"Il faut vivre avec nos maux" | A commentary on the works of Albert Camus

Mary Margaret Farrington
The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd
Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
Farrington, Mary Margaret, "Il faut vivre avec nos maux" | A commentary on the works of Albert Camus" (1950). Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers. 1422.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/1422

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
"IL FAUT VIVRE AVEC NOS MAUX"

A COMMENTARY ON THE WORKS OF

ALBERT CAMUS

by

Mary Margaret Farrington

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts

Montana State University

1950

Approved:

[Signatures]

Chairman of Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong> .................................................. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE ABSURD AS A PHILOSOPHY .......................................................... 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. SUICIDE AS A SOLUTION TO MAN'S MISERY ............................................ 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE GAME OF EXISTENCE ........................................................................ 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. IMPOSSIBILITY OF SATISFYING MAN'S NOSTALGIA TO KNOW ......................... 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. MAN'S RATIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIMITS .............................................. 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. MAN'S LIFE AND THE PRESENT .................................................................. 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. TRUTH IN CONSCIOUSNESS ...................................................................... 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. MAN AND THE ETERNAL .......................................................................... 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. THE GRANDIUR OF THE HUMAN BEING ...................................................... 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. A CONCEPT OF ART AND THE CREATIVE ARTIST ......................................... 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION ................................................................................................. 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................................................. 80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

In the midst of and following periods of great calamity such as the recent world conflict, certain basic questions come to the minds of thinking people: What is the meaning of life and what is its purpose? What is there to hope for? What can be expected of the future? What is man's relationship to the universe? Is life, in fact, worth living? To comment on these problems and to explain further his views on life and human relationships in terms of the philosophy of the absurd became the self-appointed task of Albert Camus, one of the most brilliant French writers to appear during the turmoil caused by the German invasion and occupation.

Born in 1913, in Mondevi, Algeria, Camus is the first recognized French author of North African heritage. His mother, descending from Spanish stock, and his father, belonging to an Alsatian family which immigrated to North Africa after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, were both born in Algiers. The special quality of their European strains was lost as they became assimilated to that region. The cities there cannot be called European because they are situated in Africa, nor are they African since their populations are predominantly European, either by birth or ancestry. Newly built and ruthlessly commercial, these cities are subjected to extreme summers. Their populations are caught up in the race problem, are anti-Semitic, and have many competing national strains. Algiers itself, proud of its Moslem past, enjoys the stimulus of a modern French intellectual life.
In this exotic environment, which he obviously knows well, Albert Camus began his career as a professional athlete, a career soon ended when he was stricken with tuberculosis. Due to his prolonged illness, he became deeply interested in the phenomena of disease and its effect upon the mind and spirit as well as the body. Camus made sufficient recovery to continue his education and was graduated from the University of Algiers with a degree in philosophy. He turned toward writing and with his first journalistic effort, a newspaper story which revealed the miserably wretched living conditions of the Arabs in North Africa, he aroused the public and the officials to action. At the age of twenty-five, he saw the publication of his first book, *Léger*, in 1938. From 1935-1938, he directed the theatrical group, L'Equipe, which produced among other things, his own translation of Aeschylus' *Prometheus* in which he played the leading rôle.

Following the Fall of France, Camus journeyed to Paris in 1940, where, under false identity, he was influential in establishing the underground newspaper, *Combat*. For two years before the Liberation his editorials rallied the best energies in France toward the resistance. After the Liberation, *Combat*, under his direction, became the most interesting paper in Paris. However, when Camus retired from its editorship in November, 1945, he said that the policy of the paper had passed from one of independent thought to one of habitual negation, which is not the same thing.

While visiting the United States in 1946, Camus had an idea for a unique type of publication; a critical newspaper to be published
twice each day, one hour after the first editions of the other papers. It would evaluate the probable element of truth in the main stories of the other dailies with respect to their editorial policies. After a few weeks, the whole tone of the press would conform more closely to reality; an international service would be rendered. Most journalists seemed to agree that a publication of this type would take away all the pleasure from their profession, and no one could be found to back the enterprise.

During his stay in New York, Camus delivered a lecture on *La Crise d'Homme* in which he explained to the Americans his concept of the European world of his generation.

We were born at the beginning of the First World War. When we were adolescents we had the depression. When we were twenty, Hitler came. Then we had the Ethiopian War; the Spanish War; Munich. This is what we got in the way of an education. After which, we had the Second World War; the defeat; Hitler in our towns and homes. Born and brought up in such a world, what did we believe in? Nothing. Nothing but the stubborn negation into which we had been forced from the beginning. The world in which we had to live was an absurd world and there was nothing else, no spare world in which we could take refuge. Confronted by Hitler's terror, what values did we have that could comfort us, and which we could oppose to his negation? None. Had the problem been that of the failure of a political ideology, or of a governmental system, it would have been simple enough. But what was happening came from man himself. We could not deny it. We saw it confirmed everyday. We fought Hitlerism because it was unbearable. And now that Hitler has disappeared, we know a few things. The first is that the poison that was in Hitler has not been eliminated. It is still there in all of us. Anyone who speaks of human life in terms of power, of efficiency, of 'historical tasks', is like Hitler! He is a murderer. Because if all there is to the problem of man is a 'Historical task' of some kind, then
man is nothing but the raw material of history and anything can be done with him. There is still another thing we know and this is that we cannot accept any optimistic view of human existence, no 'happy end' of any kind. But if we believe that to be optimistic about human existence is madness, we also know that to be pessimistic about man's actions is cowardly. We were against terror because terror is the situation where the only alternative is to kill or to be killed, and communication among men becomes impossible. That is why we now reject any political ideology which raises global claims on human life. Any such ideology spells terror and murder. And we want the Reign of Terror to come to an end.1

Commenting on this speech, Nicola Chiaromonte, a free lance writer and frequent contributor to literary reviews, wrote:

"His was the voice of a whole generation of Europeans and more especially Frenchmen, who, caught in a struggle that was both senseless and inescapable, have done more than any accepted notion of duty or 'historical task' could ever have required of them, with no other moral aid but the quality of their despair."2

In this world where "rien n'est clair, tout est chaos"3 and "rien de tout cela n'a de sens réel,"4 Camus published in 1942, his philosophical essay, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, promulgating his beliefs in the absurdity of human existence. The main thought in this philosophy may be evolved into one comprehensive statement which was put into words by a colorful eighteenth century figure:

2 Ibid., p. 631.
4 Ibid., p. 158.
L'important, disait l'abbé Galien à Madame d'Epinay, n'est pas de guérir, mais de vivre avec ses maux.5

Albert Camus makes fully apparent in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and illustrates in his fictional works how it is possible for humans to live with the ills of the world. Furthermore, he maintains that life is filled with valuable and worthwhile experiences both of the intellect and of the senses.

The author's philosophical treatment of the myth of Sisyphus will be used as a framework for this commentary on his works in general. From it I shall try to extract the essence of what he believes concerning the basic questions of life and man's place in the universe. At the same time, I shall call upon his works of fiction for practical illustrations of his thoughts.

5 Ibid., p. 58.
CHAPTER I

THE ABSURD AS A PHILOSOPHY

Bertrand Russell, the twentieth century philosopher and mathematician, describes in his essay, *A Free Man's Worship*, his conception of human condition in the scientific age. The substance of this essay was summarized in a recent publication in the following manner:

"Man and his fears are the product of accidental colonizations of atoms, his sense of sin, a trait inherited from the beasts of prey, his life determined by blind, unfriendly forces without plan or purpose, his whole existence on his planet—which is doomed to freeze to death when the sun dies—probably only a cruel practical joke of God. What can man do in this abyssal fix? . . . Whistle a pretty symphony in the dark. Man must worship his own visions of beauty and goodness which now and then pop into his brain; in other words, man must worship man."

Camus says effectively the same thing.

"Vivre, naturellement, n'est jamais facile."

"L'intelligence aussi me dit donc à sa manière que ce monde est absurde."

"Dans l'imense grands de l'univers, le fléau inamovible battra le bé humain jusqu'à la paille soit séparée du grain."

Accordingly, the fléau or the 'blind, unfriendly forces without plan or purpose' are to Albert Camus pestilence, war, death, social impositions, injustice, violence, cruelty and even man's own fate from which

2 Camus, *La Nuit de Béarn*, p. 18.
3 Ibid., p. 36.
he cannot escape. "Ce que je haie, c'est la mort et le mal." Et je refuse jusqu'à la mort d'aimer cette création où les enfants sont torturés." Camus speaks thusly through the personage of Dr. Bernard Rieux in his novel, La Peste.\textsuperscript{7}

Dr. Rieux's friend, Tarrou, protests against injustice and cruelty as he saw it in the courtroom of his father, a judge, who had suddenly changed from a genial, good-natured man into a villainous creature demanding death in brutal sentences.

\textit{J'ai cru que la société où je vivais était celle qui reposait sur la condamnation à mort et qu'en la combattant je combattrais l'assassinat.}\textsuperscript{8}

Later in life, Tarrou set his own pattern for existence.

\textit{Et c'est pourquoi j'ai décidé de refuser tout ce qui, de près ou de loin, pour de bonnes ou de mauvaises raisons, fait mourir ou justifie qu'on fasse mourir.}\textsuperscript{9}

---

\textsuperscript{7} In the novel \textit{La Peste}, the North African coastal city of Oran is struck by bubonic plague and is quarantined from the rest of the world for months. The story is extracted from the journal of Dr. Bernard Rieux, a great humanist, who is the central figure. He follows the raging, devastating course of the plague and minutely describes its impact upon the inhabitants—mentally and spiritually as well as physically. As the plague is ending, Dr. Rieux remembers that the bacillus never dies or disappears and it will break out again among the rats, send them forth to die, and infect the population. Often termed an interpreter's holiday, \textit{La Peste} may represent the German occupation of Europe, mankind's struggle with evil forces, or life itself—man imprisoned by his own fate.

\textsuperscript{8} Camus, op. cit., p. 276.

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 277.
Neursault, the protagonist of L'Étranger, is condemned to death, not so much because he has shot and killed an Arab, but because he was insensible to his mother's death, did not know her age, went with his girl to a comic movie the day following his mother's funeral, and involved himself without protestation in the shady affairs of his neighbor, Raymond. His mere deviation from the socially accepted pattern of behavior was sufficient to make him a victim of the law courts.

_Lettres à un Ami Algérien_ called by Casus "un document de la lutte contre la violence," brings forth his views on the German occupation during the recent war and the reasoning behind this occupation.

---

10 _L'Étranger_, a story written in the European novella tradition, is centered upon the affairs of Neursault. He is a man who refuses to accept social impositions because their codes and patterns are radically incomprehensible to him. Indifferently attends the funeral of his mother whom he has allowed to languish in an old folks' home; he has refused to accept as executive, an excellent position in the Paris branch of his firm because of a total lack of ambition; he agrees to marry the girl with whom he has been living openly although he has no enthusiasm for the project and consents to it only upon her suggestion. Neursault is a person who simply exists and to whom nothing in life really matters since everything comes to absolutely the same thing in the end. He commits murder without motivation, is executed for his lack of humanity, and completely accepts his fate.

11 _Lettres à un Ami Algérien_ is a group of four essays in letter form written during the German occupation and published after the Liberation. Casus explains in these letters how the values upheld by the Paris are different from those maintained by the other Europeans and why the latter must be victorious in the outcome.

