

Moral issues in the stranger by albert camus

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Morality is an essential aspect of life among individuals in the world, but the scenario is different for Albert Camus, as evident in the novel *The Stranger*. He approaches the issue of morality within his novel through various themes that suggest his stance on the subject. His approach is ensuring that people should understand the role of theories such as absurdism and nihilism. It should be approached with caution as morality is relevant in the life of every human being. Morality defines and gives meaning to life as opposed to nihilism that identifies it meaningless. Life's purpose should possess a positive final value (Metz). It is within his novel that Camus interconnects nihilism and absurdism that affects one's morality. In the novel, *The Stranger*, by Albert Camus, moral issues of universal irrationality, human life meaninglessness, and obsession with the physical world are addressed to reflect on the stand of nihilism and absurdism.

Universal or rationality is based on the human's futile attempt to obtain original order when actually none exists. The moral issues of universal rationality are seen in the lack of orderliness in both the internal and external world where Mersault lives. Such incidents could be seen in his attempt to avoid the question of marrying Marie and ' he'd turn it with a laugh. It was a standing joke' (Camus 11). However, he would eventually marry her without putting through into it. It is withing an evening when Marie came home and asked if Meursault would marry her and he said he did not mind. His response for agreeing to mary Marie appears out of nowhere as he stated that ' it had no importance, but it would give her pleasure' (Camus 29) then he would do it. It is a moral issue given that Mersault would fail to give careful thought to a problem that deemed of high meaning in society. It

was absurd to joke on marriage that carries social significance. Universal irrationality is also evident in Mersault's decision to kill the Arab. It is immoral to engage in murder, however, he identifies in the court that it was a pure chance that he had gone with a revolver to the exact spot where they had met. Camus is evident in his novel of the loss of meaning in life through his character Mersault. Trial sequences reveal the need for a sensible explanation for his crime through the use of reason, logic and the notion of cause and effect. All these attempts are directed towards neutralizing the horrific concept that the universe is irrational.

The meaninglessness of human life is described in the novel by Camus through the absurdist philosophy. In the book, it is clear that Camus believes in death as the only inevitable part of life. He identifies that the eventual destiny with death deems all lives meaningless. In the novel, Camus uses the character Mersault to such realization. Mersault undergoes changes that make him realize that he is unresponsive and that makes the universe unsympathetic to him in return. Camus makes us believe that just like the way Mersault was born, he will die and lack relevance thereafter. However, such realization makes Mersault attain happiness. Mersault 'realized people would soon forget [him] once [he] was dead' (Camus 72), and it was hard for him to accept this reality. It entails a paradox that after all the search for meaning in life, the end provides happiness to human beings. It is Camus's sustained effort in communicating the absurdity of human existence (Aronson). At this point in life, Camus uses Mersault to gain more profound aspects of life and understand that it did not matter whether he was executed or died naturally through old age. He felt relieved of the burdens of

life and 'felt ready to start life all over again' (Camus 76). All the hopes of illusion Mersault had or getting a successful legal appeal to escape execution were kept aside. He believed that it was just a burden on him to hope for a sustainable life. However, Camus helps in shaping the position of Mersault through attributing his defeat towards the meaninglessness of life.

The moral issue on the obsession with the physical world is based on the focus of Mersault on physical aspects around him as opposed to emotional and social aspects. He is portrayed as materialistic and limited towards the sensate world. The stance taken on the novel is limiting to morality that defines focus on spiritual, emotional, and social aspects besides the physical. The attention of Mersault in the story is based on his body, the physical relationship he has with Marie. Besides, it also entails his surroundings and the weather, among others. Mersault talks of his being 'under the weather and... having kept the blind down' (Camus 32). It reflects on his obsession with the physical aspects of life. It is also discussed in the novel that we identify Mersault's lack of emotional connection when he is concerned more with the heat at funeral procession opposed to the pain of losing and burying his mother. Morality within him seems to lack, given the traits he exhibits following the death of his mother. He had no remorse in his mind and went ahead in proceeding to see anything that crossed his mind. It is also during the trial that his physical obsession emerges. He claims that the suffering he went through under the sun led him killing the Arab. Mersault states that he 'tried to explain that it was because of the sun' (Camus 75), that he committed the crime. He is deemed to have no connections with the emotional and social world despite being in such situations.

In conclusion, moral issues such as an obsession with the physical world, meaninglessness of life and universal irrationality within the novel are discussed. It provides a clear stance of Camus on absurdism and nihilism within the book. Mersault experiences with relationships and eventually jail term in the search for meaning in life. It is when he realizes the inevitability of death, he gets happiness.