ALBERT CAMUS: THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS WITHOUT HOPE

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WITHOUT HOPE

Albert Camus, one of the most influential novelists of the twentieth century, spent his literary career in search of happiness for man. He sees man living in a state of absurdity. If there is a God, he is irrelevant to man, for he allows man to exist in a world of unexplained suffering, evil, and death. For Camus the only meaning the world can have lies within man himself, and this meaning results from man's struggle, from his revolt against absurdity. In the wreck of time, neither grace nor history suffices for man. His only hope is in his own rebellion. This world, as Camus suggests in the title of his last book of short stories, The Exile and the Kingdom, (L'Exile et LeRoyaume) is man's place of exile, and yet it is the only kingdom he knows. For Camus this is the central challenge: "Is it possible to find a rule of conduct outside the realm of religion and its absolute conduct?"

Camus places his faith in man's search as his only happiness.

In his Preface to the 1958 edition of The Wrong Side and the Right Side (L'Envers et L'Endoit), Camus states that "...a man's work is nothing but this slow trek to re-discover, through the detours of art, those two or three great and simple images in whose presence his heart first opened." Before beginning to follow Camus' "trek," it is necessary to ascertain some of the sources behind his youthful awareness.
Young Camus was first led to an awareness of absurdity through his pagan heritage in tension with the heritage of his generation and with the awareness of death he gained from his early encounter with tuberculosis.

Because he was born a poor French-Algerian he seemed to have for the most part escaped the European preoccupation with the Judeo-Christian-European heritage. This void was filled for Camus by constant exposure to the gorgeous sun and sea of Algiers.

For Camus, born in Algiers, the authentic realities were, first of all, almond trees in bloom, swimming in the sea, the softness of summer evenings. His first gods were given him along with the beauty of the world; offering himself to the sun of contemplating the night radiant with stars sufficed to convince him that the world was replete.

His writings reflect this awareness of his "invincible summer" -- his joy at being a part of the physical world.

Camus' Algerian heritage also included the "naive atheism" which he attributed to his countrymen and which he, to some degree, shared. For the North Africans whom Camus considered truly innocent, the present is the only prerequisite to happiness:

These people, wholly engaged in the present, live with neither myths nor consolation. Investing all their assets on this earth, they are left defenseless against death.

Although Camus was set apart from these people by his intelligence and education, he retained, at least in many of his writings, this fundamental attitude towards living for present happiness with no expectations of future consolation or hope.

Camus' Mediterranean heritage went deeper than simple pagan joy. From the ancient Greeks he gained admiration for the virtues of stoicism
and aestheticism as well as an awareness of an on-going tension between two extremes (which Camus believes brings moderation.) The tension is between l'envers et l'endoit, between the wrong side and the right side, between yes and no, between creation and destruction, between the joy of living and the fear of death.  

This balance was sustained by Camus's war experience -- the l'endoit of joy for life tempered by the l'envers that was experienced by all those of his generation. Born in 1913, he never really knew the father who was killed in combat in World War I. As he passed through deep depression and a second world war. He and his generation witnessed the failure of transcendentalism with the end of romanticism, the breakdown of old myths and religious systems, and the failure of practical Marxism. But also because of the failure of their fathers to prevent war and the rise of tyranny in Europe, humanism too failed. Nietszche's death of God was a reality for Camus. So Camus and other twentieth century Europeans found themselves living in a world of ruins -- the wreck of history and of eternal hope. For Camus, there was truth in Malraux's assertion in Le Tentation de l'Occident. "At the center of European man, dominating the great moments of his life, there lies a central absurdity." 

The "trek" which Camus talks of and which John Cruickshank calls his intellectual odyssey from l'absurde through revolt and beyond nihilism begins in The Wrong Side and The Right Side (L'Envers et L'Endoit), a group of essays that was Camus' earliest published work. What almost seems a revelation to Camus is the awareness of the duality
of life, the tension between the joy of living and the fear and knowledge of ultimate death. The great truth for Camus seems to be that "there is no love of life without despair of life."\(^9\)

This dualism is repeatedly expressed throughout the essays. In "Irony," the young vital man observes the emptiness, idleness, loneliness, and hopelessness of the old, and yet he realizes, "Death for all of us, but his own death to each. After all, the sun still warms our bones for us."\(^10\) There is joy in living, in being warmed by the sun, despite the knowledge of an ultimately lonely death. He continues in "Between Yes and No" by pointing out that happiness is being able to remain at that perilous moment between yes and no: affirmation versus rejection, lucidity versus indifference.

