

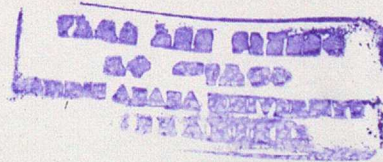
**ABSURDISM AND AUTHENTICITY PHILOSOPHY OF  
EXISTENCE AS REFLECTED IN *THE STRANGER*  
AND *I STAND ALONE***

KALKIDAN WONDIMU

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LITERATURE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN FOREIGN LITERATURE

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGE STUDIES, JOURNALISM AND  
COMMUNICATION  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE



May 2012

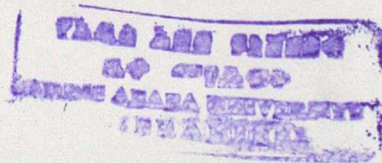
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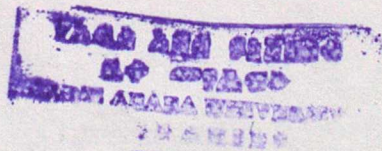
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## Abstract

This thesis studies the embedment of Absurdism and Authenticity philosophy in Albert Camus's *The Outsider* and Berhanou Dinke's *I Stand Alone*, respectively. It argues that each of the protagonists of the literary works experiences and corresponds to the twentieth century philosophical thoughts espoused in the present study. The works are analyzed with philosophical foundations consisting of Camus's Absurd worldview and authentic thoughts advocated by Sartre, Heidegger and other philosophers that made this area of philosophy their concern.

Thus, through the analyses of the protagonists in the selected texts, the study discloses how these characters make a choice for their existence. It is brought to light how the characteristics of the absurd man, living a life of indifference, living in the present moment and rebelling against the conventions of society, make Meursault a absurd. Whereas Berhanou whose alienation stems from his political discontentment such as unjust and oppressive rules of the system he serves and represents as a diplomat trigger the protest and consequently his authentic experience as an exile is analyzed.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Chapter I

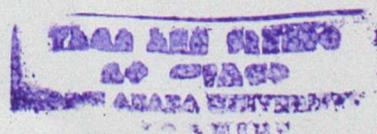
## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

Today, especially in the light of globalization and the development of modern psychology, people are inclined to deem the thought of existence as an invaluable concession. It subsists first of all as a function to insure the adaptation of an individual to his natural and social environment, in other words to reduce it to a system which at times may fail to work properly and thus may defeat the purpose of existence.

In reality if a person is capable of communing with the inner self and so of renewing contact with the reality, thereby he proves his capability of going beyond the spontaneous course of life. He may ask himself on the way if he is in a position to see more clearly what is called human dignity, since the search for the purpose of existence starts with self recognition and self respect. Yet one thing should be taken into account here, is the inevitable circumstances in which life unfolds.

Due to the intervening norms and rules posed by established values and institutions in a closed society like ours, the issue of self-searching and acting in accordance to one's own covet appears superfluous, ensuing individuals to be but without overriding aims in life and to live more or less without purpose. They are obliged to focus their attention on the obstacles encountered that make the question of 'being' appear illusionary and by far meaningless and place them within a certain zone of indetermination. Consequently, resentment, apathy and mistrust has become commonplace characteristics. Therefore the aim of the present study is to mainly focus on the existential quests as such the reliability of one's everyday view of oneself and the level of self-knowledge, the relation between objective facts and subjective experience, the



significance of the temporality and mortality of life, the basic nature of relationships between people, and the role of society in the structure of the individual, and others that are caused while one tries to address basic issues of existence and sense of meaninglessness that individuals face which hinder them steps back from having a fulfilled live.

This paper is a study of the existence of characters in Albert Camus's *The stranger*, Berhanou Dinke's *I Stand Alone*, respectively. The first chapter introduces the thesis while in the next chapter to come, which is chapter II, an attempt is made to review books and researches in relation to the topics in question. And in Chapter III, the framework is designed which provides the tools we need for the task of the analysis. In Chapter IV, the thesis proceeds to analyze the novels of the above mentioned authors in their chronological order. Firstly, Camus's *The Stranger* (1942) is studied and the outsidersness of Meursault is explored in the light of Camus's absurd worldview followed by investigation of authentic demeanor of Berhanou in *I Stand Alone*. The final chapter brings the study to a close.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

Individuals, especially in a clogged society like ours where individuality is surpassed by communal living, keep their eyes trained just a few paces ahead. In the euphoric ignorance they live seemingly contented lives, fulfilling their little purposes, enjoying the diversions and amusements along the way without asking the ultimate questions of life. This idea can be substantiated with reference to the study conducted by Taye Woldasamayate (1991 G.C). The study characterizes Ethiopian society with 'values and beliefs that deeply are held and intertwined with people's modes of life ... [that are] difficult to deviate from... and are deeply engraved in them' (p.794)

When one begins to look deeply into the future and tries to decide what to do with one's life, there comes the time of deep searching and questioning. While experiencing such disclosing moments, the inner sense of meaninglessness projects itself onto the world— perhaps one might experience a sudden collapse of definite meaning of life. Every meaning that one grips and even the things one devotes oneself to, such as possessions, relative success or pleasure contains the possibility of disillusionment.

The present study advocates a diverse way of looking at the world and confronting the ultimate questions about life, about the purpose and meaning of existence. Under this introductory part there are two vital questions that need to be addressed: why novels? Why existentialism as an approach?

To embark upon the former question, first the prominent figure of the existentialist era, Sartre in his *'What is literature?'* prescribes prose as the best form of literature in depicting human situation and particularly the ones selected for this study deal with ideas that can be identified with Existential thinking. Second, the novels give the opportunity for further study of characters and their evident nature of existence that

can be linked to the approach upheld. The distinctive view of the individual character, the self disclosure in crisis and decision and the ultimate concern- each plays a role. The novel is a far-reaching expression of human possibility and potential, and, through the characters' triumphs and failures we experience the fragility of human life, open as it is to chance, the anxiety that accompanies the human being as it moves through time, and the wide and varying emotional states that are part and parcel of the complete human life.

Literature allows not only for the imagination of circumstances that are similar to our own, but also allows us to imagine how such circumstances, if different, might affect us or those we love. What is most important about literature is its focus on the human being as locus of the concern for the morally "good" existence.

Dealing with, 'Why Existentialism as an approach?' two basic motivations come to the rear. Primarily, due to the collective way of living and restrained value system of the Ethiopian society, its philosophy appears to be clogged to Existentialism. The viewpoints of Existentialism which basically shift the focus from larger culture and communities to the individual and speak of free choice are peculiar to a rigid society overruled by rules and norms that govern interpersonal relations, activities and dwelling styles. On the other hand, Existentialism turns out to be the most convenient philosophy to sermonize the youth in our society that are dwelling in ignorance, about responsibility.

Regarding the important interconnection between literature and philosophy, it's important to notice the potential for us to enhance our modes of ethical discourse by attending to their interrelatedness. Here, the focus rests upon three interrelated matters: (1) Literature as an art form that is in its essence philosophical; (2) Literature as an art form that reveals truth in the form of perceptual knowledge, and

### 1.3 Objectives of the study

The major objective of the study is to elucidate the case of existence of the prominent characters as portrayed in the two novels *The Stranger* and *I Stand Alone*, and to demonstrate the existential features that these characters exhibit through a comparative study of them. It will also attempt to eye the condition of the individuals in the society we live in, in the light of negligent behaviors that they are allegedly more prone to, and to lay down a new path that takes up an altered way of looking at the Self.

### 1.4 Methodology

The present study is qualitative research in nature. The study primarily depends upon analysis and interpretation of the texts in question, the researcher will be obliged to consult some secondary sources as well. In sum it is concerned only with library work and collecting information from the internet.

An attempt to analyse the selected novels is made by using Absurdism and Authenticity as framework that are Existentialist thoughts conceded by Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre and other philosophers respectively. At the same time the study employs analysis and comparative study of major characters to illuminate on the meaningfulness of the text and reveal existential significance of the characters. Through the analyses of the protagonists, the study discloses how they occupied a place in the existential and social spheres of life in the twentieth century.

Previous studies made in relation to the philosophical thoughts in question are treated and will be put in dialogue with the analysis of the selected novels. This is intended for two reasons. First it is believed in doing so the interdisciplinary being of philosophy and literature will be showed and second it will give room to visit and to comment on the philosophical points that are embedded in the novels.

## 1.5 Significance of the study

*"Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism."*

Jean-Paul Sartre (1946)

In modern days where Self-fulfillment has become the recent watchword, Existentialism philosophy has been found worthwhile in providing gratifying answers to the questions that come along with such concerns. According to the existentialists if one wants to live a full and authentic human life, a rewarding and fulfilling life that embraces human dignity, one is to pursue a philosophy that makes an authentic human life possible in a meaningless and absurd world.

As is mentioned in the background of the study the target of the research is individuals and their loss of purpose for life which is very important for one to survive. And the aspiration is to introduce different way of thinking and show another way of looking at life through the philosophy of Existentialism, and its extensions as are disclosed in the selected novels, that I personally think would significantly help the targets of the study to exultantly deal with the problem.

### **Limitations**

In the progression of the success of thesis paper, the researcher has come across several limitations. The major limitation of the study is the problem of finding books and researches that are previously done on Existentialism philosophy in Libraries. The other difficulty the researcher stumbled upon is the limited access of internet.

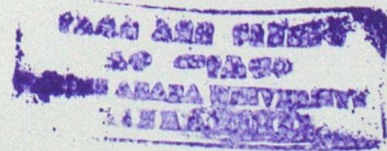
## Chapter II

### Review of Related Literature

Although Existentialism is considered a recent phenomenon, since it gained currency at the end of the Second World War, it has facets and common grounds that it shares with former thoughts. It basically gives answers to spiritual questions of freedom and identity that come once and again in the minds of human beings centers upon the analysis of existence and of the way humans find themselves existing in the world.

