

# The Notion of Political Action in the Writings of Albert Camus

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled "Notion of Political Action in the Writings of Albert Camus." submitted by Ziaullah Khan in fulfillment of ~~ten~~ credits out of total requirement of twenty-four credits for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) of the University, is his original work according to the best of my knowledge and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I discovered Albert Camus in the final year of my Graduation when I read his last novel, 'The Fall'. The book seemed to open a floodgate of ideas and observations which I thought belonged only to me. After this I knew for sure that Camus had much to offer us all about which I wanted to know as much as I could. And as I read more, the more compelling it became to write about Camus' philosophy. When I joined J.N.U. for M.Phil and presented this idea to the Committee, everyone agreed that Albert Camus was definitely workable. Hence, this Dissertation was written. So, although this work may officially be of two semesters or one year, it has a longer history.

I wish, therefore, to record my deep sense of appreciation and gratitude to the Chairman, Dr. Balveer Arora, and the staff of this Centre of Political Science for having presented me with the opportunity to undertake this academic work.

To my guide and supervisor Dr. Gurpreet Mahajan, I am sincerely grateful for all the encouragement and academic guidance she offered me during the entire course of writing this thesis, and without whom it would have been impossible to work on such a challenging topic.

## INTRODUCTION

Albert Camus was born in French North Africa in July 1913. When he was about a year old his father died in the first World War. He was raised, along with his brother, by his mother and maternal grandmother. He did his schooling and college studies in Algeria and by the age of twenty was married to his first wife, Simone Hie. A year later he joined the Communist party and created, along with others, the Theatre du Travail which staged plays sympathetic to the party ideology. After finishing his M.A. his marriage ended, and in 1937 he broke with the communist party and changed the theatre company's name and ideological bent. It was now called Theatre de L'Equipe. In 1938 he wrote articles in the 'Alger-Republicain' that supported the resistance movement against the Fascist regime. He always had trouble with tuberculosis and this is what stopped him from having an active teaching career or joining the army. But he was no mute spectator, during the Second World War he wrote in the 'Combat', which was a clandestine newspaper. His early writings 'The Myth of Sisyphus' and 'The Outsider' introduced him to the world as a serious writer. This also helped him in deciding what to do with his knowledge and talent, but before this he took to various jobs ranging from a goalkeeper, to a teacher, to a writer, to an actor and director. Due to

his affiliation with the theatre he wrote many plays as well.

Camus was sensitive to the socio-political surroundings he lived in, not only in Europe, but also in the rest of the world. He wrote a series of letters, better known as "Letters to a German Friend" in 1943-44 in which he opposed the German expansionism and its violent ways. He warned the people against the 'reasoned expression of hatred' that was spreading in Europe and said the only way to fight it intellectually was through 'objective criticism' and 'sane intelligence'. He supported the Spanish resistance movement. He wanted that a truce be created between the Arab militants and the French authorities in his own country. He was also sympathetic towards the anti-authoritarian movement in Hungary which rose in 1956 which was latter mercilessly crushed by the Soviet tanks. Views on these various historical occurrences can be seen in the book titled 'Resistance, Rebellion, and Death' and the 'Actuelles' series. The threat of a Nuclear holocaust was looming over the world after the second world war and Camus was well aware of its effects both physically and psychologically on man that is why he wrote, "collective passions make us run the risk of universal destruction" and "since atomic war would divest any future of its

meaning, it gives us complete freedom of action. We have nothing to lose except everything".<sup>1</sup> This was considered the 'wager' of his generation. He was also against intellectual slavery, unfree press and alienation which had become a way of life. It was not surprising, therefore, that 'nihilism', 'absurdity' and 'anomie', and 'anxiety' had found permanent residence in the existing societies.

Camus also used the stage most effectively to make a statement on various political activities around him. "The State of Siege" was a comment on a society that sets itself up against the true wishes of the people which, to stay in power, rules tyrannically. It was basically against a totalitarian regime, no matter which part of the world it is in and no matter which political ideology it claims to follow. "Caligula" was more of a philosophical reflection on the attempt of man to explain God, fate, chance and death by reason, failing which man is justified in doing whatever he desires; even taking the place of God himself. "The Just" was about the Russian terrorists in 1905 and it presented the paradoxes of their extreme revolutionary ways. "If death is the only way [to attain

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1. Albert Camus, Resistance, Rebellion, and Death, (Trans. by) Justin O'Brien, Vintage, New York, 1974, pp. 237-238 and 246, respectively.

freedom and deliver justice to the people], then we have chosen the wrong path. The right path leads to life." <sup>2</sup> So, "The Just" can be seen as the humanitarian impulse of man against his ideological commitments.

