and often it tends to be a combination of more than one of these types. Alienation is a driving force that pushes the human conscience to extremes. Whether it is alienation from civilization or alienation from society, drastic changes consequently occur. States of alienation come to exist as the result of many

situations. Characteristics of alienation that are common to many characters in literature have been examined in this work.

### 2.3 Masterpieces of Continental literature and the Alienation

Clear instances of alienation can be seen in many works of continental literature. Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864), Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886), Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), and Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942), are concerned with the theme of alienation. These writers struggle a lot with the theme in their novels. All the major characters of their novels are consistently alienated and experience isolation from society. These characters are separated from their loved ones both physically and psychologically. That is why those characters can be called 'outsider'.

### 2.4 Fyodor Dostoyevsky and *Notes from Underground*

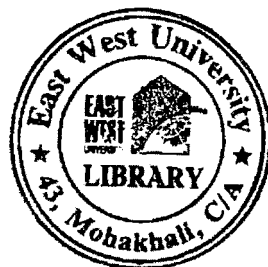
Fyodor Dostoyevsky was a Russian writer and essayist, known for his novels *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. Dostoyevsky's works explore human psychology in the troubled political, social and spiritual context of 19th-century Russian society. *Notes from Underground*, one of the greatest short novels of all-time, portrays one man in the depths of despair. A vivid depiction of the dark side of human nature, 'Notes' is a great classic that perfectly evokes the feelings of isolation, despair, narcissism, and paranoia that continue to afflict the mass of men. It is considered by many to be the world's first existentialist novel. It presents itself as an excerpt from the rambling memoirs of a bitter, isolated, unnamed narrator (generally referred to by critics as the Underground Man) who is a retired civil servant living in St. Petersburg. This man without a name lives a solitary life in his "corner", glaring out at the world, and after forty years of life has nothing to show for it but bitterness and a malicious attitude

## 2.5 Leo Tolstoy and *The Death of Ivan Ilych*

Leo Tolstoy was a Russian writer widely regarded as among the greatest of novelists. His masterpieces *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* vividly represent 19th-century Russian life and attitudes. *The Death of Ivan Ilych* is a novella by Leo Tolstoy, one of the masterpieces of his late fiction, written shortly after his conversion to christianity. The novel tells the story of the life and death, at the age of 45, of a high court judge in 19th-century Russia—a miserable husband, proud father, and upwardly-mobile member of Russia's professional class. Within weeks, he has developed a strange taste in his mouth and a pain that will not go away. The second half of the novel records his terror as he battles with the idea of his own death, leaving him to wrestle with how this terrible thing could befall a man who has lived so well.

## 2.6 ~~Frazz~~ Kafka and *The Metamorphosis*

~~Frazz~~ Kafka (1924) is one of the most influential fiction writers of the early 20th century; a novelist and writer of short stories whose works came to be regarded as one of the major achievements of 20th century literature after his death. In my opinion, *The Metamorphosis* is quite autobiographical. ~~Frazz~~ Kafka grew up in an environment where there was a sense of strain that he experienced as a Jew in Prague. Franz Kafka also had a very tense relationship with his father which greatly affected his entire life. In *The Metamorphosis*, we see how Franz Kafka projected his own father in the personality of his characters. Critics generally praise Kafka's powerful and symbolic portrayal of alienation achieved through the literalized metaphor of man as an insect in *The Metamorphosis*.



## 2.7 Albert Camus and *The Outsider*

Albert Camus was born on November 7, 1913, in Mondovi, in the northeast region of French Algeria. Camus was a French Algerian author, philosopher, and journalist who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. He lived most of his life in various groups and communities without really being of them. The perspective of the exile became his characteristic preoccupation as a writer. He was a key philosopher of the 20th-century and his most famous work is the novel *The Outsider*, published in 1942. A recurrent theme in Camus' literary works, which also shows up in his moral and political writings, is the character or perspective of the "stranger" or outsider. Its theme and outlook are often cited as examples of existentialism, though Camus did not consider himself an existentialist; in fact, its content explores different philosophical schools of thought, including (most prominently and specifically) absurdism. The main character is Meursault, a French man (characterized by being largely emotionally detached, ~~inertly passive, and anomic~~) who seemingly irrationally kills an Arab man whom he recognizes in French Algiers. The story is divided into two parts which consist of Meursault's first-person narrative view before and after the murder.

Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, ~~Kafka~~ and Camus created existentialist and alienated characters who struggle with hopelessness and absurdity, notably in their novels *Notes from Underground*, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, *The Metamorphosis*, and in *The Outsider*.