In "Death of the Soul" he reaches that moment between yes and no -- the "extreme point of acute awareness" where his "life seemed a solid block to be accepted or rejected."\(^11\) This death of the soul which Camus comes close to experiencing in Prague means giving oneself completely over to alienation and despair. But in Italy, Camus writes:

\[\text{I needed a grandeur. I found it in the confrontation between my deep despair and the secret indifference of one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. I drew from it the strength to be at one and the same time both courageous and aware.}\]^12

In contrast with the death of the soul is love of life -- the affirmation which allows the world to continue and which makes man's life bearable. Camus defines this love as "a silent passion for what would perhaps escape me, a bitterness beneath the flame."\(^13\) For him life is a two-sided coin: happiness, joy, love of life would not exist without the other side -- despair, and fear of death. In his final essay,
then, the young Camus concludes that, "I do not want to choose between the right and wrong sides of the world. . . ."\(^1\) He wants to live in constant awareness of both sides of life, to look both life and death squarely in the face.

In *Nuptials* (*Noces*), Camus journeys beyond his first awareness of *l'envers et l'endroit*. He describes a communion with nature in which man realizes that "the world is beautiful and outside there is no salvation."\(^1\) He learns to "consent to the earth and be consumed in its dark celebration."\(^1\) Camus' formula for happiness becomes a joining of love and revolt by partaking in nuptials with the earth.

He has formed an attitude; he has discovered the state of revolt that he feels is the only response to the indifferent though beautiful universe and to the final absurdity of death.

However, in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (*Le Mythe de Sisyphe*), Camus formally defines the absurdity and revolt about which he has lyricized in his first two collections of essays. By first establishing the absurd, he turns it into a basis for positive action and thus finds an alternative to suicide.\(^1\)

In the absurd situation, man is divorced from life. His universe is "suddenly divested of illusions and lights" and he realizes that he is a stranger exiled in this world.\(^1\) Man's divorce is the discrepancy between "human need and the unreasonable silence of the world." R. W. B. Lewis describes Camus's connotation of an absurd universe as one which is "tone deaf."\(^1\) Man longs for unity, for clarity, for a world which he can understand and which makes sense.
Instead he is confronted with indifference, irrationality, unexplained evil, and certain death.\textsuperscript{20} Man, Camus points out, may tread through life unconscious of the conflict, caught in pointless routine, but the absurd is discovered only through confrontation. It exists neither in the man nor in the world, but in the act of their divorce. His central interest, however, in presenting the absurd is not the absurd discovery itself, but its consequences:

If one is assured of these facts, how far is one to go to elude nothing? Is one to die voluntarily or to hope in spite of everything?\textsuperscript{21}

Camus opts for neither of the above alternatives. As a conclusion to his absurd logic he states that man's awareness of this divorce must be perpetually maintained; the struggle which is the reaction to absurdity implies

\begin{quote}
... a total absence of hope (which has nothing to do with despair,) a continual rejection (which must not be confused with renunciation,) and a conscious dissatisfaction (which must not be compared to immature unrest.)\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

He rejects any form of escape from the absurd situation, any "leap" from the absurd. Existentialism for Camus is merely "philosophical suicide," for the existentialist simply says absurd and then God.\textsuperscript{23} Physical suicide,

\begin{quote}
like the leap is acceptance at its extreme... In its way suicide settles the absurd. It engulfs the absurd in the same death. But I know that in order to keep alive, the absurd cannot be settled. It escapes suicide to the extent that it is simultaneously awareness and rejection of death... The contrary of suicide, in fact, is the man condemned to death.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

The man condemned to death is able to remain between yes and no. He is able to "remain on that dizzying crest" that is the recognition of the absurd that comes before the leap.\textsuperscript{25}
The absurd man, who is the man who knows he is condemned to death, adopts revolt as the only means of preserving the absurd and of giving life value. Hence, the negation inherent in the state of l'absurde becomes a basis for positive action. The absurd, while robbing man of eternal freedom makes man free, "available" for the present. The absurd man can decide to accept a universe where "nothing is possible and everything is given," and live a life of true happiness, a life without consolation, hope, or failure.