In his short-stories also he is addressing himself to the contemporary problems. For example, in "The Renegade" he points out the new God that man has created: "Fetish", this new master rules us absolutely and as only "evil" can "reign absolutely"<sup>3</sup>, we must destroy it before it destroys us. The state of contemporary art is also criticised implicitly in "The Artist at Work" in the same collection. The plight of the workers faced with industrialisation and mechanisation is dealt with in "The Silent Man", and so on.

Camus is studied more often as a writer than a philosopher, that is inevitable, because he does not provide one with a political philosophy directly, except probably in his essays; "The Myth of Sisyphus" and "The Rebel". However his writings reflect on the issues that are central to the western philosophical tradition: namely, freedom, justice, political action, equality,

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2. The Collected Plays of Albert Camus, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1965, P. 172.

3. See, "The Renegade", in Exile and the Kingdom, (Trns. by) Justin O'brien, London, Penguin, 1962, PP. 43-44.



alienation, nihilism etc. and analyse the meaning of these concepts in contemporary times. This Dissertation examines his views on some of these concepts. Accordingly, the first chapter discusses the notion of freedom. Discussing the manner in which freedom was defined and its meaning gradually extended from a concept, to a right, to the part of human nature itself.

Camus was faced with Marxism which provided the world with probably the most powerful and influential concept of freedom of our time. The experience of Fascism was also fresh in the memory of the western civilization. Consequently, in his writings, Camus addressed them both. About Fascism he wrote: "individuals under a totalitarian regime are not free, even though man in the collective sense is free."<sup>4</sup> Similarly under Marxism, individual liberty and human equality are frequently violated against so, mere "socialization of the means of production does not mean the disappearance of classes and exploitation."<sup>5</sup> Both philosophies also justify violence and murder. The Fascists justified it judging by their equation that a "patriot is he who supports the republic in general; whoever opposes it in detail is a traitor", in other words whoever "criticizes it is a traitor, whoever fails to give

4. Albert Camus', "The Rebel," (Trans. by) Anthony Boner, London, Penguin, 1982, p. 200.

5. Ibid, p. 197.

open support is a suspect".<sup>6</sup> Traitors are killed and suspects disappear mysteriously. Marxism justifies it on the pretext that "one day, far away in the future, the end will justify all."<sup>7</sup> Camus opposes both the views because he is against violence in general and murder in particular. He feels that freedom is not worth it if one has to sacrifice a life for it. But he also says; "It is not sufficient to live, there must be a destiny which does not have to wait on death ... man has an idea of a better world than this. But better does not mean different, it means unified."<sup>8</sup> And it is this solidarity that I have addressed myself in this work.

Existentialism, as a philosophy emerged in this century in reaction to the Marxist-Leninist tradition and its failure to give enough importance to the individual.<sup>9</sup> Instead of giving centrality to the category of means of production, they emphasised the human traumas and

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6. Ibid, P. 96

7. Ibid, P. 189.

8. Ibid, P. 228.

9. As Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Meidegger, Jaspers and Marceldo. The Neo-Marxists, Luxemburg, Lukacs, Kautsky, Krosch, and Bernstein were, however, concerned more specifically about the nature and the need of a violent revolution for historical development.

experiences in capitalism, hence they turned to the early writings of Marxism. While Camus agreed with the analysis of the existentialists, he had one major difference with them: namely, he was critical of both the capitalist and the socialist societies. He rejected completely the existing social structure and its accompanying value systems. Unlike the theist existentialists, he did not look towards God for providing a universal ground for existing values, nor did he, in the manner of Marxists privilege history.<sup>10</sup> He turned to man only because Camus felt that man held in himself naturally, the goodness and power needed for discerning between right and wrong without any external help. Camus felt, however, that man may go beserk after rejecting God and before turning to himself. For example, he may want to take this place himself and become extremely naive and arrogant, as was the case with Caligula. Or may even allow, as did Ivan Karamazov, his own father's killing. This state of nihilism or anomie, as Durkheim called it, is therefore, a destructive stage. The rejection of God and the turn to history, as Marxism does, is also destructive because one must kill if history has to progress. Camus felt, however, that another stage existed which has been

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10. Camus believed, "To Choose History... is to Choose Nihilism" ('The Rebel' op. cit., P. 212)

overlooked and which was deferent from and went much beyond the two afore mentioned; that is, 'absurdity' which leads to a positive rebellion instead of a negative revolution or murder or suicide. The rebellion transforms an extremely individualistic experience of nihilism, anomie, alienation and absurdity into a collective revolt against the present situation which is marked by unfreedom and unauthentic existence.

