

## HOW WOULD MARX APPROACH THE ALIENATION OF KAFKA'S "THE HUNGER ARTIST?"

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*This paper deals with the concept of alienation which is present in Kafka's writings. "The Hunger Artist" is one of the best known and most discussed stories written by Kafka which displays the theme of alienation. The paper argues that alienation is a concept which originated in the philosophical discussions proposed by Hegel and which went through changes and started to be contextualised from a sociological perspective by Marx. The paper suggests that the short story entitled "The Hunger Artist" displays the artist's alienation which can be compared with the conceptualisations made by Marx. In order to examine this relation firstly, Kafka as an artist with the striking themes and style of his writings is covered deeply. Then, the concept of alienation as discussed by Marx is examined. The final section is spared for establishing a bridge between Marxist theory of alienation and Kafka as can be observed in "The Hunger Artist."*

*"For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin?" (Shakespeare, Hamlet)*

### INTRODUCTION

The feeling of belongingness in human beings and the concept of self-realization have a long history beginning with the myths of antiquity and still popular in modernity. In the age we are living we know that many people suffer from estrangement from themselves, their environment, and their true nature. Most of us might have seen people in streets in different countries offering for a free hug. Such a request arises from the very basic need of human nature to be with others. However, the social circumstances of today together with the working environment and conditions of the modern world drive a person into a world of alienation. The timeless concept of alienation was explicit in Plato's *Republic* where citizens

all are engaged with the work most suitable to them, a case to investigate the relationship between social order and self-fulfilment. This timeless concept of alienation existed during the time of Shakespeare as quoted above. Hamlet's alienation was apparent when he could not decide whether to be or not to be. He was listing a number of reasons like being oppressed, scorned, despised, insulted and depreciated as causes of his alienation. Kafka's Gregor was alienated when he realized "he was a tool of the boss, without brains or backbone."

Alienation indicates a person's fallen state, in which one is in conflict with oneself, one's surroundings and others. Alienation is studied in the fields of sociology, philosophy or psychology denoting to the different forms of the alienated person or the process of alienation. The common use of the word is the active form "to alienate" meaning to remove something from someone. The term conveys a sense of loss or detachment (Bruce and Yearley 2006). The process of alienation means estrangement of people from the world in which they are living. Abercrombie et.al. adds that alienation is the process during which individuals estrange from themselves and others (2006). The original use of the philosophical term dates back to the German philosopher Hegel which was later transformed into a sociological concept by Karl Marx.

Most of Kafka's works deal with the theme of alienation by referring to the different social, economic, psychological or ontological forms of the concept. This study examines the concept of alienation which is illustrated in a well-known Kafka story, "The Hunger Artist." It is one of the best known and most discussed stories written by Kafka which displays the theme of alienation. The paper suggests that alienation is a concept which originated in the philosophical discussions proposed by Hegel and which went through changes and started to be contextualised from a sociological perspective by Marx. The study claims that "The Hunger Artist" displays the artist's alienation which can be compared with the conceptualisations made by Marx. Different from many readings of alienation in Kafka, the present study explores the Marxist dimension in terms of the capital-labourer relationship which is displayed in the form of the relationship between the manager and the hunger artist in the story.

### **KAFKA: AN ALIENATED ARTIST**

Franz Kafka who was born in Prague in 1883 as the eldest son of a Jewish family remains one of the widely read and mostly appreciated authors of the twentieth century. When he was born in Prague, the city was ruled under Hapsburg Empire and it was a part of Kingdom of Bohemia. The city was very deeply affected by the First World War which resulted in the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire. When Prague became the capital of Czech Republic, the city was dominated by Czech culture and language. After the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, the city of Prague became free of censorship. During Kafka's lifetime Prague was a city of Czechs, Germans and Jews. Many of the Jews, including Kafka, lived in the Jewish ghetto, segregated from the rest of the population in the city. Kafka's father and many other Jewish families largely ignored their Jewish identity and hoped to be blended into German culture (Milne 2000). However, living with anti-Semitism was inevitable. In addition to his native German and Czech, Kafka was a speaker of French and Italian, and Yiddish, which he learnt as an adult; Franz Kafka was first and foremost an internationalist

and a European. Kafka earned a law degree and worked in an insurance company during his adult life. His mastery of several languages helped him to keep his job.

