

**'Truth Kills': A Cry of Honest Meursault, In Albert Camus's Novel  
"The Stranger"**

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**Abstract**

Our Upanisad says, "*Satyameva Jayate*," which means "**Truth alone triumphs.**" Every religion, every sacred book, every philosophy, and every philosopher teaches us to speak the Truth. When a child starts learning, we teach him, "Do not be afraid to speak the truth, even if you die speaking the truth." To be truthful is a godly nature. Our society always teaches and expects truthfulness from every individual. Truth always comforts our life.

According to Jiddu Krishnamurti:

The general rule is that Truth should never be violated because it is of the utmost importance to the comfort of life. We have been told that all paths lead to Truth — you have your path as a Hindu, and someone else has his path as a Christian and another as a Muslim, and they all meet at the same door — which is, when you look at it, so absurd. Truth has no path, which is the beauty of Truth; it is living. A dead thing has a path to it because it is static, but when you see that Truth is something living, moving, which has no resting place, which is in no temple, mosque or church, which no religion, no teacher, no philosopher, nobody can lead you to — then you will also see that this living thing is what you are — your anger, your brutality, your violence, your despair, the agony and sorrow you live in. In the understanding of all this is the Truth, and you can understand it only if you know how to look at those things in your life. Moreover, you cannot look through an ideology, through a screen of words, through hopes and fears.

*Freedom From The Known* (1969).

However, in this world, so many people are victims of being truthful. They have suffered for Truth; even Truth has killed them. One of the victims is Meursault.

His desire to represent a truthful personality characterizes Meursault throughout the novel. He does not want to lie so that society perceives him as a stranger. Camus portrays a person who shocks society by refusing to play the game. In the true sense, society is a stranger to people who do not lie or fake. The people reading the novel for the first time are themselves, strangers, to the notion of the absurd and vainly try to judge Meursault according to the typical standards set so far. For the readers, too, Meursault is "a stranger."

**Keywords:** Truth, honesty, victim, kill.

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## **Introduction**

Albert Camus's most enticing work, "The Stranger" (1945), has been regarded as a consequential novel in the canon of English literature and praised as a marvelous literary creation of all time. The story is about Meursault, the protagonist, who believes and lives in his philosophy. The novel highlights the struggle of the main character, Meursault, and the trouble he gets himself into being brutally honest and truthful to everyone and every situation he encounters.

Camus wrote: "A long time ago, I summed up The Outsider in a sentence I realize is highly paradoxical. In our society, any man who does not cry at his mother's funeral is liable to be condemned to death. I meant that the book's hero is condemned for not playing the game. He refuses to lie. Lying is not only saying what is not valid. It is also, in fact, especially saying more than is accurate and, in the case of the human heart, saying more than one feels. We all do it every day to make life simpler. However, contrary to appearances, Meursault does not want to simplify life. He says what he is and refuses to hide his feelings, and society immediately feels threatened. For example, he is asked to say he regrets his crime in a time-honored fashion. He replies that he feels more annoyance about it than genuine regret.

Moreover, it is this nuance that condemns him." (Carroll 27). The hero does not play the game, so he refuses to lie. Lying is not only saying what is not valid, but it also shows more than is true regarding the human heart.

To simplify life, one lies, just like Goneril and Regan had done to please their father, King Lear, for wealth and power. Meursault does not want to simplify life; he refuses to disguise his feelings, and society immediately feels threatened, just like Lear showed his anger towards Cordelia. Far from being accurate, he lacks all sensibility; a deep compassion animates him, a passion for the absolute and the Truth for which he has to pay a heavy price.

## **Character of Meursault**

The protagonist, Meursault, is honest and refuses to lie for Truth and honesty. Meursault is psychologically detached from the world around him. Events that would be very significant for most people, such as a marriage proposal or a parent's death, do not matter to him, at least not on a sentimental level. He does not care that his mother is dead or that Marie loves him.

Meursault is honest, and he does not think of hiding his lack of feelings by shedding false tears over his mother's death. In displaying his indifference, Meursault implicitly challenges society's accepted moral standards, which force one to grieve over death. Because Meursault does not grieve, society sees him as an outsider, a threat, and even a monster. At his trial, the fact that he did not react to his mother's death damages his reputation far more than his taking of another person's life. Both religion and the judicial system misunderstand him and take Meursault as evil. Both religion and the court system lead to blinding the truth' rather than the path to provide Truth and justice. Both the court and religion condemn Meursault not only because he is indifferent but because he is different. Meursault finally realizes that the universe is indifferent to him as he is indifferent to the universe. He realizes that laws,

order, Truth, and honesty are meaningless. So, he does not want to make his life meaningful, but he wants to make it as simple as possible.

