

# *A Study of Absurd Philosophy in "The Outsider"*

Lizijing<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Guang Dong Ocean University, Zhan Jiang, Haida 1st Road sub district, China

a. 13641418216@163.com

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** Since the publication of Albert Camus's "The Outsider" in 1942, there have been numerous studies on this subject. Among them, the most prominent is the absurdity embodied in "The Outsider". This paper sorted out the relevant literature and explained viewpoints with reference to previous studies. First, the paper introduced the basic concept of "absurd philosophy", and explained the text absurdity in detail from three dimensions, Meursault's character, social group and state apparatus. At last, the paper praised the fearless authority of Meursault, and condemned his self-righteousness and narrow-minded thinking.

**Keywords:** "The Outsider", Albert Camus, Absurd philosophy

## 1. Introduction

After the publication of Albert Camus's "The Outsider" in 1942, there were numerous studies on its texts in various fields. As one of the absurd trilogy, Albert Camus takes the protagonist Meursault's first perspective as a narrative clue to narrate various events that happened to him. The text brings the absurd philosophy into full play. Albert Camus's creation combines personal experience and life perception, which makes readers deeply feel the ideological spirit of absurd philosophy. At the same time, it has strong practical significance, that is, it helps us to realize the limitation of preconceptions in reality.

This paper will be divided into four parts. The second part of the paper will review the classical literature, explain the connotation of absurdism to the readers, and discuss the previous studies on the philosophy of absurdity and the analysis of "The Outsider". The third part of the paper will focus on the embodiment of absurd philosophy in the text. Then we will discuss the text and analyze its practical value. Finally, the fourth part of the paper will summarize the whole paper.

## 2. Literature Review

After "The Outsider" was published, various researchers analyzed it from various angles. Among them, Zhang Qian mainly discusses the conflict embodiment of the author's identity in "The Outsider" from the postcolonial perspective. Yang Shenlin analyzes the colonial narrative in "The Outsider" based on Sayid's Culture and Imperialism [1], organically combines the text with historical facts, and adds a new perspective to the postcolonial perspective. Huang Yili uses postmodernism [2] to explore the reverse tragedy of modernist literature from the "alienation" of westerners' realistic situation. Peter Francev combines Freud's "Oedipus Complex" to analyze the text from a dualist perspective, highlighting the duality of Meursault and Mary, and exploring the

relationship between Meursault's personality and "Oedipus Complex" [3]. Yuan Zhonghui used the existentialist perspective to analyze "The Outsider" [4], and showed the absurdity consciousness in existentialism from Meursault's personal image. Ha Yanran saw the resistance consciousness of Meursault from the absurdity [5]. Like the predecessors, the text focuses on examining the text from a theoretical perspective; However, it is different from the postcolonial theory in that it focuses on the analysis from the perspective of text from the social background. The absurdism of the text is similar to that of Yuan Zhonghui, which is explained from some aspects of the text. In reality, it has something to do with Meursault's "resistance" thought in the paper by Ha Yanran. Although "absurdity" has always been interpreted by scholars, there is still room for interpretation. This paper mainly chooses the philosophy of absurdism to analyze "The Outsider", hoping to provide more thoughts for other scholars who study the theme of absurdism. The text will elaborate Albert Camus's "absurd philosophy" from the protagonist's manner and character type, social groups and the state apparatus. "Absurd Philosophy" is a concept under existentialism. It was born under the background of the impact of bourgeois civilization, and it was also influenced by Nietzsche, Sartre, Pascal and others. However, Albert Camus was the first person to elevate the concept of "absurdity" to a philosophical level. In Albert Camus's philosophy, "absurdity" is mainly reflected in the depression and meaningless psychological state that modern people feel in their living experience, in order to convey the spiritual dilemma of modern people.

### **3. The Analysis of Absurd Philosophy**

#### **3.1. Meursault's Manners and Character Types**

First of all, the most obvious absurdity in the text is the protagonist's personality. The boss wants to move Meursault to work in Paris, but Meursault is indifferent. Or the death of his mother. The novel begins with Meursault's self-statement: "Today, my mother is dead. Maybe it was yesterday. I don't know. " [6] Meursault's own mother died in a nursing home, but she did not know when she died. In the eyes of most people, Meursault seems to be too unkind in this matter. As your mother, and as your own flesh and blood, she cannot be justified without too much emotional fluctuation. Meursault himself was only troubled by the death of his mother, because he had to borrow a black tie and a mourning armband from the Emmanuel family. In addition, regardless of whether Raymond made friends with him and asked him to testify, Mary asked him if he would marry her, and Meursault thought "whatever." Even when it comes to life-and-death matters, Meursault also believes that "I can shoot or not shoot." Not only that, Meursault neither cared about the lives of others nor his own. The president asked him if he had anything else to say. Meursault only replied "no". It is also a meaningless thing to argue in Meursault. The absurdity of Meursault's own character, however, also contains a profound philosophical color. He seems to be out of step with the world, but in fact he sticks to himself in the noisy world. Meursault's feelings do not belong to anyone, but to himself.

#### **3.2. Social Groups**

Secondly, it is the "absurdity" of the social group's demand for Meursault. The first expression of "absurdity" in social groups is the attitude towards Meursault's mother's death. If Meursault is an outsider, the masses are insiders. In contrast to Meursault's indifference after his mother's death, Celeste said sympathetically to Meursault: "One has only one mother." There was a woman in the funeral hall, crying for her mother's death. And so on, it is like the trial of the great injustice of Meursault. They regard the death of their loved ones as a complete departure, so they cannot understand why Meursault is so calm. Only Meursault regards the death of his mother as a "regame". From this point of view, Meursault does not love his mother but is based on his absolute

respect for her. Meursault believes that if one does not understand a person, one naturally has no right to cry for her.

