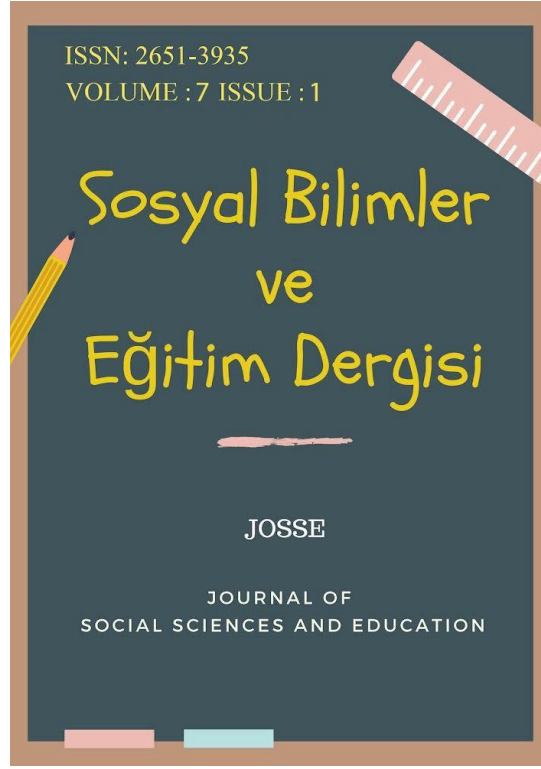


## **JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION (JOSSE)**



<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/josse>

### **Pathological Elements Created by the Father Factor in Franz Kafka**

**Umut HALLAÇ<sup>1</sup>**

*Association D'entrepreneuriat Social*

*MSc*

umut@parisadso.fr

Orcid ID: 0000-0001-7893-3001

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**Article Type:** Research Article

Received: 6.03.2024

Accepted: 24.05.2024

Published online: 29.05.2024

**Citation:** Hallaç, U. (2024). Pathological elements created by the father factor in Franz Kafka. *Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 7(1), 182-200.

## Pathological Elements Created by the Father Factor in Franz Kafka

Umut HALLAÇ<sup>1</sup>

*Association D'entrepreneuriat Social*

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### Abstract

The novels, stories, letters and aphorisms of Franz Kafka, one of the most famous writers of modern German literature, bear the traces of childhood trauma. Through his writing, Kafka revealed a system of thought that he was unable to express during his childhood. Franz Kafka grew up in a patriarchal family dominated by authority and misunderstanding. The sense of marginalisation he experienced within the family, combined with exclusion and misunderstanding, created an insensitivity, first to his immediate environment and then to the outside world, and restricted Franz's emotions from childhood. Unable to establish a positive relationship with his father, Kafka reflected in his works the feelings of alienation, hatred, inadequacy, complexes and insecurity that he had repressed in his unconscious because of his father's oppressive structure and exploitative behaviour. To date, research on Franz Kafka has focused on his works, but the unconscious behind these works has not been evaluated. The aim of this study is to examine the traumas created by the father phenomenon in the background of Franz Kafka's works, and the psychopathological elements created by these childhood traumas.

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### Research Article

*Received:* 6.03.2024  
*Accepted:* 24.05.2024  
*Published online:*  
29.05.2024

**Keywords:** Kafka, psychopathology, family, early childhood, father factor

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<sup>1</sup> **Corresponding author:**

MSc

umut@parisadso.fr

Orcid ID: 0000-0001-7893-3001

## **Introduction**

Franz Kafka, one of the most famous writers of modern German literature, was born in Prague, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, on 3 July 1883. His father, Hermann, was a successful businessman who often clashed with his sensitive son; he was also demanding and domineering. His mother, Julie, was a kind and cultured woman who tried to balance the needs of the family. Franz Kafka grew up in Prague as a minority (the Jewish community) within a minority (the German-speaking population). Franz Kafka was a sensitive and intelligent child, but he struggled to fit in with his peers, was often bullied, teased and made fun of, and felt like an outcast. He also suffered from health problems including asthma and digestive disorders.