It is believed that the question of identity was first brought about during the Greek civilization. History shows that during the time man's consciousness was sharpened unlike the mythical time in which people used to stray unconsciously, men started questioning and researching. Philosophers since the time of Aristotle, around Third-Century B.C, have held that everyone should aim for a common peak of ethical achievement. Aristotle argued for the existence of a divine being, described as the "Prime Mover," who is responsible for the unity and purposefulness of nature (*Metaphysics Book 12 section 1702a*). In order for humanity to attain such a climax, says Aristotle, everyone must "imitate The Almighty's perfect profile.

Aristotle's basic philosophy deduces that humanity strives for an identical peak of moral excellence, as judged by a higher being. For him God exists necessarily and cannot be thought of as not existing. He did not depend on anything else for his existence. He never changed or had the potential to change his eternal being. Aristotle as well defined badness or evil as the absence of actuality that God most perfectly has; a lack of something that ought to be there. Thus he believed that there is no defect in something that exists necessarily.



Existentialism has much in common with the ethical theory propounded by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. It perceives the aim of ethics as promoting human flourishing, and both understand this as a requirement that we first ascertain the underlying nature of human existence. Aristotle argues that we are essentially rational animals, flourishing in terms of the good exercise of our rational faculties, and understands ethical virtue as the set of dispositions manifested in this exercise. (Hutchinson, 1995) This is the central inspiration for the tradition that has become known as virtue ethics, according to which the centre of our ethical concern should not be the intentions with which individual actions are performed or the consequences of those actions but rather the character traits that we possess and that are manifested in our thoughts, feelings, perceptions and actions.

Socrates was another theological thinker who lived during pagan religiosity of ancient Greek and was concerned with Christianity in modernity. His philosophy has long been associated with the principle of self knowledge. Socrates did his every best to gain knowledge of human nature and to know himself. (Howard V Hong and Edna H Hong, 1985). His concern with self-knowledge emerged from the ancient Greek culture where the percept 'know thyself' was inscribed on a plinth at the temple of oracle of Delphi. The oracle was held in great esteem and Delphi was believed by the Greeks to be situated at the center of human world and consequently the self knowledge inscription was at the heart of the community.

It has been suggested the percept 'know thyself' was to be understood as a warning or a recommendation to those who consult with the gods: humans must remember their mortality and ward off their inclination to presume too much of their strength and oppose the power of the gods. But for Socrates the proclamation 'know thyself' had a philosophical significance as a foundation of the relation between individuals and truth. For him it is only if a person first of all asks himself 'what sort of being am I?' that one

can come to know any other truth at all. Thus through the Socratic formulation of a distinctively philosophical project there arises an entirely new notion of what it is to be self: the notion of the Individual as a subject for whom there is a necessary relation to the truth.

Up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, existentialist hints have existed along with philosophical and religious movements. The Nineteenth-Century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, was the first writer to call himself Existential, and reacted against tradition and religion through his works that focus on religious issues and his writings in which he criticized religious institutes. Kierkegaard was one of the principal authors of some of the most prevalent philosophical positions in academia today, which include the rejection of reason, science and the Enlightenment, and, above all, a rejection of the unity of reason and reality, which is a denial of the *possibility* of science. He saw no correlation between universal essence and individual existence—between the law-governed processes of the objective world and the perceptive and cognitive faculties of the individual. Moreover, he as well denied that such a correlation was actually achievable.

For Kierkegaard a relation to the eternal is manifested in an Individual's concern for their life as a whole and this view constitutes proof of the Divine origin of the human since 'what is great about the human being, is that he can occupy himself' with the future and that this relation to the future is a struggle. However, for the Individual this relation is not only with the unknown of the future itself, but with himself. (Pattison, 1995 )

While Kierkegaard is by no means the only major figure of this philosophical tendency, which has since spawned Existentialism, Post-modernism, and various other trends, he is chronologically one of the first. Kierkegaard argued that all systems—including scientific systems, that he thought, it altered a person's perception of his or her

surroundings, as a "corrupting" influence, "omit the individual," and therefore present an ultimately limited view of life, leaving out the most basic features of human existence. For Kierkegaard, Existence is something to strive for by each individual through the choices, values and actions which are particular to their lives (Solomon, 1972). As Kierkegaard puts it in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: 'an existing Individual human being is not an idea; surely his existence is something other than the thought-existence of the idea', Thus, for Kierkegaard, the Individual must always endeavor to exist. (Howard V Hong and Edna H Hong, 1985)

It was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a lot of existential philosophers came forward including Sartre and Camus who were noted for bringing the most international attention to Existentialism at the time. Although each Existentialist had his own way of treating the theme of this philosophy, there were underlying issues that they all share. Primarily they take the individual himself among other realities as a starting point, and also they also share the idea of choice and decision. Each basically agrees that human life is in no way complete and fully satisfying because of suffering and losses that occur when considering the lack of perfection, power, and control one has over their life. Even though they do agree that life is not optimally satisfying, it nonetheless has meaning. Existentialism is the search and journey for true self and true personal meaning in life.

Existentialism, as Sartre defines it, is an ethical theory. It is a form of humanism, which means that it takes humanity as the central ethical value. But it is distinguished from other forms of humanism in the way it understands humanity. What is valuable is not simply the empirical fact of human existence. Our ethical aims should not be to increase our numbers, lengthen our lives, satisfy our desires and preferences, or improve on our achievements. What distinguishes existentialism – or, more precisely, existential humanism – as an ethical theory is its view that all that is intrinsically valuable is the nature or structure of our existence, the kind of thing we are. The relation between

existentialism and existential philosophy therefore justifies the similarity of the two terms: existentialism seeks the flourishing of the human individual, where this is understood as the unfettered realization of our most fundamental nature (Sartre, 2007).

Most importantly, it is the arbitrary that existentialism finds most objectionable—that is, when someone or society tries to impose or demand that their beliefs, values, or rules be faithfully accepted and obeyed. Existentialists believe this destroys individualism and makes a person become whatever the people in power desire; thus they are dehumanized and reduced to being an object. Existentialism then stresses that a person's judgment is the determining factor for what is to be believed rather than by arbitrary religious or secular world values. Personal companion of Sartre and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir declares in her essay that the aim of Existentialism is to save Man from disappointments that the pessimist view which entails that humans are by nature self interested and the fate of us is determined by fixed facts of our personalities (Simons, 2004a).

According to Johnson and Melnikov (2008) the literature perspective of the Existentialism emphasizes one or more of the following five themes. First is the nature of the individual and his or her struggle to find and create meaning in life. Meaning is not one of the givens of life, however, so the Existentialist literature emphatically asserts that individuals are free to create meaning (or experience meaninglessness). One may not be totally or absolutely free, but there is freedom to respond to the conditions which confront or face the individual; there is freedom to create meaning in the immediate here-and-now of the moment. All individuals are born into a family, culture, community, nationality, religion (or none), racial or ethnic group, and so on.



Individuals do not so much "choose" these as they are "thrown into" them, embedded in social, cultural, and political contexts. The works of Martin Heidegger stressed this idea of being "thrown into" the world. Existentialists would find this question entirely irrelevant and uninteresting; even if it tends more to the one percent, there remains open to discretion, interpretation, and choice. Even a prisoner in solitary confinement has a choice on how to spend the time, existentialists would insist, whether to discover and explore the nature of solitude or to fuel the fires of anger and rage. (Heidegger, 1962)

A key concept for existentialists is "choice", and the insistence that individuals possess freedom to respond to the conditions which face them, and to elect one course of action (or interpretation) over another. An often quoted saying of Sartre is that individuals are "condemned to be free" (Sartre, 1946). An individual can approach his or her life "in good faith", which means an acceptance of one's freedom to make choices in response to situations, and be responsible for them; or one can live in "bad faith", which means a denial of one's group, often with attribution of meaning to external circumstances, people, or structures. Existentialism emphasizes freedom, action, choice, and responsibility. Individuals are seen as active subjects, creating meaning in the circumstances which confront them.

The second theme concerns emotion and its fundamental importance in life. While some of the pre-Socratic Sophists emphasized the central role of emotions in life (and thus are often interpreted retrospectively as early progenitors of existentialism), from the time of Socrates to contemporary times the primary emphasis has been on reason and rationality. From this traditional view, individuals achieve the pinnacle of their humanity and meaning to the extent they develop and cultivate their mind, the powers of their reason. Emotions are seen as a secondary or degraded side of existence, as potential obstacles to higher forms of reason.

By contrast, existentialists emphasize the passionate and emotional aspects of life, and assert the relative dominance of emotions over reason in many circumstances. This emphasizes one should embrace and passionately engage in the present moment, the here-and-now, and not allow the past or future to distort the present. The subjective emotions are not to be denied, to be regarded as secondary to reason. They should be embraced and examined. Even superficial reflection shows that our main emotions - love, family loyalty, friendship, joy, ecstasy, appreciation, and many more - are not adversative to meaningful life, or even reason; they are often the very wellsprings of meaning.

The third theme is the irrational potential of life, even the absurd. "Absurd" according to Johnson and Melnikov is a theme in some existentialist literature, showing the absence of intrinsic or inherent meaning. We are thrown into the world, thrown into specific circumstances, but these have meaning only to the extent it is created by individuals.

The fourth theme is individual responsibility. Jean Paul Sartre is one of the most adherents of man's responsibility to himself. This philosophy is most vigorously expressed in his 1956 work *Being and Nothingness*, and it is here Sartre utters the famous remark, "Everyone gets the war he deserves". This means that, while individuals may have relatively little freedom to create the social and political and economic conditions of their existence, they do have some freedom of choice to make what one can of one's situation. One may adopt an attitude of conformity, resignation, resistance, escape, rebellion, or reform, but whatever the choices, those choices then act back upon the individual and define who they are in the world. What does it mean to be human?