In the final essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus," Camus provides the image of Sisyphus to symbolize the struggle and the salvation of the absurd man. Sisyphus, the man condemned by the gods eternally to push a rock up a hill only to have it fall to the bottom again, lives without hope. He knows his task is absurd, futile, but yet he experiences happiness. He is happy because he has "his struggle towards the heights." "His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing." Although Camus negates all hope, all future, although he is aware of his condemnation to living with a futile burden that will only end scandalously in his death, he affirms the value of life.

To illustrate his absurdist philosophy, Camus used his art. The Stranger (L'Etranger) and Caligula both deal with the implications of the absurd. In Caligula, Camus interprets the life of the Roman emperor, Caligula. This absurd conqueror recognizes the absurd, yet yields to nihilism and completely destroys himself. He sees that "men die; and they are not happy," and he yearns for the moon, the impossible. So since he cannot have the moon, then everything else is on equal footing.
The problem in Caligula is the problem of absolute freedom. Given the absurd, can any act be wrong; is man absolutely free? As his assassins Cherea and Scipio sense, man's freedom must not be destructive; it must be limited so that it does not impinge on or destroy human values.

The three major characters of Caligula, Caligula, Cherea, and Scipio, represent three different responses to the absurd -- to a world where there is no hope. Caligula's response is the logic of nihilism:

I live, I kill, I exercise the rapturous power of a destroyer, compared with which the power of the creator is merest child's play, and this, this is happiness; this and nothing else -- this intolerable release, devastating scorn, blood, hatred all around me; the glorious isolation of a man who all his life long nurses and gloats over the ineffable joy of the unpunished murderer; the ruthless logic that crushes out human lives, that's crushing out yours Caesonia, so as to perfect at last the utter loneliness that is my heart's desire.

Caligula's lust for destruction is never sated; his only consolation is scorn; his only poetry is that of death and destruction. Cherea, like Caligula, lives without hope. He understands what motivates his Emperor, but rejects it. He says of Caligula, "One cannot like an aspect of oneself which one always tries to keep concealed." (Caligula, p. 50).

He recognizes the impulse towards nihilism buried in himself, but his rejects Caligula's logic,

Because what I want is to live, and to be happy.
Neither, to my mind, is possible if one pushes the absurd to its logical consequences.

He finally destroys Caligula not because of the killing and destruction directly, but because Caligula,

... sets no limit to his use of it, absolute power, and counts mankind and the world we know, for nothing. But what's intolerable is to see one's life being drained of meaning, to be told there's no reason for existing. A man can't live without some reason for living.
Although Cherea sees and agrees with Caligula's assumptions about the absurdity of life, he chooses to oppose carrying the absurd logic to its limits when he feels it invalidates human existence. Unlike Caligula, he believes in the value of life.

Scipio, like the others, has been confronted by the absurd through the senselessness of death. But he chooses to affirm life, to worship the world which annihilates him. Scipio's poem upon death for Caligula illustrates his attitude:

Pursuit of happiness that purifies the heart,  
Skies rippling with light,  
O wild, sweet festal joys, frenzy without hope!  

Although he loves Caligula, and feels the bond which the awareness of absurdity gives them, he too rejects nihilism and kills Caligula.

In Caligula, Camus rejects the temptation to nihilism. If the rebel's freedom is destructive to the human life force and the desire for happiness, it denies the values for which a man revolts in the first place. Even though there is no hope, even though death will wipe man out, even though the universe is absurd, the rebel cannot be free to disavow his rebellion.

The hero of Camus's The Stranger is another type of absurd man. Meursault, the hero-of-sorts of The Stranger, is a very ordinary man. But as Camus says in Sisyphus, "A sub-clerk in the post office is the equal of a conqueror if consciousness is common them." At the beginning of the novel Meursault is a sort of sensual vegetable -- breathing, working, sitting with his mother's dead body, going to a comedy movie the next day, swimming, copulating mindlessly. He is only aware of comfort or discomfort, pleasure or pain on a sensual
level. All experiences are more or less the same, with no real ethical differentiation. His life has no meaning or coherence. As Cruickshank points out, "Camus is at pains to show the incoherence of experience," which is symptomatic of the absurd situation. He kills an Arab with whom he has been fighting on the beach, not intentionally, but in a moment of irrationality caused by the noonday sun.