He learnt Latin and Greek, which enabled him to read his favourite classical authors in the original. He also read the German and Austrian classics (Goethe, Kleist, Grillparzer) and the 19<sup>th</sup> century European greats like Flaubert, Dickens and Dostoevsky. The values Kafka's Europe had been shaken by the writings of Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx, and the thoughts of these intellectuals left traces on Kafka's work. His first writing was published in 1909 and he continued to publish his short fiction until death. All his writings were in German. After the Second World War and the Holocaust, Prague fell behind the Iron Curtain and Kafka's books were banned. Kafka was not widely recognized during his lifetime; however a small intellectual circle in Prague appreciated his writings which were published in journals and small short story volumes. When he died, he left many unpublished stories behind, which he told his friends to burn. His friends acted against Kafka's last wish and organized, edited and published them.

Kafka was not subscribed to any particular literary movement. The Western intellectual scene of his time was existentialist, structuralist, and postmodern. Kafka's writing seemed to pioneer the new trend. Industrialisation and urban migration, changing cultural identities and class conflict were the realities of his age which he didn't appreciate but which left traces on his writings. In the beginning of the twentieth century there were two schools of literary thought, namely Expressionism and Symbolism, and Kafka is considered to be a key example for both (Milne 2000).

The domineering father was a significant source of influence in Kafka's life and work. His relations with his father were extremely difficult. The tyranny of his father is depicted in the themes of his short fiction. The figures of all-powerful authority and systems of punishment are reflections of a dominant father with whom he lived most of his life. His father as well as the conditions of his era forced him to earn money by working in an office. That is why he spent most of his adult life working in an insurance company. He saw the world of work as keeping him from writing and satisfaction. He could only write during the nights or the time when he was off work. Working in the office was a torture for him but when he turned to fiction he got better and more hopeful.

He assessed his writings and found them failures. Kafka wrote three novels, all of which are unfinished. Leaving his novels unfinished was a form of failure which he ascribed to himself (Constantine 2002). For many of the characters in his stories the office or the workplace is a place of dread, paranoia and problems. Most characters in his fiction do not have names but have a job as in "The Hunger Artist" (Constantine 2002, 82- 83). Kafka's literary thought was preoccupied by the theme of belonging and non-belonging. His divided life was of day and night, the former represented non-belonging while the latter represented belonging. Day half was the time of darkness while the night half during when he was writing was the bright and real existence.

Many of Kafka's tales are representations of the obviously divided world of business and art. In modernity people live in a divided world between work and art, which Kafka recognised as a problem inherent in modern society. Consideration of work and art as two separate sections was Kafka's solution to alienation. "But both Kafka's work and his art involved writing and world-creation; the boundary was never as clear as it ought to have been. Consequently, he became a divided self in which one side was always colluding and

colliding with the other. This is never clearer than in the short fiction which deals with work as a major theme" (Sussman 2000, 82- 83).

In the fictive worlds described by Kafka there appear characters contradicting with the order, facing the absurd life and suffering from misery. The relationship between the individual and the system appears as that of between the powerless and powerful. His protagonists are usually alienated, isolated and powerless. Kafka pictures the modern world of the capitalist system as provoking alienation which he describes individual-oriented. The alienation moves from psychological level to sociological level. The individual's self-alienation may lead to misery and detachment from life. Kafka touches the individual's alienation from his surroundings and the society. Kafka asserts that the social and political system pave way to the relationship between bureaucracy and alienation. When Kafka's own life which he mostly experienced in Prague as a Jew is considered, it is not surprising to see how much he focuses on alienation and loneliness of individuals among the crowds.