A discussion of Camus' concept of rebellion forms the second chapter of this Dissertation.

The theory of collective action or rebellion which emerges, therefore, is minus the literary, metaphysical and artistic revolt that he describes in detail in "The Rebel". It is a rebellion which is historical, political, and different. What makes the individual realization of absurdity lead to collective rebellion? This is Camus' main concern. "I revolt, therefore we exist", or the realization that the whole humanity is in the same boat', becomes apparent. Turner in his book "Radical Man" makes a detailed and even practical study of this phenomenon. Rebellion "binds" men, as does absurdity, and also death, because all that have 'experienced' it cannot tell others of it, and all that haven't cannot comprehend it in its totality. Infact this is one of the reasons why,

according to Camus, men should all work for a better future within their lifetime and not leave it to some unseen future after we are gone, like Marxism does.

Discussing the various options available to people of our time, Marxism and Existentialism which supports such revolutionary methods are rejected by Camus. Trade unionism is, however, acknowledged to be important for rebellion by Camus, but is not sufficient on its own. It requires the help of the intelligentsia, a free press, and proper communication between the two. So again importance is given to solidarity, along with the solidarity of the human race. Camus' philosophy, in this sense, can be said to be a fight against all that rejects this solidarity of man. A deep humanist sentiment is re-inserted by Camus as he gives centrality to man, but move in a collective sense, rather than an individualistic one.

The third chapter tries to create a circumfrance in which Camus' philosophy can be seen move clearly and tries to show how he is a 'Liberal Moralist' as well as a 'liberal-socialist', as some scholars have branded him.

The final chapter is an attempt to critically assess the complex and yet clear philosophy of Camus.

## FREEDOM

Freedom has been an idea as well as a force which has led man to action since the beginning of civilization. It has been used by revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries to justify their cause and actions. The fact that it finds several expressions and leads to a variety of quite diverse actions can be evaluated by observing how freedom led, on the one hand, the Russian terrorists to violent action in 1905 against the Tsarist dynasty, and, on the other, led Gandhi to adopt a totally peaceful and non-violent protest against the colonial masters. The notion of freedom has changed dramatically over time: from the Greek civilization to the present time, the concept has been redefined in a manner that has implied an extension of human control over life and environment. Beginning with the assumption that men are unequal in their capacities, skills and powers, the Greeks differentiated between masters and slaves, and provided the right to participate in the civic life of the polity only to the former. The slaves were to assist the masters in the management of the household by providing necessary labour required for sustenance. Within the framework, Plato associated freedom with self-mastery or self-

control.<sup>1</sup> He also saw freedom as an entity external to man; something that had to be achieved or realized. Aristotle conceived freedom as a privilege; he maintained that "some men are by nature free and others slaves".<sup>2</sup> They are, as it were, born unequal.

The Aristotelian conception of freedom as a privilege dominated the western philosophical tradition for a considerable length of time. Freedom was seen as the prerogative of a certain section of the community that had the right to participate in the political life of the city-state or country, and it had no relevance for the ordinary masses or slaves. While freedom finds its expression in the civic life of the people, the latter is seen as a necessary condition for the existence of freedom. Nevertheless there is, at this stage, no discussion of the threat or hindrance to freedom from the state, the society, or other individuals.

The Aristotelian interpretation of freedom found an expression in the writings of Descartes. Treating freedom as a privilege, Descartes believed that only the knowledgeable had access to 'free reason', hence, they

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1. Mortimer J. Adler, "Freedom", New York, Magi Books, 1968, pp. 72-73.