Even as a young child, Kafka was eager and enthusiastic about writing. He wrote small plays for his parents' birthdays, which were performed at home by his three younger sisters, while he himself acted as stage manager (Lewit and Bidermans, 2016). Although this period was one of the child Kafka's most enjoyable, the authoritarianism and fear generated by the father figure was always one step ahead of these memories. Hermann Kafka never sympathised with his artistically gifted son.

From an early age, Kafka's relationship with his father fluctuated between admiration and grief. His father's narcissism, self-confidence, cynical attitude and lack of understanding created feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness and shame in Kafka. Shame is an intensely negative and painful emotion in which a person perceives themselves as inadequate and wrong (Konkiewitz E.C., & Ziff E.B., 2018). Studies have shown that children who lack parental affection, children who are victims of abuse and neglect, and children whose parents have authoritarian attitudes are at greater risk of shame (Nikolić et al., 2023; Stuewig & McCloskey, 2005). As a lack of parental warmth and affection towards the child can make the child feel unaccepted, ignored or inadequate, children of parents who lack affection may see themselves as worthless and be more prone to experience shame. Empirical evidence suggests that children of rejecting and negative parents who show little warmth and affection are more likely to experience shame (Muris & Meesters, 2013). Seeing oneself as worthy or unworthy is an important aspect of self-conscious emotions and distinguishes guilt from shame; seeing oneself as worthy is related to guilt, while seeing oneself as bad or unworthy is related to shame (Lewis, 2007; Tangney & Dearing, 2003). On the other hand, shame is a mediating factor between childhood maltreatment and adult depression. It is associated with a depressive mindset in which negative experiences are generalised and linked to internal causes, while

positive events are seen as specific, isolated cases linked to external factors (Lewis, 2007). Here, in Kafka's "Letter to His Father", I was in a constant state of shame; either I obeyed your orders, which was a shame, because after all it was only for me; or I challenged you, which was also a shame, because how dare I challenge you; or I could not obey, because, for example, I did not have your strength, your appetite, your skill, even though you naturally expected it of me; that was the greatest shame of all (Kafka, 1966/2016) was not an expression of his thoughts, but of his unconscious sense of worthlessness and shame.

We can clearly see that it was the lack of recognition of his personality and the constant devaluation of the difference between his personality and his father's personality that was the main challenge and concern for Kafka in his relationship with his father; his father clearly did not accept anyone in the whole family and devalued other people as well. Kafka was also aware that his conflict with his father was not an isolated phenomenon.

In Kafka's "Letter to My Father" we can clearly see the characteristics of insecure attachment in the way he talks about his father and in the way this letter is formulated. The fact that he reproaches his father and describes his humiliating experiences with him in naturalistic terms makes it clear that he wants to be accepted by his father and at the same time realises that he will never be accepted. This oscillation between blame and withdrawal of blame in the evaluation of the relationship characterises this particular pattern of insecure attachment. Insecure attachment has led to disagreements between father and son becoming more confrontational and subsequently evaluated in memory as more emotionally distressing than the actual disagreement (Blass, 2019).

The novels, short stories, letters and aphorisms of Franz Kafka, one of the most famous writers of modern German literature, reflect traces of childhood trauma. Through writing, he revealed a system of thought that he had been unable to express during his childhood.

Traumatic events in childhood can be more traumatising. Exposure of an adult to experiences that can harm a child between the ages of 0 and 18 can be defined as childhood trauma. Childhood psychological trauma includes bad experiences that occur during childhood and cause pain to the individual (Öztürk, 2011). For this reason, childhood trauma is behind Franz Kafka's belief that life is defenceless and doomed to defeat since his childhood.