Kafka illustrates alienation of human beings via the use of nonhuman things. The world of alienation comprises of estrangement from the world of people, yet there is no room for hopelessness. Kafka who might have been under the influence of his own father, writes about oppressive families, with an emphasis on power, law, crime and punishment. Therefore, Kafka depicts the root of alienation as family which is the first social environment for a child. The relationship between Kafka and his father involved a struggle against authority. He told he felt as if he had no freedom to choose. There is no doubt that Kafka's choice of themes is a result of his own life. The alienation that starts in the wrongs of the family spreads to the alienation in terms of social relationships. Therefore, it can be argued that Kafka's fiction is mostly associated with the mood of social isolation, alienation and melancholy. It would be better to discuss the different forms of alienation focusing on the conceptualisation proposed by Marx, which we can relate to the alienation in Kafka's writings.

## THE MARXIST CONCEPTUALISATION OF ALIENATION

The term alienation was firstly uttered by the German philosopher Hegel, who argued that people created a culture which they later confronted as an alien. According to Hegel, a person is a historical being, the argument which bears the idea that one is conscious about his past and is open to the future. As such, people do not live in isolation, but live in a world with others and their world is determined by a social order. A person's development is not determined by nature but by one's actual surroundings because people are social beings. In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel states that "The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness to freedom" (Hegel 2001, 33). In his philosophy what really exists is *Geist*, which is a spiritual principle representing the unity of reality. The unity of *Geist* is a process during when it thinks and realizes itself. Initially, *Geist* is a potential spirit, which actualizes through history. *Geist* is saved from being an alienated spirit by realizing the history of humans and culture. *Geist* is a dynamic Self engaged in the process of alienation and dealienation. Hegel argued that nature is only a self-alienated form of *Geist* and a human being is *Geist* in the process of dealienation. History is the process of growth of a human being's knowledge of *Geist*, through which a person becomes self-aware and returns to oneself from self-alienation in nature. According to the phenomenology of *Geist* in Hegel, alienation is an ontological fact which is rooted in human nature. Therefore,

alienation is an inherent feature of human existence. The *Geist* which “has separated itself from itself will ultimately return to its true state” (Churchich 1990, 13).

Hegel argues that alienation is a process internal to human beings and it can be associated with the *Geist*'s dualistic nature. Not only the potentiality of *Geist* enables to struggle for self-realization but also the consciousness and will of *Geist* desires for a realization in natural life. It can be asserted that Hegel's concept of alienation is based upon a distinction between essence and existence. A person's existence is alienated from one's essence, that is, in reality one is quite different from how one would potentially be. Alienation, objectification and coming to one's own are the three processes of *Geist*'s development for self-realization.

The concept of alienation was popularized by Marx who praised Hegel for pointing the self-creation of a human being is a process of alienation and dealiation. However, Marx asserted that self-alienation of a person is not psychological but social and historical. In his *Economic and philosophical manuscripts of 1844* he used the term to describe human estrangement from true human nature and proposed that alienation is rooted in social structures of the capitalist system which denied the essential nature of human species. Marx argued that self-alienation arises from the system of production. According to Marx, human labour created culture and history, an idea contrary to Hegel's mystical substance of *Geist* (Turner 2006). Marx rejects Hegel's conception of alienation and emphasizes economic alienation by pointing that man in class society not only estranged from his essential being but also from the products of his spiritual and economic activity. However, according to Churchich “both Hegel and Marx stress that everything short of the whole or totally is imperfect and fragmentary. Individualism is rejected as a negative phenomenon. They argue that particular moments of the whole can never be absolutely true” (Churchich 1990, 13).

