

"antigone" and "the outsider"

Literature



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In the context of "Antigone" and "The Outsider", we see 'real nobility' in the characters Antigone and Meursault. In displaying unrelenting honesty in their actions and scorn for the authorities in their societies, they serve as an aspiration to us today because of their daring to break out of social restrictions, reminiscent of a hero. Additionally, their proud acceptance of death shows their deep indifference to fate.

While traditionally, heroes are expected to be virtuous, 'admired or idealized for courage' with 'outstanding achievements' (Oxford), in a modern context, more credit is given to the anti-hero, who fights against restrictions, thus bringing about the new definition of 'real nobility'. We should keep in mind that a literary hero is "not necessarily someone who ends up doing good, but is the protagonist or narrator of the story who goes through some sort of life change over the course of the plot" (Campbell): Antigone and Meursault emerge as iconic figures through their exhibitions of courage and achievements in their own unorthodox.

Therefore, I do believe that '[r]eal nobility' is, indeed, based on 'scorn, courage, and profound indifference', as portrayed by Antigone and Meursault. Scorn is characteristic of an anti-hero. In stirring strong objections against authoritative figures or restrictions, scorn enables the hero to reject social norms. This scorn does not necessarily have to be for a greater good, however, as fighting for what one believes in is heroic in its own right.

In Antigone, Antigone scorns Creon, saying, 'There is nothing in your words that pleases me - I pray it never will! Antigone is fighting for her brother's honour, which is a personal crusade, but a noble one nevertheless. The use

of the absolutes 'nothing' and 'never', as well as her contemptuous tone, is indicative of her absolute scorn towards Creon and the "overproud" restrictions he stands for. This scorn of hers is the catalyst of her rebellion later in the play. In *The Outsider*, Meursault shows scorn for the expectations in his society.

In the dialogue between him and the priest, he says that 'something seemed to break inside [him], and [he] started yelling at the top of [his] voice. This verbally aggressive outbreak of his shows accumulated resentment towards society, as the priest is symbolic of societal beliefs. Therefore, in the modern definition of nobility, as shown by the anti-heroes Antigone and Meursault, scorn is a crucial ingredient. Courage, an important part of nobility, is seen in traditional heroes as being virtuous. In the Anti-hero however, this is displayed through defiance and rebellion. We see how Antigone and Meursault defy the laws of the states through their own methods.

Antigone 'intend[s] to bury [her brother], when it has been forbidden to the city'. Sophocles juxtaposes Antigone against Ismene in this scene, highlighting Antigone's courage and defiance as well as Ismene's insipid character. In doing so, he aligns the audience's alliance towards Antigone. This is traditional of heroes, as they tend to gain the support of the viewer. Therefore in this case, it can be said that Antigone is portraying courage, albeit a slightly unorthodox form of heroism, which is indicative of '[r]eal nobility'.

In *The Outsider*, Meursault shows courage in following his own views. The society dictates Meursault to form meaningful relationships; however, he

refuses this restriction as can be seen in his laconic assertion " Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure". His dismissive tone, devoid of feelings, is a direct rebellion against the society's expectations of how an individual should behave, which in this case is feeling remorse for his mother's death. Despite judgment from society, he stayed true to his beliefs, displaying a silent courage.

Therefore, courage is essential for attaining 'real nobility', to defy the oppressive legal system both characters are under. Last but not least, an anti-hero's " profound indifference"-deep unwavering coldness towards any outcome due to their firm belief in their own cause, is an aspect of 'real nobility'. We see how through the course of the plot, Antigone and Meursault stick to their beliefs, against their society's tolerance. When caught performing burial rituals for her brother, Antigone just " stood there and denied nothing". Similarly, Meursault does not defend himself for his act of murder.

In the face of death, society itself has an emotional harsh response whereas Meursault embraces his death with quiet dignity. This is also seen in Antigone, where she says that 'it is noble for [her] to die doing this [for her brother]'. Their welcoming and acceptance of death demonstrated their indifference to any outcome, and steers our sympathy towards the protagonist encompassing this trait of a hero. Hence, the characters, by not following society's conventions and in doing so reveals the flaws of the society's system represents " real nobility" and are literally " real", making it feels as if they are closer to us.