Vous (Paris) avez supposé qu'en l'absence de toute morale humaine ou divine les seules valeurs étaient celles qui régissaient le monde animal, c'est-à-dire la violence et la ruse. Vous en avez conclu que l'homme n'était rien et qu'on pouvait tuer son âme, que dans la plus immense des histoires la tâche d'un individu ne pouvait être que l'aventure de la puissance et sa morale, le réalisme des conquêtes.  

What men must worship in the way of the 'visions of beauty and goodness' by the standards of Camus are justice, happiness, intelligence, truth, peace, friendship, courage, and work. He speaks through a woman in L'État de siège16 of a concrete view of justice.

La justice est que les enfants mangent à leur faim et n'aitent pas froid. La justice est que mons petits vivent. Je les ais au sein sur une terre de joie, Le ser a fourni l'eau de leur baptême. Ils n'ont pas besoin d'autres richesses.  

In his comparison of France and Germany during the war, Camus reflects that the true Frenchman wants to love his country while loving justice at the same time. He wants to see justice live as his country lives.

... et parfois nous ambitionnons préférer la justice à notre pays, c'est que nous voulons seule-

---

13 cited, p. 76.

14 L'État de siège is an allegorical presentation of the German occupation of Europe. Monsieur La Peste (not to be confused with Camus' novel of the same name) and his secretary come to the city of Cadis where, by means of their power to kill, they manage to control the municipal government and the will of the people until they discover their impotence against fearlessness. The resistance to the régime of Monsieur La Peste is headed by Diego, a medical student, and by his fiancée, Victoria, both unafraid. After organising the people against fear, Diego and Victoria are eventually successful in ridding their city of Monsieur La Peste.

And he summarizes his belief in good-will and justice:

... l'homme devait affirmer la justice pour lutter contre l'injustice éternelle, créer du bonheur pour protester contre l'univers du malheur. 17

Since truth under its own power far surpasses the energy of lies, the greatness of a nation could never be based upon lies. Truth could be without effort in a state of happy barbarism, but in this 'abyssal fix' the search for truth is eternal.

In order to set a tradition for man, asserts Camus, two citing are necessary: intelligence and courage. Man has sense because he is the only living creature who had to have it. 18 His mind alone must direct his actions. He discovered quickly that the mind against the sword was to avail nothing, but the mind united with the sword could never be conquered by the sword alone. 19 He found out that he had the courage to risk dying for what his intellect told him was worth his faith. He further realized that to know friendship was to be destined to remember the experience of happiness, suffering, success, failure, grief, and affection in the companionship of some beloved being. He

16 Camus, Lettres À un Ami Allemand, pp. 40-41.
17 Ibid., p. 77.
18 Ibid., p. 64.
19 Ibid., p. 29.
discovered that there was one absolute certitude in life, "le travail de tous les jours."  
"L'essential était de bien faire son métier."

In order to live as fully as possible, man should find himself on the middle path between the abyss and the visions of goodness and beauty.

Neurasthenie, l'étranger, exists in the prescribed fashion. He shows his indifference to the future by his refusal to accept the responsibility of organizing the Paris office for his employer's firm, by his lack of defense at his trial, and by his casual reply to his girl, Marie, when she asks him to marry her, "Je dis que cela n'était égal et que nous pourrions le faire si elle voulait."

His passion for exhausting what is given to him is noted in his enjoyment of the feeling of the sun and the water against his body, his satisfaction of his sexual appetites with Marie, his fondness for food and good wine, his pleasure in the performance of the comedies,

20 Camus, La Peste, p. 53.
21 Les cit.
22 Camus, Le Noble de Sivazla, p. 84.
that their own lives.

In the expected fashion, there is nothing left for them but to make preparations for their comfort. Although the women do not request to know how, they do not refuse to know when. They receive messages and requests, and then--

so that they may recite--there is a reason for these in order to another purpose. The habit of reading has increased in order to another command, and in the presentation of family resolutions, a mother and her daughter.

Now to summarize. I say in these notes, to an inscription,

Choice, since she is to be declared by certainty. Marriage requires the

she has made her choice on a basis of virtue. Especially the woman

which she will be able to observe. From only this she know how to live.

the cause that is the passed her. Therefore she that has reached

with which she has become incapable to her all this that has reached near

what wonderer can certain to came with the will to longer be in a

have enough money to enjoy all the satisfaction for which she has wanted.

All her hopes are projected into the future, that day when she will

Marian, or the Mahometo, is never in except the opposite way.

than and follow the time of less reference.

of the manner in which he shall act. He needed cutters into a scheme

with whom he certainty had no contact.肉末as it made no self

the idea! not done he would about most things.

She her mind is inserted in any way when he nearly acquired peace--

letter to write to get the better of the cruelest and most desperate

heaven to write the letter for the Gunda, to my knowledge, by which the

him an excuse of values from which he made a censored he done not

formidable, and the same for distinction and coffee. There is for

7
situations in which she finds herself and follows, accordingly, a
prescinded plan of action.

Camus appears to have many thoughts in common with the well-
known Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset, who concludes that
life is built around responses to essentially the same type of stim-
ulus:

Life means the inescapable necessity of realizing the
design for an existence which each one of us is. Our
will is free to realize or not to realize this vital
design which we ultimately are, but it cannot reverse
it, change it, abbreviate it, or substitute anything
for it. We are indubitably that single-pragmatic per-
sonage who must be realized. The outside world or
our own character makes that realization easier or
more difficult. Life is essentially a drama because
it is a desperate struggle with things and even with
our character—to succeed in being is in fact that which
we are in design.25

Dr. Bernard Rieux, narrator in La Peste, realizes that the design
for his life is to do his work as a doctor under all circumstances.
Although his wife is ill with tuberculosis and Dr. Rieux could have
accompanied her to the sanatorium, he remained behind in Oran to exer-
cise his profession. When the bubonic plague first strikes the city,
he can leave the city easily, turn his back to the suffering and in
no way try to alleviate the pain inflicted on the victims. However,
he does remain in Oran, makes the aesthetic city administrators organ-
ize measures of precaution against the plague, and fights the disease

25 José Ortega y Gasset, "In Search of Goethe from Within,"
until it is on the wane. He does not need the impact of these outside forces to determine his course of action. He knows that he is struggling for the relief and preservation of mankind and he succeeds in realizing the design which was created for him.

The journalist, Rambert, in the same novel, is torn between two poles. Finding the one woman to whom he can devote himself after a long search, he is thrust quite by accident into the state of emergency in Gran. He tries to modify the 'ultimate design' of his life by using every possible means to attempt an escape. He is completely consumed on all sides in his 'pursuit of happiness' and eventually realizes that he is closer to his beloved working against the plague and making his own desires subservient to the needs of the city. His own inclinations keep him from realizing his design until Dr. Bleux helps him to end his struggle by telling him that "l'homme n'est pas une idée, Rambert."

And Rambert fulfills his design.

Caligula,\(^n^\) the poet emperor in the play that bears his name, opposes his design. He says that he can be free only at the expense of someone else—in this case, the Roman people. He seeks after the


27 Caligula, a drama in four acts, follows the genre established by Giraudoux with his *Amédyrien* \(^25\), *Siegfried*, and *Judith*. Caligula, the name given to the Emperor Caius Caesar, is probably symbolic of Hitler. Caligula, grief-stricken over the death of a beloved mistress, and facing the realization of unhappiness, uproots all his feelings for humanity and begins to rule on the assumption that all actions are equal and he further tries to rival the caprice of providence by becoming equally cruel. Scorn is his only consolation but it frees him to launch his search for the impossible. A revolt against this mad debauchery is not long in coming, and Caligula is overthrown by the Roman people who refuse to accept a world derived of reason in which their lives are nothing.
impossible, wants to live by absolute logic, imposes his will cruelly on all who come in contact with him. Finally, when the citizens can no longer tolerate his whimsical and tyrannical rule, they overthrow him in the hope of re-establishing their 'visions of goodness and beauty' which were certainly being destroyed under his régime. He fails in the realization of his design.

Cottard, the man with the guilty conscience in Le Festin, believes that his life is more complete after the plague has struck the small town of Oran. Before the plague, Cottard had tried to hang himself to avoid what he feared would be the ultimate fulfilment of the impact of his crime. Since he did not need to fear arrest by the authorities after the plague was discovered, he became most genial, commenting cheerfully on the disaster which had thrown everyone into the same boat. However, with the disappearance of the plague, Cottard sank back into his own personal worries and lost his sanity. He failed in his attempt to substitute one type of life for another. He failed to escape from his 'vital design' and his madness became merely another refusal to fulfill his design.

One of the important aspects of life in the philosophy of the absurd, promulgated by Albert Camus, is the reaction of man to his environment.

... L'Absurde n'est pas dans l'homme ni dans le monde, mais dans leur présence commune. Il est pour le moment le seul lien qui les unisse.27

---

27 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 48.
Man knows what he wants in the world and knows what the world offers him. His ability to unify these two factors determines the richness of his life's experiences. Since the absurd recognizes primarily as moment, man need not project his plans into the future nor should he. His essential task is to live as abundantly as possible, finding pleasure in all the opportunities that present themselves. "Le bonheur et l'absurde sont deux fils de la même terre. Ils sont inséparables."28 Those individuals who struggle against their surroundings as Martha in La Malenteur, the emperor in Galliota, Ram- bert and Cottard in La Fête are essentially unhappy. However, Dr. Rieux and Tarrou in La Fête, Noursault in L'Etranger and Chere in Galliota are happy because they enjoy the world in which they have been planned and react to the conditions set before them in order to receive the greatest amount of experience from this relationship.

Although the absurd man knows that his reason is limited, he does not scorn it. There are many things that he can comprehend and explain—namely human experience. Owing to his ability to resolve this aspect of the universe into an understandable order, he would like to make everything explicable. However, when his reason has reached the end of its capability to understand all the phenomena of the universe in the light of all past experience, the absurd man recognizes the resurgence of the irrational or the inexplicable and perceives the necessity of the battle against it. Dr. Rieux found the

28 Ibid., p. 167.
plague irrational, could not discover a fit reason other than scientific for its coming, and yet he knew that he had to fight against it. To each man, according to the circumstances under which he lives, the irrational is a different matter: the people of Gran found the plague inexplicable; Nerval, the social impositions; Martha, the routines of a dull existence; Tarrou, injustice and cruelty; Diego in L'Idiot de l'Etat, the reign of terror of Monsieur de Pestre; and the people of Europe during the recent war, occupation, violence, and death. In each case the afflicted person or persons had fought against the irrational until it could be controlled, at least to some extent. As man's knowledge of the universe increases, the irrational becomes easier to control.

AlbertCamus finds in the mythological figure of Sisyphus the absurd man par excellence.

... Sisyphus est le héros absurde... Il l'est autant par ses passions que par son tourment. Son mépris des dieux, sa haine de la mort et sa passion pour la vie, lui ont valu sa supplice indéfizable et tout l'être s'emploie à ne rien souver. 29

Sisyphus had been condemned by the gods to roll a stone to the summit of a mountain, at which point the rock would roll back down the mountain under the power of its own weight. The gods had believed and with some reason, that there could be no more terrible punishment than useless work.

29 Ibid., p. 164.
At one time, Sisyphus captured Death who, was to be delivered sometime later from his conqueror by the god of war. After Sisyphus had died and had become a member of Pluto's kingdom, he wanted to return to earth in order to punish his wife for her lack of human sentiment. When he had again seen the earth and experienced the enjoyment of the sensual pleasures, he no longer wanted to return to the dark realm of Pluto's underworld. He gave no heed to the summons, the warnings, nor the anger of the gods but continued living for many years a life filled with happiness. Finally the gods took action, and Mercury was sent to seize the audacious Sisyphus and to carry him forcibly into Hades where his stone was awaiting him.

