

Optimism and Pessimism in the Fictions of Franz Kafka

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ABSTRACT

The fiction of Franz Kafka is widely recognized for its intense portrayal of anxiety, alienation, absurdity, and existential despair. His protagonists often find themselves trapped within incomprehensible systems of authority, burdened by obscure accusations, and subjected to oppressive bureaucratic structures, that seem both impersonal and omnipotent. In works such as *The Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle*, characters struggle against forces they cannot fully understand or overcome. At first glance, these narratives appear overwhelmingly pessimistic, presenting a fragmented modern world devoid of clarity, justice, or meaning. However, a deeper reading reveals that Kafka's fiction is not solely a vision of despair. Beneath the surface of suffering lies a subtle, yet persistent affirmation of human dignity and moral awareness. Even when confronted with absurdity and failure, Kafka's characters continue to question, to hope, and to seek understanding. Their very resistance, however futile, reflects a form of resilience and spiritual striving. Thus, the tension between pessimism and optimism becomes central to Kafka's literary vision, revealing a complex exploration of the human condition.

Keywords: Alienation, Existentialism, Bureaucracy, Absurdity, Modernism, Hope, Despair