## **Method**

Qualitative research method was used in this study. Qualitative approach is used when the potential answer to a question requires an explanation rather than a direct yes/no answer. In general, qualitative research is concerned with cases rather than variables and with understanding differences rather than calculating the average of responses (Maudsley, 2011). The context/ setting of the study and the researcher's reflexivity (i.e. "reflection on and awareness of their bias", the effect of the researcher's experience on the data and interpretations) are very important and described as part of data collection (Creswell & Creswell 2018). In this context, a four-stage process was followed in this study. At the beginning of the research, the subject title "Pathological elements created by the father factor in Franz Kafka" was determined and it was decided in which scope the subject would be analysed in the context of the title. Keywords related to the title such as Kafka, psychopathology, family, early childhood, father factor were identified. In the second stage, screening tools were identified and a screening plan was prepared. Within the framework of the established plan, the sources to be used and access to these sources were determined and information was collected and analysed from existing secondary sources such as documents, reports, academic publications, online publications and other materials available in libraries. In addition, websites such as researchgate and asosindex, especially related academic publications, and the relevant web resources of Britannica were used for encyclopaedia searches. In addition to gaining a broader perspective on the topic under study, this study also supplemented and confirmed the information on the topic. Visual and auditory studies on the subject were also scanned. In the third stage, the search results were categorised by dividing them into sub-parts in order to compare the Turkish, English, German and French sources and to establish the relationship between these sources. In terms of reliability, the author, publisher, publication date, ISBN and DOI (<https://dx.doi.org/>) numbers of the sources were checked. In the last stage, the evaluation of Kafka's childhood, childhood traumas, the feeling of exclusion in the family, the reasons for exclusion and misunderstanding were studied in order to identify the deficiencies of the literature on the subject of research and to respond to these deficiencies. Until now, research on Franz Kafka has focused on his works, but the unconscious behind these works has not been taken into account. For this reason, the aim of the study entitled "Pathological elements created by the father factor in Franz Kafka" was to investigate the traumas created by the father factor in the background of Franz Kafka's works

and the psychopathological elements created by these childhood traumas, in accordance with the screening plan mentioned above.

### **Hermann Kafka**

Franz Kafka's father, the son of a kosher butcher, was born in the small village of Wossek in southern Bohemia, the fourth of six children in a family living in poor conditions. Hermann Kafka had a family with an entrepreneurial spirit and a desire for social progress. In accordance with the tradition of his family, Hermann Kafka grew up as a solid, enterprising, ambitious and strong-willed child who pursued social progress and success throughout his life. He also had an authoritarian and quick-tempered temperament (Kafka Museum, n.d.).

The fourth child of Jakob Kafka and Franziska Kafka (née Platowski), Hermann Kafka had a difficult educational life. He attended school in the village of Jemnice, two kilometres from his home. Although the daily language was Czech, lessons were conducted in German. He learnt little there except basic arithmetic, writing and Hebrew (Schlegel, 2024). After failing in his education, Hermann learnt the trade with his father.

Hermann's childhood was marked by economic hardship and by getting up early every morning in the cold of winter and the heat of summer to deliver his father's parcels to distant customers. Hermann Kafka, a member of the Czech Jewish provincial class, full of ambition, unaccepting of his position, pursuing great goals, spent his childhood at a time when other Jews in Bohemia were experiencing economic miracles. Hermann Kafka, who lived his childhood in submission to the authorities around him, mirrored his father's childhood in his own son Franz Kafka, and did not refrain from beating his son and inflicting mental pain on him.

The Equality Law of 1849 granted new freedoms to the Jewish community (including the right to settle anywhere within the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). With this law, Jews who had previously lived in rural communities migrated to the cities and within a very short time began their economic and social rise, becoming successful entrepreneurs (Cafrande, 2016). The sons of these families tended to pursue academic careers such as medicine or law, as well as journalism. The Kafka family was a classic example of this transitional generation: The father went from being a simple peddler to a wholesaler, while the son continued to study law. In this respect, too, the Kafka family followed a common pattern. What was unusual was the depth of existential anxiety in Hermann Kafka's life and his lack of flexibility in the face of changing times. His constant reproaches to his children about the difficulty of his work and their comparative prosperity proved that Hermann Kafka

had not absorbed the social changes around him. Therefore, his expectations of his son were primarily to protect his own capital (Schlegel, 2023).