While Sisyphus was on the earth, he was quite indifferent to whatever the future might have in store for him. He scorched the gods by his refusal to return to Pluto, he showed his hatred of Death by capturing him at one time and again by tricking Pluto into allowing him to go back to the earth once more, and his passion for living is noted in his desire to return to the earth and his refusal to return to Hades after he had felt the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the waters against his body. However, the price he had to pay was to be condemned to useless work. After his fatiguing effort of pushing the stone up the mountain to its summit, he watches it descend again to the plain. He realizes for a moment his great unhappiness, but as he goes toward the bottom of the mountain and the lair of the gods, he feels himself superior to his destiny and stronger than his rock. He feels himself the man so aptly portrayed in Pascal's Pensees:
L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature; mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser: une vapeur, une goutte d'eau suffit pour le tuer. Mais, quand l'univers l'écrasait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tua, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt, et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien. 30

Sisyphus recognizes the extent of his miserable condition though he does not feel unduly grieved about it.

La clairvoyance qui devait faire son tourment consomme du même coup sa victoire. Il n'est pas de destin qui ne se surmonte par le mépris. 31

He finds his burden at the base of the mountain and commences once more the effort required by his torment. "Ainsi l'homme absurde comprend qu'il n'était réellement pas libre." 32 Just as Sisyphus finds his torment of the rock pushing keeps him from being totally free, each absurd man has a torment to which he submits and thus conforms his life. Even a man who believes that he lives entirely withdrawn from the world is unable to separate himself from all social or moral prejudices and as he submits to this prejudice, though merely in part, he checks his complete independence.

The absurd man does not accept God, since a belief in religious doctrines surpasses human measure and becomes superhuman.


31 Chaum, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 166.

32 Ibid., pp. 81-82.
Il n'y a point ici de certitude logique. Il n'y a point non plus de probabilité expérimentale. 33

Je veux savoir si je puis vivre avec ce que je sais et avec cela seulement. 34

Perhaps intelligence ought to sacrifice its pride here and reason bow down but the absurd man, recognizing the limitations of reason, still knows the relative value of it and sees no reason to deny it for something of which he can never be certain.

Ainsi, l'absurde devient dieu ... et cette impuissance à comprendre, l'Être qui illumine tout. Rien n'assembl en logique ce raisonnement. 35

33 Ibid., pp. 59-60.
34 Ibid., p. 60.
CHAPTER II

SUICIDE AS A SOLUTION FOR MAN'S MISERY

There is only one truly serious philosophical problem, asserts Camus, that of suicide; or "jager que la vie vaut ou ne vaut pas la peine d'être vécue." The question centers upon whether or not the absurd demands that man escape existence either by hope or by death and whether or not the absurd orders death as a solution to man's dilemma.

Since the absurd cannot exist outside the human mind, it cannot live outside the world and it must end, as with all things, in the death of the absurd man. There are two roads open to man: the path of remaining in the world or the path of escaping from it.

L'unique dområr est nous mind, l'absurde... Le problèmes est de savoir comment en sortir et si le suicide doit se détruire de cet absurde.

Man may continue to live in the world by preserving everything in it; even the irrational that seemingly overwhelms him. Consequently, he must judge what he considers to be essential in the irrational and look for a way of existing along with it.

Death by suicide is his means of escape from the world. Knowing his limitations and seeing what he considers to be his ugly and lonely future, he may resolve to end this future by cutting short his life. When a man decides that life is no longer worth the trou-

1 Camus, La Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 15.
2 Ibid., p. 69.
ble of being lived and commits suicide, he is swerving that life is passing him by or that he does not understand it.

Martha in *Le Malentendu*, affirming that she has never really lived, furnishes several reasons for no longer desiring to exist in this world.

Toute ma vie s'est passée dans l'attente de cette vague qui m'emporterait et je sais qu'elle ne viendra plus! Il ne faut demeurer avec, à ma droite et à ma gauche, devant et derrière moi, une foule de peuples et de nations, de plaines et de montagnes, qui arrêtent le vent de la mer et dont les jacassements et les marées étouffent son appel répété. D'autres ont plus de chance! Il est des lieux pourtant éloignés de la mer où le vent du soir, parfois, escorte une odeur d'algue. Il y parle de plages humides, toutes sonores du cri des mouettes ou de grèves dorées dans ses soies sans limites. Mais le vent m'épuise bien avant d'arriver ici; plus jamais je n'aurai ce qui n'est pas. 3

After Martha's mother discovers that she has killed her own son, a son unrecognized after twenty years' absence, she realizes that in the order of the universe it is not natural that a mother should live longer than her son and when she finds herself no longer capable of recognizing her own child, she decides that her rôle on earth has been completed. "Je peux maintenant aller le rejoindre au fond de cette rivière où les herbes déjà couvrent son visage. 4"

---


4 *Ibid.*, p. 78. After the mother with the aid of the daughter, have dragged the son, Jan, they drag his body to the river and push it into the water.
When Nada, the anarchist of *L'État de Sièges*, realizes that the régime of La Fête cannot maintain itself and will fall at any moment, he hurls himself into the sea exclaiming:

"Le vieux monde, il faut partir, les bourreaux sont fatigués, leur haine est devenue trop froide. Je sais trop de choses, même le mépris a fait son temps. Adieu, braves gens, vous apprécierez cela un jour peut-être. Ne peut pas bien vivre en sachant que l'homme n'est rien et que la face de Dieu est affreuse."

Gottard in *La Fête* tries to escape the punishment he deserves by an attempt to hang himself. Although his suicide is unsuccessful, he finally lapses into insanity sometime later when he feels once again that he must escape.

However, Meursault, the absurd man in *L'Étranger*, condemned to death on the guillotine, only reproaches himself for not having paid any attention to accounts of executions in the newspapers. He might even have come across one narrative in which the victim had, by chance, evaded the fulfilment of the court's sentence. Meursault did not permit himself to ponder about the possibility of escape; his only thought was that the mechanism of the guillotine should function with precision. He never considers taking his own life; he calmly waits for whatever may come his way.

In *Caligula*, the poet-emperor purposely goes to extremes to make the people around him loathe and despise him. He scorns everything and everybody; he says that he will be happy only when he believes that he has attained the extremity of grief. When he is

---

5 Camus, *L'État de Sièges*, p. 273
I encountered a man this morning, on the street. He seemed to be in a hurry, but he paused to talk to me. He said, "I've been thinking a lot lately about life. I've been feeling quite restless, I guess."

I asked him what was on his mind, and he replied, "Well, I've been thinking about my past. I've been reflecting on some of the decisions I've made, and I'm not sure if they were the best choices."

I asked him why he was feeling restless, and he continued, "I'm just feeling a little lost. I don't know what I want out of life. I feel like I'm drifting, and I don't want to waste any more time."

I told him that I felt the same way sometimes, and he smiled. "It's good to have someone to talk to about this," he said. "It's easy to feel alone sometimes."
for living and the uselessness of suffering. A man who feels himself a stranger in this universe of habitual action may dream of his own death and actually long for it. Nevertheless, there is nothing stronger in the world than the attachment of a man to his life. "Le jugement du corps vaut bien celui de l'esprit et le corps recule devant l'anéantissement."

The direct opposite of the man who takes his own life is the man, like Nerval, who is condemned to death. He dies reconcile and not with the feeling that a great pleasure is about to be fulfilled for him. The man committing suicide fails to appreciate the gifts of life; he refuses to react or to find satisfaction in any of the experiences through which he passes upon this earth; he tries to solve the problem of his wretched existence by an escape from life; he ends that life permanently and without a backward glance.

If suicide can be purged of its emotional content, its logic and honesty can be fully examined. The peril of suicide lies in the small moment directly preceding the act of terminating a life. If man knows how to maintain himself at this point, he faces the situation honestly. Any detour would be a subterfuge, a refusal to acknowledge realities.

The principal rôle of the absurd man on the earth is to find something for himself which is worth the pain of living—art, virtue, music, the dance, reason, the intellect, something of refinement.

---

8 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 20
foolishness or sublimation. An inclination towards death should be transformed into a rule for living—"et je refuse le suicide," proclaims Camus.

9 Ibid., p. 89.
CHAPTER III

THE GAME OF EXISTENCE

Since the absurd man is not permitted to escape life by suicide, he must exist; he must play his rôle in the drama or game of existence. In theatrical spectacles where he sees all sorts of designs for human destiny, the absurd man ceases to admire the play; his mind wants to enter into it. He wants to penetrate into those various lives he sees portrayed; he wants to enter into their diverse experience; that is, he wants to play their rôles. However, to play rôles is the métier of the actor. He reigns in the realm of the perishable; his glory is ephemeral. At best, he leaves his audience a mental picture, but he leaves nothing of himself; nothing of his gestures, his silences or sighs of love will return to them.

The absurd man does not rule in a perishable glory. He lives perhaps in a prosaic, day-by-day world where his existence is merely a matter of ordinary routine which he prizes above everything else. His problem is that of living in the state of the absurd where existence is a game, complete with rules from which he may not deviate. The man who tries to go farther than the rules of the game will permit, will be punished. When Sisyphus played tricks upon the gods in order to remain on earth, he had to pay for his excessive passion by a perpetual travail which would never accomplish anything nor attain any goal. Meursault, l'Étranger, paid with his life for his failure to recognize the impositions society had placed upon him and for his failure to react accordingly—the rules of the game. The emperor
in Caligula pays for his complete lack of human sentiment when his palace is mobbed by the Roman people and he is their victim. When Martha and her mother in Le Malentendu kill Jan without having recognized him, they are met by a nasty surprise and find that they no longer have any purpose for continuing to live on this earth. The legendary Don Juan expects to be chastised for breaking the rules of the game; but that to him, is only part of the game itself.

To love and possess, to conquer and exhaust all human experience are the means of playing the game of existence to its point of greatest value. Unfortunate are those who need myths in order to live. The absurd man is able to enjoy the feeling of the sun and water against his body and find pleasure in the fragrance of a flower crushed under his nose without having to speak in terms of the gods; he understands that his greatest glory lies in his right to love without measure; he learns the difficult science of living, of playing the game well. From this he draws a great satisfaction, that of having known the joy of a long day which may not seem to him an exceptional success, but an accomplishment brought about by a condition which, under certain circumstances, makes it a duty to be happy.

The rules of the game are founded upon the idea that any action will have consequences which will either make it legitimate or obliterate it from general usage.

Un esprit pénétré d'absurde juge seulement ce qui suit d'après celles doivent être considérées avec sérénité. Il

---

1 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, pp. 102-104.
At best, the absurd man will consent to use past experience on which to base future activities. "Le temps fera vivre le temps et la vie servira la vie." This field of action, limited and gorged with possibilities at the same time, seems to the absurd man beyond his clairvoyance. The only truth which instructs and comes out of this unreasonable order of things:

Ce ne sont donc point des règles éthiques que l'esprit absurde peut chercher au bout de son raisonnement, mais des illustrations et le souffle des vies humaines.

Man's defeats are not judged according to prevailing circumstances, but according to the character of the man himself, the manner in which he reacts to the situation presented to him, whether he stays within the rules of the game or tries to go beyond their limitations. In _Le Peste_, Dr. Rieux, faced with the epidemic spreading through the city of Oran could easily have left the city without adverse criticism since his wife was dangerously ill in a tuberculosis sanitarium. However, he saw that his duty was to stay in Oran, to organize the fight against the disease and to do his work as a doctor as well as he could. For this, he is admired and lauded.

