

PART II: CHAPTER 1

Immediately after my arrest I was questioned several times. But it was only a matter of finding out who I was, which didn't take long. The first time, at the police station, nobody seemed interested in my case. A week later though, the examining magistrate eyed me with curiosity. But to start with he simply asked me my name and address, my occupation and my date and place of birth. Then he wanted to know if I'd chosen a lawyer. I confessed that I hadn't and inquired as to whether it was absolutely necessary to have one. 'Why do you ask?' he said. I replied that I thought my case was very simple. He smiled and said, 'That's your opinion. But this is the law. If you don't choose a lawyer yourself, we'll appoint one for you automatically.' I thought it most convenient that the legal system should take care of such details. I told him so. He agreed and said it showed how well the law worked.

At first I didn't take him seriously. I was shown into a curtained room, there was just one lamp on his desk which was shining on the chair where he made me sit while he himself remained in the shadow. I'd read similar descriptions in books before and it all seemed like a game. After our conversation though, I looked at him and saw a tall, fine-featured man with deep-set blue eyes, a long grey moustache and a mass of almost white hair. I found him very pleasant, in spite of a few nervous twitches he had about the mouth. On my way out I was even going to shake his hand, but I remembered just in time that I'd killed a man.

The next day a lawyer came to see me at the prison. He was short and stout, quite young with his hair carefully greased back. In spite of the heat (I was in my shirt sleeves), he was wearing a dark suit, a wing collar and a peculiar tie with broad black and white stripes. He put the briefcase which he had under his arm down on my bed, introduced himself and told me that he'd studied my file. My case was tricky, but he was confident of success, provided I had faith in him. I thanked him and he said, 'Let's get straight on with it.'

He sat down on the bed and explained that some investigations had been made into my private life. It had been discovered that my mother had died recently in a home. Enquiries had then been made at Marengo and the magistrates had learned that I'd 'displayed a lack of emotion' on the day of mother's funeral. 'You will understand,' my lawyer said, 'that I feel rather embarrassed at having to ask you this. But it matters a great deal. And the prosecution will have a strong case if I can't find anything to reply.' He wanted me to help him. He asked me if I'd felt grief on that day. This question really surprised me and I thought how embarrassed I'd have been if I'd had to ask. I replied though that I'd rather got out of the habit of analysing myself and that I found it difficult to answer the question. I probably loved mother quite a lot, but that didn't mean anything. To a certain extent all normal people wished their loved ones dead. Here the lawyer interrupted me, looking flustered. He made me promise not to say that at the hearing, or in front of the examining magistrate. But I explained to him that by nature my physical needs often distorted my feelings. On the day of mother's funeral I was very tired and sleepy. So I wasn't

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Why?

Commented [2]:
explain

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comment

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was it really? In what sense?

Commented [5]:
Why is this relevant?

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This is an important point in the case.

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What does 'normal' imply?

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Cite other examples from the text.

fully aware of what was going on. The only thing I could say for certain was that I'd rather mother hadn't died. But my lawyer didn't seem pleased. He said, 'That's not enough.'

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Why? Refer to chapter 1 of pt 1

He thought for a moment. Then he asked me if he could say that I'd controlled my natural feelings that day. I said, 'No, because it's not true.' He looked at me in a peculiar way, as if found me slightly disgusting. He told me almost spitefully that whatever happened the warden and staff of the home would be called as witnesses and that this 'could make things very unpleasant for me.' I pointed out to him that none of this had anything to do with my case, but he merely replied that I had obviously never had anything to do with the law.

He left looking angry. I'd have liked to have kept him back and explained to him that I wanted to be friends with him, not so that he'd defend me better, but, so to speak, in a natural way. The main thing was, I could tell that I made him feel uncomfortable. He didn't understand me and he rather held it against me. I wanted to assure him that I was just like everyone else, exactly like everyone else. But it was all really a bit pointless and I couldn't be bothered.

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Why?

Commented [11]:
Is he? How?