## 2.8 Theory of Existentialism

The study also looks at the theory of existentialism. All the writers showed some aspects of existentialism. Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation, the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe (Finkelstien, 1965). Kierkegaard and Heidegger (1965) mentioned in their essay *Existentialism and German Fascisms* that

Existentialism is a philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe. It regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice. The problem with existentialism is that it leaves us without absolute foundations, encourages an isolated or individual sense of self, and gives too much power to our imagination and to how we may choose to live (Marino, 2004).

## 2.9 Theory of Absurdity

For many critics and readers, Albert Camus is an outstanding representative of contemporary sense of alienation. The theory of absurdity is reflected when the character of Meursault in *The Outsider* is discussed. In 1883, Friedrich Nietzsche published his magnum opus *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where the revolutionary thesis that “God is dead” appeared. Friedrich Nietzsche’s theory of absurdity implies that there is no meaning to be found in the world beyond ~~what meaning we give to it~~. This meaninglessness also encompasses the amorality or ~~“unfairness”~~ of the world (Sartre, 2003).

~~Absurdity like alienation conveys a deep sense of estrangement and detachment. In this sense, the concept of the Absurd builds on the concept of alienation. In this chapter, I briefly review the meaning of alienation and emergence of the consciousness of alienation before giving a detailed analysis of the philosophy of the absurd.~~

## Chapter III

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Methods of this study

The study analyzes Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864), Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886), Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), and Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942). In an attempt to show how they deal with the theme of alienation. Karl Marx's theory of alienation has been applied to facilitate the examination. The Introduction (Chapter 1) gives an overview of the hypothesis, the alienation theme in the concerned texts, and establishes the periphery of the research ground. The Literature Review (Chapter 2) surveys the background of the theme as well as the texts and the meaning range of the term "alienation". It also looks at the supporting theory of existentialism and absurdity. The texts are analyzed in (Chapter 4) in the light of these theories. Each text is separated individually, and connected with the respective writer's life. The Conclusion (Chapter 5) sums up the whole idea and corrects the texts.

## Chapter-4

### Analysis



#### 4.1 Introduction

One of the underlying themes of twentieth-century writers has been to point out the increasing alienation of people from their families, communities and society. It seems the more technologically advanced we become the more compartmentalized our lives are and the more difficult it is to remain connected to our humanity (Faulkner, 1965). In the selected continental works selected for this study the idea of isolation is presented as a direct result of the character's loneliness. The reality, in which these people live, is so harsh that they isolate themselves from the rest of the world. Such alienation is a complex psychological disorder that influences the **formation of characters' identities**. Isolation results in the expulsion of a person from all social **affairs and interactions**, preventing him from becoming a full member of society. The theme of **isolation is thus utilized** in continental literature to shape the principal characters and provide a **particular vision on crucial aspects** of their identities.

#### 4.2 The Life of Dostoevsky and the Genesis of *Notes from Underground*

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky was born October 30, 1821, in Moscow's hospital for the poor. He was admitted to the Academy of Military Engineers in St. Peterburg in 1838. He completed his studies in 1843, graduating as a lieutenant, but was quickly convinced that he preferred a career of writing. On April 23, 1849, Dostoevsky was arrested with other members of the Petrashevsky circle, and sentenced to death. But the sentence was changed afterward. During his prison term he learned that the peasant and uneducated workers of Russia associated the progressive thinkers with upper classes that oppressed them and limited their freedom. After his

release, he published *Memoir from the House of the Dead* (1861), which was based on his prison experiences in the journal *Time*. In 1863 it was banned. So Dostoevsky founded another magazine *Epoch* in 1864 in which he published the *Notes from Underground*.

Dostoevsky was one of the pioneers of realism in the modern novel and *Notes from Underground* (1864), along with his later novels, belongs to this genre. The novel probes the mind of an individual on the margins of modern society, and examines the effects of modern life has on that man's personality. The protagonist is a low ranking civil servant in St. Peterburg who has gradually gone mad because of a lifetime of inability to cope with the society around him. The underground man is an antihero, a kind of downtrodden, indecisive victim of society. At the same time, the underground man is a victim of the modern Russian urban experience. Deprived of positive social interaction, he tries to relate to the world. The failure of these attempts make him even more bitter and isolated or alienated, driving him deeper underground. The bitterness of the novel can also be partially attributed to the circumstances of Dostoevsky's life at that time. So Dostoevsky's writing here is at least partially autobiographical.