2. Richard Mckeon, (ed.), "The Basic Works of Aristotle", New York, Random House, 1991, p. 1133.

alone could be free. The sovereign should be one with knowledge and intellegence so that he could grasp what it means to be free and then interpret it in a way that is in the interest of the masses.<sup>3</sup> However, a couple of centuries later one finds that freedom is analysed in quite a deferent way. It is no longer seen as a privilege, instead it is seen as the 'natural right' of all men. Probably two of the most influential proponents of this view were John Locke and J.J. Rousseau. Freedom to use one's powers and abilities in a manner that the self deemed best and proper was, according to Locke, a right that man possessed in the 'state of nature'; that is, at the time when there was no organised political powers and the state had not come into existence. However, hindrance to the exercise of this right and the possible violations of it by other people in the society necessitated the signing of a contract to form a political and social union. And only in this situation, were the people in a position to protect and freely exercise their natural rights. State was therefore a necessary component for the freedom of man. Locke understood that free life in a state implied that men must abide by the laws that are collectively formulated by the representation of the

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3. John J. Blom (Trans), "Descartes, his Moral Philosophy and Psychology", Sussex, Harvester Press, 1980, pp. 28, 79-80, 944.



people in the political institution's decision making process. But he wanted to guard against the possibility of any infringement of the rights by the state. Using the theory of 'natural rights', he maintained, that these were rights that were inalienable and fundamental. They existed prior to the formation of the state, hence, they had to be respected by the state. If the state acted in a manner that violated and infringed the rights, then men had the right-indeed the obligation-to resist the state.<sup>4</sup> Hence, Locke found that the state was necessary yet it could, if the people were not vigilant, become an impediment to the exercise of the natural right of freedom.

Rousseau saw society as a system which had turned against man and was responsible for the moral decline and degeneration of man. Man, according to Rousseau, was born free but now was everywhere in chains.<sup>5</sup> He had lost the nobility and dignity that he enjoyed before the existence of the social and political system. Therefore he wanted to re-structure the existing institutions and replace them with institutions that would provide

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4. See, D.A. Zoll, Reason and Rebellion, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963, PP. 170-175

5. See, Alan Genirth (ed.), Political Philosophy, New York: Macmillan, 1965, PP. 61.

security, without subordinating the individual to the will of another person. the 'general will' was to be the device which would provide just that.

Locke and Rousseau gave primacy to rights; whenever these were suppressed or curtailed, by the laws or actions of the state, they called for a change.<sup>6</sup> Accepting this major premise Jeremy Bentham emphasised the need to curtail the actions of the state: to reduce them to the minimum, because laws (of any kind), for Bentham, limited and often hindered man's freedom.<sup>7</sup> A gradual shift of emphasis is noted here. Earlier it was argued that the citizens realized freedom by participating in the political process involving legislation and adjudication of laws, now, in the post-renaissance world, man was given freedom to choose whether to obey those laws or not.

J.S. Mill saw the threat to freedom from both the state and the rest of the society. He was not willing to accept the infalliability of the state. That is why he was faced with the following questions: 'In what sphere should men be allowed to do as they want?' 'What are the spheres that can be regulated?' Mill's answers to these questions became clear when one looked at the way be

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6. This idea found expression in the Declaration of 1789 after the French Revolution

7. See, D.A. Zoll, op. cit., pp. 255-256.

catagorised action. He saw actions as "self-regarding" and "others-regarding". Self-regarding' action or action which concerned the individual alone should, in his view, be left entirely in the domain of the individual action. But action that affected others in the community could not be left to individual will, and so fell in the domain of 'others-regarding' action.<sup>8</sup> Man was free to do what he wanted, therefore, so long as he did not inflict any physical harm to others. But freedom also requires the creation of an environment necessary for the development of man, therefore some positive steps had to be taken by the state; thought Mill. Freedom was no longer seen as the absence of state interference or regulation, and it was acknowledged that the latter was actually necessary sometimes for the realization of freedom. This was so mainly because the state was seen as "the only association which a man joins not from choice but from necessity".<sup>9</sup>

Immanuel Kant added another dimension to the discussion on freedom. He thought that the absence of external restraints was by itself insufficient for ensuing freedom of man. One required, along with it, freedom from

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8. For a discussion see, C.E.M. Joad, "Introduction to Modern Political Theory", Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1982, pp 27-30.

