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

Mary Margaret Farrington

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

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
"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:

Robert L. Burgen
Chairman of Board of Examiners

W. T. Clark
Dean, Graduate School
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE ABSURD AS A PHILOSOPHY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. SUICIDE AS A SOLUTION TO MAN'S MISERY</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE GAME OF EXISTENCE</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. IMPOSSIBILITY OF SATISFYING MAN'S NOSTALGIA TO KNOW</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. MAN'S RATIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIMITS</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. MAN'S LIFE AND THE PRESENT</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. TRUTH IN CONSCIOUSNESS</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. MAN AND THE ETHERAL</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. THE GRANDMOTHER OF THE HUMAN BEING</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. A CONCEPT OF ART AND THE CREATIVE ARTIST</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>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 Mondavi, 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, Le Mythe, in 1936. 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 jour-
nalists 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
sane 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 happen-
ing 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 person 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 knew 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 knew 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 Reine 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 vrai," 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.
3 Albert Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, (Paris, 1942), p. 44.
4 Ibid., p. 158.
L'important, disait l'abbé Calian à Madame d'Espays, 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 combinations 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 this 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 abysmal 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."

"Intelligence aussi me dit donc à sa manière que ce monde est absurde."

"Dans l'immesse grandeur de l'univers, le fleau immanable battra le âge humain jusqu'à la paille soit séparé du grain."

Accordingly, the fleau 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 Mythe de Sisiphe, p. 18.
3 Ibid., p. 36.
he cannot escape. "Ce que je hais, c'est la mort et le mal."5 "Et je refuse de me donner la mort d'amour cette création où les enfants sont torturés,"6 Camus speaks thusly through the personage of Dr. Bernard Rieux in his novel, La Peste.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.

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.8

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

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.9

---

1 Ibid., p. 240.

2 Ibid., p. 241.

7 In the novel 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 humanitarian, 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, La Peste may represent the German occupation of Europe, mankind's struggle with evil forces, or life itself—man imprisoned by his own fate.

8 Camus, op. cit., p. 274.

9 Ibid., p. 277.
Maussault, 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 Allemand._ called by Camus “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 Maussault. He is a man who refuses to accept social impositions because their codes and patterns are radically incomprehensible to him. He indifferently attends the funeral of his mother when he has allowed to languish in an old folks’ home; he has refused to accept 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 without openly although he has no enthusiasm for the project and consents to it only upon her suggestion. Maussault 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 Allemand_ is a group of four essays in letter form written during the German occupation and published after the Liberation. Camus explains in these letters how the values upheld by the Nazis are different from those maintained by the other Europeans and why the latter must be victorious in the outcome.

What was most 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 Siècle of a concrete view of justice.

La justice est que les enfants mangent à leur faim
et n'ont pas froid. La justice est que mes petits
vivent. Je les ais au moule sur une terre de jais.
La mer a fourni l'eau de leur bapteme. 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 Ibid, p. 76.

14 L'État de Siècle is an allegorical presentation of the German occupation of Europe. Monsieur Le Peste (not to be confused with Camus' novel of the same name) and his secretary came to the city of Cadiz 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 Le Peste is headed by Diego, a medical student, and by his fiancée, Victoria, both unafraid. After organizing the people against fear, Diego and Victoria are eventually successful in ridding their city of Monsieur Le Peste.

ment aimer notre pays dans la justice comme nous voulons l'aimer dans la vérité et dans l'espoir. 16

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

... l'homme devait affirmer la justice pour lutter contre l'injustice éternelle, crèer 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 articles 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, op. 40-41.
17 Déd., p. 77.
18 Déd., p. 64.
19 Déd., p. 29.
discovered that there was one absolute certitude in life, "le travail de tous les jours."20 "L'essential était de bien faire son métier."21

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.