#### 4.3 The Theme of Alienation in Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*

The anonymous narrator of *Notes from Underground* is a bitter, misanthropic man living in St. Petersburg, Russia in the 1860s. He is a veteran of the Russian civil service who has recently been able to retire because he has inherited some money. The novel consists of "notes" that the man writes in a confused and often contradictory set of memoirs or confession describing and explaining his alienation from modern society. Dostoevsky's work explores the theme of alienation and investigates how men's immoral personality leads to their alienation or differentiation from the rest of society.

*Notes from Underground* is divided into two sections. The first section serves as an



introduction to the character of underground man, and explains his theories about his antagonistic position towards society. The second section describes his interaction with the various people who inhabit his world. The Underground Man is so alienated from this people that he is completely incapable of normal interaction with them. He treats them with a mixture of disgust and fear that results in his own effacement and humiliation, which in turn result in remorse and self-loathing. In a confused attempt at social interaction, the Underground Man deliberately follows some school acquaintances to a dinner where he is not wanted, alternately insulting them openly and craving their attention and friendship. Later that same evening the Underground Man attempts to rescue an attractive prostitute named Liza by delivering impassioned, sentimental speeches about the terrible fate that awaits her if she continues to sell her body. When Liza comes to visit the Underground Man in his shabby apartment several days later, he reacts with shame and anger when he realizes that she has reasons to pity or look down upon him. "I sensed vaguely that she was going to pay dearly for it all" (Dostoevsky, 1993, p.118). The underground man's alienation manifests itself in all kinds of relationships. The Underground man does not fit in society because he can tolerate neither his own class nor the class of his desired friends. At one point he reaches an existential crisis, since he's unsure of his belonging, and he questions of his own existence. The Underground Man's logic is twisted and convoluted, and often contradictory. He concludes that the universe is without reason. "And why not? There is also pleasure in a toothache, I will answer" (Dostoevsky, 1993, p.14). He is always alone. The Underground Man acts as a great forerunner to the existentialist notion that every man is in constant isolation from his fellow human beings.

Dostoevsky says that the Underground Man is representative of certain people who "not only may but must exist in our society". The Underground Man is extremely alienated from the

society in which he lives. "I did not, of course, maintain friendly relations with my comrades though I had cut off all relations. That, however, only happened to me once as a rule, I was always alone" (Dostoevsky, 1993, p.47). He feels himself to be much more intelligent and conscious than any of the people he meets. However, he is aware that his consciousness often manifests itself as a skepticism that prevents him from having confidence in any of his actions. He is therefore incapable of taking decisions about anything. "Oh, gentlemen, perhaps I really regard myself as an intelligent man only because throughout my entire life I've never been able to start or finish anything" (Dostoevsky, 1993, p18). Throughout the novel we see the Underground Man is unable to make decisions or take action with confidence. He explains that this inability is due to his intense degree of consciousness. The only emotional interactions he can have **with others** involve anger, bitterness, revenge and humiliation. This humiliation **actually gives the Underground Man** a sense of satisfaction and power, as he has brought about **the humiliation himself**. As long as he can exercise his will, he does not care if the outcome is **positive or negative**. This feeling of inadequacy before others is enhanced by the fact that as an orphan, he has **never had** normal life or loving relationships with other people. Having no real life experiences **upon which** to base his hopes and expectations, he often relies on the conventions of novels **and drama**. The contrast between his expectations for life which are based on literature and the realities of **the world** he lives in is often great, and this alienates the Underground Man from society **still further**.

At the end of the novel, Dostoevsky reveals that the Underground Man fails to take even this simple decision to stop writing, as Dostoevsky says that the manuscript of the notes goes on for many pages beyond the point at which he has chosen to cut it off.

The “underground” or the “dark cellar” from which the Underground Man claims to be writing is a symbol of his total isolation from society. He feels rejected and shut out from the society to which he is supposed to belong. He imagines that he is viewing the world through cracks in the floorboards. The Underground Man often claims, however, to prefer the underground to the real world above. He treasures the space, the underground gives him to exert his individuality-one of the few things he possesses.

#### 4.4 The Life of Leo Tolstoy and the Genesis of *The Death of Ivan Ilych*

On August 28, 1828 Leo Tolstoy was born into a wealthy aristocratic family that resided at a country estate called Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoy knew death early. When he was only two, his mother died while giving birth to her fifth child. And Tolstoy’s father followed suddenly in **1837. From 1875-1878** Tolstoy experienced a period of increasing depression and psychological **crisis that was to alter** both his philosophy and his art. In the *Confession*, an autobiographical **account of his life and mortal** struggle written after the crisis, Tolstoy writes that the principal cause of **his depression was** his inability to find an acceptable meaning in human life.