Meursault is tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death for his crime -- not because he shot an Arab, but because he refuses to show remorse, to repent before a God he does not believe in. He is convicted not so much for murdering as for not crying at his mother's funeral, for beginning a love affair the day after she died, and for consorting with pimps and prostitutes. He is a stranger, tried and convicted of murder because he is, as Camus says in his 1956 Preface to The Stranger, too innocent to lie the lies and play the part that bourgeois morality expects from him. Germaine Brée has commented: "He is a stranger to society because he refuses to make any concession whatsoever to its codes or rituals." But it is as a man condemned to death that Meursault becomes aware of the absurdity and the hopelessness of life and of death. His life takes on new meaning each night that he passes without being taken to the guillotine, for he knows that he has "another twenty-four hour's respite." It is the unannounced visit of the chaplain that brings Meursault's attitude into focus:

And his voice was quite steady when he said: "Have you no hope at all? Do you really think that when you die you die outright and nothing remains?" I said: "Yes."
Finally he fully realizes the absurd situation:

What difference could they make to me, the deaths of others or a mother's love, or his God; or the way a man decides to live, the fate he chooses, since one and the same fate was bound to "choose" not only me but thousands of millions of privileged people who, like him called themselves my brother.40

In a realization that echoes that of Scipio's poem he explains,

It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and gazing up at the dark sky spangled with its signs and stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe. To feel it so, like myself, indeed, so brotherly, made me realize I'd been happy, and that I was happy still.41

Meursault here reflects Camus's belief that "The contrary of suicide... is the man condemned to death." All he wishes is for "Howls of execration" from the spectators at his execution. He only realizes his happiness when he faces death, the final absurdity. Life has meaning in its meaninglessness. In death, he is no longer the stranger, because it is that common, absurd death that makes him the brother of all men. By demonstrating the qualities of lucidity and revolt, Meursault becomes Camus's absurd hero, living in a totally one-way, hopeless world, yet revolting against death to affirm the meaning of life.

Camus's writings during and after his experiences in the French resistance in World War II mark a definite change in his concern. So far his basic concern has been the individual in the absurd universe. But now his focus changes from the universe to mankind. A strong sense of human worth develops in the works of this period. It seems as though Camus comes to the position that Thomas Hanna expresses:
That all men shall die is a problem we can do nothing about, that all men shall be oppressed is a problem we can do something about, and this is the beginning of the philosophy of revolt.\[\text{13}\]

In his writing for the resistance, Camus begins to express his revolt against the oppression of men as he answers German tyranny. The world is meaningless, but man has meaning; he must be saved; there can be justice for him.

This intense optimism for mankind is apparent in the essay, "The Unbeliever and Christians," based on notes from a lecture at the Dominican monastery of Latour-Maubourgigin in 1948.\[\text{14}\] He points out that though he and Christians both struggle against unexplained evil, and should therefore work together, ". . . I do not share your hope, and I continue to struggle against the universe in which children suffer and die.\[\text{15}\] He clearly expresses his faith in man while contrasting his position with the Christian position:

If Christianity is pessimistic as to man, it is optimistic as to human destiny. Well I can say that, pessimistic as to human destiny, I am optimistic as to man. And not in the name of humanism that always seems to fall short, but in the name of an ignorance that tries to negate nothing.\[\text{16}\]

This optimism about man himself is a kind of tentative hope, and it is more of an affirmation than Meursault's realization that men are brothers because they share a common death. Man's hope is that he can be a brother to other men who "intercede almost everywhere and ceaselessly for children and for men."\[\text{17}\]

This new hope for man, what Nathan Scott calls Camus's "modest optimism," is even more fully developed in The Plague (La Peste). Man united, as symbolized by the city of Oran, is attacked by unexplainable evil -- in this case, a plague which overcomes the city,
isolates it from the outside world, kills mercilessly, and completely disrupts the lives of all those caught up in its deadly, efficient tyranny.

This novel, the secret journal of Dr. Rieux, becomes the chronicle of the plague, and man's reaction and resistance to it. The men who fight the plague struggle persistently although futilely as it continues to rage unrestrained by their efforts. Eventually, after months of struggle, the serums begin to work, people begin to recover, because of, or perhaps in spite of, the struggle. The plague disappears, only to reappear in the future when it is least expected.