Hannah, the journalist in the same novel, is at first an unworthy

---

3 Camus, _Le Mythe de Sisyphus_, p. 95.

4 _Loc. cit._

5 _Loc. cit._
individual because he thinks only of himself, his own happiness, and his fervent desire to escape from unpleasant circumstances. Only later, when he realizes that his happiness can lie only in his helping to relieve the catastrophes that has come upon the people of Oran, does he find his dignity as a human being. Diego, the protagonist of L'État de Siège, is praiseworthy for his lack of fear of the régime of La Peste. The mere fact that he is not afraid to organize the people of Cadiz against La Peste is laudable in the same measure that Western Europeans are scolded for their refusal to accept as permanent the occupation of their countries by the German invasion and occupying forces and for their continued resistance against that dominating power until its removal was successful.

No man existing in the state of the absurd universe knows how to sustain himself without some profound and constant thought which enlivens him with its force. In La Peste Tarrou lives by his belief that there may be created a society in which true justice will reign; a society where he will not be forced to choose sides since only one side, that of unquestionable justice, will prevail for all men. Dr. Rieux's thought is that he must do his work in the city of Oran as best he can and without hesitation. Cottard, whose only purpose in life is to escape, has no preoccupation that can sustain him in his earthly existence. Joseph Grand's raison d'être is to make clear to Jeanne, by some means, his love for her, which he had failed to do during their married life. Rambert seeks after love and happiness. Le père Pameloux thinks constantly about the great iniquities that
enjoy the joy of living. There is no name in being happy. Say that
experience is there. However, no man in the intelligence thought denying it.

inference of her name because it is a number a person de not remember your
able to do. Theo want's victory to live in order to finish the site

piece by something their look at fear for him or something he might be
in this. As a whole place their movement upon riding the car off in

saw at home to the breathing point front. Dido and Victoria
forward seeking the unpleasant, wanting to bend the will of the gift-

never return in the dialect on human being. Old-fashioned with
thoughts turn some concept about being one again in society in which man
not want to live in world write men because more nothing like

may. Therefore, the most intense enemy of the emperor in Austria, does
entertainment, attention to the gun, only thought of love and hope.
cases and life by the sea. Marta, the role of the watered gun, had

Martina at the watered gun, enriched by the presence of material one

since. The German, however, enriching the same variety of thought.

enrich the sensory attention, especially the taste of good food and

the sense of the pleasures of the senses; feeling the skin against his body

of any skin of flesh or mind. Mentally, I interpreted that the mind goes

death by the pleasure of monetary things. I need someone who can accept

into his mind concerning the occurrence of dead is the horrible

their thoughts toward God and Father ways. Those first doubt that

are concluded by the citizens of France and how he can make them turn
"Mais aujourd'hui l'imbécile est roi et j'appelle imbécile celui qui a peur de jouer."

From these widely diverse, profound and constant thoughts, men have found and still find the force to spur them on to a life with a meaning for each of them. They play the game of existence and accomplish their tasks even in the midst of the most senseless pestilences, wars, diseases, intolerance and injustice.

La conquête ou le jeu, l'amour incommencable, la révolte absurde, ce sont des hommages que l'homme rend à sa dignité dans une campagne où il est évanouit vaincu.

The only problem is that of being faithful to the rules of the game. This thought is sufficient to nourish the mind since it has sustained and will sustain entire civilizations. No one can deny the existence of a pestilence at a time when it completely surrounds and overpowers a society of men. This society, in order to survive, must put the pestilence under control and learn to live with it. "Il faut en mourir ou en vivre."

7 Camus, L'Homme, p. 21.
8 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 139.
9 loc. cit.
CHAPTER IV

IMPOSSIBILITY OF SATISFYING MAN'S NOSTALGIA TO KNOW

For man to know everything is impossible. The world is infested with irrationalities which he cannot understand and which cannot be explained to him. However, his desire to know is insatiable and his heart cries out for knowledge; "Je veux que tout me soit expliqué ou rien." His reason is powerless to satisfy this thirst for knowledge. His mind, awakened by this demand to know, finds only contradictions and nonsense in its search for the ultimate truth. His intellect, unable to account for the existence of these irrationalities, may deduce that the universe has a single signification—that of an immense unreasonableness. He believes that he knows only the walls that surround him. His mind, thus limited, is nevertheless capable of judging and of arriving at conclusions. As for man's experiences coming from his everyday life, they are born in the desert that he must not leave; he must know, at the very least, from where they come. After having arrived at this point, man finds himself confronted by the irrational. He feels strongly his desire for happiness and reason. The absurd, born of this confrontation between human longing and the irrational, is the consequence from which a human life draws its importance.

L'Irrationnel, la nostalgie humaine et l'absurde qui surgit de leur tête à tête, veillent les trois personnages du drame qui doit nécessairement...

1 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 24.
finir avec toute la logique dont une existence est capable. 2

For the absurd man, reason is vain and yet there is nothing for him that goes beyond reason. His appetite to understand, his nostalgia for the absolute are explicable only in the proportion to which he can already understand and explain many things. To deny reason absolutely is vain. It has its order—human experience—in which it is efficacious. Since the absurd man can understand human experience, he wants to know everything about the universe. However, because he cannot know everything, he comes upon the absurd. The absurd results as much from the nature of man as from that of the world; it is the bond between them; it ties them to each other. If this bond is all that can be discerned clearly in the universe, the absurd man must realize that absurdity regulates his relationship with life; he must sacrifice everything to this conclusion which he must constantly keep in view.

Although Dr. Rieux can explain from the scientific point of view the origin and spread of the plague, as a visitation upon humanity, it is completely irrational to him. There is nothing for him to do but to accept the situation and to use his reason to combat this irrationality. Diderot of L'État de Sisye, confronted by La Peste's malevolent and irrational government, conducts himself according to the principles of justice as dictated by his reason. In the same manner, the people of Europe who were quite incapable of

2 Ibid., p. 45.
explaining away the war, its cruelty and violence, has the capacity, nevertheless, to judge what their relationship to this irrationality should be and react to it in what became the accepted and prescribed manner.

Man will probably always be a stranger unto himself.

Ce coeur même qui est le mien me restera à jamais indéfinissable. Entre la certitude que j'ai de mon existence et le sentiment que j'essaie de donner à cette assurance, le fossé ne sera jamais comblé."

Man may know many truths about himself but he can never know the ultimate truth. He can never guarantee that he will always act completely virtuously or absolutely wickedly. In his attempt to follow a special design in conducting himself, he reveals his desire to know himself and at the same time he reveals his ignorance of himself. He cannot be certain of what his reactions will be under every circumstance. "C'est pas facile de devenir ce qu'on est, de retrouver sa mesure profonde." It is not always easy to be a man and it is even less easy to be pure man for to be pure man is to recover the territory where his relationship to the universe becomes sensible."

How can man deny the world when everyday he experiences its power and its force? On the earth there are trees whose rustling leaves he can hear, there is water that he uses to moisten his lips,

---

1 ibid., p. 34.
2 Camus, "D蜕变., p. 15.
3 ibid., p. 67.
there is the fragrance of the newly cut grass, the stars lighting
the darkness, the fall of night close to the earth, and there are
certain evenings when the heart unbinds to show man that the world
is his to enjoy. However, science gives him nothing that can assure
him that the world is his. Scientists divide and classify, enumera-
te scientific laws which, in his thirst for knowledge, man accepts
as true. He is told of atoms and electrons; he hears about
a system of planets and gravitation. He has no need for these.
great scientific efforts in order to be able to enjoy the soft out-
line of the hills against the sky or to feel the touch of the even-
ing breeze upon his face. These wonders of nature need no explana-
tion; man finds pleasure in them without having an agenda of support-
ing scientific data. Stranger both to himself and to this world, man
is armed only with his reason which is denied as frequently as it is
affirmed. His appetite for the conquest of knowledge seems forever
blocked by walls which defy his assaults. He does not want to exist
in a state of peace which is obtained only by refusing knowledge and
the experience of living.

Blind reason may try to assure man that everything is explicable;
nevertheless, the lack of proofs to satisfy his mind tells him that
this cannot possibly be. If everything were explicable, man would
not be happy until he could know and comprehend everything. The
realistic man only laughs at these attempts to reduce everything to
a state of clarity. In this universe, however inexplicable and
limited it may be, the destiny of man takes on its meaning, the sense
of the absurd. The world in itself is not reasonable and that is all
that is indisputable. 6

To think is to learn once again how to see, to direct consciousness, to make of each image a special scene. Although the world cannot be explained in this fashion, there is for the absurd man a description of what conditions were previously in existence and of what the present state of nature is in the universe. Thus the absurd thought returns to its first affirmation that "il n'est point de vérité mais seulement des vérités." 7 Each thing in the universe has its own truth. Man's thought, limited to describing what it cannot explain, finds a rich profundity of experience and a rebirth of the world in its verbolessness; "la pensée peut encore trouver sa joie à décrire et à comprendre chaque visage de l'expérience." 8

The sleeping world may be awakened in this fashion to find itself peopled with living minds. If the mind should wish to extend itself and to lay a rational foundation for this conception of universal truth, if the mind should aspire to discover the essence of each recognizable object, it would restore profundity to experience. For the absurd mind, however, that is incomprehensible. The absurd mind realizes that it is incapable of fathoming the depth of experience and that it is conscious of the universe constantly upset by checks and balances which teach the absurd man nothing new. "Il

6 Camus, La Forêt de Braise, p. 37.

7 Ibid., p. 69.

8 Ibid., p. 64.
CHAPTER V
MAN'S RATIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIMITS

In this devastated world where the uncertainty of knowledge is clearly demonstrated, where nothingness appears to be the sole reality, where despair without recourse is a constantly recurrent attitude, man's mind finally arrives at the conclusion that no truth is absolute and that he cannot render an impossible existence satisfying. He is forever confronted by the irrationality of human thought and his revolt against this irremediable situation never ceases.

In order for man to gain some insight into his place in the universe, he must, above all, unify his thought. He demands the familiar, he has an appetite for clarity. To know the world, he must reduce it to the human element and mark it with his seal. Similarly, the mind which attempts to understand reality cannot esteem itself satisfied until this realism is reduced into terms of thought. If man could recognize a providence, he would be reconciled. If thought were to discover in the continually changing phenomena of the world some eternal relationships which could be resolved into a unified principle, the mind might find happiness. This nostalgia for unity, this appetite for the absolute illustrates the essential movement of the human drama.