The final theme that is related to the above is "bad faith". It is another remark by Sartre. Living in bad faith means that one denies one's freedom, choices and responsibility. It means that one is oriented to others' values, interpretations, perspectives, and

judgments. The opposite of living in bad faith is living an authentic existence, which means one accepts one's freedom to make choices, and accepts one's responsibilities for those choices. The freedom to act and decide in a world which is indifferent to those actions and decisions, this is indeed a major theme of existential freedom.

Among the local scholars that opt Existentialism as an approach to analyze Ethiopian novels in the MA thesis they conducted are Tewodrose Gebre and Tseday Wondimu. Tewodrose for his study *የአማርኛ የርዕይ መነጠቅ ልቦለዶች*., chose four Amharic novels- Feker Eskemekaber, Yetewodros Enba, Keadmas Bashger and Adeferes- and made one side of human identity, which encloses futility, disillusionment, self exile and death that are enfolded in the novels, to be the center of attention of his research. Along with analyzing the novels from these perceptions that abide by Existentialism, the researcher also investigated the lived situations of the country in which the novels were written.

Tseday on the other hand in her thesis named *The Case of Existence in Fiqar Eskemeqabar, Ka Admas Bashager and Gracha Qachiloch: From Existentialist Perspective*, took Sartrean existentialism as a framework to analyze three Ethiopian novels mentioned in the title. The researcher also tried to reflect upon the social ills from which the nation is suffering and showed how much power the society has over the individual, the disregard of individual's ability and freedom to judge between right and wrong creates favorable condition for social malady.

The present study differs from the above two for three reasons. First it uses Absurdism and Authentic philosophical thought as its frame work to analyze the selected texts. Second, this study aims at bringing to light the ways of life that the characters in question have chosen for their own as depicted in the texts. And third, a comparative study of these characters is made to throw light on the significance of choices in determining one's life.

## Chapter III

### Conceptual frame work

Toward the end of the Nineteenth-Century and through the mid-Twentieth, a movement follows "Existentialism," a philosophical theory of life endeavored to achieve a level of moral excellence. Even though the idea of Existentialism is complex, certain themes are common amongst the philosophers and authors: moral individualism, freedom of choice, responsibility, and alienation. It is found appropriate that the concept of Absurdism and existential authenticity holds considerable promise as a conceptual framework for analyzing the selected books in depth.

Existentialism, as a philosophy, is concerned with the kind of existence we humans have, as opposed to the kind of existence had by rocks, plants, and animals. Many existential philosophers reserve the very word "existence" for the way in which we exist and to articulate the nature of our existence. Central themes of existential thought therefore include the reliability of our everyday views and other people's, the relation between objective facts and subjective experience, the significance of the temporality and mortality of life, the basic nature of relationships between people, and the role of society in the structure of the individual.

The urge to consider these issues is not confined to any particular phase or movement in intellectual history since these are clearly perpetual questions arising from the very human condition they ask about, as William Barrett makes clear in his masterly study of existential thought, *Irrational Man*, their sense of urgency is heightened and lessened by historical circumstances and the framework within which they are addressed varies with other aspects of culture.

This list of central themes makes clear; moreover, that existential thought is not another branch on the philosophical tree along with metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and politics, but rather a lens through which these topics can be viewed. The nature of reality and the limits of knowledge are important, according to this approach to philosophy, only insofar as they enlighten us about the structure of our own existence. The nature and significance of beauty and art cannot be understood without reference to the sort of existence had by those who find pleasure and solace in them. How we should treat one another and organize our societies depends upon the kind of things we all are.

Existential philosophy encompasses all the classic philosophical problems, therefore, but with the distinctive twist that they should be understood in relation to a single overarching question: what is it to exist as a unique individual person? Focusing on the human individual has led many existential thinkers to see the social and material worlds as at best dimensions of the individual, at worst a threat to each of us. This explains why artworks that focus on isolated and lonely figures that fit a standard conception of existential thought, a notion often conflated with Existentialism.

The researcher chooses Absurdism and Authenticity philosophy to be the major framework of the present study keeping in mind these philosophical thoughts of the twentieth century offer ample prospects that help to probe deep into ideas of existence that are entrenched in the selected texts for analysis. Furthermore the views that these philosophies uphold are found pertinent for they basically set straight existential stresses that are laid upon individuals, which is one aspiration of this study.

### 3.1 Albert Camus and the philosophy of Absurd

One of the extensions of Existentialism, Absurdism believes that it is futile to examine the meaning of life, since life has no meaning. Life to an absurdist is random and looking for meaning is a waste of time, since there is no inherent meaning in life. The Algerian-born French author Albert Camus was one of the leading thinkers of Absurdism and he best describes this in his literary works. In "The Myth of Sisyphus" for instance he describes man's life as a series of daily boring work such as rolling a rock up a hill, as Sisyphus did in the Greek myth. Sisyphus was doomed to roll the rock uphill, only to see it roll back down the hill. He had to continue to do this task for the rest of his life as punishment. In our own lives Camus insists, we roll rocks up hills too and each evening they roll back down so the next day we must do the same thing, we are indulged in monotonous life.

Camus states that for one to obtain any freedom in an absurd universe, he or she must recognize absurdity. If one faces this realization then they can understand that the universe is never absolute, and this can free us of expectations. No expectations=Freedom! It is not necessary to speculate, as life and the things that we believe in or understand have no meaning anyway. Camus does believe that it is us who create the meaning in those things we enjoy in life, and for him this is what he thinks makes it worth living. People may create meaning in their own lives and find their own goals for which to strive.

"There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy." (Camus 1942) The statement reveals one of the dilemmas of the philosophy of Absurd which Camus sought to answer. Camus was not the first to present the concept of Absurd but it was owing to him that this idea gained popularity and

influence, and it transformed into a proper philosophical movement of Absurdism. His famous novels include *The Stranger* [also translated as *The Outsider*] and *The Fall*, while *The Myth of Sisyphus* is his most important book with regard to his philosophy of the Absurd.

The foundations of the concept of Absurd can be traced back to the deeply religious Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the fore-father of Existentialism. Kierkegaard describes the Absurd as a situation in life which all the rational and thinking abilities of a person are unable to tell him/her which course of action to adopt in life, but in this very uncertainty he/she is forced to act or make a decision. "What is the Absurd?" It is, as may quite easily be seen, that the self, a rational being, must act in a case where his/her reason and powers of reflection, tell him/her. (Kierkegaard 1849)

Since the beginning, thinkers have strived to find out the meaning to life and have pondered over the purpose and objective of this universe. "Either they have concluded that this life is meaningless and purposeless, or they have taken refuge in some faith and religious belief such as the existence of God to make-up for this apparent lack of meaning. Even in the latter case, the question arises: what is the purpose of God? And it is this question which a believer has no answer to, as Kierkegaard pointed out, rendering belief in God (or any other religious authority) as absurd. Hence there exists an absurdity which cannot be eliminated." (Aftab, 2008).

Camus believed at first life was intrinsically devoid of meaning and purpose. He refuses to accept any meaning that is beyond this existence. "I don't know whether this world has a meaning that transcends it. But I know that I do not know the meaning... What can a meaning outside my condition mean to me? I can understand only in human terms." (Camus, 1942)

But if life is absurd, what is the point of living on? Why shouldn't we commit suicide and hasten our fate? Using the Greek myth of Sisyphus as a metaphor, Camus attempts to answer this question and present an alternative to suicide. How to live with the consciousness of this absurdity of life is the central question of Camus's philosophy. Camus believes that the answer is no. The appropriate response to the experience of Absurd, Camus suggests, is to live in full consciousness of it. He rejects all those things which erase the consciousness of absurd, such as religious faith, suicide and Existentialism.

Camus begins with a criticism on Existentialism. He says that Existentialists recognize initially that this life is absurd and meaningless, but they then take an 'existential leap' or a 'leap of faith' and attribute a fabricated meaning to their existence, and often they deify the Absurd. Camus calls it a 'philosophical suicide'. It must be noted here that although Camus sees life as absurd and ultimately irrational, he does not advocate a stoic acceptance of the difficulties and problems of life but to be valuable and worth-defending.

Camus popularized the notion of the absurd and the response of metaphysical rebellion. For Camus salvation in an absurd universe could be possible only in knowledge which doesn't come at the rational philosophical plane.

I want everything to be explained to me or nothing. And the reason is impotent when it hears this cry from the heart. The world itself, whose single meaning I don't understand, is but a vast irrational. If one could only say just once: 'all is clear' all would be saved (*Myth of Sisyphus*: 34).

In a world where everything is absurd and meaningless "the only ultimate significance must be one which includes, or accepts, the meaninglessness of all recognized values

and concepts." (MS: 34). Camus believes that it is metaphysical revolt that gives life its value. He doesn't wish to be relieved of the weight of his great truth of self knowledge, the truth that delivers, counts hardly for Camus. "Socrates' Know thyself has as much value as the 'be virtuous' of our confessionals. They reveal nostalgia at the same time ignorance. They are sterile exercises on great subjects" (MS: 54).

In any case, present becomes and remains the place in which the absurd philosophers focus on in life, thereby fully living in the now and "not in what may or may not come to pass". Integrity is very important which comes with judgment of what is right and what is wrong, whereby integrity is total honesty with oneself and striving to remain consistent in living one's life in an authentic way.

### **3.2 The notion of Authenticity Philosophy**

Another extension of Existentialism that appears important for this study is Authenticity, which is the recognition of how our freedom interacts with our factuality, exhibits the responsibility which we have to make proper choices. Since Authenticity, is used in so many different contexts, the most significant difficulty that arises in attempting to define it, lies in the philosophical nature of its meaning. As Sartre pointed out, authenticity does not denote 'objective qualities' such as those associated with the notions of sincerity and honesty, qualities one predicates of a person.