One of the motifs that runs through the chronicle is that of the walled city, cut off from the sun and sea, where all the inhabitants are prisoners of an absurd fate. Many are exiles from homes they cannot return to. The world, as well as God, if there even is one, turns a deaf ear to their plight.

But man remains strong in adversity; he does not despair; he continues his resistance. The plague fighter, represented by Dr. Rieux, is not concerned with man's salvation:

Salvation's much too big a word for me. I don't aim so high. I'm concerned with man's health; for me his health comes first.48

He is a healer because

. . . in his heart he has deliberately taken the victim's side and tried to share with his fellow citizens the only certitudes they had in common -- love, exile, and suffering.49

He places his faith in man and he learns from the plague, "That there are more things to admire in men than to despise."50 However, he does not have faith in God or future. Unlike Father Paneloux, the priest,
he cannot look upon a child dying in senseless agony and yet believe in a God or a force for goodness outside man himself. He does not submit himself to unexplained evil; he rebels completely against it even though he must surrender his personal happiness and feel all love dulled by his total awareness of evil.

The plague which Camus writes about is not just the evil which attacks man from the outside, however. The reader learns from Tarrou that man himself is pestiferous. He is the carrier of the plague. Tarrou, a stranger in Oran who befriends Dr. Rieux, discovers that man cannot live, cannot breathe, without in some way contributing to the suffering and death of other men, either by action or omission:

As time went on I merely learned that even those who were better than the rest could not keep themselves nowadays from killing or letting others kill, because such is the logic by which they live; and that we can't stir a finger in this world without the risk of bringing death to somebody.51

For Tarrou, the only peace possible in this world comes from attempting to be "an innocent murderer," "a godless saint" who strives to be totally conscious of the evil within himself. Though defeated before he begins, he tries to help men rather than to harm them whenever possible.

The dilemma that Camus is beginning to grapple with in *La Peste* is man's search for values in a world without God, with evil, and with man as the only absolute. But Camus shows hope for man, at least for men when they join together to fight against a common evil. Brian Murchland points out Camus' confidence that man can construct without the help of God or of rationalistic thought, a creative humanism of high nobility. Wherever two or three people are gathered
together, there is hope, Camus seems to say. However, irremediable and definitive man's imprisonment he can rejoice in a sense of dignity and an innate feeling of sympathy that suffices to make him great. 52

As Rieux sees all who were parted by the plague re-unite at the end of his chronicle, he realizes the only hope for men in their quest for happiness and peace:

They knew now that if there is one thing one can always yearn for and sometimes attain, it is human love.53

Once again, in The Just Assassins (Les Justes), Camus ponders how the rebel can act at all in a world where "man secretes evil even in the exercise of what he calls virtue."54 For Camus, the 1905 Russian assassins of Grand Duke Serge carry the plague within them as surely as did Tarrou and his companions in suffering. The goal of the assassins is justice for the Russian people. For Stephen, the embittered revolutionary, the end of justice justifies using any means. For Kaliaiyev, the poet-revolutionary, love of life and respect for certain human values is more important than justice: "Revolution by all means. But revolution for the sake of life -- to give life a chance if you know what I mean." 55 Kaliaiyev and Dora, his compatriot, then, become Tarrou's "innocent murderers" or "les meurtiers delicats" (a phrase which Camus uses extensively in The Rebel) because they refuse to murder innocent children while assassinating the Duke. They realize, furthermore, that the only way one can justify the enormity of even political murder is by giving his own life to commit it. Dora and Kaliaiyev sacrifice not only their lives, but they turn their backs on their private love for each other to win their justice. But there are problems with that justice. As the Grand Duchess points out to the
imprisoned Kaliaiyev, the Grand Duke, though symbolically guilty, was really personally more innocent then the children Kaliaiyev saved. Is justice possible in an unjust world? Can destruction be purposeful and limited? Can murderers ever be innocent? Can the rebel ever afford to repudiate the source of his rebellion through murder? Man's situation seems all the more absurd, all the more hopeless, because he seems not to be able to escape from the guilt that permeates his world and himself:

The plague infects man to such a point that he cannot work for his own progress without dirtying his hands: 'We begin by wanting justice and end up by organizing a police force.'

