

Practice and philosophy in the stranger novel



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Imagine where all of the past is lacking in any purpose and only the present pertains meaning to an individual. Where the existence of an individual has been vanished after his or her death, as if any entity of faith, for instance God, is to be deemed as fruitless. In the novel, *The Stranger*, the author, Albert Camus, illustrates the practice and philosophy that associates with Absurdism.

It begins with the main character, a man, that attends his mother's (French for mother) funeral, however denies to see his mother one last time and rather acknowledges how the heat from the environment of the retirement home has an effect to the decay of her body. This event plays a role when he is put on trial for a subsequent event for killing an Arab man without intent. Through Mersault, the author discusses the magnitude of human life and reveals how an individual's perception of death correlates with an individual's perception of life.

Death is an imminent stage in life that no individual can escape from.

Mersault is in attendance of his mother's funeral and as the day comes to an end, he has no clear memory of the day, but recalls a quote by the nurse at the funeral, 'If you go slowly, you risk getting sunstroke. But if you go too fast, you work up a sweat and then catch a chill inside the church.' (Camus 17) The nurse presents a dilemma that is being represented through an analogy about death and the weather. The nurse explains this by emphasizing that the impact of the heat is unavoidable. Mersault realizes this as a way to compare with other humans, in which individuals are born into this world only to perish in the end. Death resembles the severe impact of heat as an inevitable force that all humans face.

Mersault's nonchalance has been proven to be one of the most contributing factors to his character. Upon hearing of the death of his mother, he does not exhibit any sign of emotion or remorse, rather discloses this fact in a candid tone and manner. Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know. I got a telegram from the home: Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours.' That doesn't mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday. (Camus 3) Common among Absurdist beliefs, Mersault focuses on what appears to be an insignificant detail. In addition, Mersault's further commentary on the telegram implies he does not make an impact on him of her death, extending his belief of the meaninglessness of existence in humans.

Facing the reality of fate can provide a temporary sense of happiness. After meeting with the chaplain that explained to go to God during his death sentence, he becomes a victim to a blind rage, As if that blind rage had washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, in that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world. Finding it so much like myself- so like a brother, really- I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again. For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate. (Camus 122-123) This absurdist ideology, the lack of meaning in life and the feeling of indifference towards the lives of others, evidently becomes an idea that Mersault finds credible and accepts it, however he does not grasp this idea thoroughly until he witnesses his own death, rather the death of other individuals. He discerns a connection to the indifference of

occurrences of other individuals from the universe and himself, therefore kindling a brotherly relationship with the universe. He is content with his societal standing and embracing the truth behind human existence.

One who is conscious of death can accentuate the consciousness of one's life, in which it would all end one day. When one treasures life, they sense an impulse to live life to the fullest to counteract any emotions to associate with death. However, this does not contribute to the longevity of life in of itself. While the key to liberty is to make oneself familiar with the senses of pain and beauty of life.