It is not **insignificant that** *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, written in 1886, was the first major fictional work **published by Tolstoy** after his crisis and conversion. Tolstoy’s religious philosophy serves as a **background** to the understanding of the novel. Brotherly love, mutual support, and Christian **charity**, values that became essential to Tolstoy in the second half of his life emerge as the dominant moral principles in *The Death of Ivan Ilych*. And just as Tolstoy’s discovery of the true meaning of life led him to fulfillment and an acceptance of death. So too, Ivan Ilych’s awakening exposes him to the light of a meaningful life and calms his fear of dying. Thus, *The Death of Ivan Ilych* can be seen as a reflection and an elaboration of Tolstoy’s post-conversion philosophical concerns.

Not surprisingly, *The Death of Ivan Ilych* is a deeply religious work, but religious on its own terms. The protagonist is a somewhat clueless, spiritually empty hero whose long illness forces him to confront the meanings of both death and life. Ivan Ilych represents a small but important class of urban bureaucrats, prominent in the day to day running of Russian affairs in Tolstoy's days, whose life became increasingly detached from nature, the land and spiritual values. By exposing the horrible vacuity of Ivan Ilych's life, Tolstoy explores the self-deception, immorality and alienation of a whole class of individuals. The story is a fictional adaptation of Tolstoy's autobiographical work *The Confession* (1879–1880), which recounts his personal struggle for meaning in the face of the terrifying inevitability of death.

#### **4.5 The Theme of Alienation in Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych***

*"The Death of Ivan Ilych"* is widely regarded as one of the most powerful meditations on **death and dying in continental literature**, at least in part because it anticipates modern **psychological discussions** of the stages of dying. On the surface, *"The Death of Ivan Ilych"* is a simple **story**. **A conventional family man** and a successful judge who is a member in good standing in **high society**, **the protagonist suddenly develops a mysterious illness** that causes him agonizing pain and **eventually kills him**.

At the **beginning of the story**, Ivan Ilych is already dead. Before the actual story of Ivan Ilych's life is told, the reader **is first shown** the various reactions of the people who figured in his life. From these reactions, it becomes **apparent** that the man had lived a lonely and empty life dominated by great pain and suffering towards the end. As real as death is, in this novel Ivan goes out of his way to avoid thinking about death. To Tolstoy, denial of death is usually linked with an incredibly detached living of life (Lawson, 2008). Gary (1999) mentions in his book Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych-An interpretation* that "Characteristic of the artificial life as

well as of the purely physical life is the tendency towards alienation". Whenever Ivan encounters a situation or relationship that does not promote his existence, he distances himself from it. Because Ivan has no spiritual existence, he is incapable of seeing other people as individuals. He acts only to obtain the good for himself and has no concept for those that impinge upon his pleasure. Thus, in his selfish quest for happiness, Ivan shuts out individuals. Tolstoy makes use of several images of enclosure and isolation to reinforce this point. From the funeral notice surrounded by a black border to the coffin lid leaning against the wall, Tolstoy hints at the voluntary separation that Ivan created.

Ivan's physical transformation is a slow deterioration of the body, which for most of the **story is unnoticeable**. Though the sickness causes pain for Ivan, the physical changes do not **become apparent until** almost two-thirds of the novel. Even Ivan is unaware of his physical ~~transformation~~, **as is shown** when his brother-in-law "opened his mouth to gasp but checked **himself**", **and Ivan asked**, "what is it have I changed?" (Tolstoy, 2004, p.85). Ivan is physically **isolated from his former life**. Tolstoy exposes the alienation through the long and solitary hours in which Ivan **constantly questions his misfortunes** and rages against death while his family goes about their **daily life**.

Ivan's defining **characteristic and principal** shortcoming is that he lives his life by the dictates of others. Rather **than relying on his own** reason and good sense to direct his moral life, Ivan blindly adopts the **beliefs and values** of aristocratic society. Like a fly to a bright light, Ivan is drawn to those with high social **standing**. He believes that if he only imitates their conduct and lifestyle, if he only runs in the prescribed tracks of high society, his own life will progress according to a plan and he will find meaningful and fulfilling. "Ivan Ilych's life had been most simple and **most ordinary** and therefore most terrible" (Tolstoy, 2004, p.9). Ivan becomes

obsessed with standards of propriety and decorum, the etiquette of the upper class. He begins to act as one in his position should act. He takes a wife because a young legal gentleman with secure means should take a wife. He buys a house in the city and furnishes it with highbrow trappings because a cultured aristocrat should have a material status symbol. As Ivan accustoms himself to propriety, he grows increasingly intolerant to everything that threatens his own comfort and material well-being. He fences himself off from every discomforting influence. When Praskovya, his wife introduces something unseemly and unpleasant with her pregnancy, Ivan retreats from her and absorbs himself in his official work. When married life becomes difficult, Ivan adopts a formal, contractual attitude towards his family. By adopting the values of aristocratic society, then, rather than using his reason to discover what is truly meaningful in life, **Ivan isolates himself** from the rest of the world. And in place of meaning and fulfillment, Ivan **finds only pain and dissatisfaction**.