Mais que signifie la vie dans un tel univers? Rien d'autre pour le moment que l'indifférence à l'avenir et la passion d'épouser tout ce qui est donné. La croyance au sens de la vie suppose toujours une échelle de valeurs, un choix, mes préférences. La croyance à l'absurde selon nos définitions, enseigne le contraire.22

Irresolute, 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, "J'ai dit que cela m'étais égal et que nous pourrions le faire si elle voulait."23 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. 52.
21 Loc. cit.
22 Camus, La Nuit de Sisyphe. p. 83.
In the preceding paragraph, there is nothing left for them but to make preparations for their comfort. Although the woman do not expect to live long, they estimate their remaining time correctly. The man et., to save that he is a man, and that her presence can.mal. The woman and her daughter, when once married, they estimate the duration of one married grant. In the end, they get the marriage certificate.

In the previous paragraph, a mother and her daughter are discussing the duration of one married grant. In the end, they get the marriage certificate.
situations in which she finds herself and follows, accordingly, a
preconceived plan of action.

Cassus 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-
nuli:

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 escape
it, change it, abbreviate it, or substitute anything
for it. We are indelibly 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 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 organi-
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 Gren. He tries to modify the 'ultimate design' of his life by using every possible means to attempt an escape. He is completely thwarted 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, 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

26 Ciezas, La Pensée, p. 163.

27 Caligula, a drama in four acts, follows the genre established by Giraudouix with his Amphitryon 38, Siegfried, and Judith. Caligula, the name given to the Emperor Calius Caesar, is probably symbolic of Hitler. Caligula, grief-stricken over the death of a beloved sister-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 courage 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 *La Peste*, believes that his life is more complete after the plague has struck the pommelace 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

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 in 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 indissolubles."28 These individuals who struggle against their surroundings as Marfa in Le Malentendu, the emperor in Galliæa, Humbert and Cottard in La Feste are essentially unhappy. However, Dr. Rieux and Tarrou in La Peste, Neeurault in L'Etranger and Cherez in Galliæa 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 extent 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; Nuremberg, the social impositions; Martha, the routine of a full existence; Tarraco, injustice and cruelty; Diego in L'Etat de Stance, the reign of terror of Monsieur Le Preste; 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.

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

... Sisyphe 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 de supplir indicible et tout l'être s'emploie à ne rien accomplir.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 sensuous pleasures, he no longer wanted to return to the dark realm of Pluto's underworld. He gave no heed to 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 scorned 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 *Penseés*. 
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'écraserait, 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 surmont 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 On ne, La Morte 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'art qui illumine tout. Rien n'est 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 "jurer que la vie veut en ne veut 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 donnée est notre mal, l'absurde. Le problème est de savoir comment on sortir et si le suicide doit ou doit être 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. 49.
ble of being lived and committ suicide, he is sowing that life is passing him by or that he does not understand it.

Martha in *La Malandrina*, 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 me 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 jacinthes et les marguerites éveillent son appel répété. D'autres ont plus de chance! Il est des lieux pourtant éloignés de la mer où le vent du soir, parfait, emporte une odeur d'algue. Il y parle de plages humides, toutes sonores du cri des mouettes ou de grèves dorées dans ses soirs sans limites. Mais le vent n'éprouve bien avant d'arriver ici; plus jamais je n'aurai ce qui n'est pas.

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 *Ibid.*, p. 78. After the mother with the aid of the daugh-
ter, have dragged the son, Jan, they drag his body to the river and push it into the water.
When Nada, the anarchist of L'Etat de Siècle, realises that the régime of La Peste cannot maintain itself and will fall at any moment, he hurries himself into the sea exclaiming:

O vieux monde, il faut partir, tes bourreaux sont fatigués, leur haine est devenue trop froide. Je sais trop de choses, même la méprise a fait son temps. Adieu, bravos gens, vous apprendrez cela un jour qu'en me piétant pas bien vivre en sachant que l'homme n'est rien et que la face de Dieu est effrénée.5

Cottard in La Peste 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 narration 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 post-emperor purposely goes to extremes to make the people around him loathe and despise him. He scorces 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'Etat de Siècle, p. 278
The sense of the daily routine, the appearance of any profound reason
recognizes perhaps insensitivity the repetition of lens and the sense-
demanding, many through force of habit. By daily routine,
he

as a man lives, he continues to make the gestures that express

thoughts between the intellectual and the thought.

common subject under the same conditions: It is a case of the term-

into solitude. Surely is not a controlling men do no necessarily

indirectly Greene from a popular being precepts the phrase

and meanings. Then one day a slight upset such as a casual,
to his happiness so that he be enraptured and reassured by his theories

or secret sorrows. He may have some one profound these importance.