While discussing the concept of alienation Marx proposed the concepts of object and objectification. Object is a product of objectification process. Human species realize the activity of objectification by expression of human power in the creation of objects, which is a potential creativity essential to human being. People cooperate with others in this creative activity during which human essence is realized by labour. By objectifying their individuality in objects and by making others enjoy their products, people affirm themselves. Thus, the process of objectification is affirmative and social for Marx. However, since workers have to work and produce in order to live, it is no longer a free process.

People create material objects which, though reflecting human nature, happen to be entities outside themselves. “The product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labour. Labour's realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realization of labour appears as loss of realization for the workers; objectification as loss of the object and bondage to it; appropriation as estrangement, as alienation” (Marx 1959, 29). There is the danger of alienation as a result of objectification in the specific circumstances of capitalist society. The capitalist group of people finds these products applicable. In this case alienation may appear both as a subjective state and as a structural category. The individual's feeling of alienation is a subjective state while the social and economic arrangements of capitalism represent a structural category (Abercrombie et.al., 2006). However in a pre-capitalist society, the production of the materials in which they put some of themselves was for the producer's own use; one could either use the product of one's own labour for oneself or

exchange it fairly, which was a system of properly human. In the capitalist society, the workers have to sell their labour and they are not the owners of the means of the production which result with alienation manifested in four different types as described by Marx. The worker is alienated from (1) the product of his labour, (2) from the process of production, (3) from his human nature, and (4) from other people.

The worker is alienated from the product of his work which is appreciated by others but over which he has no control. The means of production are owned by capitalists and the products of his labour become an alien object. "... the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own" (Marx 1959, 29). At one point it is possible that workers cannot consciously control the objects they produce and the products that would fulfil their needs. Workers might serve for the production of the things which are not likely to appeal to their own needs. In this way, Marx asserts that in the capitalist system the worker who is estranged from the product of his labour can become the slave to the product. The worker's own product becomes an external existence, existing independently outside him. It is like an alien and a hostile having the confronting power on him.

The worker is alienated from the act of production because working is no longer a creative activity which the worker carries out with intrinsic motivation and satisfaction. The act of production is forced on the worker by external power; it is the external constraints that decide the value of the labour, when to start and when to cease. When the worker cannot consciously control the process of production, the activity of objectification is no longer a free one. In such an activity of objectification the worker changes into a tool serving for capitalism. Under these circumstances the labour becomes meaningless. Division of labour among the workers according to their skill results with the alienation of the worker from the practice of production.

The third type of alienation in capitalist society is the alienation of the worker from human nature because working in such a society lacks the quality of species being. "Man is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object, but – and this is only another way of expressing it – also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a universal and therefore a free being." As neither the product nor the process of production is a conscious and intentional activity, both the individual and the species cannot develop. This very activity which is not directed consciously is no longer a free one. "Man's species-being, both nature and his spiritual species-property, into a being alien to him, into a means of his individual existence. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his human aspect" (Marx 1959, 32). In the capitalist system the worker carrying out the activity of production cannot encounter a world that reflects and supports its species. He is exposed to an alien world which is not a result of his endeavour and reality.

The kind of alienation brings forth the alienation of a person from another which is of a social kind. "An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life activity, from his species-being, is the estrangement of man from man. When man confronts himself, he confronts the other man. What applies to a man's

relation to his work, to the product of his labour and to himself, also holds of a man's relation to the other man, and to the other man's labour and object of labour" (Marx 1959, 32). Human beings must also be in relation with others in the social world. However, the social relationships of exchange are transformed into market relations. The qualities of human beings as individuals in social relationships are replaced by the positions of people as workers in the market.

