

EMOTIONAL OBJECTIVITY in FRANZ KAFKA'Metamorphosis and ALBERT CAMUS'The Stranger

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Abstract

This present article explicates the need of Emotional subjectivity which is lacking in Modern and Post Modern Era. There are numerous individuals around us who have no empathy and love. This world is money oriented and hardly cares for anything it is just a market of artificial emotions where it is very much compulsory to show case your tears and emotions whether they are artificial or real this is not a matter of significance Here this is the story of Gregor Samsa and Meursault who were not only transformed rather it was society who also got transformed . It has no emotions, love, and consideration for the person who does not or could not produce or who does not show synthetic sentiments. My study, therefore, is to read Metamorphosis and The Stranger through the subjective lens into the objectivity of folks.

Keywords: Emotional remoteness, objectivity, Metamorphosis, The Stranger, Gregor Samsa, Meursault, Society.

Emotional aloofness is a decision to avoid engaging emotional connections, rather than an inability or difficulty in doing so, typically for personal, social, or other reasons. In this sense it can allow people to maintain boundaries, psychic integrity and avoid undesired impact by or upon others, related to emotional demands. As such it is a deliberate mental attitude which avoids engaging the emotions of others.

This detachment does not necessarily mean avoiding empathy; rather it allows the person space needed to rationally choose whether or not to be overwhelmed or manipulated by such feelings. Examples where this is used in a positive sense might include emotional boundary management, where a person avoids emotional levels of engagement related to people who are in some way emotionally overly demanding, such as difficult co-workers or relatives, or is adopted to aid the person in helping others such as a person who trains himself to ignore the "pleading" food requests of a dieting spouse, or indifference by parents towards a child's begging. Emotional detachment experienced with dissociation and depersonalization was given by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway*.

Same I have found Emotional Detachment in Franz Kafka' novella Metamorphosis and Camus' novel The Stranger. Characters alike Gregor and Meursault have presented the characters that are not valued when they stopped earning or does nothing significant for the society. Society hardly values for human beings. It values only for the money. One is valued as long as one is a breadwinner or giving money to the family.

Society doesn't worth for love, Obligation, Care, Emotions. It is just a market of artificial emotions where it is very much compulsory to show case your tears and emotions whether they are artificial or real this is not a matter of significance. It is full of charlatans. If character like meursault is not crying on the death of his mother, he is doubted as murderer, and Society then sees him with guilt eyes.

Money is the intact thing, else is nil. True love, Truth, Deep Feelings hardly exist, if exist and person is not able to display than you are not worth to live life in this world of hypocrites.

Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka holds its merit as one of the most profoundly original works of 20th century. Kafka' ability to combine magic with realism comes across from all points in his most famous novella.

Kafka' Metamorphosis tells the story of a travelling salesman named Gregor Samsa who wakes up one morning to find out that he has turned into an insect like creature for apparently no reasons. Now as far as awkward moments go, I would say that most would find it an unpleasant inconvenience and wake up to find oneself looking like one of those horror film insect monsters.

After questioning 'why' several times, Gregor avoids hysterics and accepts his condition. However Gregor refuses to let this become a burden to him or his family, most especially his younger sister who he cares a great deal about.

One of the main antagonist of this story is 'society' which is antagonist nowadays everyone who comes across Gregor' mysterious affliction completely ostracize him and his own family stops treating him like a human being. Yet Gregor still loves his family, so much that he hides in uncomfortable places and accepts his father' violence towards him to keep them from feeling shame. He is laughed at, beaten and shunned during the duration of this tale.

It is than revealed in multiple parts of the story that before Gregor' transformation, he was being used and bent so easily to his family' demands. The reason he had ever gone into his job was because of his love for his family and their need for financial support. He is a powerless hero in a sense, yet he demonstrates the quality of good man. Yet Gregor is so weak like the insect that he is easily pushed around and eventually crushed under the toe of society' boot.