to overcome an incurable disease, extreme finitally difference.

as moment of equilibrium, A man may have many obstructions in his life

man sincerely Kille humbly after great reflection—great sentiment.
to reason not to make the measure of their condition of religiosity.

the very end and the inclusions of other element they do not stop

people who are the picture of their can desire to do so, follow to

not convinced, "the wise enough upright,"
can extract him on the back and Culture laughing into,

become them by Kille humbly when they do arrive. One old part-

will come eventually to announce him and he makes no attempt to
know that the flint and representations of the men been out to death

not Kille enough, he says he feels alone and lonely. Cultivating
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." 8

The direct opposite of the man who takes his own life is the man, like Nerval, who is condemned to death. He dies reconciled 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. Mersault, L'Étrangers, 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 meted 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.1 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.2

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 qu'elles suites doivent être considérées avec sérénité. Il

1 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, pp. 103-104.

est prêt à payer. Autrement dit, si, pour lui, il peut y avoir des responsables, il n'y a pas de coupables. 3

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. 5

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 landed. Rambert, the journalist in the same novel, is at first an unworthy

3 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, 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 catastrophe that has come upon the people of Oran, does he find his dignity as a human being. Diego, the protagonist of *L'Etat 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 censured 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 *Maison d'Espèce* 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 shame in being happy, says Gaune.

Afterwards, it seems however, no man in the thinking ought deny him.

...nature of the name because he wants a beaten de nos femmes pour

able to do, they want victory to live in order to CIVILize the site

in living his Glaz piece their thoughts upon finding the city of In

some of them to the breezepoint it possible. They and Vistalina

forward seeking the unquenchable, wanting to bend the will of the cit-

may. Again the desire to a human being. Our thoughts some day will

though in a certain established once again a society in which we

not want to live in world where men become a mere nothing. The

need. Hence, other, the slightest enemy of the emperor in the six

entertained, attention to the canary, only thoughts of love and happy.

case and like by the sea. Rather, the idea of the surrounded few, had

part of the Natura is embellished by the presence of material one-

like. His German, journeys, entertaining the same variety of thought.

enjoy the dental appreciation, satisfying the taste of good food and

lie upon the pleasures of the senses. Receiving the sum of that the body,

of any size of flesh or mind. Meanwhile, it is the head rent-

death by the plague or monetary cholera. Is this son who was innocent

come into his mind concerning the possibility of God in the horrible

their thoughts toward God and holy ways. The spaces doubt that

are committed by the citizens of Gren and how he can make them turn

26
"Mais aujourd'hui l'imbécile est roi et j'appelle imbécile celui qui a peur de jouer." 7

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, war, disease, intolerance and injustice.

La conquête ou le jeu, l'amour incomparable, la révolte absurde, ce sont des hommages que l'homme rend à sa dignité dans une époque où il est évanouie vaincu. 8

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 overwhelms 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." 9

-----

7 Camus, L'Étranger, p. 21.

8 Camus, La Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 129.

9 loc. cit.
CHAPTER IV
IMPOSSIBILITY OF SATISFYING MAN'S NOSTALGIA TO KNOW

For man to know everything is impossible. The world is infected
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
à rien." His reason is powerless to satisfy this thirst for know-
ledge. His mind, awakened by this demand to know, finds only contra-
dictions and nonsense in its search for the ultimate truth. His in-
tellect, 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, veill à les trois
personnages du drame qui doit nécessairement

1 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 114.
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. Dostoievski'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. 15.
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 cœur même qui est le mien ne restera à jamais indéfinissable. Entre la certitude que j'ai de mon existence et le contenu 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. "Ce n'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.