Marx's idea of the types of manifestations of alienation can be concluded as links in a chain; a person alienates products from oneself which is followed by one's alienation from the activity of production. The first two result in his being estranged from his natural and essential world. The alienated person who cannot fulfil oneself as a free and creative being of praxis cannot realize oneself as a social being having humane relationships with others. Humans become what they are by realizing the power and the capacities they possess; therefore, it is important for Marx to become, to live like, and to work like a free human being. The modern world of capitalism was at rise during the time of Marx and Kafka. The increase in mass production brought harder and less humane working conditions. The system encouraged the employers to think of their workers as their slaves. The work became an oppressive power on the individual and drove him into alienation. The self-alienation of the individual brought the worker's alienation from the other workers and the relationships got insincere. Now it is better to examine the relationship between alienation as discussed by Marx and as pictured by Kafka in his short story entitled "The Hunger Artist."

### **KAFKA'S ALIENATED HUNGER ARTIST**

As discussed earlier in this paper, most of Kafka's fiction deals with the alienation, isolation and misery. "The Hunger Artist" is one of the short stories by Kafka that illustrates the modern world of alienation. The story is about an artist whose art is fasting. During Kafka's time, the real historical phenomenon of professional fasting was recorded in newspapers as a catchy form of art. The art of fasting as a profession lasted for nearly 42 years during 1880-1922. The first professional fast was carried out by an American who has gone forty days without food. Later in Europe, it was Giovanni Succi who fasted for 30 days in at least 30 different performances. Professional fasting was followed by many others in Europe with varying success. In the twentieth century, the changes in popular culture affected the development of new forms of mass entertainment (Milne 2000, 105). Kafka's story of "The Hunger Artist" describes an artist who used to be famous with his public performances of the act of fasting. The exact time or place fasting takes place is not specified; however, it is probable that Kafka has been inspired by the professional fasters of his time.

The story begins with a flashback, pointing the artist's dissatisfaction with his himself and the interest of his audience directed towards new trends in entertainment. The artist suffers from the misfortune that his talent for fasting is no longer valued. The world has changed and the art of fasting which used to be popular is no longer appreciated by crowds. People used to wait for days and nights to see the artist fasting and they even bought season tickets in order not to miss the performance. The hunger artist fasts in a cage in which there are straw and a clock and his fasting is ended by his impresario at the end of forty days. The hunger artist is against limiting his fasting within a period of forty days because he believes he can easily fast longer. However, for impresario, the art of fasting is

carried out in order to earn money and the longer the duration of the fasting, the increase in the loss of public interest. The final of the performance is designed in the form of a show in which the hunger artist's cage is opened, he is taken out of the cage accompanied by two ladies, and is given his first food after the period of fasting in front of the crowds. Here, Kafka emphasizes that the artist is against ending his performance and he disapproves the show in which he is shown to the public as being starveling and walking into the food given. The first half of the story describes the time when the hunger artist is working with a manager, fasting and rejoicing the huge crowds.

Later in the story, the hunger artist left alone by his impresario hires himself to a circus. Kafka's hunger artist resembles the case of the human skeletons exhibited in sideshows (Sussman 200, 123). His cage in which he performs his art is put next to the cages of the animals. He becomes one of the things exhibited in those cages and is no longer different from the rest of the animals. But, the interest in the hunger artist decreases in a short time and the artist is almost forgotten in the cage. At the beginning, the attendants in the circus take care of the notice board and change the number of days of fasting. The dramatic change in the interest in his art has driven him towards indefinite fasting.

The climax of the story describes the humiliated and neglected artist in his cage, suddenly noticed by an overseer. The overseer discovers the artist buried in the straw, on the verge of death. The number of the days he has been fasting is unspecified and even the hunger artist is unaware of the duration of his fasting. The overseer asks "Are you still fasting? When on earth do you mean to stop?" The reply of the hunger artist is interesting: "Because I have to fast, I can't help it. . . because I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else." The final words of the hunger artist are followed with his fasting until death. The artist's cage is refilled by a young panther, having the opposite qualities when compared to the artist. The jaws of the panther seem to be ready to swallow the food brought to him without hesitation.