Nevertheless, man is limited; there is a deep gulf separating his desire from his actual conquest. A mind falls into a ridiculous

1 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p.42.
contradiction when it affirms total unity in the universe, knowing
at the same time the diversities in it. There is a vast difference
between what man imagines he knows and what he really knows; prac-
tical consent and ignorance cause him to live with ideas in his
mind which, if he really experienced them, would upset his whole
life. His mind does not try to reach beyond the immobile world
of its hopes so that everything is reflected and ordered in the
unity of its desirability. But when the world is cracking up and
collapsing, man desires of ever being able to reconstruct the famil-
lar and tranquil pattern which has given him peace of mind. Centuries
of research followed by repeated renunciations of hypotheses by great
thinkers, leads man to know that he must forever despair of acquiring
any true knowledge. If the history of significant human thought
were to be written, it would be one of relative impotence and suc-
cessive repentances. 2

"La première démarche de l'esprit est de distinguer ce qui
est vrai de ce qui est faux." 3 To search for what is true is not
always to look for what is desirable. The mind cannot judge that
everything is true or that everything is false. It can only use
its intelligence to select and affirm. "D'est bien là le génie:
l'intelligence qui connaît ses frontières." 4 Just as the most

2 Ibid., pp. 73-75.
3 Ibid., p. 71.
4 Ibid., p. 98.
same circumstances of torment and affliction.

Feeling of some friendliness with those who had suffered under the
realized that he had known it, and lived through it, and had known the
upon the proposition of Oan. However, when it was wanting. Dr. Healy
could not see any logical reason for the change, having determined
are of no importance to him or anyone else. Dr. Healy in his Praise
them to realize the presence and paralysis of the life. It not, they
or not. If a man keeps himself conscious of the experience, he needs
differentiation there? they can either make use of those experience
his angle of unequal to other men. The degree of this consciousness
the extent to which a man is conscious of his experience makes

5. We see humanity. The deep interruption of the surface
impressionists make our characters an object of some
can we not come to point where phases extinction one

In the causes of the moment mind.

tolerance to be able to reason the certainty and certainty.

to attempt to keep himself in the house willing, permit in the
than to lose that live. To live by what he knows and by what only,
though the live may be purposeless. Nothing could be worse for him

situation. This human who lives in hope for another life beyond this

them, men by means of his intellect finds himself in a parallel

excellent authority recognize their life's and never try to exceed
The experiences of which man is conscious tend to persist in bringing him into a close relationship with the earth; they tie and bind him to it. Drawing his strength from his contact with the world, man feels himself married to it.

Je veux délivrer mon univers de ses fantômes et le peupler seulement des vérités de chair dont je ne peux nier la présence.

Man cannot long sustain his rationality in a search for the moon or "quelque chose qui soit démont peut-être mais qui ne soit pas de ce monde" as the emperor in Caligula was attempting to do. He must depend upon the world which his hand can touch and his lips caress to enable him to feel that he is not an outsider in his own surroundings. "Voici qui est rouge, qui est bleu, qui est vert. Ce ci est la mer, la montagne, les fleurs." Man knows that he can never become sufficiently familiar with the world in order to be completely content. Yet he knows that there is truth in the sun, the sea and the rocks; "nous étalons tous l'heureuse lassitude d'un jour de noces avec le monde."

Man lives with the few ideas that came to him by chance when he encountered the world and he and the world reacted upon each other; the more he discovers about the universe the more familiar he

---

6 Ibid., p. 139.
7 Cassus, Caligula, p. 110.
8 Cassus, Moses, p. 17.
9 Ibid., p. 20.
becomes with its outward appearance. "Par un miracle absurde, c'est le corps qui apporte encore la connaissance." It is the body that is sensitive to the fragrance of a flower, the charm of a smile, the desire for a woman; it is again the body that takes account of the approach of twilight or dawn. The body often suffers pain, feels blood beating against its temples, feels hunger and thirst; the body is conscious of hardness or softness, dryness or dampness, fatigue or restiveness. As the body responds to the activity of its environment, it succeeds consequently in becoming acquainted with the world by its senses in as great a capacity as possible.

Man's thought must, without condition, be based upon his past experience. As his experiences increase, his thought undergoes frequent change and continues to be in the process of perpetual development. "Une pensée profonde est en continual devenir, épouse l'expérience d'une vie et s'y façonne." When from his rational experience man begins to create, his work is strengthened by the numerous and successive aspects of the universe that he is now able to describe. Some aspects complement others; some correct; some even contradict. If the creator by chance terminates his masterpiece, it is not that he, blind with his own abilities, believes that he has said everything, through his own medium, that is worth saying about man and the universe. He knows that only with his death will his experience be completed.

10 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 112.

11 Ibid., p. 154.
and his creation forcibly finished. However, he selects le moment when he wishes to recreate the world that he knows from his past experience.

Il y a un temps pour vivre et un temps pour téméigner de vivre. Il y a aussi un temps pour créer, ce qui est moins naturel. Il me suffit de vivre de tout mon corps et de téméigner de tout mon coeur. 12

Through the lives and journals of Dr. Rieux and Tarrou in La Peste are revealed the evolution of their rationalism. Tarrou, having believed that his father, a judge, was the kindest of men, was disillusioned to find that this jovial creature was seeking the death of a defendant in a court trial. From that time on, Tarrou sought to combat assassins who he thought had built a society based on condemning men to death. He refused to acknowledge a single reason for that fanatique hirsute. He chose to be obstinately blind until his waiting to see and understand more clearly was successful. When the epidemic came, he became certain that everyone in the world had something of the plague in him: no one was completely immune to it. And yet, no person should ever cease to watch over himself to keep his germs from infecting another human. Tarrou concluded, "Je dis seulement qu'il y a sur cette terre des fléaux et des victimes et qu'il faut, autant qu'il est possible, refuser d'êtrre avec le fléau." 13

12 Camus, Peste, p. 22.
13 Camus, La Peste, p. 278.
Dr. Rieux cannot agree with Father Pameleur that the plague has come as a visitation upon the iniquitous population of Oran. He refuses to accept a system of things in which the innocent are tortured; thus he continues to force the lethargic city officials to set up regulations that will eventually succeed in putting the disease under control. Dr. Rieux believes that he is on the road toward truth in his fight against the phenomena of the plague.

Pour le moment il y a des malades et il les faut guérir. Ensuite, ils réfléchiront et soit aussi. Mais le plus pressé est de les guérir. Je les défends comme je peux, voilà tout. 14

He defends them because he believes that the order of the world is regulated by death and he wants to use all his forces against it even though his victory can be at best only temporary. The plague is for him an interminable defeat.

... mais vous savez, je me sens plus de solidarité avec les victimes qu'avec les saints. Je n'ai pas de goût, je crois, pour l'héroïsme et la sainteté. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est d'être un homme. 15

All thought that renounces unity exalts diversity. The sole thought which liberates the mind is the one that leaves it alone, certain of its limits and its end. No doctrine should be so entrenched in the mind that all life's experiences are dogmatically judged by it. The absurd man, in his daily efforts, mixing passion and intelligence, which make up a strong discipline, finds there

14 Ibid., p. 246.
15 Ibid., pp. 279–280
the essences of the strong, of perseverance and constancy, of
of the question of the constitution of a God is not free and a God is not powerful and responsible for

whether man is not free and a God is not powerful and responsible for

the second bound to the question of the constitution of a God.

the second bound to the question of the constitution of a God.

in order to know it in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.

in order to know it.
the evil in the universe, or man is free and responsible and this god is not all powerful. Since this question goes beyond the mass of man's individual experience, he is lost in attempting to decide what would be a liberty that was given to him by a superior being. The only liberty with which he is acquainted is the liberty of thought and action.

Or si l'absurde annihile toutes ses chances de liberté éternelle, il me rend et exalte au contraire sa liberté d'action.19

Before he encounters the absurd, man ordinarily lives with certain goals in mind which are to unfold in a future time. After he finds himself confronted by the absurd, his goals are shattered because he realizes that he continually faces the absurdity of a possible death at any moment; this becomes a vital reality to him. He grows certain of the perishableness of material wealth; again his mind turns toward the consciousness of its power and its limits; that is to say its efficacy, its intelligence; for at the same time that his body dies, man's intellect will cease to function. "Mais le savoir, voilà sa liberté."20

What interests the absurd man is not so much the absurd discovery as the consequences of them. His mind draws from the absurd his belief in the necessity of defying the irrational and his belief in liberty of thought and action even though they may be

19 Ibid., p. 80.

20 Ibid., p. 121.
limited by his inability to know and to do everything. "On ne
peut vivre sans raison." 21

21 Genus, Caligula, p. 131.
CHAPTER VI

MAN’S LIFE AND THE PRESENT

When man finds himself in a universe of darkness where his intelligence alone can give him light to see the phenomena that confront him, where the absurd world continues to contain its diversities, he is wise to stop his thought, to content himself with a single way of examining the world, to deprive himself of verifying the contradictions in his surroundings. However, his thought and his manner of thinking are only a small part of his relationship to the world; his most important task is to live in the world and to live with its diversities, contradictions, and irrationalities: “vivre avec ses maux? “Ce visage de la vie m’étant donné, puis-je m’en accommoder?”

The absurd man, knowing that there is no special sense to life, accepts a quantity in preference to a quality of experiences: “Ce qui compte ce n’est pas de vivre le mieux mais de vivre le plus.” He does not stop to wonder if life, by that standard, is common or sickening, elegant or regrettable. Judgments of value must become subservient to judgments based on actions. Man can draw conclusions only from what he himself is able to see and know. His scale of values is built from the quantity and variety of experiences that he has accumulated during his life. From this scale of values he selects and observes what he considers to be the rules of the game of living.

---

1 Camus, La Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 64.
2 Loc. cit.
the man who takes the greatest of experiences makes the

least of them. He may take pleasure in the fact that a phrenetic

death has made his life easier, but he is not ready to think about

the consequences of a life in which he is capable of a combination of all the

values, pleasures, or intrinsically excellent to govern himself.

The chance of experience which is of highest importance and the

pattern of life demanded by those values. It is not so much

man experienced. On the other hand, he wants to return and warn

of life imposed on him by the cause of values resulting from his

experience. On the one hand, man has a desire to escape the pattern

remains of life. It becomes more as the degree of experience grows.

part II, in which one through the experiences and instructions can

esucceed in meeting the world without contradictions, our chief

turns regression. To do encounter the world as often as possible.

Place the name of J. E. B. Hartt, given at the end of


J. R. A. p. 66.
since most of life's experiences become more significant with age.

There always comes a time in a man's life when he must choose between contemplation and action, a decision which is frequently called 'becoming a man.' The choice is difficult. If man selects action in lieu of contemplation, it is not because contemplation is an unknown territory, but rather because it cannot give him everything that he needs. Deprived of any sure knowledge of the eternal, man seeks to ally himself to time and to act with it. He does not wish to convey an idea of nostalgia for the eternal nor bitterness toward time; he seeks only to see as clearly as possible the present. Just as the Europeans in the recent war took up the sword to act in accordance with the time, Dr. Rieux in La Peste, Diego in L'Etat de Sisyphe, and Cherec in Caligula take steps to prevent their world from becoming devoid of reason. "On ne peut vivre sans raison." Nevertheless, even these temporary victors know that action in itself is useless. "Il n'y a qu'une action utile, celle qui referait l'homme et la terre." There is only one victory that could ever be eternal, but which men will never have, the victory of a revolution against the gods, the victory of man against his fate. But men is his own end, his sole end. If he wants to be something, it must be in this life where, at certain moments, he feels himself the equal of a god, discovering that his forces are great enough to assure him of being

5 Camus, Caligula, p. 121.
6 Camus, Le Lythe de Sisyphe, p. 119.
Voilà bien la parole absurde. Qu'est-ce en effet que l'homme absurde? Celui qui, sans le nier, ne fait rien pour l'Eternel. Non que la nostalgie lui soit étrangère. Mais il lui préfère son courage et son raisonnement. Le premier lui apprend à vivre sans appel et ce suffire de ce qu'il a, le second l'instruit de ses limites. Assuré de sa liberté à terme, de sa révolte sans avenir et de sa conscience périsable, il poursuit son aventure dans le temps de sa vie. Là est son champ, là son action qu'il soumet à tout jugement hors de sa signification. Une plus grande vie ne peut signifier pour lui une autre vie.