The story is dark and obscure and in a sense depressing-however it is very unique and overpoweringly bizarre from the very beginning to the end. Kafka' writing style is always

having something hiding behind every sentence. ‘What does this ever mean? Why would this happen?’ Kafka has been known to never divulge the answer ‘why?’’S of his readers. Yet the theme illustrated by Gregor’ selfless love for his family is quite relatable. The selfish feelings of all humans, the powerlessness we feel when those we love hurt us, and oddities are reflected from society and the problems that emerge in the typical bourgeoisie, are all prevalent in the Metamorphosis. Franz Kafka is truly one of the strangest and most extraordinary story tellers in pioneering magical realism and find that this novel provides a gateway for stronger intellectual thinking. it really grows on you. It is simply a tragic example of how self sacrificing, morally good people are eaten, chewed up and spat out by society.

In conclusion, it is important to remember, that the title is misleading. Overall, it is not just Gregor that is metamorphosed, but also the father, mother, and sister because they are all equally transformed into different people through their responses to Gregor (Webster 350). It is with the complex story line and form of climax through denouncement from beginning to end of the novel that alienation is demonstrated in the workplace and at home on the physical, psychological, and emotional levels.

As Kafka suggests that societal values are destroyed. We work in jobs that we hate that twist and deform us so much that we eventually become unrecognizable even to the people we love. Family tries to love us for who we ARE, BUT IF WE DONT FIT WITHIN THEIR EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT WE SHOULD BE, they will eventually reject us. Some will reject us outright. We will be loved but only so long as we don’t become a burden on the people who love us; the limits of their love may be determined not by how deeply they feel for us, but by what they think others will say about them; people will do what others will expect them to do and their lies their limits.

Finally as Gbeaty has pointed out, Economics rule. Love, Obligation, even Family ties are nothing in comparison to Economics. W must survive and in order to survive, We must make or bring in money, that which interferes with economics and survival must be eliminated regardless of who and what that is.

Kafka’view of society is bleak. it is society where love is not rewarded where social laws dictate human behaviour and where ultimately financial consideration triumph all others. I have the same opinion.

Same I have seen in the stranger “ The Outsider”, L’Etranger’ by French author Albert Camus, The title character is Meursault- an indifferent French Algerian described as “a citizen of Franz domiciled in North Africa, a man of the Mediterranean, yet one who hardly partakes of the traditional Mediterranean culture.”

“Aujourd’hui, maman est morte.” – *Mother died today.*

“Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas.” – *Or maybe it was yesterday. I don’t know. (1)*

The novel opens with the arresting (lack of) reaction of the novel's first person narrator Meursault, a French-Algerian civil servant, to his mother's death. He then goes on to display a conspicuous lack of grief both at his mother's funeral as well as in the following days in which he instead chooses to continue idly enjoying his life. During this time he strikes up a friendship with a neighbour, an insalubrious character and known wife-beater called Raymond. Seeing no reason not to, Meursault agrees to holiday with Raymond but they quickly become embroiled in an altercation with some Arabs in which Raymond sustains a knife wound. With his by now customary detachment, Meursault placates an angry Raymond and takes his gun from him to avoid any future trouble. It is then, while walking calmly along the beach, that Meursault comes across one of the Arabs and in the taut confusion that follows Meursault fires the gun and kills the Arab.

Meursault then stands trial and, to his surprise, finds that the prosecuting lawyer brings up his lack of grief at his mother's funeral in order to smear his character and secure a conviction. Meursault is nonplussed by this but, against the advice of his own lawyer, declines to either display insincere grief for the benefit of the court or even plead self-defence. He is then sentenced to death and reflects on his life in the short interim before his execution. In the final chapter he agrees to a visit from the prison chaplain. An explosive encounter follows in which Meursault refuses to hand himself over to God, instead opening himself up to life's inherent meaninglessness, or as Camus writes: *la tendre indifférence du monde* (lit. "the tender indifference of the world") which perversely reconciles him to his upcoming execution.