Hermann Kafka married Julia Löwie, who came from a wealthy and educated urban aristocratic family. When Hermann Kafka was 31, his son Franz was born. Franz Kafka, whose paternal lineage was tall and well-built, did not grow up with the physical structure of his father's lineage; on the contrary, it was unacceptable for this child, who had a kind, emotional and meticulous temperament, to be withdrawn by his father, who was a merchant.

For socio-political reasons that were developing throughout Europe (Prague was then within the borders of the Austrian Empire), Czechs and Germans began to separate from each other, and a tendency to exclude German speakers developed among the Czechs. In order to survive in Prague society, many Jews turned away from their roots and sought to assimilate. One of them, Hermann Kafka, hated his Jewish roots and wanted to rise as an economic and respectable person. "Hermann Kafka's career is an example for Jews living in Austria in the 1900s" (Haring 2004, p.42). Hermann Kafka did not hesitate to ignore his Jewish identity in order to achieve his ideals, climb the career ladder and maintain his economic development. For him, the issue was always clear: to continue on his own, coming from an impoverished background, and to always work hard in order to provide his children with a carefree and untroubled life. However, in order to make his children feel grateful to him, Hermann Kafka took every opportunity to remind them of all the material means he had provided for them and to fuel their unnecessary guilt. There are three phases that had a lasting impact on the development of Hermann Kafka's personality (Cafrande, 2016).

Phase I: Childhood and youth experience of poor rural conditions: The negative traces and effects of Hermann Kafka's struggle to find a place in the social structure belong to this period. This period is full of traumas.

Phase II: Military experience: The period that left its mark on his system of values and rules.

Phase III: The period of social advancement: Gaining a place in the social elite and economic success.

### **Pathological Elements in Franz Kafka**

Psychopathology, which is basically used to describe the deterioration of emotions, thoughts and/or behaviours, deals with abnormal behaviour. Various norms such as statistical, cultural and developmental norms are used to assess whether an emotion, thought or behaviour pattern is normal or abnormal. Emotional stress or trauma in the parent-child

relationship tends to be a cause of child psychopathology. (Schimizzi, 2021). Research has shown that child maltreatment can increase risk for various types of psychopathology by increasing threat sensitivity, decreasing reward sensitivity, and causing deficits in emotion recognition and understanding (Jaffee, 2017).

Early childhood underlies the emergence or exacerbation of psychopathology in later life. Therefore, the early childhood years are highly relevant given the greater vulnerability and fragility of early brain development, which can have long-lasting effects on academic, social, emotional and behavioural outcomes in adulthood (Black et al., 2017). For Kafka, this period was very fragile, introverted, restless and full of anxiety. In early childhood, the mother, as the object of the dyadic relationship, forms a diadic bond with his child. The father joins this diadic relationship in the child's oedipal stage, replacing the mother by making the relationship a triadic one. The destructive attitude of a domineering and authoritarian father prevented Kafka from going through these childhood stages in a healthy way, and prevented him from structuring his individual identity. Hermann Kafka, who had his own rules, did not hesitate to emotionally abuse his son by depriving him of the attention, love and care he needed. The most obvious examples of this abuse are his father's constant humiliation of Franz Kafka's qualities, abilities and desires, depriving him of social relationships and resources, imposing severe social punishments, ignoring him and making demands inappropriate for his age and strength. Franz Kafka was a child who suffered not only emotional abuse but also emotional neglect. The father does not respond to his son's psychological needs, does not care for him emotionally, does not show him enough love and affection, and does not provide enough support for his social development.

Fonagy & Target (2003) points to the importance of the parental relationship for the normal development of the child. According to him, the parental designs symbolised in this relationship and the bonds between parents form the basis of dyadic relationships. The concept of father and fatherhood develops through the internalisation of parental relationships. These processes, which begin in early childhood, are called primary identifications. It is very clear that baby Franz makes primary identifications with all the symbolic images of strong fathers and the symbolic images of obedient children (Odağ, 2004). Julie Kafka's absolute dependence on her husband Hermann Kafka, her obedience to what her husband says and her submission to her husband are also clearly seen. In addition, Julie Kafka's portrayal of her father as a symbol of authority, her indexing of family life to her father, and her messages such as "the good son obeys the father" have identified the images of the ideal father and the good son in Franz's unconscious.