Camus himself said Meursault was a "poor and naked man." He did not hide anything. With Meursault, what we see is what we get. He confesses everything as he feels and as it is and does not hide anything. All these qualities prove that Meursault is a man of Truth and honesty, but they lead to his ending, which was the death penalty. Still, he was happy because he knew that when we die, the universe continues. Nothing fundamental gets changed. Thus, honest Meursault understands the Truth of human life and the Truth of the universe and dies as a martyr of the Truth.  
**Honest Meursault pays a heavy price.**

The Stranger tells the story of Meursault, who lives for the sensual pleasures of the present moment, free of any system of values. Rather than behaving by social norms, Meursault tries to live as honestly as he can, doing what he wants and befriending those he likes. He also refuses to simulate feelings that he does not possess, and thus, he does not force himself to cry at his mother's funeral or to mourn her death too profoundly. A series of events leads to the climactic moment when Meursault haphazardly murders an Arab on the beach. The subsequent trial condemns him not so much for the murder as for his lack of commitment to the unspoken rules of society.

Most of the philosophical content of the novel comes near the end, where Meursault sits in his cell awaiting his execution, particularly in a heated exchange between Meursault and the prison chaplain who tries to convert him to Christianity. Meursault rejects the chaplain's entreaties, telling him he has no interest in God or anything otherworldly. He wants to live with the certainties of this life, even if his only certainty is the death that awaits him.

Meursault refuses to accord himself with custom and asserts his freedom by doing what strikes him as appropriate at any given moment. This includes smoking and showing indifference at the vigil for his dead mother, going to the beach and sleeping with a woman the day after his mother's funeral, and forging a letter for his friend Raymond, who is a thug and a pimp. This exercise of freedom also represents a revolt against any attempt to restrict his life. His passion is evident in his enthusiastic pursuit of new pleasures and experiences: he loves being alive.

Meursault also maintains the ironic detachment we would expect from an absurd hero. He prefers observing events to getting directly involved; one memorable chapter describes Meursault spending an entire day sitting on his balcony watching passers-by in the street. He cannot get too caught up in events, even when directly involved. When his lover, Marie, asks him to marry her, he tells her that he does not love her but that it does not matter if they get married. Even when he kills the Arab, there is a sense that he is not there, not doing what he is doing. It seems almost as if he is observing himself shooting the Arab rather than doing the shooting.

In his final outburst to the chaplain in prison, Meursault sums up a great deal of his absurd worldview, forcefully asserting that nothing matters, that we all live and we all die, and what we do before we die is ultimately irrelevant. After the chaplain leaves, Meursault enjoys a final, revelatory moment: "And I felt ready to live it all

again, too. 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, I felt that I had been happy and was happy again." Free from hope, Meursault recognizes himself in a universe without meaning and hope. At the end of the novel, he fully accepts his absurd position in the universe and cannot but conclude that he is happy.

### **Conclusion**

Meursault, the novel's protagonist, is a remarkable character in literature. He is a simple clerk who greatly enjoys life's physical pleasures and does not care about social norms. Meursault's misfortunes are his lazy desire to please others and his stubborn truthfulness. He is sent to the Valley of Death because he refuses to dance to the tunes of society. It is Meursault's actions that make the novel and define existentialism. He sees the world as meaningless events that give no purpose to life and existence. Meursault has a passion for the Truth. For this reason, he is an outcast, an outsider, and a stranger and is detached from others because they cannot face the world's truths as he (Meursault) perceives them. Both the religion and the judicial system misunderstand him and try to hide the Truth and condemn Meursault not only because he is indifferent but because he is different.

For me, Meursault is an honest man as he stays true to himself at all times. He does not consider other people's feelings before he says anything. He does not say what other people want from him to suit them, but he says what he feels, not more, not less. He does not pretend. His life is an open book. We find the same what we see in him. He does not lie to save his life because he knows a lie is a lie even a thousand people say, and a truth is a truth even a single person says. He also knows that to say less than Truth is not only a lie but to say more than Truth is also a lie. He knows the Truth of life, that is, death. Life is meaningless to him simply because death is unavoidable. One day or other, one has to face death, and that is why he refuses to find/give the world a meaning even after the multiple attempts of the judge and the Chaplain to make him find one.

For me, Meursault is an extremely truthful and honest man. As he tells his story, Meursault describes phenomena purely and. Honesty and truthfulness are carried to such an extremity that instead of saving, they bring devastation to Meursault and kill him. Meursault pays his best for the sake of Truth. I agree with critics like O'Brien, who consider Meursault "a hero and martyr for the truth" (O'Brien 21).

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