The absurd man does not look for another life; he takes cognizance of the extension of his time in the world to pursue his career as a man. He lives from day to day. "J'étais toujours pris par ce qui allait arriver, par aujourd'hui ou par demain." To the absurd man, the thought of another life has no more importance for him than a wish to be rich, to swim very fast, or to have a better shaped mouth.

When Nerval in L'Étranger, about to go to the guillotine, is visited by a priest who tries to convert him to the belief in another existence, he tells the priest that those who believe in a future life always live on earth as men condemned to death. No, Nerval, has lived as fully as he knew how from day to day; has taken no thought of tomorrow, has wasted no time in the contemplation of death. Nothing has any great importance for him since he has only

7 Ibid., p. 93.
8 Opus, L'Étranger, p. 141.
the common fate of all men to anticipate. Therefore, it holds no terror for him.

Dr. Rieux does not believe that there is any time but the present. If there were a future time for him, he would stop trying to cure the people afflicted with bodily diseases and allow them to be cared for in that future time.

Conscient que je ne puis me séparer de mes temps, j'ai décidé de faire corps avec lui. C'est pourquoi je ne fais tant de cas de l'individu que parce qu'il m'apparaît dérisoire et humilié.9

The individual knows that he has no victorious causes, only lost causes; he feels himself alone as he approaches his destiny; his soul is prepared to accept either defeat or fleeting victories. He clings to the certitudes of history and feels that his own presence in the world is not divorced from the story of mankind. He knows that tomorrow will be similar to all other days, he awaits nothing but accepts what comes.

Too often men live in view of the future; tomorrow, later, when you have a position, with age you will understand, after the race has been finished. If men can renounce all the plus tard in the world, he can enjoy more fully the richness of his present existence. His only fear of death comes from his having to separate himself from the world which invites him to go on living. "Le présent et la succession des présents devant une âme sans cesses conscients, c'est

9 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 118.
idéal de l'homme absurde."\(^\text{10}\) Thus the absurd man is the one who does not separate himself from his time.

The conscious moment in man pases and he falls again into subconcsousness. He must take advantage of knowing that the conscious moment scarcely impresses itself upon him or he will lose it before he is entirely sensitive to it. Nothing interests man more than being conscious of all the diversities that are projected into a life. Having evidence that he is mortal, man knows that his consciousness is concerned with time and the period of his life. He cannot expect to be conscious of death or to have the experience of the death of any other human. "Il faut vivre avec le temps et mourir avec lui."\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{10}\) Ibid., p. 68.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 118.
CHAPTER VII
TRUTH IN CONSCIOUSNESS

Many a man may work from day to day following an exact routine, never deviating from the set pattern, never questioning the monotony of his course. Then one day, the emptiness of his life becomes apparent to him, the chain in his existence is broken and strangely enough his heart seeks to replace the broken link which can restore him to his former way of living. However, at this turning point in his life, everything of importance to him begins as a result of the lassitude which previously was his complete attitude toward existence.

"Commence," ceci est important. La lassitude est à la fin des actes d'une vie machinale. Mais elle inaugure en même temps le mouvement de la conscience, elle l'éveille et elle provoque la suite. La suite, c'est le retour inconscient dans la chaîne, ou c'est l'éveil définitif. Au bout de l'éveil vient, avec le temps, la conséquence; suicide ou rétablissement. ¹

Thus, everything begins with consciousness as it evolves from lassitude and nothing has any value except by its connection with consciousness. The man who formerly was carried along by time, now keeps watch over time and carries it along with him. He is conscious of his relationship with time, recognizing it as his enemy because it will eventually bring his death. However, for the conscious man, death and old age are not a surprise. Accustomed to seeing them everyday, he is justly conscious of them and does not try to hide

¹ Camus, *L'Étranger*, p. 27.
their approach from himself. Knowing they will come, he looks upon neither one nor the other as an expected punishment, merely the outcome of any man's span of life. "Je sais seulement que ce ciel durerà plus que moi." In regard to death, the conscious men finds nothing more to be scorned than disease, which he considers a remedy against death. It prepares him for death, creates a period of apprenticeship, takes away from him the certitude de mort et de vie and establishes a group of morte consciente who lessen the distance that separates him from the world.

Generally, man is conscious of two universal facts, his desire to live and his knowledge that he must someday die. From these facts he learns to count on nothing and to consider the present as the only criterion by which he may examine his surroundings, "double vérité du corps et de l'instant." The realities which man deduces as a result of his having been conscious of his communication with the universe, make him their prey. Once these realities are recognised, he does not know how to divorce himself from them. Thus as a man becomes conscious of the absurd, he is bound to it forever. A man without hope of the eternal and conscious of being so, no longer belongs to the future. Contemplating the moment, he knows that in order to receive the most experiences and to live the most abundant life, he must never allow any spectacle of beauty or happiness to

---

2 Camus, Noces, p. 66.

3 Ibid., p. 86.
escape from him without first having been fully conscious of its
grandeur. The absurd man can only exhaust everything and he himself
become exhausted. Consciousness and revolt in man's nature make him
opposed to doctrines that would take away the weight of his own life
which he should bear himself. All that he loves upon the earth which
would be useless without his love, for beauty is worthless without
man's appreciation of it, animates him to enjoy the happiness which
is born for him because of the absence of hope for the eternal. His
mind finds reason in the consciousness of the body and in this con-
sciousness and the revolt against the doctrines, he experiences the
reality of defiance against death. He is not willing to accept
death with pleasure, but rather finds himself dying irreconciled
to giving up the factors that make up his life. Despair should
never cause a man to abandon his life; only when he feels his heart
closing up, when, without any feeling of revolt against death or a
claim on life, he turns his back on what he had accepted until then
as his life. Only conscious enjoyment of the world can unite man to
it; enjoyment up to the limits dictated by his senses.

The world can destroy or exalt man at the same time. He may
be destroyed by a war or a pestilence or he may be exalted by hav-
ing survived these forces. There is constant revolt against the
world that destroys, and in this battle against it, the flesh of
mankind comes up against the powers of destruction.

*Mere humiliée la chair est ma seule certitude. Je
ne puis vivre que d'elle. La créature est ma patrie.*
Voilà pourquoi j'aid choisi cet effort absurde et sans portée. Voilà pourquoi je suis du côté de la lutte.

In many cases, a victory to a conqueror simply means the extension of a territory, but a victory against the destructive forces of the world has come to indicate a protestation and a sacrifice without future, but without the taste of defeat.

Everything in the world has its truth, from the morning dew on the grass to the new-blown rose lifting its countenance to the sun. Consciousness enlightens man about these truths by the attention which it lends to them. "La conscience ne forme pas l'objet de sa connaissance, elle fixe seulement." The mind is fixed upon numerous and successive objects which do not necessarily become of immediate consequence. Man's consciousness holds in readiness these objects retained by the mind's eye and they are henceforth outside all judgments. Consciousness is characterized by this retention of images in the subconscious, and upon determination, the mental pictures may be called into consciousness once again. They will recall to man the truths that he discovered for himself by the use of his bodily senses.

Although man may find himself impotent as he looks back over the story of mankind and may find his reasoning lacking in its ability to satisfy his longing to know, he holds several evidences of truths from which he cannot detach himself.

4 Cassus, Le Mythe de Sisypho. p. 119.

5 Ibid., p. 63.
existence, the close not try to destine himself, make a reason or ex-
ner for the contrivers in the world. About once, or the con-
hope for the essential. The consciousness, perceptional removed, finds
between the world and the human people. It becomes him to sense the
perception of the essential existence to him the contriver.
their. Meant into mind, the thought, thought. The
different to contriver and to unconsciousness, he must maintain
tension to appear to the essential human, like the human which in
what man balefore to be true, he meet such when. Then though those

for the contriver to be true, he meet such when. Then though those

only what he somehow and what precise the touch are understandable.
man face. A sense that you beyond the world means nothing to him.
whose existence is outside the position as a member of the hu-
the spread man cannot comprehend in human become any prudence
plain all the aspects of his life, he realizes that he can never
know himself completely and he accepts as sufficient, the knowledge
of his being.

Ce cœur en moi, je suis l'éprouver et je juge qu'il existe. Ce monde, je puis le toucher et je juge en-
core qu'il existe. Là s'arrête toute ma science et
le reste est construction. 8

8 Ibid., p. 34.
CHAPTER VII

MAN AND THE ETERNAL

One of the most debated questions found in the minds of men
concerns the existence of a sense that is greater than the world,
of a judgment that surpasses human understanding, the immortality
of the soul, the eternal or a god. Does man turn toward god only
to obtain the impossible? Is it only when man tries to surpass his
own ability to comprehend that his knowledge leads him to a god?

All churchmen and the doctrines of all churches aspire to the eternal.
Happiness, courage, justice are only secondary ends in their beliefs.
Preoccupied as these men are with the eternal, they seem to have for-
gotten the one true gift conferred upon them in the world, the body,
which does not ask any involved questions. The body ignores hope;
it recognizes only the beating of its heart making the blood flow
through its veins; eternity is a matter of complete indifference
to it.

Mais je n'ai rien à faire des idées ou de l'éternel.
Les vérités qui sont à ma mesure, la main peut les
toucher. Je ne puis me séparer d'elles.

Although the priest who came to visit Meursault in L'Étranger
gave the appearance of being completely sure of himself, to Meur-
sault, condemned to death, all the priest's certitudes were not
worth a single hair in a woman's head. He considered that the
priest was not actually sure of being alive since he lived in a

1 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyph, p. 122.
state of continually looking toward death.

Moi, (Meursault) j'avais l'air d'avoir les mains vides. Mais j'étais sûr de moi, sûr de tout, plus sûr que lui, sûr de ma vie, et de cette mort qui allait venir. Oui, je n'avais que cela. Mais du moins, je tenais cette vérité autant qu'elle me tenait. 2

When Tarrou in La Peste asks Dr. Rieux if he believes in God, he answers negatively. If there were an all powerful God, Dr. Rieux would leave his profession and allow his patients to be cared for by God. But he believes that no one would abandon himself so completely to God. If a priest consults a doctor, there is a contradiction. Rieux considers that he is on the road toward truth when he combats creation (the plagues in the world) such as it is.

... puisque l'ordre du monde est réglé par la mort, peut-être vaut-il mieux pour Dieu qu'en ne croie pas en lui et qu'en lutte de toutes ses forces contre la mort, sans lever les yeux vers ce ciel où il se tait. 3

Rambert, the journalist in the same novel, forever attempting to escape from Oran to join the woman he loves, is asked by an old woman if he is not afraid of carrying the plague to his mistress. He contemplates and then decides that it is a chance that the two of them will have to take. If he remains in Oran, they risk being separated forever. The old lady asks him if he believes in God. He answers her with a quiet no as she goes on to remark that he is right to try to find his love again for without a belief in God and

2 Camus, L'Étranger, p. 166.
3 Camus, La Peste, p. 147.
the eternal, what would be left for him?

In spite of all that man can do, death comes with the end of life. It terminates everything. For this reason many people have chosen to hope for an eternity and to denounce the illusions of this world. Often, these creatures are seized by a terror full of pity and consideration for those who can live with the image of death before them and remain indifferent to it. However, the latter frequently pity themselves too, but they draw strength and self-justification from this indifference which they experience.

The legendary Don Juan, reared in the ways of the church, plays the hope of another life against heaven itself. "Car plus rien pour lui n'est vanité sinon l'espoir d'une autre vie,"6 Janet had a strong enough belief in God to sell himself to the devil. But Don Juan, threatened with the devil and hell, always answered, "What a long delay you give me." What comes after death is futile and of no consequence to him. How greatly will he enjoy the days which are to come; he who knows how to live! Not to believe in a profound sense of things is characteristic of the absurd man.