The fruition of Camus's quandary of revolt comes in The Rebel (L'Homme Revolte) where he defines the rebel and his manifesto, and asks two vital questions which really amount to the same issue:

Our purpose is to find out whether innocent, the moment it becomes involved in action, can avoid committing murder.

and/or

Is it possible to find a rule of conduct outside the realm of religion and its absolute values?

The rebel, according to Camus, is the man who simultaneously says yes and no to life. As opposed to the slave, he does not despair; he is not silent. He becomes aware that his situation is intolerable and he says "no -- beyond this limit I rebel." He, like Caligula, wants the moon. "Man," Camus states, "is the only creature who refuses to be what he is." He rejects the sacred because in a world where grace, or myth provides all the answers, there is no awareness of absurdity, no need to revolt. The solutions the rebel looks for must be in man himself; therefore, rebellion is collective, whereas absurdist suffering, the state of the slave's despair, is individual. Camus ends his
definition of the rebel by issuing the rebel's manifesto: "I rebel -- therefore we exist."60

In The Rebel Camus considers the revolt against grace and against history. The metaphysical rebel revolts against man's condition in the universe. This rebel first must banish God. He is a blasphemer who, in the act of defying God, actually affirms his existence.

He \( \sqrt{\text{the rebel}} \) does not suppress God; he merely talks to him as an equal. But it is not a polite dialogue. It is a polemic animated by the desire to conquer.61 God, who allows children to suffer needlessly, as did the magistrate's son in The Plague, must be denounced as "the father of death."62 Man is a son of Cain in the image of the defiant Prometheus who chooses man over the Gods, and Epicurus, who banishes hope and the gods. To give life meaning he struggles against death.

As long as Christ was God, he was a pre-answer for rebellion. By experiencing evil and death, he abandons his immunity, and the image of Yahweh, the Hebraic father-god, is softened. Camus asserts that Christianity assumes that the total injustice of the sacrifice of Christ, the most innocent, could assuage the sufferings of men. Christianity substitutes the promise of eternal life for happiness in this life. But once the rebel, specifically, the modern rebel, denies the divinity of Christ, Christ is annexed to the world of man, to the brotherhood of victims. With this annexation begins the onslaught against heaven.

The rebel, however, is really in search of a new god to replace the one he has murdered. And this god would serve the same function as the old one: to provide unity. But Camus also points out that nihilistic rebellion, which justifies any means for rebellion, destroys.
Each time that it deifies the total rejection, the absolute negation of what exists, it destroys. Each time that it blindly accepts what exists and gives voice to absolute assent, it destroys again. Hatred of the creator can turn to hatred of creation or to exclusive and defiant love of what exists. But in both cases it ends in murder and loses the right to be called rebellion.

Camus is back to his central dilemma. How can the man who has banished hope and the gods, who is alone, live without murdering and destroying?

In the portion of the book devoted to historical rebellion, Camus asserts that once he has denied God, the rebel chooses history. The temptation, then, of the rebel is to deify history. The revolutionary falls into the trap of history when he substitutes "I rebel -- therefore we shall be" -- for "I rebel -- therefore we are." For the revolutionary, lured by the promise of the future, any means, even violence, murder and the betrayal of his own quest for meaning, justifies the end -- the future.

Camus refers back to the "just assassins" of 1905. Only by upholding murder as "the desperate exception," like "les meurtiers delicats," can the rebel demonstrate that he still believes in the "we are" part of the manifesto.

The image of the rebel, then, is once more the image of Sisyphus:

Thus the rebel can never find peace. He knows what is good and, despite himself, does evil. The value that supports him is never given to him once and for all; he must fight to uphold it, unceasingly.

The rebel's task, like Sisyphus' rock or like the plague, is never-ending, is hopeless. For he is constantly caught between grace/eternity/non-violence versus the sword/history. If he denies both, "he is the
witness of pure freedom, of nothing." He must choose either "silence or murder -- in either case, a surrender."\textsuperscript{66}

The only path for the rebel, therefore, is that of Meursault, of Tarrou, of Rieux: to love man, to resist evil always in man's immediate interests, and to live for the present.

Then we understand that rebellion cannot exist without a strange form of love. . . . Its merit lies in making no calculations, distributing everything to life and to living men. . . . Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present.\textsuperscript{67}

For the true rebel, the innocent murderer, God is dead, eternal hope is dead, but he is not idolatrous -- he does not set up himself as God like Caligula did. He accepts his own mortality and lives within the limits which his love places on his passion for freedom, unity and justice.