The notion of authenticity signifies something beyond the domain of objective language, while the notions of sincerity and honesty have to do with attributes to which the language can refer directly. This sentiment is strengthened by reading *Being and Nothingness*, where Sartre describes 'human reality' as 'being which is what it is not and which is not what it is'. This idea, and his insistence that authenticity is something we are aware of when 'we flee it' suggest that authenticity is a negative term. Its presence is

discerned in its absence, in the zealous search for it, in various acts of 'bad faith' (*mauvaise foi*).

Sartre on his attempt to define authenticity despite the impossibility of such a definition, he revert to the traditional concept of truth as correspondence: Authenticity consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate.

According to Sartre this side of Existentialist thinking puts every man in possession of himself and places the entire responsibility for his existence upon his own shoulders. He says Man is a project which possesses a subjective life and before that projection of the self nothing exists; man will only attain existence when he is what he purposes to be. Not, however, what he may wish to be. Sartre unmistakably locates the distinction between wishing and willing that the former is what we are ambitious about while in the later a conscious decision is taken, prior and more spontaneous decision. And, when it is said that man is responsible for himself, it doesn't not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.

The Existentialist philosophy focuses on each human individual's existence. The belief is that on earth there is only human existence and no divine interference that impacts human life. The philosophy goes on to elaborate on how every choice individuals make; they are completely responsible for and no other. Each individual has to make decisions in which they must decide what is right and wrong, what is true and false and what beliefs they want to choose. Along with this freedom of choice individuals must learn to take full responsibility for their beliefs, choices and actions. If an individual has the right to make a decision, Existentialists believe that the individual also has the responsibility of accepting its outcome.

Freedom compares parallel to the responsibility of their choice. Jean Paul Sartre states how man does not just have freedom, the essence of an individual is based on freedom for without it, it is almost as if man does not exist. Yet, when human beings realize the weight of this responsibility they are bombarded with a sense of anxiety that takes over. To run from this, humans often try to ignore or deny their freedom and the responsibility along with it. This is where Existentialists go on to say that each individual must take full responsibility for their choice, no matter the hardships. Because it is only then will human beings learn to live their life meaningfully and authentically, and understand who they are.

The other issue that is worth mentioning here is the question of choice and what the existentialists called Subjectivism. The word "subjectivism" is to be understood in two senses, says Sartre, on the one hand, the freedom of the individual subject and, on the other, that man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity. It is the latter which is the deeper meaning of Existentialism. When it is said that man chooses for himself, it means that he is choosing for all men. In all the actions an individual takes in order to create himself as he wills to be, to choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of that which is chosen; for one always chooses the better. "What we choose is always the better; and nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all."

In the modern world, by contrast, the very notion of a social 'place' has all but ceased to have any application. The individual no longer has a fixed and given position in society. The self has far greater independence from its roles, which are looked upon as external to the self and contingent for it. Identity is no longer a predetermined given. Individuals must now choose their social place and role and, in doing so, create their own identity.

The essentialist conception of individuality and the true self is embodied in what at first appears to be a very different sort of account of the self, an account which begins

with the rejection of the very idea that the identity of the self can be specified in terms of instincts or needs. What is distinctive of human beings, on this view, is that they have no predetermined instincts or needs, they are free.

Such views are expressed with great clarity by Sartre. With human beings, he says, 'existence precedes essence' (Sartre 1948) meaning man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards. If man, as the existentialist sees him, is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. "There is no fixed and pre-given human nature. Our actions are not the determined effects of instincts, needs, drives, desires or any other aspect of our natural being; they are the product of free and purely individual choice. Of course, Sartre does not deny that human beings have drives, needs, and desires, and that these influence us. Such factors set the conditions in which we must choose. However they never completely determine the outcomes of our choice.

Sartre emphasizes that there is no human nature and by this he means there is no predetermined and fixed purposes in human life which can provide a standard for the authenticity of our actions. However there is at least one universal and essential characteristic the Sartre attributes to the self: freedom. According to Sartre freedom is a pre-given aspect of self which we do not choose: we are condemned to be free. (Sartre, 1957)

Nietzsche on the other hand portrays human beings as primarily creatures with instinct and desire. Our instincts embody the 'will to life'; they make up our essential nature, our true self. Thus, on the Nietzschean view, living authentically consists in following one's instincts and affirming 'life'; whereas modern European 'civilization' and Christian-liberal morality, are inhibiting, repressive and 'hostile to life' (Nietzsche,

1990). It forces individuals to suppress and deny their instincts, to be hypocritical, false to themselves and inauthentic.

The concept of authenticity in terms of the idea that there is an 'essential human nature' or 'true self' which is located in each individual provides a standard against which the authenticity of our actions, feelings or thoughts can be assessed. One is being authentic or true to himself when one is following his/her true self or essential nature. The concept of truth involved here is the familiar one of correspondence to a given objective standard. One is being true to oneself to the extent to which his/her thoughts and actions correspond to his/her true self.

In this part of the paper where the focus is on existential authenticity, as related to human nature and as the essence of human individuality, it is argued that Heidegger's concept of existential authenticity holds considerable promise as a conceptual framework for exploring the idea of authenticity. Heidegger uses the term "authenticity" to indicate that someone is being themselves existentially. This is deeper than being oneself behaviorally or psychologically.

To be oneself existentially means to exist according to one's nature or essence, to transcend day-to-day behavior or activities or thinking about self. Because existential authenticity is experience-oriented, the existential self changes from moment to moment. As a result, a person is not authentic or inauthentic all the time. There is no authentic self. (Heidegger 1996). Heidegger's idea is that to be human is to have possibilities and the capacity to choose among them. Authenticity determines possibilities sourced in one's individual and shared past which Heidegger calls "heritage" and "destiny" respectively, experienced as the world in which people find themselves: a world of possibilities.

Heidegger(1968) implemented the phenomenological method in seeking to understand the question "what is meant by being?". He framed existence (Dasein or Being-there) with respect to both its historical and temporal aspects. For Heidegger, authentic possibility exists in relation to Geworfenheit (i.e., "thrown-ness"). Thrown-ness refers to the idea that people are born into a world that they did not construct, live along with conditions over which they have little control, and are insufficiently equipped to determine solutions to existential questions such as "Who am I?". Consequently, the sum of people's behaviors is at first a function of the behavioral prescriptions derived from the social environment. In light of the constraints of their "thrown-ness," and the inevitability of death, people can embrace their individuality and freedom to live authentically (Halling & Carroll 1999).

According to Heidegger, whether people are authentic or inauthentic is determined not by how they respond to their possibilities but by how they project themselves, which brings their possibilities to light. The decision to be authentic or not is taken in the existential moment, in the moment of basic self-understanding, when one decides how to respond to an experience or what to do. Through a process of becoming their own self, individuals pass through the stage of self-alienation, and subsequently rely on their subjective faith to energize and organize their chosen actions toward their absolute end/goal or their essential purpose.

We live from birth to death under the compulsion of brute fact; yet out of the mere givenness of situation it is we who shape ourselves and our world and in this shaping we succeed or we fail, to succeed is not to escape compulsion but to transcend it- to give it our own significance and meaning by our own projection of the absurdly given past into the future. (Grene 1952:266)

To Heidegger authenticity has three characteristics: mineness, resoluteness, and the situation (1996:247–292). Mineness refers to recognizing that individuals can have possibilities of their own that are not shared with others. Resoluteness refers to the courage and tenacity it takes to claim one's own possibilities rather than share those of others. It takes courage and tenacity because Heidegger claims people have a natural tendency to conform and to embrace their 'they-selves' because they-selves are accepted and welcomed among others while a my-self may feel more alone. The situation refers to rare experiences in which people find themselves in their unique place in the world, in a unique situation in relation to the connectedness around them. In life the mineness would manifest itself as a desire to make up one's own mind about what is going on during a certain experience, to interpret it for oneself. Resoluteness would manifest as a desire to get off the beaten track, in a rejection of advice on how to handle the situation.

When Authenticity is perceived from literature perspective, we see the principal aim of those who write on authenticity is to evoke their readers' 'pathos of authenticity'. According to Golomb, these writers hoped to restore a personal mental power and sense of selfhood that modernity had diminished. 'Since they could not argue, they had to be satisfied with portraying the sublime and heroic patterns of authentic life. These portraits are intended to provoke us into creating true selves.' (Golomb 1995: 29). Since, in matters of authenticity, the 'how' is more crucial than the 'what', literature is particularly helpful in engaging the reader's attention and provoking them to action, since it tempts the reader to follow the path of authenticity without making this aim explicit, and, more importantly, without defining authenticity. Authenticity thus indicates a certain kind of integrity—not that of a pre-given whole, an identity waiting to be discovered and variety of literary styles that can be utilized indicates that there is no one exclusive and definitive path to authenticity—to be authentic means to invent one's own way and pattern of life.

The one thing that is worth being pointed out on the discussion of the philosophy of authenticity is the concept of alienation, a feeling of estrangement among modern man. There is a rupture between human beings and their objects, between human beings and other human beings, or between human beings and the natural world, or even between human beings and their own creations in art, science and society. Alienation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, psychological, philosophical and sociological, because it concerns the individual and the group. When Hegel spoke of this estrangement, he used the terms "Entäußerung" (externalization), "Entfremdung" (alienation), "Selbstentfremdung" (self-estrangement) and "Vergegenständlichung" (objectification). Since reality is essentially spiritual to Hegel, this estrangement is primarily to the mind. The absolute Idea or Reason enters the stage of self-alienation in Nature and returns from this estrangement to Itself as Mind.