9. Ibid, p. 32.

determination by passions and desires. Freedom of thought and consciousness, similarly, required the absence of 'internal' and 'external' constraints. The major impediment to free action and thought, according to Kant, was morality as internally it would take the form of conscience and externally it would take the form of laws. Man was seen then, as a morally responsible person, because for Kant, "free will and a will under moral laws" was "one and the same" thing.<sup>10</sup>

Taking laws as an essential feature of the state, Hegel thought that whenever there were laws, freedom was implied<sup>11</sup>. The state, for Hegel, was the embodiment of the individual and collective desires, so the desire and reason of the state merely expressed, in the laws and customs, what the people accepted universally, within the system. So the laws were the best possible representation of the peoples beliefs.<sup>12</sup> Hegel also thought that freedom had progressed in history, in the sense that freedom had been extended to more and more progressively as history unfolded itself. With his notion of dialectics he showed

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10. See, Roger J. Sollivan, 'Immanuel Kants' Moral Theory, Cambridge, University, Press, 1989, pp. 44-46.

11. Bertrand Russell, "A History of Western Philosophy", London, Unwin, 1987, p. 707.

12. Alan Gewirth, op. cit., pp. 80-84.

that during the ancient 'Oriental' stage (i.e. 'thesis') only one or the king was free. During the 'Greecko-Roman' era (i.e. 'antithesis') some were free; and with the coming of democracy in the 'Modern Christian Germanic world', (i.e. 'synthesis'), all were free.<sup>13</sup> This implied that, for Hegel, as history progressed and developed, so did the realization of freedom.

Karl Marx did not see freedom as an attribute of the political system because the existence of political order was not an expression of the shared aspirations of the people in that system, for him. Society was divided, by Marx, into two opposing classes: the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' or, in the present capitalist formation, the bourgeois and the proletariat. These classes could and still can't, have consensus on anything, so the concept of just and equal laws and therefore, freedom, does not arise. The only way that freedom could be understood then, according to Marx, was by relating it inalienably to equality; and equality could only be maintained if economic exploitation would be put to an end. The only way to do that, Marx believed, was by overthrowing the ruling class which has accumulated wealth by sucking out the blood of the workers and the poor. The overthrow

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13. T.Z. Lavine, 'From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophical Quest', New York: Banjam, 1984, p. 236.

would be a violent one, and would pave the way for a better society. The real potential of man and real freedom, according to Marx, could be realised only in this new society.<sup>14</sup>

The philosophers of this century borrowed heavily from the previous philosophers and their thoughts. For example, the Benthamite view of the minimum interference of the state is reflected in the writings of F.A. Hayek<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, the positive and 'negative' notion of freedom find their way in the writings of Isaiah Berlin.<sup>16</sup> Herbert Marcuse<sup>17</sup> and Erich Fromm<sup>18</sup> also believed in these concepts of positive and negative liberty.

These new developments led to the careful

14. See, Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1977, pp. 97, 100. Also See, V. Afanasyav, "Marxist Philosophy", Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1965, p. 177.
15. See, John Gray, Liberalism, London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 91, 94, 95 and 97, for detail.
16. T.H. Green saw 'Positive' freedom as freedom which seeks realization beyond the existing system, and 'negative' as that which sought freedom within the existing structure. (See, G.H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory", New Delhi: Oxford, 1973, p. 658). Isaiah Berlins' view can be found in Four Essays on Liberty", London, 1969, pp. XXXVIII-XLIV, also p. 131.
17. See, Herbert Marcuse, "One Dimensional Man", Boston, 1964, pp. 1-4, 214. Also Marcuse, "Essay on Liberation", London, 1969, pp. 55-56, 59.
18. See, Erich Fromm, "Escape from Freedom", New York, 1941, pp. VIII, 13, 15-16, 24, 25, 141 and 256.

redefinition of the role of the state and kind of rights it offered and protected. The role of the society also needed to be redefined, as it was no longer seen as an extension of the family<sup>19</sup>. It was seen as a system which had grown on its own, much resembling the organic theory believed by the Contractualists. The Utilitarians, the Marxists and the Existentialists also believed in it. But unlike the predecessors, the existentialists and neo-Marxists of this century analysed the human society today vis-a-vis the mechanisation and industrialization, and the impact, both psychologically and physically, it has had on the individual and his immediate surroundings. Existentialism opposed "the institutionalised and collectivised life on the analogy of the machinery of technology towards which modern man is drifting "and wanted to retain" the agonizingly difficult authentic existence of the individual who insists upon maintaining his unique consciousness in the face of the overwhelming pressure to conform."<sup>20</sup> to the dehumanisational movement mentioned above.