Meursault learns of his mother's death. At her funeral, he expresses none of the expected emotions of grief. When asked if he wishes to view the body, he says no, and instead smokes and drinks coffee in front of the coffin. Rather than expressing his feelings, he comments to the reader only about the attendees at the funeral.

Meursault lives a quiet life of routine, content with his simple office job and uncomplicated way of living. He is a man without a past, without definable motivations; a blank canvas upon whom the reader is forced to project their own self, their own experiences, and identifies with intimately, provided they acknowledge their own inherent comradeship with him. But in a more perverse sense neither Meursault, nor we, have any history until we realise it in the face of our own mortality.

Meursault, arguably, has two defining characteristics. Significantly, he does not lie - adhering very strictly to his objective view of truth - and refusing to alleviate the discomfort this causes others by joining in the small lies that hold society together. This dogmatic honesty is not born from a firmly held moral position, rather it grows out of his indifference; as he reminds the reader constantly, he "doesn't mind". Indeed, this indifference is Meursault's second defining characteristic; he feels no grief for his dead mother, has no romantic or career aspirations, and makes no moral judgement of others. He simply is, and is content with

that.

In maintaining the highest levels of honesty, Meursault embodies many of the ideals that society is so keen to promote but, just as Kierkegaard exploded the aesthetic sphere of existence from within, Camus demonstrates the impossibility of living a life of principled sincerity, of honesty without compromise. Meursault is shunned by society for upholding their ideals to an extent that they themselves cannot; there is complete congruence between his emotions, thoughts, and acts, which is unpalatable to those who fall short of these standards. When faced with the realisation of their idealised morality they cannot abide it, and persecute Meursault for the sake of their hypocritical, delusional society as much as for his crimes. Meursault is “a menace-threat to society” only in so much as he undermines society, and it is for this reason that he must be put to death.

Meursault’s behaviour and ethos are entirely in line with the ideals of Kant’s Categorical Imperative, and yet the result is a mechanical, sub-human existence. As the novel progresses Meursault begins to see the hypocrisy of those moral arbiters of society, who are charged with upholding the ideals of such an ethos, and balks at the hollowness of their rhetoric. As he waits for death in prison, Meursault turns inwards for morality and develops an informed pathos, not about his own death, but about the absurdity of the life that surrounds him.

Meursault himself is often considered ‘The Outsider’, and yet in many ways the novel’s title is ironic; Meursault’s realisation of the absurdity of life gives him a divine knowledge of the world, and it is those who desperately cling to messianic ideologies and religious doctrines, for whom the world is but a transitory stepping stone on the road to eternity, that are the true outsiders. Meursault’s belief that earthly life is one’s only life makes death the ultimate act of nihilism, and with this knowledge Meursault achieves a level of authenticity at the novel’s conclusion that is beyond the grasp of those who subscribe to the framework of morality set out by religion and society.

As an embodiment of humanity Meursault is paradoxically both impenetrably complex and risibly simplistic. There is an interesting interplay between the reader, narrator, and third-person characters, who all perceive Meursault’s character differently. Whilst the reader may view Meursault as emotionally-stunted, there is little evidence that the other characters view him in this way, in fact they treat him as a fully-rounded human being, whose company and companionship is to be sought.

However, whilst some characters form relationships with him, they are all one-sided, with Meursault indifferent to their friendship. Marie and Raymond - his closest companions within the novel - take advantage of Meursault’s passivity, ignoring responses they do not like and taking his lack of forceful disagreement as assent. They assume a bond, which Meursault himself does not feel. Indeed, Meursault allows others to define his reactions and shape an

identity for him, which proves increasingly tragic as the novel progresses. Having a more objective viewpoint and is struck by Meursault's lack of emotion, and his distance from Marie and Raymond, as well as from themselves. Indeed, Meursault does not endear himself to the reader as one might expect a protagonist in a first-person narrative, and instead the reader feels as disengaged from Meursault as he does from the world. Where Marie and Raymond fail to see it, the reader recognises the void in Meursault's life, and identifies him as 'the stranger'.