By 'alienation' Hegel refers to the process by which 'finite Spirit', the human self, 'doubles' itself, externalizes itself, and then confronts its own other being as something separate, distinct and opposed to it. According to Hegel, self-conscious Spirit evolves through a series of different historical and social forms. Subjectivity, individuality, and freedom develop through a process in which the self is alienated from itself and then comes to recognize itself in its alienation, so that, at the end of the process, the self eventually comes to be at home with itself.

Kierkegaard argues in *The Concept of Dread* says, state of alienation is the state of anxiety. Anxiety is "the uncanny apprehension of some impending evil, of something not present, but to come, of something not within us, but of an alien power." In *The Sickness Unto Death* anxiety becomes to itself, or every disturbance in the process of becoming a Self, an illness of man as a spiritual being, arising from his attempt to separate himself from the power which created him, or from the fact that he neglects

what is eternal in him and forgets his spiritual nature. Starting with despair, says Kierkegaard then comes the problem is how to become oneself again.

On the matter of the way in which modern social life imposes the absolute rule of the 'they' upon the individual, Kierkegaard's opinion is that individuals in modern 'mass society' lack 'passion' and individuality. Through increasing equality and 'levelling' they are reduced to conformity and uniformity.

Just as desert travellers combine into great caravans from fear of robbers and wild beasts, so the individuals of the contemporary generation are fearful of existence, because it is God-forsaken; only in great masses do they dare to live, and they cluster together *en masse* in order to feel that they amount to something. (Kierkegaard 1941, 318)

For Hegel individual self-consciousness is not an immediate, unchanging given. The self is a historical and social creation. It develops through a process of alienation and its overcoming, self-estrangement and self-recognition, a 'fall' into division and reconciliation. Alienation is therefore an internal process, based on one's attitude to oneself. The actual self is alienated only when it is separated from aspects of what is deemed to be necessary for it to be authentic. Authenticity is possible, but it is an individual rather than an historical achievement. To find oneself and be authentic, one must stand back. One must detach oneself from the 'they', from one's social existence, and make contact with one's authentic individual self.

## Chapter IV Analysis

### Synopsis: *The Stranger* by Albert Camus

Meursault, the narrator, is a young man living in Algiers. After receiving a telegram informing him of his mother's death, he takes a bus to Marengo, where his mother had been living in an old persons' home. He sleeps for almost the entire trip. When he arrives, he speaks to the director of the home. The director allows Meursault to see his mother, but Meursault finds that her body has already been sealed in the coffin. He declines the caretaker's offer to open the coffin.

That night, Meursault keeps vigil over his mother's body. Much to his displeasure, the talkative caretaker stays with him the whole time. Meursault smokes a cigarette, drinks coffee, and dozes off. The next morning, before the funeral, he meets with the director again. The director informs him that Thomas Perez, an old man who had grown very close to Meursault's mother, will be attending the funeral service. The funeral procession heads for the small local village, but Perez has difficulty keeping up and eventually faints from the heat. Meursault reports that he remembers little of the funeral. That night, he happily arrives back in Algiers.

The next day, Meursault goes to the public beach for a swim. There, he runs into Marie Cardona, his former co-worker. The two make a date to see a comedy at the movie theater that evening. After the movie they spend the night together. When Meursault wakes up, Marie is gone. He stays in bed until noon and then sits on his balcony until evening, watching the people pass on the street.

The following day, Monday, Meursault returns to work. He has lunch with his friend Emmanuel and then works all afternoon. While walking upstairs to his apartment that night, Meursault runs into Salamano, an old man who lives in his building and owns a mangy dog. Meursault also runs into his neighbor, Raymond Sintes, who is widely rumored to be a pimp. Raymond invites Meursault over for dinner. Over the

meal, Raymond recounts how he beat up his mistress after he discovered that she had been cheating on him. As a result, he got into a fight with her brother. Raymond now wants to torment his mistress even more, but he needs Meursault to write a letter to lure his mistress back to him. Meursault agrees and writes the letter that night.

The following Saturday, Marie visits Meursault at his apartment. She asks Meursault if he loves her, and he replies that "it didn't mean anything," but probably not. The two then hear shouting coming from Raymond's apartment. They go out into the hall and watch as a policeman arrives. The policeman slaps Raymond and says that he will be summoned to the police station for beating up his mistress. Later, Raymond asks Meursault to testify on his behalf, and Meursault agrees. That night, Raymond runs into Salamano, who laments that his dog has run away.

Marie asks Meursault if he wants to marry her. He replies indifferently but says that they can get married if she wants to, so they become engaged. The following Sunday, Meursault, Marie, and Raymond go to a beach house owned by Masson, one of Raymond's friends. They swim happily in the ocean and then have lunch. That afternoon, Masson, Raymond, and Meursault run into two Arabs on the beach, one of whom is the brother of Raymond's mistress. A fight breaks out and Raymond is stabbed. After tending to his wounds, Raymond returns to the beach with Meursault. They find the Arabs at a spring. Raymond considers shooting them with his gun, but Meursault talks him out of it and takes the gun away. Later, however, Meursault returns to the spring to cool off, and, for no apparent reason, he shoots Raymond's mistress's brother.

Meursault is arrested and thrown into jail. His lawyer seems disgusted at Meursault's lack of remorse over his crime, and, in particular, at Meursault's lack of grief at his mother's funeral. Later, Meursault meets with the examining magistrate, who cannot understand Meursault's actions. The magistrate brandishes a crucifix and demands that Meursault put his faith in God. Meursault refuses, insisting that he does not

believe in God. The magistrate cannot accept Meursault's lack of belief, and eventually dubs him "Monsieur Antichrist."

As he awaits his trial, Meursault slowly adapts to prison life. His isolation from nature, women, and cigarettes torments him at first, but he eventually adjusts to living without them, and soon does not even notice their absence. He manages to keep his mind occupied, and he sleeps for most of each day.

Meursault is taken to the courthouse early on the morning of his trial. Spectators and members of the press fill the courtroom. The subject of the trial quickly shifts away from the murder to a general discussion of Meursault's character, and of his reaction to his mother's death in particular. The director and several other people who attended the vigil and the funeral are called to testify, and they all attest to Meursault's lack of grief or tears. Marie reluctantly testifies that the day after his mother's funeral she and Meursault went on a date and saw a movie. During his summation the following day, the prosecutor calls Meursault a monster and says that his lack of moral feeling threatens all of society. Meursault is found guilty and is sentenced to death by beheading.

Meursault returns to prison to await his execution. He struggles to come to terms with his situation, and he has trouble accepting the certainty and inevitability of his fate. He imagines escaping and he dreams of filing a successful legal appeal. The chaplain comes to visit against Meursault's wishes. He urges Meursault to renounce his atheism and turn to God, but Meursault refuses. Like the magistrate, the chaplain cannot believe that Meursault does not long for faith and the afterlife. Meursault suddenly becomes enraged, grabs the chaplain, and begins shouting at him. He declares that he is correct in believing in a meaningless, purely physical world. For the first time, Meursault truly embraces the idea that human existence holds no greater meaning. He abandons all hope for the future and accepts the "gentle indifference of the world." This acceptance makes Meursault feel happy.

## Meursault as an Absurd Man

*"This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world".*

Albert Camus.

In the cold and mournful spring of 1942 when France witnessed one of the most terrible periods of World War II, the publication of *The Stranger* heralded an era of literary importance and esteem for the young Camus. This alluring novel that inflicts a considerable thought provoking wound at first reading brings forth and look through the deepest senses of one's anguish and throws a peripheral light on the mourning of French people going through the invasion of their country by Nazis. Yet, the all-pervasive undercurrent of the novel does not seem to chiefly center upon war and invasion, but in essence, it echoes the tone of a chaotic mind reflecting the writer's own recollection of a life lived in this anarchic period. One that came into close contact with two inhumane and absurd world wars that vitiated Europe as the first victim, bestowing the massacre of thousands of innocent people. *The Stranger*, therefore, can be deemed as the evidence of Camus's critical observation of these disturbing wars and, indeed, of what he calls 'absurd' about the human life and destiny.

Camus to some degree formalized his unique brand of Absurdism. With his approach being realistic and at the same time humanistic; he looks at the absurd from a practical and human angle setting aside all existing systems of thought. His primary consideration is the problem of suicide. As David Galloway affirms, "man must decide either to live or to die. If suicide is eventually rejected as a solution to [his] absurd situation, he is left with the problem of how he should live." (Galloway, 1981: 8). Camus brings this difficult concept of life, the lucid observation of the absurd and its inevitability, to life in *The Stranger*, the second of his three works in which he

develops his ideas of the absurd. Meursault's journey from social illusion to absurd reality elucidates the seeking of reconciliation of the incongruence of human desire and natural reality.

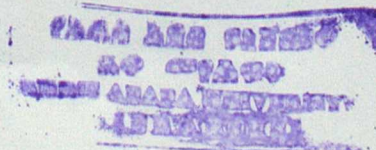
Camus states that as revolt exempts man from any commitments and attachments it brings forth "freedom". He argues that before encountering the absurd, man sets for himself goals and he unconsciously confines himself to living towards his aims and ideals. At the same time, he creates for himself a self-image and a certain role, which require him to behave in particular ways. However, after becoming aware of the absurdity of life, he realizes that "he adapted himself to the demands of a purpose to be achieved and became the slave of his liberty"

*The Stranger* is told from the perspective of Meursault, a young man living in Algiers. From the very beginning we can see that this is a peculiar man. In the opening line of the novel, the narrator mentions the death of his mother, but expresses more concern with remembering which day it actually happened than his emotions regarding it.

Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know. I had a telegram from the home: 'Mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Yours sincerely.' That doesn't mean anything. It may have been yesterday (*The Stranger*, 9).

These words uttered by Meursault in a detached tone give away his character: he is an emotionally indifferent man. It would seem that Meursault either has no emotions, or his emotions are very different from those we experience. He doesn't despair, he doesn't hope. He is in no need of any consolation.