The protagonist of the story is presented as suffering from misery, isolation and alienation which can be argued as outcomes of his job or art. The artist believes that he is not receiving the admiration he deserves. Therefore, he is never satisfied with his fasting because he has no control over his own starvation. He is ambitious to achieve that no one has ever did before. However, his fasting is ended by the impresario in the fortieth day and he is irritated at giving up his fast at a ceremony presided over, in part, by women. During the nights there are watchers controlling if the artist would cheat and eat something. It is emphasized that these people never believe in his fasting and think that he must be eating secretly. The hunger artist starves for admiration and appreciation which he never receives. The alienated artist even forgets the reason of his fasting and his only aim appears to be admired. It is as if he is fasting in order to be applauded, but not for spiritual yearning.

When the interest in the art of fasting decreases, impresario leaves the artist all alone. The hunger artist's whole life is his job which is his art and when it is taken from him, he has no life at all. The only way for his survival is to go on fasting. When he starts performing his art in a circus, he turns into something exhibited within a cage. However, his competitors are more attractive, lively and entertaining. No one in the circus, not even the fasting-artist himself, counted the days. The unawareness of the people made his heart grew heavy. The spectators are interested in the others and the hunger artist's cage is treated as being



empty, as if nothing exists in it. “Kafka’s circus figure — the pitiful Hunger Artist has been read as nihilistic allegory of the modern artist.” (Sussman 2000, 123). The closer the artist comes to perfection in his art, the closer he comes to death. Finally, the artist dies in his cage without even being noticed and is replaced by a panther.

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The negative effects of industrialization and capitalism have on men are displayed by Kafka in his writings. The hunger artist’s job is his art; men need to work in order to make a living. In the capitalist society, no one can ignore the necessity of having a job. In the cage of the hunger artist, there is straw and there is a clock. The presence of a clock in that cage seems to be absurd because the hunger artist is not concerned with the passage of time. In economics, the clock is an indicator signalling the time to go to work. For the hunger artist, the clock indicates the duration of his fasting which is his job.

Kafka touches on the idea pointed by Marx about the functional aspect of the individual in the capitalist society. The individual who is no longer functional in modern life is externalized from the society. The hunger artist is one of the victims of the capitalist system; when he is no longer attractive and appealing for the society, he does not function any more. He is abandoned by the impresario and he is obliged to exhibit his art and work in a circus. Impresario gives up on him because his work no longer makes any money. The modern society exploits the labour of the working class and eliminates the people when there is nothing left of them for its profit.

The first step towards the alienation of the hunger artist is his being estranged from his job. Both the process of fasting and the exhibition of his art are like alien to the artist. He has no control over his job and over his life. His inability, or refusal, to end his fasting is of no use. He cannot decide the duration, the process or the form of his fasting. An external force determines the process of his job. This force determines when to begin and when to end the fasting. It appears like the hunger artist is drifted to a direction on which he has not control. However, when he decides that there is no ‘food’ that tempts him and that he would better fast until the end, he gets control over his life and decisions. The wilfully chosen end is a conclusion he decides for himself.

His having no control over his job results with his dissatisfaction. He is not satisfied with his fasting because his product is not for his own use or his spiritual self but for providing money for the system. He is alienated because he is not an artist but a link in the chain of capitalist system. Pre-capitalist society demands the worker’s satisfaction with his own work and product. However, capitalists care for the satisfaction of the employer or the customer. Otherwise, work will cease to be ‘a living’ because an unsatisfied employer can dismiss his employee. The artist lives by and from his art alone and dissatisfaction on the part of the employer is an end for the artist’s life. In the story, when there is no market left for the artist who cannot really satisfy an audience, his work and the artist himself begin to be forgotten. Just at the point where he is close to perfecting his art, the audience gives up on him. Achieving perfection in hunger artistry is the death of the artist. The system exploits the artist until his death. But, we cannot ignore that his life until choosing fasting without end was his own decision. His choice of being a part of the capitalist system can also be considered as a self-chosen form of alienation. The fact that he did not revolt against the

system was a choice and it was when he accepted to live in alienation.