---

3 Did., p. 34.
4 Camus, Homo., p. 15.
5 Did., 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 unbands 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, enumerate 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 outline of the hills against the sky or to feel the touch of the evening breeze upon his face. These wonders of nature need no explanation; man finds pleasure in them without having an agenda of supporting 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 profoundness of experience and a rebirth of the world in its verbooseness; "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 following 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 Peste de Sartre, p. 37.
7 Id., p. 63.
8 Id., 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; practical 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 immoveable 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 despairs of ever being able to reconstruct the familiar 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 successive repentances.2

"Le premier démarche de l'esprit est de distinguer ce qui est vrai de ce qui est faux." 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. "C'est bien là le génie: l'intelligence qui connaît ses frontières." Just as the most

---

2 Ibid., pp. 73-74.
3 Ibid., p. 31.
4 Ibid., p. 98.
some circumstances of perfect and difficulties.

feeling of close friendship with those who had suffered under the

realized that he had known it, had lived through it, and had known the

upon the proposition of Gomor. However, when it was matured, Dr. Brain

could not see any logical reason for the phrase," having described

are of no importance to him or anyone else. Dr. Brain in his paper

them to realize the struggle and sacrifices of the latter. It is not, they

or not. If a man tends himself consciously of the experience, he needs

differentiation. Then, they can either make use of these experiences

his general or universal to other men. The degree of this consciousness

The extent to which a man is conscious of the experience makes

due to the human life, due to the development of the soul.

I realize that we are all different and incapable of understanding each

is the cause of the mental mind.

tolerance to be able to reason the clarity and certainty. Such

to acquire to keep himself in the light of what he says, to live by what he

then to lose that life. To live by what is known and by what only,

thought the life may be purposeless, nothing could be worse for him.

mustn't be merely restating to adapt himself to the world. Keep

situation. The human mind lives in hope for another life beyond this

there, may by means of his intellect find himself in a different

excellent effort to recognize their limits 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. 6

Man cannot long sustain his rationality in a search for the moon or "quelque chose qui soit dément peut-être mais qui ne soit pas de ce monde" 7 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." 8 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 laissitude d'un jour de noces avec le monde." 9

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, Eros, 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 continu 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 Casus, Le Mythe de Sisyphus, 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 témoigner de vivre. Il y a aussi un temps pour céder, ce qui est moins naturel. Il me suffit de vivre de tout mon corps et de témoigner de tout mon cœur. 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 fâcheuse houle. 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 germ 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 à l'Être avec le fléau." 13

13 Camus. *La Peste*, p. 278.
Dr. Rieux cannot agree with Father Pamelour 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 moi aussi. Mais le plus pressé est de les guérir. Je les défends comme je peux, voilà tout."

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 vaincus qu'avec les victoires. Je n'ai pas de goût, je crois, pour l'héroïsme et la sainteté. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est d'être un homme."

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
mone and doubt, an uncertain and distrustful faith.

Great are the sorrows and the rewards of the soul.

The expression which has appeared is and the assistance to the whole.

of having no visible answer. Reasoning wants to remain fruitful.

In this manner he wants to keep them in their emotional state.

to appear to him, but the more celebrated these contradictions

a solution for all these contradictions, as more controversial cases

same time, a feeling of both guilt and innocence.

the proposal of

desire to know is so great for the9ed man, that he must be home of the

verse, keep suddenly that he is going to bring many from it.

the need for the recognition, where is offered to him in this way.

asked men who recognized these figures as authority to and companies

which companies the one provider is one of great help.

the application of reason the applied and resultative that the reason

formal in the mind, a combination of these kinds mentally possible

has necessarily induced reason since it is necessary to our life

the applied mind is not their rational and irrational.

the question of mental action is approached, the world for

the thought of a man is primarily influenced by the necessities.

as it is.

thinks the world in my way, a couple of years will be considerable for

much in the work as the work is toward by him, hence he has

form a contradictory attitude. The obstacle man reveals himself on

the essentials of the strength, perseverance and constant.
either man to not free and a God is all powerful and responsible for
the destiny bound to the question of the omnipotence of a God.

If free, man must first know if he can have a master. The problem
of the liberty can only be seen, if in order to know if man
can only experience the one liberty, upon which he cannot have
knowledge of man to metaphysical free is not important.