Certainly, Meursault creates a sense of distance and reveals his absurd character not only by the way he reacts to the news but also by what he does after the news. He goes on to behave as if nothing upsetting has happened. He takes a bus to the old people's home, where his mother used to live. During the whole journey, he



sleeps and when he arrives at the home, contrary to the rituals, he refuses to see the body of his mother. He disinterestedly sits by the coffin, drinks coffee, smokes a cigarette and dozes off in the room where his mother's body lies. The following day, during the funeral procession, he focuses solely on the weather, the sun and the landscape. He relates how he noticed that "for quite some time now the countryside had been alive with the humming of insects and the crackling of grass" (*The Stranger*, 20). Then, he narrates the disturbing aspects of nature: "All around me there was still the same luminous sundrenched countryside. The glare from the sky was unbearable." (*The Stranger*, 21) He, in addition, closely observes the attendees of the funeral:

Almost all the women were wearing aprons tied highly round their waists, which made their swollen bellies stick out even more. I'd never noticed before what huge paunches old women can have. The men were almost all very thin and carrying walking-sticks. What struck me most about their faces was that I couldn't see their eyes, but only a faint glimmer among a nest of wrinkles (*The Stranger*, 15).

Meursault's intense focus on the outward appearance of the old people reveals his attachment to what is physical. He, instead of reminiscing about his old days with his mother or praying for her soul, continues to watch attentively his surroundings. He further relates: "I also looked at the warden. He was walking in a dignified way, without a single pointless movement. A few beads of sweat were forming on his brow, but he didn't wipe them off" (*The Stranger*, 21). Moreover, after the burial of his mother he feels "joy" at the thought of "going to go to bed and sleep for a whole twelve hours" (*The Stranger*, 22).

The essential aspect of Meursault's personality is his complete lack of concern with matters that people normally find important. Characteristically, as an absurd man, Meursault enjoys what is connected with the sensual and tangible: that is why his daily life is also devoid of any abstract ideas such as love, grief, ambition and

commitment. They are beyond his comprehension as they do not have any physical realities. One of the clearest examples comes through a conversation with his girlfriend:

That evening Marie came by to see me and asked me if I wanted to marry her. I said it didn't make any difference to me and that we could if she wanted to. Then she wanted to know if I loved her. I answered the same way I had the last time, that it didn't mean anything but that I probably didn't love her. 'So why marry me, then?' she said. I explained to her that it didn't really matter and that if she wanted to, we could get married....Then she pointed out that marriage was a serious thing. I said, 'No.' (*The Stranger*, 41)

It seems that nothing is important to Meursault, even the way he lives his own life. Meursault's strangeness is also apparent in his lack of ambition. He does not aspire for the future and is closely attached to the present moment. In making decisions he does not look for the *right* path but merely the path of least confrontation. His disinterest in the future is revealed in his answer to his boss's offer of a position in Paris. Meursault says:

I said yes but really I didn't mind. He then asked me if I wasn't interested in changing my life. I replied that you could never change your life, that in any case one life was as good as another and that I wasn't at all dissatisfied with mine here...I'd rather not have upset him, but I couldn't see any reason for changing my life. Come to think of it, I wasn't unhappy (*The Stranger*, 44).

Meursault's dispassionate response reveals his absurd outlook on life. For him, nothing matters as all the ways of life are the same and most of the circumstances in his life are controlled by chance. That is why he responds to the events instinctively and allows himself to be drawn into the sequence of events, which end in his disaster. It is by chance that he meets Raymond, who gets him involved in a conflict which leads to Meursault's killing of an Arab on the beach at

the end of the first section of the novel. No clear reason is ever given in the narrative for *why* Meursault shoots the Arab; the only explanation offered is the overwhelming heat of the sun that makes his sweat fall like a veil over his eyes, the shining burning beams of the sea, the sand, burning at fifty degrees, and most relevant, the reflection of the knife that the Arab holds in his hand, yet no concrete reason. In a rational world, however, ordinary man demands rational explanations for the events happening in one's life. Therefore, the absurd condition that Meursault found himself does not make the murder justifiable. Ultimately, he is arrested; put into prison, where his actions and choices are questioned.

In Part Two, Meursault is tried and convicted of the crime, but his conviction has more to do with his personality than with his crime. For instance, the lawyer warns Meursault that his indifferent attitude at his mother's funeral will turn the jury against him and he advises him to alter his statements about his mother's funeral. Meursault, however, replies frankly:

...by nature my physical needs often distorted my feelings. On the day of my mother's funeral I was very tired and sleepy. So I was not fully aware of what was going on. The only thing I could say for certain was that I'd rather wished mother hadn't died. But my lawyer didn't seem pleased. He said, 'that's not enough'. He thought for a moment. Then he asked me if he could say that I'd controlled my feelings that day. I said 'No, because that's not true' (*The Stranger*, 65).

The lawyer is disturbed by Meursault's inability to lie about how he felt at his mother's funeral; yet, Meursault is determined to maintain his honesty. Throughout his trial, he neglects all opportunities to pretend grief over his mother's death and express remorse for the man he shot. By being honest and unpretentious, he acknowledges his own acts. Meursault goes on to reveal his integrity in front of the magistrate who waves the crucifix in his face in an attempt to make him feel remorse:

'Do you know what this is?' ... Then he spoke very quickly and passionately, telling me that he believed in God, that he was convinced that no man was so guilty that God wouldn't pardon him, but that he must first repent and so become like a child whose soul is empty and ready to embrace everything (*The Stranger*,67-68).

Upon this warning, Meursault again expresses what he thinks honestly. He replies that he doesn't believe in God. The magistrate is shocked at his answer. Meursault narrates the magistrate's reaction in a way:

He sat down indignantly. He told me that it was impossible, that all men believed in God, even those who wouldn't face up to Him. That was his belief, and if I should ever doubt it his life would become meaningless. 'Do you want my life to be meaningless?' he cried. As far as I was concerned, it had nothing to do with me and I told him so. (*The Stranger*,68)

Meursault's atheism shocks the magistrate because he believes that the universe is controlled by God and life is meaningful only through God's existence. On the other hand, for Meursault, life is absurd and there is not any supernatural existence that can help him. He, in a way, depicts a revolt against the concept of god and asserts that man can only himself make his life meaningful and must himself be fully responsible for his destiny. Therefore, he continues to live the life of indifference and is still concerned with his present existence.

Meursault is the absurd hero, living only for the moment and performing only the basic and momentary functions of life. The past and the future do not matter to him. He is not concerned with an afterlife, and has no interest in God. It may be that life is important to him, but it makes no difference to him how one lives. Such views of Meursault are far from the philosophical thoughts of Camus. The actual message is not in Meursault himself and how he looms in the novel but in how readers act in response to his manifestation. It is clear that the author is not advocating Meursault's



way of approaching life. Rather, Camus, in the novel, argues against giving up of values and living with indifference toward the world.

One might think in response to Meursault's character that he is always aware of the meaninglessness of all activities in the existence of death but he misunderstood the nature of his meaninglessness and that he was using inappropriate methods for dealing with it. For Meursault, the goals and purposes of what we call possessions, accomplishments, adventures, love, marriage, family all seemed hollow and empty. He knew these would not satisfy his quest for meaning, and he took an ignorant attitude toward people who thought otherwise: he has no ambition to advance socio-economically. This awareness that Meursault has, is somehow never strong enough to involve self-awareness – that is, he never reflects on the meaning of death *for him* – until he is in prison awaiting execution. The "meaning" of death is not rational but, again, is existential – its implications are to be found in the finality of each moment.

Before his trial, Meursault passes the time in prison by sleeping, by reading over and over the newspaper story about the (unrelated) murder of a Czech, and by recreating a mental picture of his room at home in complete detail. In this connection, it must be admitted that he is externally very sensitive and aware, despite his lack of self-understanding and emotional response. This is evident by his detailed descriptions. He is especially sensitive to natural beauty – the beach, the glistening water, the shade, the reed music, swimming, making love to Marie, the evening hour he likes so much, etc. He even says that if forced to live in a hollow tree trunk, he would be content to watch the sky, passing birds, and clouds (*The Stranger*, 95).

The trial was absurd. From the first moment there is no possibility of mercy and not even justice for Meursault. He faces the judges of unquestionable principles who will never have any doubts about their worth. The judge, the prosecutor and even the lawyer have the same conventional aura, and together they plot and sentence this stranger who does not recognize these formalities and who according to the

perspective of the court lacks filial love, to death; he who has no reason to live, doesn't deserve to live. According to Sartre Emotions are central to life. Rather than being "irrational", our basic emotions of love, friendship, family fealty, joy, grief, and many others are the very wellsprings of meaning. The emotions play a central role in creating and maintaining our social self or identity. Therefore Meursault is guilty of both his indifference and living in a society that has no values to offer, where everybody bows insincerely to their pre-established customs and undesirable relations, while he defies. Unreflective to all the customs and rules, he fails to understand that he does have to cry when his mother dies, though dishonestly, and this provides the court too useful an asset to announce him guilty of the crime he felt nothing for. To make matters worse, he cannot even stand up against the jury for alleviating the extremity of his punishment, since he is both captured by his apathy and the fact that though it is all about him being penalized, he is never given the real opportunity to defend himself.

After his trial (in which he is sentenced to be executed), he no longer indulges in his memories or passes the time in the perky way he was accustomed to spend Sundays at home. At first, he dwells on thoughts of escape. He reconciles the contingency of his sentence (Why guilty? Why sentenced by a French court rather than a Chinese one? Why was the verdict read at eight pm rather than at five? etc.) with the emotionless certainty of the process that leads inevitably to his death (*The Stranger*, 137). He does also prove his consciousness to be still in effect. Proven guilty, Meursault condemns the jury and everybody else in court as being obsessive more about his apathy toward his mother's death rather than being charged with murder. He abhors and reproaches most of the dialogues to be centering upon him as being 'soulless and finally says "the futility of what was happening [back in the court] seemed to take me by the throat, I felt like vomiting, and I had only one idea: to get it over, to go back to my cell, and sleep", which alludes to him as possessive of emotions and consciousness that nonetheless operate as profoundly silenced.

