

Rethinking the Absurd Hero: A Psychoanalytic Study of *The Stranger* by Albert Camus

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts a psychoanalytic enquiry of the prevalent absurdist reading of *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. Rather than treating Meursault's indifference as existential clarity, it considers whether it may function as a form of ego defense. The study examines Meursault's sensory-based narration and opacity of emotions which suggest detachment to protect the self from vulnerability. His indifference to his mother's death, love, morality, and finally his own execution is examined as strategies that preserve ego coherence in the face of threat. Drawing on Søren Kierkegaard's concept of despair as a misrelation within the self, his clarity is formed in negation and not in attunement to the self. In the end, Meursault's acceptance of cosmic indifference serves as a cognitive reframing, rather than a resolution of his need for

meaning. Therefore, this paper challenges existing existential readings and reasserts that meaning-making and narrative coherence play a structural role in the psyche's well-being.

Keywords: Meursault, Defense mechanism. Absurdism, Detachment, Ego coherence.