**Ivan is also emotionally** alienated from others. Ivan's emotions are often kept hidden from **those around him**. **The text**, hints to the reader that Ivan desires an emotional connection to those around **him, but he is unable to connect** because he wishes to keep a strong appearance in front of his colleagues. **Ivan wants to cry, and be caressed**. But instead of crying and getting affection, he assumes **a serious expression**. Nothing does so much poison in the last days of Ivan's life as this falseness **in himself and** in those around him.

Ivan's illness, then, can be **seen as** a curative influence. By forcing Ivan to confront the prospect of his death, it brings **him** face to face with his own isolation. "Tolstoy explains Ilych's pain and alienation from society, saying, he had to live thus all alone on the brink of an abyss, with no one who understood or pitied him" (Tolstoy, 2004, p.107). That isolation terrifies Ivan, provoking **serious** existential reflection in him. As Ivan begins to examine his life, and as he

questions his existence and the rationale behind his suffering, he slowly begins to see that his life was not as it should have been. Ivan's illness reveals to him the true nature of life. At the climactic moment of the novel, Ivan realizes that compassion and love are the true life values by which to live.

In *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, through the theme of "loneliness in the face of death" one can see that the mediocrity of Ivan Ilych's life has done little to prepare him for the unexpected shock of dying. At the very end of the novella, Ivan's realization of his mortality brings about an extreme change in his psychology and allows him to quest his shallow existence. Thus, the intense loneliness suffered by Ivan Ilych is due to his attitude towards life, in which he had **always placed the highest value on work, career and material possessions while rejecting the real life needs of his family** and of others. Tolstoy makes it clear that this fault in Ivan Ilych's life **exists in virtually everyone's life**.

#### 4.6 **The Life of Kafka** and the Genesis of *The Metamorphosis*

**Franz Kafka (1883-1924)** was born in Prague to middle-class Jewish parents. His father, the son of a **village butcher, was a man of little education** but strong entrepreneurial ambition. In 1924, at the age of **41, Kafka succumbed to tuberculosis**. The bulk of his work was published after his early death. **The collections of short stories and the novellas he saw published (including *The Metamorphosis* in 1915) sold minimally**, but were highly praised within a small but respected circle of German-speaking intellectuals. Kafka wrote *The Metamorphosis* in 1912, the year he felt his creativity finally taking a definite form. It was one of the few works Kafka was to publish in his lifetime. *The Metamorphosis* is an autobiographical piece of writing. It is well known that Kafka felt like an insect in his father's authoritative presence and even developed a stammer **while speaking** to him (Kafka, 1991). Gregor, likewise, cowers in fear of his father,

who finds him repulsive and attacks him at every turn. Kafka even wrote that he was pleased with the similarity of Samsa's name to his own. Kafka's mother, like her alter-ego of the story, hid silently behind her husband's presence. Out of a sense of duty to his parents, and because he needed money for his planned marriage, Kafka was forced to take an office job he did not enjoy. Furthermore, his family insisted that he needed to spend his afternoons in the office. Kafka himself felt that his presence at the office was pointless, and that it took up so much time that he was not able to write, alienating him from his creative needs. Kafka had been very close to his sister, Ottilia, and she usually understood him. In this dispute, however, even she turned against him in insisting he stay at the office in the afternoons. Kafka felt that she had betrayed him, and one night he actually contemplated suicide. In Kafka's story, Gregor's sister betrays him by **insisting that the family must get rid of him.**

**The haunting story** of a man transformed into an insect has attracted numerous **commentators, who while** agreeing on the high quality and importance of the story, disagree **strongly about what it means.** Freudian, Marxist, existentialist, and religious interpretations have all been proposed, **and there has been debate over** whether Gregor Samsa, the man-turned-insect, symbolizes the **human condition (Sokol, 2007).** It is generally agreed, however, that the story portrays a world that **is hostile and perhaps** absurd and that major themes in the story include father-son antagonism (**perhaps reflecting** Kafka's difficult relationship with his own father), alienation at work, isolation, and **self-sacrifice.** In *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka uses his experiences to create much of Gregor's life. Kafka's life of alienation directly relates to his development of Gregor Samsa, the outcast son who Kafka symbolically turns into a huge, repulsive creature. Kafka puts much of his personal experience into the writing of this book. *The Metamorphosis* has come to be considered one of the central enigmas of the modern literary



imagination. Nevertheless, critics generally praise Kafka's powerful and symbolic portrayal of alienation achieved through the literalized metaphor of man as insect.