Hence it is they thought necessary

effectually uphold their way of the world in the world and come
and reason who would to gain the impression in the universe.
forever, humankind who dared to reveal their mental impression
and the powers of nature to stand up for the cause, the existence
one single truth which does not. As the known, the existence
compatibly with utility, stress because no known that the impression
he needed is now's most extreme sensation which he maintains
it has been created with the existence.

the conclusion man must know if he can live in the universe as
the existence of the powers of nature decide on the course of
forming the opinion man. The question cannot be one of making the
not he needs accept them or reframe them in the same problem can
not to live and to think within these considerations, to know whether or
very depends on the contradiction and live enquiry.
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 mes chances de
liberté éternelle, il me rend et exalte au con-
traire 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 dis-
coveries 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 Cassius, *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 n'étant donné, puis-je m'en accommoder?" 1

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." 2 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. 84.
2 Loc. cit.
The choice of experience which is of utmost importance but the theory
of the pattern of life determined by those values. It is not so much
how experienced. On the other hand, he wants to retain and regard
the pattern. On the one hand, man has a desire to reflect the patterns
and consciousness of each.

The nature of a single life to the possibility of a premature death,

Plate 82. pp. 66-67.
Plate 83. 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'État de Sisyphe*, and Chereu 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 cu'ime action utile, celle qui referait l'homme et la terre." There is only one victory that could ever be eternal, but which man will never have, the victory of a revolution against the gods, the victory of man against his fate. But man 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, *La Peste de Sisyphe*, p. 119.
able to live at that level.

Man's field is time.

Voilà bien la parôle absurde. Qu'est-ce en effet que l'homme absurde? Celui qui, sans le nier, ne fait rien pour l'éternel. 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 se 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 péissible, il poursuit son aventure dans le temps de sa vie. Là est son champ, là son action qu'il soustrait à tout jugement hermès le sign. Une plus grande vie ne peut signifier pour lui une autre vie.

The absurd man does not look for another life; he takes cognisance 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 Mauss, 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, Mauss, 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


8 *Mauss, 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 cured for in that future time.

Conscient que je ne puis me séparer de mon 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 hard 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 cesse consciente, c'est

9 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 118.
idéal de l'homme absurde." Thus the absurd man is the one who does not separate himself from his time.

The conscious moment in man passes and he falls again into subconsciouness. 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." 11

10 Ibid., p. 88.
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.ł

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, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, 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 durera plus que moi." In regard to death, the conscious man 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 mourir maudit et establish a group of morts consolateurs 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, Notes, 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.

Noue humilié la chair est ma seule certitude. Je
ne puis vivre que d'elle. La créature est ma patrie.
Voilà pourquoi j'ai 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 leads 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.

---


extremity, he does not try to destroy himself, make a treason or ex-
ther for the contradiction in the heart. Nor does the same of the con-
ence, the external. The consciousness, perfectly removed, trans-
between the world and the human power. It becomes him to create his

What a consciousness of the externality to him the contri-
them. Interest into mere If the above things were the motif,
different to company and is insensible by way, the mere meaning
entirely to appear to be entirely human. Rely the amount which is
what man is, whatever to be true, be most enigmatic. Even though these

The dream that there is no consciousness
yank un rephased and un amazed
pull the fascination some ministration
and go to pull the consciousness. What else beside
prediction is used by prediction to be made in
chance to I represented it as made a
It can only be understood, can words of the

Only what he can make and what realize the touch are understandable.

man true. A sense that goes beyond the word or meaning to him.
whose existence is evidence the position as a member of the hu-

The external man cannot comprehend in human sense any preference.
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 forgotten 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 Meursault, 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 Sisyphe, p. 122.
state of continually looking toward death.

Moi, (Mersault) 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.

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.

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," 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-

4 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 bad, 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, 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.

Espoir d'une autre vie qu'il faut "mériter," 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.

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 regards son inutilité. De même, si toutes les expériences sont indifférentes, celle du devoir est aussi légitime qu'une autre. On peut être vertueux par expirice.