The second manifestation of the absurdity of social groups is the priest. In the verbal and verbal defense with the priest, Meursault's mood reached its first outburst. Under the repeated challenge of the priest, the long-standing grievance, anxiety and disgust mixed emotions of Meursault burned like a raging fire. The priest kept asking Meursault to believe in God for salvation, but Meursault believed that he was not guilty and did not believe in relying on external power to save himself: God did not take him away from prison, and human beings sentenced him to death instead of God. Meursault can control his own death, but the priest cannot. Although the priest has faith, he does not know for whom to live.

Everyone has his own emotional contact, just like the old men at the funeral who were immersed in their own world and didn't realize how to smash their mouths. At that time, Meursault felt that "in their eyes, the dead man lying among them had no meaning." But he later denied his own thoughts at that time. Because their seemingly indifferent behavior is only the reason why the old people are used to the scenes in where you will go. Or their sadness needs to be touched at a certain moment. For example, Mr. Pérez at the foot of the slope runs behind the car, tears streaming down his face as he remembers the past with Meursault's mother, while Meursault's emotional contact is based on individual experiences. Therefore, it is undoubtedly absurd to demand from social groups that Meursault should be as sad at the funeral as the woman who befriended her mother, or to impose personal beliefs on him.

### 3.3. State Apparatus

Finally, "absurdity" is fundamentally embodied in the state apparatus. Meursault's "crime of indifference" reached its climax in court. Therefore, Meursault's previous behavior has naturally become a strong testimony of personal guilt. Throughout the trial, the judge was not so much discussing the relevant details and process of the Arab case as using Meursault's personal life performance as a result of judging whether Meursault was guilty. The ultimate goal of this judgment is not to explore the cause of the crime, but the murderer is already the murderer. As for the reasons behind it, it is not important. The director of the nursing home recalled in court that Meursault complained about his mother, did not want to look at her body, did not observe a moment of silence in front of her mother's grave and did not even know her age. The concierge added that Meursault smoked and drank milk and coffee after his mother died. In Mary's presentation, Meursault had sex with her on the second day of her mother's funeral. They also went to see a farce like *Fernand*, which seemed to confirm that Meursault was such a coldblooded and heartless person.

However, the fact is that the real reason for Meursault's shooting was out of self-defense. "The Arabs did not get up, but pulled out a knife and pointed it at me in the sun." It is normal for people in nursing homes to complain frequently. Milk coffee is concierge please Meursault to drink; Although it is hard to understand what Meursault did when his mother died, his behavior did not actually hinder anyone's interests. These things should have been as important as the facts of Meursault's crime, but they all seem to have become irrelevant under the prosecutor's subjective judgment. "In the end, is it accusing him of burying his mother, or is it accusing him of killing a person?" cried Meursault's lawyer. As a "person who does not cry at his mother's funeral", Meursault is his greatest "sin of innocence". What is more absurd is that making friends with the pimp Raymond has also become a confession to Meursault's crime. The prosecutor who boasts "justice" does not want to see the real truth, he only wants to see the truth he wants to know.

Mr. Pérez could not help but stand up and speak for Mr. Meursault because of the false charges he was charged with. "This is the form of interrogation. Everything is true, but nothing is true!" Mr. Pérez also answered the president's "this is the law" during the trial. The connotation of; In Ma

Song's eyes, Meursault is an upright person who cares about his dog. Seles and Raymond both believed that Meursault was only the wrongdoer of an accident. Mary wept for Meursault. "In the end, is it accusing him of burying his mother, or is it accusing him of killing a person?" cried Meursault's lawyer. "Those who do not cry at their mother's funeral" is the greatest crime without evidence.

"People seem to be dealing with this case without me at all, and all this is happening without me," Meursault said. Therefore, Meursault's fate is not controlled by himself at all, but decided by the alienated state apparatus.

In "The Outsider", Meursault suffered from misunderstanding due to his unique personality. The alienated state apparatus forced him to a dead end. From his "absurd" thought, it also brings realistic inspiration. As a person who decides the fate of Meursault, the prosecutor is both exasperating and hateful. Although we spurn and despise the prosecutor's black-and-white reversal, everyone has the shadow of a prosecutor. For example, when we saw a woman dressed in heavy make-up on the street, our first reaction was not to praise her for her self-pleasing, but to maliciously speculate that she might have a wrong style. Seeing a fierce-looking person, he will feel that he must be difficult to get along with and behave barbarically, but he does not want to know whether there is a gentle heart hidden under his rough appearance; Some teachers only see the students' failing grades, but ignore many factors that lead to unsatisfactory grades. Everyone has the freedom to choose how to spend the rest of his life. Therefore, even if some people's way of life is unacceptable to us, if this does not hinder our life, we are not qualified to ask to live as we want, let alone judge them from the moral vantage point. This is out of respect for others and respect for ourselves. Only by taking the perspective as much as possible can we see the world in a more inclusive way.

#### 4. Summary

Based on the full text, Albert Camus's "absurd philosophy" puts individuals in the society to discuss the internal relations and contradictions between them, which profoundly shows the loneliness of modern people's inner circumstances. Therefore, the novel "The Outsider" is full of absurdism. Through four parts, the text elaborates the "absurdity" of the text from three aspects: Meursault's behavior, social groups and the state apparatus, connecting with life examples, praising Meursault for not following the crowd, maintaining the personality and quality of his personality, and criticizing the narrow-minded thought.

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