The way parents behave towards their children and their attitudes towards events determine the direction and shape of the parent-child relationship. In this process, democratic parental understanding, which takes into account the needs of the child and follows a consistent path, gains in importance. Hermann Kafka's own childhood was far from democratic parenting, a style of parenting in which the parent guides the child's development in an accepting but consistent way and promotes a climate of cooperation, justice, equality and mutual respect between parent and child. This is why Hermann Kafka, who subjected his child to all kinds of abuse, went to great lengths to bring his child down and make his son accept his own superiority. The message "There is always something missing in you" underlying his attitudes and behaviours, such as finding fault with everything, judging unnecessarily, invalidating positive attitudes and emotions, rejecting his son's successes and achievements, reflects the characteristics of a grandiose narcissistic father.

Hermann Kafka's approach made his son feel that he had little to offer others and that even when he experienced success, he did not deserve it. As a result of this terrible effect of a narcissistic father, lack of understanding, oppression and being pushed around, Franz Kafka preferred to suffer in a state of weakness rather than fight. His shyness, excessive timidity and state of depression will create a conflict in his personality which he has not yet defined; he will remain incompetent and indecisive in carrying out even simple tasks. The disease of perfection from which he suffers will be reflected in his words and behaviour, and he will begin to look for the fault he perceives in himself. In this context, Franz Kafka's indecision and guilt, his chronic tendency to blame himself, which are the clearest examples of gaslighting, will appear as the simplest signs that he grew up in a family environment dominated by a narcissistic father.

Research on childhood adversity usually combines more than one type of experience in cumulative risk measures. Cumulative measures of childhood adversity are strongly associated with many negative outcomes in adolescence and adulthood (Stein, 2022). Therefore, Kafka's relationship with his father is directly related to the image of authority that was formed in his mind throughout his life. In particular, in his work 'Letter to My Father', he clearly expresses how his father's attitudes and behaviour had an impact on his own life. In this work he also discusses all the feelings of helplessness left in him as a result of his father's behaviour and the emotional pain he experienced with his siblings and mother. Because of the feelings of helplessness left by his father, we can see that his works contain negative, critical and even hateful memories of the family institution (Çiçek, 2015). This work of Kafka's is important because it is the first concrete example of his struggle for rebellion against

authority, as it is the only place where he can express his feelings. Kafka sees it as a struggle against authority to express all his feelings that he could not express verbally to his father. As we can see from this, he is in a battle with his father within himself, a war that he can never win.

Although references to the father figure are different in each society, it is generally known that he represents authority. It is seen that people who grow up in the presence of a strict and harsh father have a dark childhood and experience problems in their adult life (Ünal, 2019). For this reason, Kafka's sense of failure is the result of the neglect and abuse his father inflicted on him. Kafka's inferiority complex, worthlessness and insecurity because he was not accepted and loved by his father as he was, negatively affected Kafka's relationship with women.

Guidance and rules set by parents help children distinguish between right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (Furstenberg, 2013). Kafka, who did not receive guidance, genuine love, affection and acceptance from his family, could not feel recognised, seen, loved and safe. These deficiencies are known to cause children to repress feelings of hostility and, as a result, feel insecure and anxious. This insecurity and anxiety cause them to despise themselves and alienate themselves and the world (Ünal, 2019). In Kafka's life story and the Kafkaesque style in his works, these feelings are clearly evident.

Franz Kafka's childhood experience was a source of lifelong trauma: surrounded by a Czech-speaking governess, a cook and a maid, he grew up as a child deprived of parental love, lacking emotional attachments and the indifference of parents whose ambitions and economic concerns kept them at work all day. Franz Kafka's lifelong feeling that his father was an absolute ruler, his determination and self-confidence created a sense of inadequacy and worthlessness in Franz. As the son of a large and powerful merchant, he was generally excluded from public life, and the genocide of the Jews affected Kafka's childhood and was a major factor in his introversion. Kafka's childhood years, which were full of contradictions, became his destiny until the end of his life (Çomak, 2012).