As Don Juan goes from woman to woman, he does not intend making a collection of them. Collecting for an absurd man is to be capable of living in the past, of separating himself from his time which he can never do. He refuses to regret his past actions; that is also a form of hope. Don Juan in his rôle as a seducer of wo-

---

6 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 98.
men has no intention of reforming his ways; only in novels do men change their manner of living and become better. He is conscious of his many pleasures with various women and follows to the fullest degree the principle of experiencing as much as possible, desiring quantity rather than quality.

According to the doctrines of the churches, a man must live in a certain manner in order that he may merit another life. In the world of good and evil, he must choose the good if he does not wish to be visited by innumerable pestilences. To the absurd man who has seen the innocent suffer as well as the blamable,⁵ there is only one evil that he should guard against, the sin against life itself, not so much a despairing of this life, but a hoping for another, thus taking away the implacable grandeur of this existence.

Repair d'une autre vie qu'il faut "meriter," ou tricherie de ceux qui vivent non pour la vie elle-même, mais pour quelque grande idée qui la dépasse, la sublime, lui donne un sens et la trahit.⁶

If the certainty of the existence of God could be established, thus giving a sense to life, the satisfaction of the knowledge of this certainty would surpass by a great deal the attraction of doing evil, of causing suffering in the world. The choice would not be difficult. Nevertheless, for the absurd man, there is no choice since the absurd does not permit him to act exactly as he might choose. The absurd neither authorizes nor prohibits any action but

⁵ Camus remarks in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* that there are only blamable individuals, not guilty persons.

suggests that man avoid inflicting pain upon the creatures in the world.

Il ne recommande pas le crime, il restitue au recours son inutilité. De même, si toutes les expériences sont indifférentes, celle du devoir est aussi légitime qu'une autre. On peut être vertueux par imprécis.

The church long condemned the theatre because it found in the roles played by the actor many heretical souls, a debauching of emotions, a scandalous aspiration of minds who refused to live in accordance with only one doctrine leading to one destiny, and a precipitation into all the intemperances. The church disapproved in the drama its taste for the present time and the triumph of changing principles which are the negation of everything it teaches. The eternal is not a game; a person senseless enough to prefer the theatre to the contemplation of the eternal lost his sense of values and between the despised profession of theatrics and the church, there came to be an unmeasured conflict.

"Ce qui importe, dit Nietzsche, ce n'est pas la vie éternelle, c'est l'éternelle vivacité. Tout le drame est en effet dans ce choix."

Adrienne Lecouvreur, on her death bed, wanted to confess and to take communion, but she refused to renounce her profession. She thereby lost the benefit of confession. She upheld the part of her profound passion in life, the theatre, against God. This woman probably attained more greatness in her art by refusing to deny

7 *Did.,* p. 94.

8 *Did.,* p. 113.
it in her last moments than she ever gained on the stage itself. This was her finest rôle and the most difficult to perform; it was her choice between heaven and a laughable fidelity, a preference for eternity over one for the nether regions.

In any contemplation of God and the eternal, the characteristics of the Supreme Being naturally concern the members of the various schools of religious philosophy. However, not one of these schools has been able to add to or subtract from the multitude of conceptions concerning the nature of God. Is God all powerful and responsible for the ills in the world or is man responsible for them and God not omnipotent? To the absurd man, "la face de Dieu est affreux." 9

Dieu est peut-être bâillonné et inconnaisable, incompréhensible et contradictoire, mais c'est dans la mesure même où son visage est le plus hideux qu'il affirme sa puissance. Sa grandeur, c'est son inconscience. Sa puissance, c'est son inhumanité. 10

To the absurd man, God seems to be tired of or indifferent to the ills of humanity. He sits calmly watching the suffering of his creatures in the world without moving a hand to stop their afflictions, to mitigate their sorrows or to aid them in any way. When they call upon him in their moments of dire distress, asking him to have pity on them and to help them, his only answer is a disinterested one; he will do nothing. 11

9 Casseau, *L'Évit de Dieu*, p. 233


11 This attitude is personified by the manservant in *Le Malentendu*. Appearing to be a deaf mute, he does not lift a finger to prevent the two women from committing their atrocious crimes. In the final scene of the play when Maria, the wife of the murdered Jan, is praying to God to help her in this hour of great distress, the manservant appears and
The gods who had condemned Sisyphus, the perfect absurd man, to
his everlasting and useless work were created of the same clay as
the God of the Christians appears to have been created in the mind
of the absurd man. But Sisyphus teaches the world a fidelity supe-
rior to the gods which denies their powers and helps him to lift
his rock. Sisyphus has long decided that the universe is without
a master though it does not appear sterile or futile to him with-
out that greater sense.

The absurd man, allying himself to his time, chooses to believe
in the history of mankind rather than the eternal because he loves
certitudes and of that he can be certain.

... cette entente souveraine de la terre et
de l'homme délivré de l'humain—ah! je n'y con-
vertirais bien si elle n'était déjà ma religion. 12

CHAPTER IX

THE GRANDDEUR OF THE HUMAN BEING

As the absurd man arrives at the conclusion that there is no hope for an eternal and comprehends that the universe in which he dwells is filled with contradictions, irrationalities and absurd questions himself about the possibility of his being able to live without appeal, to play his rôle of a man, to excel in his career as a human being. "Il n'est pas toujours facile d'être un homme." 1

The actors of Molière's time knew, say Camus, that to enter their profession was to be excommunicated from the church, which looked upon them as its worst enemies. According to the church, the players were literally choosing hell in preference to eternal life. Many literary critics have been especially indignant with the church for refusing Molière, the greatest of all comedians, the last rites. But Molière was a man who did not separate himself from his time and probably would have believed that the church's action was entirely just, particularly for him who "mourut en scène et acheva sous le fard une vie tout entière vouée à la dispersion." 2 He knew what punishment had been promised to him but he still preferred to continue the vocation that was his whole existence and a present reality rather than give it up because of the vague menaces of a future chastisement. He lived without appeal.

1 Camus, L'Écran, p. 67.
2 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 114.
Sisyphus is only too well aware of his destiny of useless travail from which he can never hope to be relieved. He forms his world from his rock, his mountain, and the night. "La lutte elle-même vers les sommets suffit à remplir un cœur d'hommes. Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux." He lives without appeal.

Not knowing how to govern the pleasures of his soul, Ixion was ready to sell it to the devil. The opposite is true of Don Juan who satiates himself with pleasure. Though his life may be burdensome to him at times, he has no desire to lose it. "Ce fou est un grand sage." He knows that everything in the world would be simplified if mere love among humans were sufficient. It is not through lack of love that Don Juan goes from woman to woman; he is not in quest of total love either; he wants to exhaust his gift for love by using it repeatedly. From his viewpoint, to love greatly is not necessarily to love only once. He is not a weakling as frequently accused; he utilizes fully the gifts conferred upon him in this world. Hell is something he can provoke; as for the anger of the divine, he has only one reply, human honor: "J'ai de l'honneur, dit-il au Commandeur, et je remplirai promises promesse que je suis chevalier." Many people live with the idea that they see the true grandeur

---

3 Ibid., p. 168.
5 Ibid., p. 100.
of man by which they attempt to create and maintain their culture.

Ce peuple tout entier jeté dans un présent vit sans mythes, sans consolation. Il a mis tous ses biens sur cette terre et reste dès lors sans défense contre la mort. Tous les dons de la beauté physique lui ont été prodigués. Il n'a avec eux, la singulière avidité qui accompagne toujours cette richesse sans avenir. Tout ce qu'on fait ici manque le dégout de la stabilité et insouciance de l'avenir. 6

Man is proud of his dignity as a human being. The emperor in Caligula lost the support of his peers largely through subjecting them to all manner of indignities. One man he ridiculed by calling him a little woman, other men he caused to run around his litter in a circle when he was taken on a promenade in the country, another man's wife was taken from him and made to work in a public house, and still other men had their boxes at the circus taken from them and given to the commoners and were forced to mingle with the plebeians in order to find places to sit. But, according to Caligula's enemy, Cherson, the emperor's worst outrage was causing young men to despair and to forget their dignity as men.

Ramsey remarked to Dr. Rieux in La Peste that man was incapable of suffering or of being happy for a long time and was therefore incapable of anything that was of great worth in the universe. He believed that man was capable of dying for an idea but what interested him most was that man lives for and dies because of what

6 Camus, L'écrit, p. 66.
In this universe and can draw his attention from it. He can refuse
and within which he can live. He decides that he can accept living
the only reasonable liberty that the human heart can experience.

concentrated on the observation that death and the process bring him
limited in contemplation due to the difficulty to know forever. He
untilly concentrated because of the integrity and at the same time
the same at life and at the same time for death, a universe
the moment now capable of becoming of the universe burning with

the extension of

the world in the very, her only exist was sufltcnt over the whole of
would feel her heart become more alive. Having given an illusion to
life, a more self-granted and profound mode of living in which the
concentrated above herself coming into the consciousness to be a greater
were where they hoped to find a fuller, sharper existence. Marta
suggestive thing to go from their existence to a plane next the
nothing but a time when she and her mother would have meaningful
who returned to find happiness in her surroundings, who thought of
and turned to the mistress. He is represented by Marta in the scenario
where is concentration hope in the heart as he continues to give an idea-
the road of meditation. He focuses that there are performances and
happiness in the daily living. He is striving for a greater life on
leaving aside all the material, forgetting to be conscious of the
had concentration here to live to the actualization of material goods.

be lower. Dr. Pocket, impressed, realization was that man, is not
hope of the eternal and live without appeal; "il a senti l'étonnante grandeur de l'esprit humain." 7

Today, the common worker may follow a set routine everyday, returning home to his wife and children each evening without a second thought. His life is accomplished with the help of his mind, with its recollections and its advances, in solitude and in companionship. His destiny is not less absurd than that of Sisyphus; it is tragic in the rare moments when he becomes conscious of it. If the hope of success sustained him at each step, he would feel no pain. But like Sisyphus, he is superior to his destiny and stronger than his obstacles; he knows the full extent of his miserable existence. Nevertheless, he finds a joy and a happiness in life. "Mais les vérités écrasantes périssent d'être reconnues," 8

Happiness and the absurd go hand in hand; they are inseparable. They chase from the earth any god who would enter there bringing dissatisfaction and a taste for useless griefs. They allow man's destiny to belong to him alone.

When the absurd man, like Sisyphus, contemplates his torment, he feels the world become silent before him. He has arrived at the conclusion that what is human is of human origin. He judges his torment to be fatal and despicable but he knows that he will be master of his days. He feels that the inhumanities in the universe

7 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 120.
8 Ibid., p. 166.
cause the grandeur of man to be exhibited and hence to give a
value to his life. "Le spectacle de l'orgueil humain est indé-
galable. Toutes les dépréciations n'y feront rien."9

9 Ibid., p. 78.
CHAPTER X

A CONCEPT OF ART AND THE CREATIVE ARTIST

Man cannot deny the earth; he cannot deny a war or a pestilence; thus he cannot deny the absurd. He must live and breathe with it, recognize the lessons it teaches and profit from the substance contained in them. "A cet égard, la joie absurde par excellence, c’est la création."1 Creating is the force that keeps man from dying from the truths that he comes upon. There is no mystery about man’s ability to create; his will drives him to it.