When he gives up trying to find a way to escape, he finds his mind ever returning either to the fear that dawn would bring the guards who would lead him to be executed, or to the hope that his appeal will be granted. To try to distract himself from these thoughts, he forces himself to study the sky or to listen to the beating of his heart – but the changing light reminds him of the passing of time towards dawn, and he cannot imagine his heart ever stopping. In dwelling on the chance of an appeal, he is forced to consider the possibility of denial and thus of execution; therefore, he must face the fact of his death – whether it comes now or later. One he really, honestly admits death's inevitability, he allows himself to consider the chance of a successful appeal – of being set free to live perhaps forth more years before dying. Now he begins to see the value of each moment of the life *before* death. Because of death, nothing matters – except being alive. The meaning, value, significance of life is only seen in light of death, yet most people miss it through the denial of death. The hope of longer life brings Meursault great joy.

Perhaps to end the maddening uncertainty and thus intensify his awareness of death's inevitability, or, less likely, as a gesture of hopelessness, Meursault turns down his right to appeal (*The Stranger*, 144). Soon afterwards, the prison chaplain insists on talking to him. Meursault admits his fear but denies despair and has no interest in the chaplain's belief in an afterlife. He flies into rage, finally, at the chaplain's persistence, for he realizes that the chaplain has not adequately assessed the human condition (death being the end of life) – or, if he has, the chaplain's certainties have no meaning for Meursault and have not the real value. Meursault, on the other hand, is absolutely certain about his own life and forthcoming death. His rush of anger cleanses him and empties him of hope, thus allowing him finally to open up -- completely and for the last time -- to the "benign indifference of the universe" (*The Stranger*, 154) which is to say a world without inherent meaning, hence absurd and through it all he realizes that he has always been happy.

The idea of death makes one aware of one's life, one's vital being – that which is

impermanent and will one day end. When this vitality is appreciated, one feels free – for there is no urgency to perform some act that will cancel the possibility of death, seeing as though there is no such act. In this sense, all human activity is absurd, and the real freedom is to be aware of life and its actually, of its beauty and its pain.

Meursault can be defined as a fully conscious character who only has no reflective feelings upon various forged and hypocritical rules and customs of a society that in the moment of defiance, though lawfully, pushes anyone to the edge as a stranger, and he is figuratively exiled because of not playing the game of the others. He goes on to live like an unreflective mirror taking all the incidents of life in a heart that works unsympathetically and a mind that thinks unreflectively but he is finally caught in the hands of the law, which offers no sympathy and reflectivity like him.

Pure honesty is asserted to be his feature, and so all the disaster in his life do not seem to stem from society and hypocrisy, nor from extreme honesty. But it all comes from his deep sense of indifference and unreflective being that operate as a mirror that has deactivated all its features to reflect.

Meursault wholeheartedly advocates his indifferent outlook on life and he continues to remain an outsider by believing in the inevitability of death, which obliterate all the significance of other things. His outbursts relieve him and express his relief:

I woke up with stars shining on my face. Sounds of the countryside were wafting in. The night air was cooling my temples with the smell of earth and salt. The wondrous peace of the sleeping summer flooded into me...I felt ready to live my life again. As if this great outburst of anger had purged all my ills, killed all my hopes. I looked up at the mass of signs and stars in the night sky and laid myself open for the first time to the benign indifference of the world. And finding it so much like myself, in fact so fraternal, I realized that I'd been happy, and that I was still happy (116-117).

These statements show how Meursault is the perfect example of an absurd man, and he has come to terms with the absurdity of life and the nothingness of death and is ready to welcome both of them unquestioningly.

Albert Camus, as a writer, created an absurd protagonist in *The Stranger*, namely, Meursault. He is "a man who has lived a life of the senses in total simplicity and innocent enjoyment, but whom Society eventually roots out, humiliates, and crushes" (Masters, 19). The reason why society excludes Meursault is that he, from the beginning till the end of the novel, exemplifies the characteristics of an absurd man: He has an indifferent attitude towards life, he lives in the present time and he rebels against the established conventions and beliefs of society. Therefore, it can be concluded that Camus in *The Stranger* pictures the alienated condition of an absurd man, who, in full consciousness, accepts the senselessness of his condition and with dignity declares that "all is well"

### **Synopsis: *I Stand Alone by Berhanou Dinke***

Former Ethiopian Ambassador to the United States Berhanou Dinke examines his life in exile and his experience in the States after his open protest against the unjust rule of Emperor Haile Sellasie I in his "small book" *I Stand Alone*.

In the year 1965, the idea of protesting against the emperor came to Berhanou's mind. And after clearing the thin cloud of hesitation he decides to discuss his idea with the well known columnist and supposed friend Drew Pearson. Drew appears very supportive of the idea and even sympathetic to Berhanou's situation and promised to provide him with free living quarters on his farm. They agreed on the date when he wanted to publish his article about the resignation and protest.

Early in the morning of June 13, 1965, Berhanou receives a phone call from his other friend Miller that Drew Pearson was on the radio commenting on his resignation and the protest the night before and asked if it was true. Agonized from the betrayal Berhanou hurriedly gathers a few of his personal things and drives away from the embassy.

Three days after his flight from the embassy, Berhanou enters the office of Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs to explain his actions but nobody in the office shows sympathy to his cause, although they know perfectly well that his protest is justified. A few days after this Mr. Anthony Astrachan, a reporter from The Washington Post interviews him for two days and gives his word to Berhanou that he would write an objective report to American public.

A month after the interview, the article is released. To worsen Berhanou's misery the columnist presented none of the concrete reasons for his protest which he has given him and instead repeated the charge of venal disloyalty and personal depravity made against him by the Ethiopian Embassy.

Afterwards Berhanou moves to Grey Ledges seeking for solitude and tranquility for his mind to regain its strength. He stayed for forty five days writing political pamphlets and sending them to Ethiopia and attending Bible readings without receiving any support or promise of help. With his telephone being tapped and his relationship with other people affected by it, his stay in Grey Ledges was a time of complete isolation.

### **Berhanou Dinke the Authentic**

*The authentic person is a humanistic socialist who promotes the coming of democratic classless society.*

Jean Paul Sartre

Portrayals of authentic functioning date back to the Ancient Greek philosophers. Actually, the earliest account dates back to Socrates' stance that the "unexamined" life is not worth living. While self-inquiry is paramount to Socrates, in his work *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle emphasized the importance of actions. Aristotle viewed ethics in terms of people's pursuit of the "higher good." Specifically, he proposed that the highest good is activity of the soul in accordance with the best and most complete virtue in a complete life. Such pursuits are intimately tied with people's well-being. From this view, well-being is attained through self-realization, that is, by performing activities that reflect one's true calling. Such activities do not have happiness or pleasure as their desired end; instead, pleasure is a consequence of a life in which one

successfully manages to perform these activities well. The same theories of authentic existence are brought to life in, what Berhanou Dinke calls "compte rendu" of his experience, *I Stand Alone*.

The shadow of Existentialism and authenticity hovers over the whole novel, adding to it a specific ideological stance. One constantly averts one's eyes from the dilemmas of working values, and avoids definite engagements one way or the other. These conflicts come to the surface when an existential emergency calls for immediate action. The decision to be authentic or not is taken in the existential moment. In this moment of fundamental self-understanding one decides how to react to an experience and what to do. The issue of Freedom is one of the cornerstones of Existentialism. There was no authenticity in escaping the radical freedom and the radical responsibility of being human. Time and time again, Sartre proved how the renunciation of the emancipating project entails a renunciation of freedom, of being fully human.

Nothing can determine which goals we adopt, according to Sartre, and nothing can determine whether we continue to pursue a given goal or abandon it altogether except Freedom. In one of his letters addressed to the emperor Berhanou declares,

I do feel free in my conscience that at least I am trying to be honest with your Majesty and myself in pointing out that the salvation of our country lies in a higher standard of morality and freedom rather than in flattery and adulation. (*I Stand Alone*, 83)

The quest for authenticity becomes especially pronounced in extreme situations. In order to be authentic and true to the selves, one must throw off the repressions which are imposed upon him by the constraints of conventional morality and which one imposes upon himself; breaking free from the constraints of entrenched social and political orders. Berhanou as an Ambassador, whose mind is tormented with

oppressiveness of the system he is serving, could no more turn a blind eye to the people of his own who are the victims of the corrupt rules of the Emperor and articulated as follows.

Nearly half of the population has but one meal a day living almost entirely on dried beans roasted or boiled. They sleep on dirt floor, well accustomed to flea and lice. Many do not have cloth but may put a piece of animal skin about their loins for decency. The observer is astounded at their passive submission to such condition. (*I stand alone*, 43)

Berhanou sets about looking for himself when he feels he is actually experiencing the disintegration of himself and his own identity. The role of these existential predicaments explains the tendency of one to engage in self-questioning and self-analysis; to probe the innermost layers of one's turbulent life. Continuous self-examination helps one to see that, to use Sartre's words, one is not what one is, and one is what one is not.

I am speaking here of individuals and this is not of with sense of animadversion or condemnation. It is rather with a genuine spirit of self-examination and an honest desire to understand what is wrong with each of us as individuals. (*I stand alone*, 29)

Berhanou's personal solution to this conflict is therefore, to take a big step to first free himself by giving up his Ambassadorship; then to openly protest against the Emperor's long-established dictatorial rule and to become an exile in a foreign land.