The artist's alienation is symbolized with the physical element of the cage. The physical barrier between the artist and the others is illustrated with the cage. His aesthetic residence represents the iron cage of modernity and the barriers recall the spatial otherness. "Art, for Kafka, as personified by the Hunger Artist, is a multifaceted inversion of the values regulating bourgeois culture and economics" (Sussman, 2000, 123). Kafka's writings focus mainly on setting. The place of the events in "The Hunger Artist" is the cage. It is neither closed nor open. The condition of the artist is relevant to the cage. The artist is open to the external world, leaning towards them and waiting for their admiration. On the other hand, he isolates himself with the barriers of the cage. He is distant, silent and on the far edge of the cage in obscurity.

Kafka's artist is a representative of man's disconnected and lonely life in modernity. Kafka describes the artist with no family, relatives or friends. The artist's whole life is his job which is his art. When it is taken away from him, it is as if his life is over. No matter how much the individual desires to free from the harsh and insincere conditions of working, he has no alternative but to work. The modern world gives rise to the individual's alienation by reducing his whole life to work. The greater the place of work is in man's life, the further he gets away from himself and others. This is man's alienation from the self and the society. Kafka's hunger artist is alienated from himself and the rest of the world around.

In his fiction, Kafka illustrates an extraordinary world that is completely opposite to the real. The characters as described in their extraordinary lives find themselves in absurd and unique worlds are examples of extremity of alienation. Kafka habitually draws up opposite powers against his protagonists. Alienation is presented as a result of modern social world in which the modern man wastes his time and energy in city and work and in which he suffers from fear, depression and disregard. The absurd life in which man is alienated brings loss of hope. The characters in Kafka's stories are governed by a number of laws which they cannot interpret. This is the case of the artist whose life is managed by the rules laid down by the impresario. The artist neither interprets nor wants to obey them; however, his working conditions do not allow him to react against. The organism's regular development has been stopped and his movements are limited in space.

In addition to the hard working conditions, the hunger artist suffers from the spectators' prejudice because they find him unreliable and don't admire his art. The spectators' admiration is crucial for the artist because they symbolize the power of the market. The artist's job is dominated by the power of the market to which the artist becomes a slave. Under these circumstances, it is inevitable for the artist to be drifted into alienation. The artist becomes a slave to his impresario who decides everything about his work. His work is like a burden on his shoulders. He fears from losing his job, falling in value and depreciation. He ends with alienation which is the final point of modern individual.

As suggested previously in the introduction, the present paper suggests a Marxist reading of Kafka's "The Hunger Artist." The relationship between the manager and the hunger artist, the manager being the symbol of capital and the artist being the symbol of labour is at the centre of the story. The artist's being controlled, manipulated, directed and exploited image of the story is a reflection of a labourer's being made a toy in the hands of the capitalists. The alienation suffered by the hunger artist is both economic and social just as the stages of alienation pointed by Marx. Therefore, a Marxist reading of "The Hunger

Artist” in this study would suggest an exploration of alienation in Kafka fiction from another perspective.

The increase in mass production promoted by the modern capitalist world is illustrated as evil and the human beings as powerless and incapable. Most of the protagonists in Kafka fiction, including the hunger artist are presented as nonhuman creatures. The exhibition of the performance of the hunger artist in a cage is a treatment of the artist as an object. Dehumanization under capitalist society results with alienation of man. Modern man is subject to the power of the market. Man becomes a part of the system which Kafka regards a social threat, the source of which is the power of the capitalist system. The man of routine labour turns to a link in the chain, objectified and dehumanized. The end of humanity will be accompanied by alienation. The modern world will bring more and more hunger artists alienated from their products, their jobs, themselves and others. As for the question in the title of the paper, Marx would find Kafka’s hunger artist a prototype of modern alienated man.

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