Soon after that, I was taken to see the examining magistrate again. It was two o'clock in the afternoon and this time there was only a net curtain to soften the light which was flooding into his office. It was very hot. He made me sit down and very politely informed me that, 'due to unforeseen circumstances', my lawyer had been unable to come. But I was entitled not to answer his questions and to wait until my lawyer could assist me. I said I could answer for myself. He pressed a button on the table. A young clerk and sat down right behind me.

We both sat back in our chairs. The examination began. He told me first of all that people described being taciturn and withdrawn and he wanted to know that I thought of that. I answered, 'It's just that I never have much to say. So I keeo quiet.' He smiled as before, remarked that that was the best reason and added, 'Anyway, it doesn't matter at all.' He stopped talking and looked at me, then sat up rather suddenly and said very quickly, 'What interests me is you.' I didn't quite understand what he meant by that and I didn't say anything. 'There are certain things,' he added, 'that puzzle me in what you did. I'm sure you'll help me to understand them.' I told him that it was all very simple. He urged me to go over the day again. I went over what I'd already told him about: Raymond, the beach, the swim, the fight, the beach again, the little spring, the sun and the five shots. After each sentence, he'd say, 'Fine, fine.' When I came to the outstretched body, he nodded and said, 'Good.' But I was tired of repeating the same story over and over again and I felt as if I'd never talked so much in all my life.

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Why?

Commented [13]:
Why did he have to repeat the story?

After a short silence, he stood up and told me that he wanted to help me. I interested him and that with God's help he would do something for me. But first, he wanted to ask me a few more questions. In the same breath, he asked me if I loved mother. I said, 'Yes, like everyone else,' and the clerk, who until now had been tapping away regularly at his typewriter, must have hit the wrong key, because he got in a muddle

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Refer to the earlier comment on being normal

and had to go back. Still without any apparent logic, the magistrate then asked me if I'd fired all five shots at once. I thought it over and specified that I'd only fired once to start with and then, a few seconds later, the other four shots. 'Why did you pause between the first and the second shot?' he said. Once again I saw the red beach in front of me and felt the burning sun on my forehead. But this time I didn't answer. Throughout the silence which followed, the magistrate looked flustered. He sat down, ran his fingers through his hair, put his elbows on his desk and leaned slightly towards me with a strange expression in his face. 'Why, why did you fire at a dead body?' Once again I didn't know what to answer. The magistrate wiped his hands across his forehead and repeated his question in a slightly broken voice, 'Why? You must tell me. Why?' I still didn't say anything.

Suddenly he stood up, strode to a far corner of his office and opened a drawer in a filing cabinet. He took out a silver crucifix and came back towards me brandishing it. And in an altogether different, almost trembling voice, he exclaimed, 'Do you know who this is?' I said, 'Yes, naturally.' 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. He was leaning right across the table, waving his crucifix almost directly over me. To tell the truth I hadn't followed his argument at all well, firstly because I was hot and his office was full of huge flies which kept landing on my face, and also because he frightened me a bit. I realized at the same time that this was ridiculous because after all, I was the criminal. But he carried on. I vaguely understood that as far as he was concerned there was only one part of my confession that didn't make sense, the fact that I'd paused before firing my second shot. The rest was all right, but this he just couldn't understand.

I was about to tell him that he was wrong to insist on this last point: it didn't really matter that much. But he interrupted me and pleased with me one last time, drawing himself up to his full height and asking me if I believed in God. I said no. 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 he 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. But across the table, he was already thrusting the crucifix under my nose and exclaiming quite unreasonably, 'I am a Christian. I ask Him to forgive your sins. How can you not believe that He suffered for your sake?' I noticed that he was calling me by first name, but I'd had enough. It was getting hotter and hotter. As I always do when I want to get rid of someone I'm not really listening to, I gave the impression that I was agreeing with him. To my surprise he was exultant. 'You see, you see,' he was saying, 'You do believe and you will put your trust in Him, won't you?' I obviously said no again. He sank back into his chair.

He looked very tired. For a moment he said nothing while the typewriter, which had followed the entire conversation caught up with the last few sentences. Then he

Commented [15]:
Symbol of suffering, symbol of religion

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Note the intensity of his action

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Note the elements of satire here: exaggeration and humour

Commented [18]:
Why not?