#### **4.7 The Theme of Alienation in Franz Kafka' *The Metamorphosis***

Kafka uses alienation as a central theme in *The Metamorphosis* to comment on the human need to experience love and acceptance. In this novella, the alienation and resentment of Gregor Samsa is presented depicting his physical separation, psychological isolation, and emotional disaffection. In each of these instances, Gregor becomes more complex and controversial to the reader. Not only is Gregor metamorphosed, but his father, mother, and sister are all equally transformed into different people through their responses to him. Gregor experiences a great deal of alienation, which separates him from the groups to which he has been comfortably attached for most of his lives. "When Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from troubled dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous insect" (Kafka, 1996, p.64). The physical changes that plagued Gregor were the forces that perpetuated further alienation. They are important to note because not only do they change the appearance of the character but they also affect the way those around him viewed him. In this way the author is better able to comment on the mental isolation which becomes the worst part of his misfortune. In *The Metamorphosis*, one of the main views is alienation or estrangement which is demonstrated by Gregor's relationship with his family, his social life, and the way he lives his life after his metamorphosis. Gregor claims that his life is conducive to solitude. Although Gregor doesn't realize it, the relationship between him and his family is not good. Gregor takes over his father's responsibilities, leaving nothing for Gregor's father to be responsible for. He is physically isolated from his family as they lock him in a room and are unable to even look at his monstrous form. Not only is Gregor alienating himself from his family, but he is also alienating himself from society. Gregor goes

on many trips for his job, but instead of going out to meet people; he stays at the motel and does nothing. He follows the same routine every day of his life and fails to look ahead into the future. In the modern world, people work without appreciation like machines, or an animal (Sokel, 2007). For secluding himself in this way Gregor makes his life look like that of a cockroach. Gregor's adjustment from being a daily traveler to being a literal prisoner in his home is one way in which one can connect the drastic alienation Gregor experiences to his physical transformation. Whenever Gregor tries to communicate with someone, the only thing that comes out of his mouth are cockroach noises that scare his family, and his appearance disturbs his family.

“That was the voice of an animal” (Kafka, 1996, p.8). Gregor is psychologically alienated because although he is an insect, he still has the thought process of a human being. He is torn between hopes of returning to his human form, and the comfort he derives as a monstrous insect.

Gregor wanders his apartment alone in his thought and body. He only comes out of the room when he is alone and finds some resting space under the couch. His sister sees him there and leaves a bowl of food for him to eat. This is the way he is nourished from that day on. His sister tries to take care of him, but eventually she becomes weary of this never-ending task and forgets about him. And then his family realizes that nobody can or should be left alone with Gregor. The maid requests him to leave and exits immediately. Grete and Anna argue over Gregor's room. Grete wants to take the furniture out so that they can move around more easily and have fun. Gregor feels more distant and alone without his belongings, being treated less like a member of the family and more alone like a creature. They do not take Gregor's feelings into consideration when they make these rules and he is thereupon left to a life of solitude for “no

doubt he would be free to crawl about unimpeded in all directions, but only at the price of rapidly and completely forgetting his human past”(Kafka, 1996,p.103).

Gregor also suffers from emotional isolation. As the main source of income for the family, he has an emotional attachment to them as dependents. His love for his family, particularly his mother and sister, is shown through Gregors thought after his transformation .His desire to remain emotionally connected with his family, particularly his younger sister, is presented during the scene in which Gregor listen to his sister playing the violin.

Gregor is seen alienated from his family and the rest of society. He is devastated that his family leaves him alone helpless in his current state. They have all gone on to find new jobs and have left him to find food and activity for himself. His back still suffers from the apple hailed by his father. The family has not even paid him enough attention to remove it from his body. “He thought back on his family with deep emotion and love. His conviction that he would have to disappear was, if possible even firmer than his sister’s. He remained in this state of empty and peaceful reflection until the tower struck three in the morning (Kafka, 1996, p.39).

Throughout the entire story, Gregor is almost like a total stranger to everyone. His family is very unhappy while he is taking care of them. Gregor barely has any contact with the rest of society, and the metamorphosis causes his family to not even want him around at all. All of these situations are perfect examples of one of the views of existentialism, or in other words, of alienation or estrangement. After his metamorphosis, Gregor feels completely alienated from his room and environment and, as a symbol of this, can't even see his street from his window. *The Metamorphosis*, then, is a powerful indictment of the alienation brought on by the modern social order (Sokel, 2007).