The first years of his educational life were spent far from love and understanding, with threats from the cook of the house who took him to school that he would be reported to his father (if he resisted in any way or disobeyed the cook's word). Franz, who was loved and respected at school but was afraid of attracting attention, completed the first years of his education as "someone no one dared to be honest with, always in a glass case" (Aytaç, 1983, p.279).

Father Kafka's emotional abuse of his son was part of his upbringing. Hermann Kafka's understanding of upbringing caused traumas to his son Franz and further fuelled the sense of nothingness that already existed in Franz's soul. In addition to the emotional abuse his father inflicted on him, Franz Kafka had to endure his father's insulting attitude towards the people around him, his lack of perception of the world, and his rude attitude towards his fellow countrymen and employees. For this reason, he saw his father as an absolute ruler who influenced the fate of the people around him. Because of this unconscious understanding of his father's absolute sovereignty, he began to admire his father's abilities, to appreciate his positive qualities, and to believe that he was essentially a good man. Kafka sees in his father all that he cannot be himself: A man with good health, appetite, a booming voice, eloquence, self-importance, worldly sovereignty, perseverance, a strong mind, human nature, a certain way of doing things (Popova, 2015).

Franz described how Hermann Kafka, who had narcissistic tendencies, disciplined his children at the dinner table: It was to cut the bread properly, but what you did with your knife, dripping sauces, was unimportant. You had to be careful not to spill the leftovers on the floor; in the end, most of the food crumbs would be under you (Popova, 2015). He could never express these thoughts to his father, whom he saw as the absolute authority.

In his upbringing and personality development, the tyranny of his father, the power he made him feel with every word and look, had a great influence. When Hermann Kafka's increasing dominance over time combined with the mother's acceptance of everything as natural, Franz Kafka began to search within himself for the love and human world that he could not find in his immediate environment as a child, and to produce dreams according to his own ideas (Can, 2010). In Franz Kafka's works, there are very few signs of the pain he suffered in his early childhood, and in these works he shows his father Hermann as the protagonist. However, Kafka did not realise that the main sources of his imagination were deeply hidden in early childhood (Miller, 1998).

For the child, everything the father said was law and the decisive criterion for judging the world. However, this also applied to the father's own judgements and there were significant inconsistencies between them. The father did not follow his own rules, and this was particularly evident at the dinner table. For example, he scolded a lot, but forbade others to scold him. For the son, this resulted in a division of the world into three parts: In the first part there was only himself, living as a slave, subject to laws made just for him and which he could never fully fulfil. In the second part lived his father, fully occupied with ruling, and in the third part lived other people, happy and free from all this.

In a healthy parent-child relationship, communication should be direct and open. In order for parents to give correct and effective messages to their children, they should know the methods of communication and follow some rules. The most important of these rules is accepting the child, thinking by putting oneself in the child's place, and being honest (Kırman & Doğan, 2017). However, Franz Kafka's childhood is completed with a father figure masked by authoritarianism, intransigence and contempt, and a mother's melancholy fuelled by impossible grief. The father figure is deaf because of his struggle against the risk of the feeling of total failure that threatens him; the mother figure is mute because of the persistence of an inexpressible melancholy. During his childhood, the passive mother's acceptance of everything as natural, in the face of the authoritarian dominance of a narcissistic father, led to a gradual deterioration in Kafka's mental health and to a problem of self, and Franz Kafka tried to draw attention to himself in the face of this negative development.

In his childhood, he was not strong enough to resist his father both physically and mentally. For this reason he could not express himself against his father and always found himself blaming him. The door he opened to other worlds to get rid of the universe created by his father became his "cause". By saying "I am a citizen of the universe I have created" he conveys his struggle to make a way for himself within the systems.

Miller (1998), who states that it is much more difficult for a child to overcome early traumatisation if it is caused by their own parents, says that the patterns of events Kafka describes in his books tell us exactly what might have happened to the severely neglected baby Kafka.