Meursault's unusual approach to human interaction has led some commentators to suggest he is of low-intelligence or mentally deficient in some manner. However, one need only look at the comparisons between Camus's own life and that of his narrator's to dispel this idea. Like Camus's, Meursault's father died before he was old enough to remember him and, like Camus, Meursault attended college. Characters often comment on Meursault's intelligence, and Raymond engages him to compose a letter of great emotional importance. Therefore one can conclude that Meursault is not lacking in intelligence, his autistic manner is as a consequence of his strict adherence to objective honesty not, as some critics have suggested, as a result of ignorance.

However, it is true to say that there is nothing extraordinary about Meursault - he is an everyman - a cipher for our own existence, worthy of contemplation only for his unnerving adherence to objective truth. He has no aspirations, other than to be allowed to continue life as he has chosen to live it; he rejects his employer's offer of promotion, and is apathetic to Marie's proposal of marriage. Meursault is not disengaged, he is simply not committed to life in the way others are; he exists, and that, for Meursault, is enough.

This moment in particular is an example of his detached, passive, and psychotic nature. He offers to kill so nonchalantly that it shows no moral stance whatsoever. He's so mentally detached that the thought of murder poses no great emotion or even feared remorse.

When the sun blinds Meursault in a fateful moment, circumstances and conditions overcome his autonomy, and he is found guilty of everything in his life: his personality, his habits, his tolerance, his indifference, his daily life, as well as his crime. Camus extrapolates: nothing guides us, we are on our own, we can trust nothing and no one, and we are guilty of everything because we persist in refusing the evidence of the Absurd and contrive hierarchies and reverse circles of power, ruthlessness, and indifference. As Camus has put it in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "What is absurd is the confrontation between the sense of the irrational and the overwhelming desire for clarity which resounds in the depths of men."

This strangeness, this feeling of alienation, this uneasiness with the way the world works so inexorably, is prompted by the banality of our circumscribed and irrational world, the

personal solitude we experience, the dependence we have on the hypocrisy around us. Camus defines the Absurd as the: confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart.

So in Camus's formulation, existence itself is not absurd. Existence is simply, as Camus writes, *not reasonable*. The Absurd actually arises as the interaction between existence in its meaninglessness and the desire for the human mind to find meaning in it. The rest of *The Myth of Sisyphus* deals with how a life lived in regard to the Absurd would look.

Meursault insists throughout the story that various events or feelings "don't matter." He is fond of saying "It doesn't mean anything." Meursault's epiphany at the end of the book is revealing: "Then, in the dark hour before dawn, sirens blasted. They were announcing departures for a world that now and forever meant nothing to me. .. I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world."

Society nonetheless attempts to fabricate or impose rational explanations for Meursault's irrational actions. The idea that things sometimes happen for no reason, and that events sometimes have no meaning is disruptive and threatening to society. The trial sequence in Part Two of the novel represents society's attempt to manufacture rational order. The prosecutor and Meursault's lawyer both offer explanations for Meursault's crime that are based on logic, reason, and the concept of cause and effect. Yet these explanations have no basis in fact and serve only as attempts to defuse the frightening idea that the universe is irrational. The entire trial is therefore an example of absurdity—an instance of humankind's futile attempt to impose rationality on an irrational universe.

The last line -- "I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate" (123) – underscores the freedom Meursault found in death. By suffering final judgment from the world, he realizes that he is no longer bound to conform to their standards. He can finally exist in his own realm and behave not the way he should "hope" to attain, but simply the way he wanted to. Indeed, with his execution he doesn't have to stay up all night waiting for the "dawn" when the world will come in and take him because he now understands that they can only free him: no one has "the right" to steal his life. Thus the "cries of hate" would be proof that he did not exist in the world's acceptance, but rather in a world of his own creation.

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