It is, Camus is saying, finally man's love for this earth and his capacity to share the lot of his fellow victims and to work in love for his brothers that keeps alive in him the "invincible summer," the meaning, the "hope" for life:

Our brothers are breathing under the same sky as we; justice is a living thing. Now is born that strange joy which helps one live and die, and which we shall never again postpone to a later time.\textsuperscript{68}

The rebel is a happy man.

Camus' invincible summer seems very distant in the inferno he creates in his last novel, \textit{The Fall} (\textit{La Chute}). The world of Jean-Baptiste Clamence is a world where man has fallen from innocence. Man's plague is truly within himself, for once he rejects old values, he is left with a precarious freedom that will either topple towards nihilism/destruction because man, like Caligula, refuses to accept responsibility,
or toward a new sort of transcendence. How is man to find meaning in
a world without God? How can man find innocence and pardon when he
rejects condemnation? 69

Clamence's hell is a world where he realizes the perversion of
his former rebellion. 70 In his state of innocence he considered him-
self free from guilt, free to live with "very flattering image of his
own manhood and humanity which he had built.

From day to day, women, from day to day virtue or
vice, from day to day, like dogs -- but every day myself
secure at my post. Thus I progressed on the surface of
life, in the realm of words as it were, never in reality.
Then came human beings; they wanted to cling, but there
was nothing to cling to and that was unfortunate -- for
them. As for me, I forgot. I never remembered anything
but myself. 71

He falls from the above state of blissful ignorance when he hears a
drowning girl and, overcome by fear, shock, and cowardice, does nothing
to save her. He can no longer lie to himself.

After months of self-torment, of fear of death, of debauchery,
just when Clamence is celebrating his recovery, he re-experiences his
initial fear and shame. He realizes that he will have to live with his
own guilt until he dies. He has become aware of the selfishness,
shallowness, vanity, and his inability to love anyone but himself. He
finds that when one cannot believe in his own innocence, then,

Moreover, we cannot assert the innocence of anyone,
whereas we can state with certainty the guilt of all. Every
man testifies to the crime of all others -- that is my faith
and my hope. . . . God is not needed to create guilt or
punishment. Our fellow men suffice, aided by ourselves. 72

In Clamence's vision, even Christ is guilty:

The children of Judea massacred while his parents were
taking him to a safe place -- why did they die if not be-
cause of him. Those blood-spattered soldiers, those
infants cut in two filled him with horror. But given the
man he was, I am sure he could not forget them. . . . The
lamentation would rend the night, Rachel would call her
children who had been killed for him, and he was still alive.

Christ is another innocent murderer, but not only that, he is seditious
against God -- "Why has thou forsaken me?" -- and he dies censored.

Clamence ends his tirade by stating what has become of all the
rebels. The rebels have become judges, seekers of "justice":

Wherefor, since we are all judges, we are all guilty
before one another, all Christs in our mean manner, cruci-

ded, always without knowing.74

But he claims to have found the solution to the madhouse this world
becomes when man tries to "be judged without law."75 Clamence is the
new Jean-Baptiste, crying in the wilderness -- a dark hole in Amster-
dam -- the judge -- penitent. By intricately drawing new acquaintances
into his self-confession, he makes them see that his guilt is their
guilt; the "I" becomes "we." Because he has judged himself, he claims
the right to judge others, to hear their confessions, and once again he
can feel that he is, if not innocent, at least extraordinary:

I pity without absolving, I understand without for-
giving, and above all, I feel at last that I am being adored.76

Clamence has found a way to bear living in spite of infirmity,
guilt, shame, and death. But he is never rid of them. For he realizes
that even if he had a second chance to save the girl, and himself too,
he would always be as he was the first time, too late. He stands per-
petually self-condemned and condemning.

In The Fall, man's kingdom is where he searches in vain for peace
and innocence. The bond between him and his fellow man is no longer
simply that of the brotherhood of innocents condemned to a senseless
death, but it is a brotherhood of shame and guilt, where death is the ultimate tie in a life-long series. How can Clamence, how can any man, Camus asks, bear to exist with the agony caused by the realization of the plague of evil he carries within him as well as the unexplained evil and death around him. Is the freedom of complete lucidity too much for man? Can he bear it without self-destruction or without "erect[ing] new, tyrannical divinities." Can man suffer endlessly "without hope or final assurance," or must "a new 'virtue,' a new law" be found?