Kafka, the child of an authoritarian father, weaves into his works his jealousy of children because of the childhood he did not experience, and "children appear to him as invaders of the position of smallness in which he seeks refuge. But then it becomes clear that children are not little people who want to remain inconspicuous, but the position of smallness that is the target of the noise and painful behaviour of adults" (Canetti, 1984, p. 209).

Kafka started work at the Workers' Accident Insurance Company on 1 November 1907; he stated that he was unhappy with the company's working hours, which lasted from eight in the morning until six at night and made it difficult for him to concentrate and write. Following his work life, he developed sleep problems and became intolerant of noise. In addition to his physical illness, Franz Kafka also suffered from many pathological problems (Forbes, 2020). In the following years, new diseases were added to the clinical picture with the appearance of furunculosis, asthenia and neurovegetative disorders (Felisati ve Sperati, 2005). In addition to these illnesses, Kafka suffered from severe clinical depression. Three

scenes in Kafka's childhood memories caused him clinical depression. The first is the memory of the injustice he suffered one night when he was taken to the pawlatsche (an open balcony overlooking the courtyard, common in old Viennese and Prague houses at the time) to silence a child who asked his father for water. The second is the encounter between his weak body and his father's strong body in the swimming pool. The third is a description of family meals, interrupted by his father's curses, inviting him to eat quickly and in large bites. In all three cases, the child plays the role of the victim of a ruthless executioner, condemned to expulsion (in the Pawlatsche scene), humiliation (in the pool) and force-feeding (at the dinner table) (Bancaud, 2002). Franz Kafka's depressed mood, lack of energy, suicidal thoughts, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, helplessness and hopelessness, insomnia, loss of appetite and consequent weight loss are evidence that he was clinically depressed. The beginning of this process of clinical depression is based on childhood trauma.

Based on Kafka's writing style, personal data and anecdotes from those closest to him, some researchers suggest that the author may have "borderline personality disorder and psycho-physiological insomnia, anorexia neurosis and even schizophrenia" (Forbes, 2020).

Kafka wrote about the basic emotions of burnout, despair, loneliness, and isolation from society, and in his works conveyed how this burden is transformed into interpersonal interaction by an individual carrying the weight of the whole world on his shoulders. In addition, Kafka, who seems to have a deep place in his stories, burned a large part of his own works. On his sick bed, he asked his friend and editor Max Brod to destroy all his remaining works: Everything I have left in the form of diaries, all writings, letters (what I have written and the answers I have received), drawings, be burned and destroyed (Forbes, 2020). Although Max Brod did not fulfil Kafka's will, Kafka, who was dissatisfied with himself and his life, was in a constant state of imperfection, uselessness and nothingness, and it is usual for him to suffer from the pathological cases mentioned in connection with other signs.

The father figure, the source of childhood trauma and located in the unconscious, is a common metaphor in the works of Franz Kafka and is a complex and multifaceted symbol, often representing authority, power and the struggle between individuality and societal expectations. In most of Kafka's stories and novels, this father figure represents an oppressive force that imposes its will on the protagonist, often leading to feelings of powerlessness and existential angst. Gregor Samsa, one of the most famous examples of the father metaphor in Kafka's works, wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a giant insect (Kafka, 1915/2000). Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect can be seen as a metaphor for how he perceives himself in the eyes of his father -*a worthless and alienated person*-. The father's

reaction to Gregor's transformation -*hostility and ultimate violence*- reflects a broader theme of paternal authority and its impact on the individual's sense of self-worth and identity (Corngold, 1988). The father, who has become a symbol of authority and control, demands obedience from Gregor even as he struggles to accept his transformation. In another important Kafka story, "The Judgement", the protagonist Georg Bendemann is confronted with his father's judgement and authority, which ultimately leads to his own death. The father in this story represents not only a real authority figure, but also a metaphorical embodiment of guilt and self-doubt. The metaphor of the father in Kafka's work is often ambiguous and open to interpretation, reflecting the complexity of family relationships and the dynamics of power and control. It can be seen as a reflection of Kafka's troubled relationship with his father, but also as a broader exploration of the human condition and the struggle for autonomy and identity in the face of external forces.