By looking at the theory from a Marxist perspective, we see that the underlying theme of the story is a conflict between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. For capitalist society, a citizen who is unable to labor and earn wages is quickly abandoned and the result of this abandonment is often death.

### 1.8 The Life of Albert Camus and the Genesis of *The Outsider*

Camus was born in 1913 in the Algerian village of Mondovi. Camus was an Algerian novelist and *The Outsider* was first published early in his career in 1942, when he was primarily concerned with what he called the "absurdity" of the human condition. Camus believed that people want, and need, a basis for their lives and value, but the world offers them none. Because there is no overarching value system, a person can't make everyday value judgments, but is adrift in a meaningless world. The inevitability and finality of death adds to the absurdity of life, in Camus's view.

*The Outsider* is set in Algiers and it sets out the relationships and interactions that Meursault, the main character, has with his friends and associates. Meursault is an alienated individual. His life is painted as relatively ordinary until he perpetrates an act of violence. His reaction to this act frames the whole of the book and questions the fundamental morals of a society that are set so strongly that anyone who breaks such rules are condemned as an outsider.

Admittedly, the act of violence committed is manslaughter. The author himself best sums up the reasons that Meursault is alienated, "In our society any man who doesn't cry at his mother's funeral is liable to be condemned to death" (Warsh, 1986). This basically means any man who doesn't play the game will be condemned. Throughout the book Meursault is absolutely honest about everything. Meursault's inability to lie cannot seamlessly integrate him within society and in turn threatens the simple fabric of human mannerisms expected of a

structurally ordered society. Consequently, the punishment for his crime is not decided on the basis of murder, but rather for his startling indifference towards his mother's recent death. His emotions are never hidden, but he is judged to be emotionless, because he tells the truth about his emotions. All is indifferent, the world to him, him to the world and it is only in the ending that he recognizes and articulates philosophically and clearly his own predicament and is finally moved to openly declare the lack of meaning for his own existence. The book begs the question of what society does when a man who tells the truth is condemned to a life of alienation.

### **The Theme of Alienation in Camus's *The Outsider***

Warsh (1986) pointed out in his essay *Albert Camus's The Stranger* that "Every society, even virtual societies, has a set of unwritten rules to follow. If a person does not follow these so-called rules or does not play the game then they will be alienated by their society" (69). *The Outsider* is a story about a man who doesn't play the game and the isolation that follows because he doesn't want to follow the unwritten rules. The anti-hero narrator, the ultimate "outsider" and person who seems to observe everything, including his own life, with almost pathological detachment. The novel is about indifference, alienation and lack of emotional responses.

Meusault seems to live a normal mundane existence in Algiers but his life changes dramatically when he murders somebody on a beach. The book shows how he faces up to what he has done and how he is condemned as an outsider for trying to go against society's rules.

The book is split into two parts. Part 1 starts with one of the reasons he is called an outsider and the incidents leading up to when he commits the crime. It shows the character of the man Meusault and what he likes and how he feels about things.

Part 2 deals with consequences of the crime. This makes us feel sympathetic for him as he seemingly has not done any thing wrong but is still classed as an outsider just for being

truthful and not hiding his feelings like so many do. The book starts with the key event, which shapes the way he seems different. "Mother died today or maybe it was yesterday"(Camus, 1982, p.9). His mother's death at the start shows what kind of person he is. He seems not to show very much remorse and doesn't even know how old his mother was when she died. When Meursault calls his mother's death, he shows no emotion for her. He feels detached from her life, her death, and her entire being, for he had previously put her in a home. So, when she passes away, nothing truly changes in his life. Meursault is initially apprehensive about speaking with the undertaker so soon after his mother's death. He is even more concerned about drinking and smoking a cigarette in front of her dead body. However, he soon forgets both her presence and his attachment towards her, and lights a cigarette. Although Meursault's body is present at his mother's burial plot, his mind is elsewhere. He can think of only his home in Algiers and his desire to be in bed, as opposed to standing outside in the heat. He is quite detached from the idea of a funeral, and rather sees the afternoon as an annoying day outside. Immediately after her death, he goes about his daily life, as if it were normal. "It occurred to me that anyway one more day was ... back to work, and that, really, nothing had changed"(Camus, 1982,p.28).Immediately after the funeral, he goes to the beach and meets up with Marie Cardona, a woman from his office. They become intimately involved from that moment on.