In other words, the existentialists argued : (i) that man in the present social structure and state

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19. As Aristotle thought.

20. William V. Spanson, (ed.), "A Casebook on Existentialism" New York : Thomas Y. Crow, 1966, p. 2

institutionalization was unfree'; (ii), that man has 'the power to choose', (iii), that man is a rational and moral thinking being; (iv), that there is a desperate need to change the present situation; and (v), that it is up to man alone to do something about the present situation: his own life, and the life of his fellow-humans, and that too on his own initiative. Existentialism sees existence prior to essence<sup>21</sup>, and so this philosophical tradition finds itself standing on the exact opposite position as compared to 'essentialism'. It believes that all men have the same capabilities. The traditional liberal notion of freedom<sup>22</sup> as the absence of constraints to an individuals' thought and actions, is also acknowledged by the existentialists. Similarly, the traditional liberal notion of freedom that allows the individual to do whatever he wills so long as he does not harm another,<sup>23</sup> is also acknowledged by the existentialists. But this concept is extended by them as well, in the sense that an individual is given the liberty to commit the act which signifies ultimate freedom in human action, suicide;<sup>24</sup> as

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21. Ibid, P. 278.

22. See, Mortimer J. Adler, op. cit., PP. 17, 25-26.

23. Ibid.

24. Especially Sartre, Camus and Jaspers.



long as others are not physically harmed.

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The existentialists were basically criticising the bourgeois society, and the way it had progressed. And the fact that the two World Wars were fought essentially in their part of the world, led to a disenchantment with the present socio-political system as on whole. This opinion finds ample expression in all their writings. They emphasised the mundane existence of man and understood well that man is trained from childhood itself to behave and act in a particular manner and talk in a particular language. This helps in moulding the individual in a way which suits the existing institutional structure, and guarantees the perpetuation of the system<sup>25</sup>. So existentialism not only saw freedom in that unique historical setting but also (perhaps because of it) saw freedom from a different philosophical perspective. Deviating further, from the post-Renaissance tradition which saw freedom as a natural right of man, existentialism saw freedom as the very nature of man. Sartre, infact saw freedom as the very being of man.<sup>26</sup>

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25. This doctrine was borrowed from Blaise Pascal, see, "Pensees", (Trans. by) Issac Taylor, New York: Grolier Inc., 1968, p. 35. The same concept can also be found in Marcuse, Frend, Fromm and Humanist writings.

26. The only exception to this view probably is Mearleau-Ponty, he wrote, "freedom is not in the hither side of my being, but before me, in things." ("Phenomenology of perception", (trans. by) Colim Smith, London, 1986, p. 452).



Existentialism also borrowed from other traditional sources. The Aristotelian notion of "freedom of choice"<sup>27</sup>, which was emphasised by Immanuel Kant<sup>28</sup> and Soren Kierkegaard<sup>29</sup>, was re-emphasised by them. Sartre infact pushed this tradition further when he claimed that the only way man could choose freedom was by choosing oneself<sup>30</sup> and if one does not then one would remain 'unfree'. Sartre feels that freedom is so ingrained in the very being of man, that one can never, even if one tries escape from it; that is why man is "condemned to be free."<sup>31</sup> Similarly even if man does not choose, he has exercised his power of choice" as even not choosing is a choice.<sup>32</sup> Freedom must be seen, Sartre thinks, as something which man is not oriented towards naturally; it is a value (like every value) 'determined' by man himself, and in "unoriented, in the sense that there is no

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27. Richard McKeon (ed.) op cit. pp. 967 & 978.

28. See Bernard Carnois, "The Coherence of Kant's Doctrine of Freedom", (trans. by) David Booth, Chicago: Univ. Press, 1987, pp. 88-91.