A series of works by the same artist approximate the same thought. Although the works may seem to be without any relationship to each other, placed together, they uncover the hidden sense common to them all. With the death of the creator, his works take on a greater sense, a sense coming from the artist himself. They reflect the thought that he has wanted to repeat in order to show what he considers to be an image of his own conception of the universe.

Perhaps the great work of art was of less importance in itself than the consciousness it required of the creator and the occasion that it furnished him to overcome his idealism and approach reality with more foresight.

Dans cet univers, l’œuvre est alors la chance unique de maintenir sa conscience et d’en fixer ces aventures. Créer, c’est vivre deux fois. La recherche ténébreuse et anxieuse d’un Proust, sa

1 Camus, Le Mythe de Sise, p. 130.
méticuleuse collection de fleurs, de tapisseries
et d'angoisses ne signifient rien d'autre. En
même temps, elles n'ont plus de portée que la
création continue et insaisissable à quoi se
livrent tous les jours de leur vie, le comédien,
le conquérant et tous les hommes absurdes.  

Everyone tries to imitate, to revent and to recreate reality as he
sees it; he always terminates by having before himself a picture
of his truths; he gives a form to his destiny. In La Peste the
journals of Dr. Rieux and Tarrou recapitulated the entire series
of events that made up the siege of Oran by the dreaded disease.
Dr. Rieux's profession placed him in a position to see the greater
part of the population of Oran at one time or another and to catch
the spirit of their feelings. He was well situated to report what
he had seen and heard, and he believed that having a reference to
what had occurred there was desirable.

D'une façon générale, il n'est appliqué à ne pas
rappporter plus de choses qu'il n'en a vu voir,
à ne pas prêter à ses compagnons de peste des
pensées qu'en comme ils n'étaient pas forcés de
former, et à utiliser seulement les textes que
le hasard ou le malheur lui avaient mis entre les
mains.  

In works of fiction, thinking seems to be a desire to create
a world, to get away from the fundamental disagreement that separates
man from his experience and to find an explicable universe, clari-
fied with analogies and surrounded with reasons which would permit

2 loc. cit.
3 Caine, La Peste, p. 329.
resolving the split which is found between man and the universe. The creators of these works are philosophers carrying their universe with them in their masterpieces. The creations have logic, reasoning and intuition which, if the works are great, cannot be separated from the author. His abstract thoughts are supported by examples from the senses of the body and its passions, following the requirements of the author's vision of the world.

On ne raconte plus "d'histoires," on crée son univers. Les grands romanciers sont des romanciers philosophe, c'est-à-dire le contraire d'écrivains à thèses. Ainsi Balzac, Sade, Melville, Stendhal, Dostoievsky, preust, Malroux, Kafka, pour en citer quelques-uns.

The absurd creation makes upon the creator the same demands that the absurd requires from the absurd man—thought, revolt, liberty, and diversity. The essential element in man's forces is his desire to create; his great effort is to free himself from a daily routine and, having realized the absurdity of life, to plunge himself into it with all his strength. What binds man to the world are the images he has of it which he wishes to recreate, the terrestrial drama where wisdom is difficult to attain and the passions of human sorrow are inexhaustible.

The work of art comes as a result of intelligence; it does not demand reasoning upon what is concrete in the universe. The work of art does not require that one add to what has been described

4 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 136.
about the world a profound sense that is beyond human measure. It
is a work of intelligence whose proof is indirect.

L'œuvre absurde exige un artiste conscient de ses
limites et un art où le concret ne signifie rien
de plus que lui-même. Elle ne peut être la fin, le
sens et la consolation d'une vie.  

The problem for the absurd artist is to acquire the savoir-vivre
which goes beyond the savoir-faire. In the end, the great artist
must have lived and must be living to the utmost extent of his capa-
city, having understood that to live is to experience as well as to
reflect and think. The intellect of the man who creates the absurd
masterpiece demands that he bring out and describe in his art form
what his reasoning cannot fathom in the universe. If the world
were explicable, art would not exist.

No philosopher has ever developed several systems of thought;
he has merely expresses one idea with its different phases. "L'art-
istre au même titre s'engage et se devient dans son œuvre."
He
unifies in his work the goals that lie in his mind. The heart that
the creator must have in the absurd world is one that can maintain
its serenity in great upheavals. If the artist can paint a peace-
ful landscape in the midst of great turmoil, if an actor can play
his rôle while his wife is dying, he is greater through his restraint
and controlled emotions, the loftiness of his soul, than he is through

5 Ibid., p. 134.
6 Ibid., p. 133.
what he would express by giving way to his surroundings.

Man's existence is merely "une mise dénudé sous le masque de l'absurde. La création, c'est le grand mise." Imitating what is perishable in a man, the actor trains and perfects himself in his appearance to the outside world. Because of theatrical convention, the heart can express itself only through the medium of the gestures of the body and the voice, which becomes the soul of the body. The law of this art demands that everything be made increasingly easy to see and be transformed into acts of the body which is king in that domain. The actor speaks through all his gestures, he lives by his cries. Thus the actor composes his personages. He designs them, sculptures them, makes himself a part of them and lends his blood to making them come alive. Incapable of sublimating the reality in their lives, his creation comes with his making himself as nearly like them as possible. These thoughts are reflected in the contemporary théâtre en silence of such men as Jean-Jacques Bernard. Bernard suggested the term le théâtre de l'inexprimé himself, which perhaps expresses the idea more clearly. In 1922, he wrote previous to the production of his play Martina:

Le théâtre est avant tout l'art de l'inexprimé. C'est moins par les répliques mêmes que par le choc des répliques que doivent se révéler les sentiments les plus profonds. Il y a puis le dialogue entendu comme un dialogue sous-jacent qu'il s'agit de rendre sensible.

Un sentiment commenté perd sa force. La logique du théâtre n'admet pas les sentiments que la situation
n'impose pas. Et si la situation les impose, il n'est pas besoin de les exprimer.8

The true work of art is always subject to human measure. "Elle est essentiellement celle qui dit 'moins'," There is a relationship between the artist's experience and what the work reflects. The work is bad when the artist tries to exceed his own experience, and it is good when he pictures only a small portion of it, thereby showing the great richness of his total experience.

To live, to experience, to think, are the elements necessary for the creation of a masterpiece. The greater cannot make too great use of his senses because it is from his total impressions, given him by his senses, that he is able to create a world of his own.

---


9 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 124.
CONCLUSION

From the foregoing chapters one may conclude that the philosophy which enters into the works of fiction as well as the philosophical treatises of Albert Camus is a simple pragmatic one. Camus does not burden the reader with technical, philosophical terms nor does he try to identify his beliefs with previous philosophical systems. He does not try to sound the depth of ultimate reality, but, finding man's existence absurd as far as his position in the universe is concerned, he would seem to stress the importance of living for le moment and not for a time projected into the future.

Owing to the scourges in nature, the 'blind unfriendly forces without plan or purpose, the plagues in the world, the absurdities such as war, death, violence, intolerance, cruelty, or man's own fate, Albert Camus believes that life can never be easy to live. Nevertheless, man can find many valuable experiences in life which make it worth living—friendship, love, courage, justice, work, pleasures of the senses, appreciation of the arts. Finding these available in his everyday living, he has sufficient reason to refuse suicide, to live with the ills of the world.

By living everyday to the fullest extent of his capacities, by exhausting all the experiences that the world allows him, he plays the game of life. Even in the midst of undeniable pestilences, man can accomplish his tasks through his profound and constant thoughts which keep his forces alive.

Man has an insatiable thirst for knowledge which his reason is powerless to satisfy completely; he cannot discover the ultimate
truth about the universe. However, his intellect has the ability to judge and draw conclusions. His reason permits him to know many truths about himself, about man in general, and about the world. In order for his intelligence to retain its clarity and certainty, he has to live by what he knows and by that alone. The extent to which he is conscious of his experiences differentiates him from other men.

Man's thought is in continual evolution and is a recreation of the images in his world; he reproduces in his mind what he finds to be real. Primarily influenced by his longing to know, his thought demands that his reasoning retain its faith with the evidences of which he is certain, the absurdities in the world; he must know if he can live with them. He concludes, from the presence of the absurd in the universe, that it is necessary to defy it in order to be able to live with it.

Realizing that he is continually faced by the absurdity of death, man does not separate himself from his time; he knows that his consciousness is concerned with the time and extent of his life. He refuses to live with his plans projected into the future because the irrationalities in the world will inevitably spring from nowhere to upset these proposed arrangements.

In order to live the most abundant life possible, one must be conscious of all the spectacles of beauty which the universe affords. With his reason limited to that of a human being, Cassia can find no justification for a belief in a providence. A profound sense that goes beyond the universe means nothing to him; he is convinced that
the universe is without a master. His only possible concept of the Supreme Being could be one that characterizes this deity as having completely disinterested himself in the weaknesses and sufferings of his earthly creatures and as unwilling to help them.

Man discovers that he can live without appeal, without hope for another life. As he confronts the inhumanities in the universe, he feels stronger than these obstacles; he exhibits his grandeur and dignity as a human being.

Man's thought and experiences can be expressed through an art form which will be a creation of the world as he is conscious of it. His desire to create is one of the strong forces in his nature; it is his effort to free himself from a daily routine. His total work, subject to human measure, exemplify his reasoning and logic which cannot be separated from the artist himself.

To live is difficult; man must forever consider his surroundings.

Life is, in itself and forever, a shipwreck. To be shipwrecked is not to drown. The poor human being, feeling himself sinking into the abyss, moves his arms to keep afloat. This movement of the arms which is his reaction against his own destruction, is culture—a swimming stroke. When culture is not more than this, it fulfills its function and the human being rises above his own abyss. But ten centuries of cultural continuity brings with it—among many advantages—the great disadvantage that man believes himself safe, loses the feeling of shipwreck, and his culture proceeds to burden itself with parasitic and lymphatic matter. Some discontinuity must therefore intervene, in order that man may renew his feeling of peril, the substance of his life. All his life saving equipment must fail, he must find nothing to cling to. Then his arms will once again move redeemingly. Consciousness of shipwreck, being the truth of life, constitutes salvation.

---

1 Ortega y Gasset, op. cit., p. 1165.
Man, conscious that the world is his to enjoy, will not allow the absurd to crush him. He will live with the ills of the world.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS OF ALBERT CAMUS

"Between Yes and No." English translation by Bernard Frechtman. 
*Partisan Review*, XVI, 1090-1097 (November 1949).

"Chomfort." English translation by L. Le Sage. 
*Esquire Review*, XVI, 12-27 (January 1948).


"Two Chapters from Le Mythe de Sisyphe." English translation by 

WORKS CONSULTED


"Reflections," *Time,* XIV, 22-26 (March 6, 1950).


ANNOTATION

Critical material discussing the works of Albert Camus is conspicuously lacking. This void is probably due to the comparatively recent publication dates on his writings most of which made their appearance during or shortly after the war.

Since he is still a young man and still writing, it is difficult to get a perspective on him. The only information available is
in the nature of book reviews and brief biographical sketches, centered around two dates, his visit to the United States in the spring of 1946, and the American release of his novel, La Peste, known in English as The Plague, in the summer of 1948. The Partisan Review and a few other literary reviews have published his shorter works in translation and have also discussed his writings in connection with those of the other post-war French writers who have become internationally famous. However, the greater part of these articles have been limited to an analysis of whether or not Camus is an existentialist like his friend, Jean-Paul Sartre. Camus is one of the directors of the Gallimard publishing house and is actively interested in theatrical productions in which his friends, especially Jean-Louis Barrault, engage.