When Meursault and Raymond meet and begin to talk, they realize that they share the same detached sentiment about humanity and relationships. Raymond understands Meursault's mentality of not openly speaking about his mother's death and his emotions with Marie. They share the feeling of wanting to be alone, without others disturbing their solidarity. When Raymond beats his ex-girlfriend, Meursault is slightly shocked. Still, he and Raymond feel no remorse for having inflicted violence on another human being. After the matter has passed and

Meursault promises to support Raymond with the police, the two men fall back into the same line of thought as before. They seem detached and indifferent from the fighting and violence. Weeks later, while on the beach, they encounter a group of Arabs, including the brother of his late ex-girlfriend. They fight and leave. Meursault returns to the beach later that day and shoots the Arab in cold blood four times. "Then I fired four more times at the motionless body ... knocking four quick times on the door of unhappiness" (Camus, 1982, p.60).

He is put on trial for murder and eventually sentenced to death by public execution. Only after the police begin to question him, Meursault realizes that he has, in fact, killed a man. He does not understand why the police continue to question him and he feels detached from the current legal situation. He is put on trial for murder and is eventually sentenced to death by public execution. While on trial, he observes the courtroom, recollects on his past relationships, and comes to terms with his actions.

Meursault also feels distant from Marie when he sees her briefly during visiting hours. He believes that he could get used to any type of life, regardless of the constraints and frustration, without friendship, without family. Those "extra" portions of life are detached from what he considers to be important.

Meursault has difficulty understanding his connection with the case. When the court proceedings begin, he often feels detached and distant from his body and entire self. He wonders about the murderer on trial and suddenly remembers that it is he who is on trial and must deal with the consequences of his actions. Marie's testimony is the ultimate clincher in Meursault's case that illustrates his detachment. Her words prove to the court that Meursault engaged in happy, sensual actions immediately following his mother's death. "The investigators had learned that I had shown insensitivity" (Camus, 1982, p.64). According to the court, this detached

...ment seems conclusive proof of his guilt. Meursault ultimately does not believe in God, is  
...rated with every person in his life, and welcomes death openly.

Meursault at last finds peace within himself. Alienated from society and life itself, he  
...his honor in death. He takes nothing from this world with him, for it gave him nothing. His  
...ly found consciousness will carry him into the unknown. Thus, Meursault finally realizes his  
...angement from society and disregards what society thinks about him as long as he is happy  
...ta who he is and what he had done. At the end of it all, Camus' fundamental principle is  
...ealed: "Apart from ones own conscious being, all else is otherness, from which one is  
...anged" (Thody, 1959). So the novel is about indifference, alienation and lack of emotional  
...ponses. In *The Outsider*, Meursault is alienated from existence; that is, from life as such. He  
...es not understand existence; he finds it absurd. Meursault's alienation is due to his seeing of  
...e absurdity of existence.

## Conclusion

This paper states that alienation, the feeling of being isolated from communities, friends  
...nd family, jobs, and even oneself, is a common theme in modern-day literature, especially in the  
...erature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The theme of alienation without a  
...rbit one of the most important themes in Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864), Leo  
...stoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886), Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), and Albert  
...amus's *The Outsider* (1942). Alienation is a theme which these authors have explored in their  
...asterpieces where the main characters are alienated from their society. It is the common  
...riminator among the four main characters of these novels. The alienation is experienced by all  
...ese four characters, and is also exposed through psychological methods. The *Underground*



Ivan, Gregor and Meursault all experience changes in how they are able to view themselves and their relation with others. Society has marginalized the Underground Man, and placed him. Because he has no voice within society, freedom is the only way he can rebel. Meursault's alienation is due to his seeing of the absurdity of existence and he is forced to "feel" by society. Ivan's realization of his morality is an extreme change in his psychology and allows him to deepen his formerly shallow existence. This psychological alienation is yet another order of Ivan's separation from others. Gregor is psychologically alienated because although an insect, he still has the thought process of a human being. This dichotomy leads to a subtle shift in Gregor's psychological well-being. By analyzing the psychological, emotional, and physical aspects of alienation in *Notes from Underground*, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, *The Metamorphosis*, and *The Outsider*, I found similarities among in the four characters position as they are suddenly forced to reflect on their own importance and are made to question their autonomy.

All the characters are victim of alienation and loneliness. None of them have chosen by themselves to be in this situation. They are victims because of the system of modern society which subsequently leave them in the grip of isolation. Due to economic setbacks the Underground Man, Ivan, Gregor, and Meursault can never absolutely overcome alienation. The theme of alienation is popular in literature because mankind can relate to this emotion. As humans' struggle to gain acceptance, they face the obstacle of alienation every day. I feel that understanding alienation in literature is important because of the problems of alienation in our contemporary society.

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