29. See, Dipti Shukla, "Subjectivity in Kierkegaard's Philosophy", Meerut, Mansi Prakashen, 1987, pp. 14,41,43.

30. Herbert Morris (ed.), "Freedom and Responsibility", Standard: University Press, 1961, p. 142.

31. Istvan Meszaros, "The Work of Sartre", Vol. I, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979, p. 163.

32. William V. Spanson, op cit., p.291.

objective value correlative to the human will."<sup>33</sup> In other words, man determines freedom and not the other way round, and that is why man's apathy is freedom's hindrance. Man must, therefore, take the initiative and do something on his own, responsibly. Sartre observes, "Man is free so as to commit himself, but he is not free unless he commits himself so as to be free."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Sartre feels that man has the capacity not only to choose between given alternatives, but also amongst the ends of those alternatives.<sup>35</sup>

Karl Jaspers, on the other hand, saw freedom as 'transcendence' and 'Existenz'.<sup>36</sup> As: "Existenz is the will to be authentic"<sup>37</sup> and authentic existence can be

33. Fredrick Copleston, "Contemporary Philosophy", London: Search Press, 1965, p. 115.

34. Istvan Meszaros, op. cit., p. 14 (emphasis added)

35. Sartre seems to echo what Spinoza had said : "The sort of freedom involved in speaking of moral freedom in generally believed to consist of the feeling or awareness that human beings have of being able to choose between alternative means to a desired end, or between alternative ends themselves" (Paul S. Kashap, "Spinoza and Moral Freedom," New York, 1987, p. 153.

36. Jaspers says, "freedom is Existenz" ("Philosophy", Vol. III, (Trans. by) E.B. Ashoton, Chicago Univ. Press, 1971, p. 58)

37. Walter Kaufmann(ed.) "Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre", Cleveland: Meridien, 1965, p. 193.

experienced only through transcendence, Jaspers also referred to freedom as the "Encompassing". The force through which man can transcend is "Defiance" or revolt. Two things, however, are important to note in the writings of Jaspers; (i) the notion of God, and (ii), "Existential Freedom." About God, he wrote: "To chide God is to seek God. My every No is a plea for a Yes, but a true, honest Yes. To be true, surrender must spring from a defiance that has been overcome."<sup>38</sup> In making this assertion Jaspers seems to acknowledge the superiority and presence of God ultimately. "Existential Freedom" is seen as being restricted on the one side by the "natural law", and on the other by "moral law."<sup>39</sup> The former being, in all probability, a reference to the laws of nature which are beyond man, and the latter being to laws that are created by man himself.

Albert Camus was in sympathy with many of these observations. For example he agreed with Sartre that man can determine his own values, and with Jaspers that authentic existence can only be reached through a revolt or 'Defiance'. But unlike the other existentialists, Camus criticised both the bourgeois state as well as its

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38. Karal Jaspers, "Philosophy", Vol. III, op.cit., p. 71

39. Jaspers, "Philosophy," Vol. II, op.cit., p. 136.

socialist counterpart. He observed that as society progressed in history, it "became accustomed to legalizing what might serve her future"<sup>40</sup> and so crush all that hindered its progression and threatened its survival. Commenting on the notion of freedom as it existed and operated in bourgeois societies, Camus' said: "The Quarter-truth contained in Western Society" is portrayed to be all inclusive and genuine notion of freedom and therefore, "the only way of perfectibility." But what is to be realised is that though the freedom of enterprise, only the "heavy industry can be perfected, but not justice and truth."<sup>41</sup> Freedom, he argued, has become a privilege today because it means "the right of the strongest to dominate"<sup>42</sup> by getting richer and more powerful while the worker gets poorer and weaker, both organizationally and intellectually. The reason why people remain silent and passive even after realising such a development and

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40. Albert Camus', "Resistance, Rebellion, and Death", New York: Vintage, 1974, p. 226.

41. Ibid, p. 248.

42. Camus', "The Rebel", (Trans.by), Anthony Bower, London: Penguin, 1982, p. 251.

distortion of freedom "is not because of its privileges, ... but because of its exhausting tasks."<sup>43</sup> Camus did not, however, want the people to succumb to the 'fatality', and believed that "the strongest always progresses at the expense of the weaker";<sup>44</sup> instead, he wants them to fight against it. He also wants them to fight against dominant 'ideologies' and the prevailing conceptions of 'art', 'innocence' and 'justice'.<sup>45</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Camus agreed with some of the existentialists on their understanding of freedom. For example, Merleau-Ponty's belief that "there is no

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43. Camus, "Resistance, Rebellion, and Death", op.cit., p. 99