Commented [19]:
Imposition?

looked at me intently and rather sadly. He murmured, 'I have never seen a soul as hardened as yours. The criminals who have come to me before have always wept at the sight of this symbol of suffering.' I was about to reply that that was precisely because they were criminals. But I realized that I was like them too. It was an idea I just couldn't get used to. Then the magistrate stood up, as if to indicate that the examination was over. Only he asked me in the same weary manner whether I regretted what I'd done. I thought it over and said that, rather than true regret, I felt a kind of annoyance. I had the impression that he didn't understand me. But on that occasion that was as far as things went.

From then on I often went to see the examining magistrate. Only I was accompanied by my lawyer every time. I would simply be asked to clarify certain details of my previous statements. Or else the magistrate would discuss the charges with my lawyer. But actually they never took any notice of me on these occasions. Anyway, the tone of the examinations gradually changed. It had somehow classified my case. He didn't talk to me about God any more and I never saw him again in such a frenzy as on that first day. The result was that our discussions became more friendly. A few questions, a short conversation with my lawyer and the examinations would be over. My case was taking its course, to use the magistrate's own phrase. And sometimes, when the conversation was of a general nature, I would be included too. I began to breathe again. No one was unkind to me on these occasions. Everything was so natural, so well organized and so calmly acted out that I had the ridiculous impression of 'being one of the family'. And by the end of the eleven months which this investigation lasted, I must say I was almost surprised that I'd ever enjoyed anything other than those rare moments when the magistrate would escort me to the door of his study, slap me on the shoulder and say in a friendly tone, 'That's all for today, Mr Antichrist.' I would then be put back in the hands of the police.

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Was he an outsider in his own case?

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Meaning?

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<https://litcharacterscanhelp.wikispaces.com/The+Stranger>

Archetype

Meursault, the indifferent protagonist in *The Stranger*, is an excellent example of the anti-hero archetype. It is evident throughout the novel that he rejects values, rules, and attitudes of society and political establishments. His deviation from society is unmistakable from the beginning of the novel; he does not shed a single tear for the death of his mother. In fact, he believes the funeral to be more of a burden than a time of grieving. His disregard for the values of society is also evident in the people that he befriends. Raymond, an alleged pimp, explains to Meursault that he beats his mistress; yet, Meursault finds nothing immoral about it and is completely indifferent to this deviation from social norms. He also does nothing to stop his neighbor, who regularly beats his dog to the point where the dog whimpers and cries. Meursault finds nothing wrong with actions that many would find immoral, or against the values of society.

Another trait that qualifies Meursault as an anti-hero is that he has no status in society. Although he does have a steady job and seems to be content most of the time, he doesn't exhibit any signs of ambition to make a name for himself. In fact, when his boss offers him a promotion to Paris, he declines and asserts that "one life is as good as another and that [he] wasn't dissatisfied at all" (30). He doesn't attempt to make a better life for himself because of his complete indifference to the world. Meursault is perpetually content with the life that he lives.

Meursault is also deprived of the rules and consequences of society. The most apparent evidence for this claim comes from the murder of the Arab. Without a second thought, Meursault described that "the trigger gave" (59). The idea that he would be arrested and that other consequences would ensue never crossed his mind. He was simply upset that the situation had "shattered the harmony of the day, the exceptional silence of a beach" (62). Though investigators and authorities attempt to discover Meursault's motives for killing the Arab, no questions were resolved. Furthermore, nothing in his previous narrative presented Meursault as a man that would intentionally murder another. Yet, his complete disregard of emotions and of the world provides insight to why he did it. Meursault is simply indifferent to society as a whole and the rules and consequences it embodies.

The last qualification for an anti-hero that Meursault exhibits is his quest for self-realization. While he awaits his death in his prison cell, Meursault transforms into a man who can completely accept his inevitable death. He accepts that the universe is just as indifferent to human affairs as he is. He realizes that the world has no rational or meaning. His indifference throughout the