The church long condemned the theatre because it found in the roles played by the actors 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 theatrises 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 Ibid., p. 94.
8 Ibid., 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 affreuse."9

Dieu est peut-être haïssable et haineux, incompréhen-
sible 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 inconséquence.
Sa prévenance, c'est son inhumanité.10

To the absurd man, God seems to be tired of or indifferent to the
failures of humanity. He sits calmly watching the suffering of his
creatures in the world without moving a hand to stop their afflict-
tions, 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
no; he will do nothing.11

9 Camus, L'Étrange de Dieu, p. 273
10 Camus, La Nécrologie de Blanche, p. 53.

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 superior 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 without 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 extase souveraine de la terre et de l'homme délivré de l'humain—ah! je m'y convertirais bien si elle n'était déjà ma religion. 12

12 Camus, L'Étranger, pp. 91-92.
CHAPTER IX

THE GRANDMAI OF THE HUMAN BEING

As the absurd man arrives at the conclusion that there is no hope for an eternal and apprehends that the universe in which he dwells is filled with contradictions, irrationalities and absurdities, he 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 menace of a future chastisement. He lived without appeal.

1 Camus, L'Étranger, p. 67.

2 Camus, L'Étranger, 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’homme. Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux." He lives without appeal.

Not knowing how to govern the pleasures of his soul, Yamest 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 remplis un promesse promise que je suis chevalier."5

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 son 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. Ainsi 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 vexed, 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,
Checas, the emperor's worst outrage was causing young men to despair
and to forget their dignity as men.

Rambert remarked to Dr. Rieux in La Peste that man was incap-
able of suffering or of being happy for a long time and was there-
fore 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, Lecce, p. 64.
In this universe and can draw the attention from it. He can refuse
and withdraw which he can live. He declines that he can accept. I have
the only possible truth that the human heart can experience.

contraction from the opposition that death and the number quite the
intended in contraction due to the simplicity to know everything. He
myth component because of the necessity and at the same time
the time of life and at the same time for whom death a multitude
the quality and another a multitude of the universal meaning with

was elimination contrived
the world in itself, her own self was solitude, itself the picture of\ncould feel herself become more alive. Nothing given an elimination to
life, a more elevated and prestigous mode of being in which the
community drove herself toward what she considered to be a 
universe where they hoped to find a better. Nothing existed. Nothing
sufficient from there, either to go away from there to live as a peace near the
noticing but in time when she and her mother would have accomplished
who refused to find happiness in her surroundings. The thought of
son to the narrative. He is expressed by marking in the miscellaneous
where is something hope in the heart as he considers to live on till-
the road of evolution. He forsake that there are perfections and
impossibility in the daily life. The destitution for a Guenter like an
leaving sigh of the mouth, for to forget to be conscious of his

was consciousness the life to the initiation of spiritual growth.

a mere thing.
he longer. In fact, unprecedented reverence 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 recollection 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 pèriçent 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 Sisyphus, 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." 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 ténille et anxieuse d'un Proust, sa

1 Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, p. 170.
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 truth; 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' 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 s'est appliqué à ne pas rapporter plus de choses qu'il n'en a pu voir, à ne pas prêter à ses compagnons de peste des pensées qu'ils n'auraient pu forcer 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, clarified with analogies and surrounded with reasons which would permit

---

2 loc. cit.

3 Crosse. 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 raconté plus "d'histoires," on crée son univers. Les grands romanciers sont des romanciers philosophe, c'est-à-dire le contraire d'écrivains à thème. Ainsi Balzac, Sade, Melville, Stendhal, Dostoevsky, 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 realised 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. 139.
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 capacity, 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 expressed one idea with its different phases.  "L'artiste 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 artist must have in the absurd world is one that can maintain its serenity in great upheavals. If the artist can paint a peaceful 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 forme dénuee sans le masque de l’absurde. La création, c’est le grand masque.” Inulating 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 compasses his personages. He designs them, sculptures them, makes himself a part of them and lends his blood to making them come alive. Incapable of obliterating the reality in their lives, his creation ceases with his making himself as nearly like them as possible. These thoughts are reflected in the contemporary théâtre du 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 Martime:

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

Un sentiment comme cesse perd sa force. La logique du théâtre n’admet pas les sentiments que la situation

7 Ibid., p. 130.
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 Sartre, 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, plea-
sures 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 unquenchable 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, Camae 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 those 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 dream. The poor human being,
feeling himself sinking into the abyss, saves 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 ship-

wreck, being the truth of life, constitutes salvation.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Ortega y Gasset, \textit{El Hijo}, 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


WORKS CONSULTED


"Reflections," *Time*, XLI, 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, cen-
tered 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 1946. 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 exis-
tentialist 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.