### **Results and Discussion**

The father figure, who dominated every aspect of his life, had a huge impact on Kafka's life. In his letter to his father, Kafka criticised his father's behaviour and character structure, saying "*You were for me the measure of all things*", revealing the destructive criticism he created of himself.

Franz Kafka grew up in a patriarchal family dominated by authority and misunderstanding; escaping the power and authority his father always made him feel required alienation, shrinking and transformation. The sense of marginalisation he experienced within the family, combined with exclusion and miscommunication, created an insensitivity, first to his immediate environment and then to the outside world, and limited Franz's emotions from childhood. Being caught in the middle of problems led him to develop a constant sense of protection and defence; what activated his unconscious sense of revenge was possible by transferring what he could not say with his tongue to his pen and by transferring his unconscious to his literary works. Kafka, who was able to express his suffering through writing, could not get rid of the traces of his childhood trauma and could not erase the unconscious emotions and memories stored in his body.

Webb (2012) has defined twelve behaviours that cause feelings of emptiness. Hermann Kafka's relationship with his son overlaps with the narcissistic and authoritarian parent characters from these definitions, and the narcissistic identity and authoritarian structure of father Kafka caused a feeling of emptiness in his son. Narcissistic parents do not

see their children as individuals separate from themselves. Rather, they see their children as extensions of themselves. Children's needs are defined according to their parents' needs, and children who try to express their own needs are accused of being selfish and inconsiderate (Webb, 2012). In particular, Kafka's father accusing his son of being selfish and inconsiderate is the main evidence that he is a narcissistic parent. In addition, authoritarian parents who expect too much from their children are not satisfied with challenging the rules they set and only want their children to obey these rules. Parents educate according to a template they have in their own minds of how their child should behave and do not take into account the needs, temperament or feelings of their own children, just as Herman Kafka did with his son. This is why the protagonists in Kafka's works are weak and powerless, like himself. The fact that in these pictures he often compares himself to an insect or a fugitive from the forest, and never uses images that make him look strong and respectable, shows us very clearly the self-perception and alienation in his inner world. It is obvious that behind these images are the traumas caused by his father in childhood.

In his writings, Kafka often explores the weight of authority and the struggle of the individual to maintain autonomy in the face of overwhelming power. The metaphor of the father is central to Franz Kafka's work, serving as a symbol of the external forces that shape and sometimes distort one's life and destiny. Kafka's use of the father metaphor is not only a reflection of his personal experience, but also a manifestation of early childhood trauma.

There was an unhappy conflict between father and son, and the boy grew up with the perception that he was constantly failing to live up to his father's expectations, which over time led to a negative and distorted self-image and also caused him to see his father as an enemy and tormentor. In the background was the identity of an authoritarian and narcissistic father. The only contribution that Hermann Kafka, who did not take into account the needs of his son Franz and his other children and who was far from a democratic parental understanding, made to his son are the literary works that we have today. While Franz Kafka reflected the traumas of his childhood in his works, the father factor, which he repressed in his unconscious, played an important role in the creation of works such as *The Judgement*, *The Metamorphosis*, *The Castle* and *Letter to his father*.

The role of the father in the cognitive, social and emotional development of the child is of great importance. In traditional patriarchal family life, the father's responsibilities towards his children were defined as protective, authoritarian, unaffectionate, disciplining and money-earning, whereas today, equal responsibilities with mothers are included in the child's development. The emotional well-being of children is certainly more respected today than in

Kafka's time. However, father-son conflicts have not disappeared, only the form of parents' expectations of their children in terms of education, performance and life organisation has changed. The father is an important role model, especially in the development of boys. The presence of an active father not only makes the child feel secure and reduces anxiety, but also plays an important role in the child's intellectual, social-emotional, sexual-role and identity development. Without the presence of an active father, the main sources of Kafka's imagination are hidden deep in early childhood. This source became a burden on his body and, unable to bear the burden any longer, Kafka died of tuberculosis on 3 June 1924. This desk research has revealed the role of the father in the child's developmental period and the traumas that the father's negative impact on the child has caused or will cause.



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