Ironically, perhaps, Camus' last original published work, The Exile and the Kingdom (L'Exile et le Royaume) returns to the theme of The Wrong Side and the Right Side and Nuptials: "the world is the place of man's exile, but it is also his kingdom." For example in the short story, "The Adulterous Women," a middle-aged woman with a mediocre, childless marriage gives herself in that "harmony of love and revolt" which Camus describes in Nuptials to an absurd yet beautiful desert, temporarily deserting her husband's bed. But she returns to him because the realization of the absurd is not enough; she must be needed by and need another human being to continue existing in spite of loneliness.

For Camus then, human happiness requires a realization of the absurd and yet human contact as well. Man's only hope lies in his brother exiles who share his kingdom with him.

The problem that follows Camus throughout his career is, given the absurd divorce between man and his universe, how can man respond. Throughout his writing Camus is constantly concerned with maintaining
that perilous tension between affirmation and negation. Affirmation implies that even though there is no permanent answer for man, no source of coherence and peace, man can find value and meaning for life in his own dignity, his own resources, and in a fellowship with his brother aliens. Man must, however, say no to the forces of irrationality and tyranny over man. If he does not, he can only despair. But complete negation, nihilism, denies man's only value and source of happiness, himself.

As Camus develops beyond his first awareness of absurdity, he grapples with the implications of man's position. He learns that man cannot escape from the negative, destructive forces around him and inside him. Man's happiness is in his struggle -- he, like Sisyphus, is the image of futility, yet nobility. In The Fall as well as in The Myth of Sisyphus or The Stranger, Camus realizes that he is condemned. But the condemned man who struggles constantly against his condemnation values life all the more. Camus has in a sense developed a Keatsian "negative capability," a capacity to search constantly but in full knowledge that he will never find an absolute. For Camus, happiness is not the end of his search, but rather, it comes out of the act of searching.
FOOTNOTES

1 Albert Camus, Lyrical and Critical Essays, p. 17.

2 John Cruickshank, Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt, pp. 22-23.

3 Jean Onimus, Albert Camus and Christianity, pp. 7-8.

4 Lyrical and Critical Essays, p. 89.

5 Cruickshank, p. 24.

6 Ibid., pp. 6-7


8 Cruickshank, p. 11.

9 Lyrical and Critical Essays, p. 56.

10 Ibid., p. 29.

11 Ibid., p. 50.

12 Ibid., pp. 50-51.

13 Ibid., p. 56.

14 Ibid., p. 61.

15 Ibid., p. 103.

16 Ibid., p. 105.

17 Cruickshank, p. 62.

19 Lewis, p. 61.

20 *Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 16.


36 Cruickshank, p. 151.


38 Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, p. 634.

40 Ibid., p. 639.

41 Ibid., p. 640.

42 The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 40.

43 Thomas Hanny, The Thought and Art of Albert Camus, p. 247.

44 Albert Camus, Resistance, Rebellion and Death, p. 69.


46 Ibid., p. 73.

47 Ibid., p. 74.

48 Albert Camus, The Plague, p. 199.

49 Ibid., p. 272.

50 Ibid., p. 278.

51 The Stranger, p. 228.


53 The Plague, p. 271.

54 Onimus, p. 82.

55 Albert Camus, The Just Assassins, p. 245.

56 Onimus, p. 82.

57 Albert Camus, The Rebel, p. 4.

58 Ibid., p. 21.

59 Ibid., p. 11.

60 Ibid., p. 22.
FOOTNOTES (continued)

61 Ibid., p. 25.
62 Ibid., p. 25.
63 Ibid., p. 101.
64 Ibid., p. 282.
65 Ibid., p. 285.
66 Ibid., p. 287.
67 Ibid., p. 304.
68 Ibid., p. 306.
69 Onimus, p. 100.
70 Adele King, Camus, p. 85.
71 Albert Camus, The Fall, p. 50.
72 Ibid., p. 110.
73 Ibid., pp. 112-113.
74 Ibid., pp. 116-117.
75 Ibid., p. 117.
76 Ibid., p. 143.
77 King, p. 85.
78 Hanna, p. 234.
79 Ibid., p. 233.
80 King, p. 97.
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