Exile and captivity (which we usually shrink from facing at all in happier times) became for us habitual objects of our concern they must be considered as our lot itself as our destiny, the profound source of our reality as men. Thus the basic question of liberty was posed, we were brought to the deepest verge of knowledge that man can have of himself. The secret of man is

the limit of his own liberty, his capacity for resisting torture and death. (Sartre, 1947: 498)

According to Heidegger genuine existence is existence which dares truth: rising from dissipative and deceptive consolations of today's concerns to the inner realization that its own past must take shape and significance in relation to its inevitable last tomorrow. There is always a gap between the declared ideals and values of a system and its actual conduct. The question is how to respond to this unbridgeable gap between theory and practice? Several responses are possible. There is the response of the honest individual who, despite his awareness of this gap, contentedly conforms to the 'ought' of the prevalent ethics. Only an individual who possesses an abundance of positive power and firm authentic selfhood is able to grant similar rights and freedoms to all those whom he recognizes as his equals. He is not afraid that this might diminish or destroy his own authentic power. It is the self-affirmation of one's power and virtues that psychologically enables the affirmation of the other and *his* authenticity. Berhanou reads:

The main source of my discomfort was my own function as Ambassador.... The purpose for which the high level diplomatic relationship had been established and for which I was welcomed was very limited. (I Stand Alone, 37)

Authenticity reflects self understanding and self creation. Socrates equated self examination with the very value of person's existence and other philosophers, emphasis the importance of self understanding in organizing one's action. To create one's own self, one must first overcome one's sensual nature, then universal reason; only then can one become what one intrinsically is: the sole creator of one's self. For this the utmost passion, commitment and self-overcoming are needed. One must be deeply immersed in the search for authenticity.

To become existentially committed and to act decisively, Kierkegaard holds, one must feel passionately about the object of one's commitment. In pursuit of authenticity, determinism and extreme dedication is required and in such moment of self conviction. Berhanou bumps into ceased reservations:

One side of me was enheartening himself to go ahead with the new defiant idea that has long been building up in my mind. Though I had not always been aware of what was happening to me.... (*I Stand Alone*, 2-3)

"The basic idea of existentialism is that even in the most crushing situations, the most difficult circumstances, man is free. Man is never powerless except when he is persuaded that he is and the responsibility of man is immense because he becomes what he decides to be."(Sartre, 1948:188) To an almost unprecedented extent, Sartre embraced the ideal of man being a conscious creator of social relationships in charge of his own destiny, also responsible for the wellbeing of others. Sartre constructed his existentialism as "a humanist philosophy of action, of effort, of combat, of solidarity and so does Berhanou.

The warning signal from the hesitant side of me, consists of fear of the unknown future in a foreign land, fear of losing my property at home, fear of separation from relatives and friends, at last lost its intensity and was replaced by what I considered a noble and worthy dedication to the good of my country. (*I Stand Alone*, 3)

Authenticity denotes, among other things, a state of integrity between the innermost self and its external manifestations. And in such process Heidegger saw anxiety, which comes due to pervasive alienation, as necessary and inevitable accompaniment to acting authentically. Through a process of becoming oneself, individuals pass through the stage of self-alienation, and subsequently rely on their subjective faith to energize and

organize their chosen actions toward their absolute end/goal (their essential purpose). Berhanou, for he believes human nature has to be understood as a dynamic concept created through social relations and their alterations, faces the affliction of isolation from his colleagues and friends that he feared would happen to him. The moment has come when he was gnawed by loneliness.

I yearn intensely to talk with someone no matter about what subject. But with whom? Every one seem not only too busy, but to the depressed mood of my secluded mind, uninterested and indifferent to me. (*I Stand Alone*, 57)

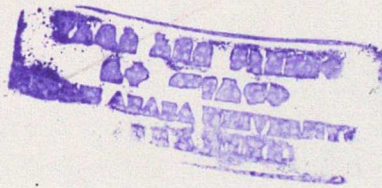
Nevertheless to be alienated is still a way of life for Berhanou, with its own logic, ends and goals. It allows him to gain new perspectives on friendship and shows the possibility of relying on the self and to "live by faith." The more conflict one can face without being destroyed by them the stronger the individual.

As an exile I cannot count my friends even up to ten. They are very few. This means that it is very rare to find friends who look on my troubles as their own. Until friendship reaches such degree, I could hardly call any casual human relationship though useful in its own way real friendship. (*I Stand Alone*, 60)

The person seeking authenticity in Sartre's view has to have *respect* for others. Sartre himself, apart from implicitly promoting this view in many of his works, openly posited in *Notebooks for an Ethics* that authentic inter-subjectivity is based on mutual *recognition*, on *embracing the freedom of the other* as mutually enriching. The requirement of mutual recognition and respect excludes dehumanization of the other as actions compatible with authenticity. Berhanou, in the letter he wrote to his Majesty Haile Sellassie I, he puts his opposition in a courteous as follows.

Let it be known to you and others that I am not hatemonger. There is no reason for me to be. What I did and is still doing is to try and help you to realize that what we in Ethiopia repeat aloud to praise your Majesty doesn't always truly agree with the whisper of our conscience. The fact that some of my countrymen continue with this pretence shouldn't be construed as contradictory evidence to the case of which I am plaintiff. (*I Stand Alone*, 60)

Taken as a whole, authentic functioning reflects a set of processes. The notion of authenticity reflecting a set of processes is essential to the perspectives discussed from Kierkegaard through Sartre. Collectively, the existential philosophy perspective couches authenticity as occurring when people freely choose to commit themselves to engage their activities with agency, in a process of self-authoring their way of being. In this respect, the existential view of authenticity is consistent with Berhanou's experience of exile.



## Conclusion

Throughout the previous chapter, the study has analyzed exclusive characters as outsiders because of the adverse effects of the realization of their existence. It has been disclosed how these outcast men who lived in the twentieth century, differ in their way of looking at and approaching their lives.

Meursault, a Frenchman, is alienated from everyone and everything in life because he is an absurd man; he can be defined as a self imposed uprooted character since he doesn't have friends and family and never cared to lose one. He willingly chooses to break away from others and rejects any contact with them. Meursault, as pointed out in the second chapter, has a mother that he institutionalizes for a trivial reason. As his bond to his mother is tenuous, he rarely visits her and receives the news of her death calmly. In addition, he does not mourn for her and continues to live as if nothing has happened.

Lack of commitment for things that other people would treasure is the second characteristic that the alienated protagonist demonstrates. Meursault does not feel committed towards achieving any goal since for the absurd mind life does not have any value and any meaning. Therefore, concepts such as advancement, progression and ambition seem to be insignificant for him. He reflects his absurd worldview when he is offered a promotion by his boss. Meursault nonchalantly rejects such a gratifying proposition because he believes that there is not any meaning in what he does and everything has the same value.

Moreover, his indetermination can be observed when Marie broaches the issue of marriage. Again, he says that he did not mind marrying her and he could marry her if she wants to. Obviously, life for him is meaningless and nothing has any significance. Consequently, he is a free man who chooses to lead a life that is consistent with his own interests and desires.

Meursault, whom this study has analyzed in depth, is also a rebel who resists authority, tradition and allegiance to any established beliefs, as an absurd man does not obey the conventions of society. His actual rebellion emerges when he confronts the attorney and later the priest. He thinks that his actions do not need any justification by a "transcendental" being. Hence, when the prosecutor shows him the crucifix and asks him whether he believes in God, he answers in the negative. All in all it is brought to light how the characteristics of the absurd man, living a life of indifference, living in the present moment and rebelling against the conventions of society, make Meursault a absurd and these reveals how this character rebels against Camus's belief that one must make life in this world meaningful.

On the other hand we find the genuine character Berhanou who has devoted himself and has given up on his entire career and life in search of authenticity. His commitments to the people he represents in the United States as a diplomat yield him to become a conformist: he reacts against the political doctrines and political ideology of the system he serves. Because of his discontentment with the autocratic rule, he rebels against the absolute power of the king in 1965. He expresses his disapproval by giving up on his ambassadorship and becoming an exile.

Although he had his own reservations his determination and commitment to bring out and follow the truth help him to suppress the hesitations that knocked on his mind's door. On the eve of his protest he has received betrayal from the people he trusted with his life and on being an exile in foreign land Berhanou faced rejection from his colleagues and the people who looked up to him while he was in position. On the whole, Berhanou, whose alienation stems from his political discontentment such as unjust and oppressive rules of the system he serves and represents as a diplomat, the extravagance and pretence of the Emperor while the countrymen dwell in poverty and other reasons that trigger the protest and his experience as an exile in foreign country, as he chose to be authentic, is analyzed.

Through analyzing the selected novels in relation to the concepts of Absurdism and Authenticity, the researcher arrives at the conclusion which illuminates on the routes of existence that one chooses for the life he/she is given. According to Sartre existence is a matter of choice and the deepest roots of our perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, therefore, are neither fixed facts about us due to our genetic inheritance or early childhood nor the mechanical effects of our material and social environment, but rather the goals that we choose to pursue and can choose to abandon.

Consequently, one either chooses to spend his/her brief existence on earth by being consumed by Absurdist thoughts which in Nigel's view advocate ideas such as: first our existence will not matter a long time from now that nothing we do will matter in a million years. Second, we are mortal and life is an "elaborate journey, leading nowhere", there is no point in the things we do. In both cases Absurdism endorses meaninglessness of life and irrationality of living.

Or one can embrace authentic life through first, being in touch with one's inner self, knowing one's self, having a sense of one's own identity and then living in accord with one's sense of one's self, Second, being attuned to one's own experiences rather than interpreting the world through institutionalized concepts and abstractions and third giving Meaning to the meaningless through experiencing love, through acting creatively, and through building up the courage to face suffering.

The choice is left for the individual to make.

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