44. Ibid, p. 141.

45. Camus' view on 'art' can be read in 'The Rebel', op.cit., pp. 219-242. His opinion on the notion of innocence, which has changed so as to include seeing even violence sympathetically and even glorifying murder ideologically (e.g. Marxism); can be read also in 'The Rebel', pp. 244, 268, and in 'Resistance, Rebellion, and Death', op.cit p. 101. In 'The Fall', (Trans. by), Justin O'Brien, London: Penguin, 1988, pp. 45, 60, 62, 81, 82, 83, 85 and 106, Camus' views on innocence are given. Camus' observes in 'The Fall' that 'we have lost track of the light, the morning, the holy innocence of those who forgive themselves' "(Ibid, p. 106). Implying that our crimes through genocide and destruction have pushed us away from pure innocence for which we shall never be forgiven. His notion of 'justice', is given in 'The Rebel' (op.cit) p. 254-255.

freedom without a field"<sup>46</sup> in merely re-written by Camus when he says, "freedom has no meaning except in relation to its limited fate."<sup>47</sup> Camus agrees with Kierkegaard when he says that man must choose his freedom and take the responsibility of the choice taken.<sup>48</sup> And with Sartre on the point that man must create his own values and hence understand and discover freedom keeping this consciousness in his mind rather than being determined by freedom itself. Camus also believed in what Jaspers defined 'Existential Freedom' to be. But he did not believe that some men can attain freedom better and more easily than others, (as Nietzsche believed.)<sup>49</sup> just as Kierkegaard related freedom to anxiety<sup>50</sup>. Camus relates 'the absurd' to

46. "Maurleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception", op.cit., p. 439.

47. Albert Camus', "The Myth of Sisyphus", London, Penguin, 1988, p. 59,

48. Dipti Shukla; op.cit., p. 41

49. Richard Schacht, "Nietzsche," London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, pp. 308-309.

50. Kierkegaard distinguished between 'animal fear' and 'human anxiety', and believed that the realization of this 'anxiety' leads to either the acceptance of fate (as Kierkegaard himself did), or the feeling of guilt. He also saw anxiety as 'subjective' (i.e. the 'consequence of sin') and 'objective' (which is felt by innocence and leads to freedom). For details see, R. Grossmann, "Phenomenology and Existentialism", London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, pp. 71-76 and 158-161.

freedom. I shall come back to this later. But first, a general survey of his writings on freedom would reveal that Camus is addressing himself to certain general questions like; What does freedom lie in? Does it mean having complete control over our life and death? Or does it mean simply, the liberty to do what one wants to? Camus seems to think that freedom lies both in the control of one's desires, passions, life and death; and in doing what one wants to. Absolute control, is impossible for man is controlled and influenced by many things which he may not even realize, or do anything about; for example, the future, and, death. Besides it is like taking the place of God. Camus, therefore, wants man to remain, and remind himself to remain, in the realm of the possible<sup>51</sup>. He believes that freedom exists "only ... in a world where what is possible is defined at the same time as what is not possible."<sup>52</sup> If man does not do so and tries instead to make "the impossible possible, the results are disasterous. This is the exact mistake which the young king Caligula makes after his siter, Drusilla, suddenly dies. Caligula takes refuge in logic and tries ...to explain everything with it, and ends up making what he

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51. Camus', "The Rebel," op.cit., p. 62

52. "Collected Plays of Albert Camus", "London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965, p. 14.



wanted most; "a kingdom where the impossible is king."<sup>53</sup> But Caligula is also trying to take the place of God, fate, and chance, because he knows not where to stop as he has broken the boundaries between the possible and the impossible. Once Caligula does this, the results are horrific. 'Aspiring for the impossible leads to self-destruction,' this is what Camus seems to be telling us through this Play. Elsewhere he observes, man "turns towards God only to obtain the impossible. As for the possible, men suffice."<sup>54</sup>

Camus also points out to other limitations to an individuals freedom. Social conventions, he argues, also limit freedom. If one does not act in accordance with established norms, then one is seen as an 'outsider' or a 'stranger' in the society. By not crying after learning of his mother's death through a telegram, and later at her funeral, Meursault breaks a very sacred norm. As Camus later points out himself about his first novel "The Outsider," Meursault does not "stick to the rules" of the society; he "wonders, on the fringe, in the suburbs of private, solitary, sensual life," and just "refuses to lie."<sup>55</sup> But this is only the beginning, Camus went on to

53. Ibid, p. 16

54. Camus', "The Myth of Sisyphus", op. cit., p. 37

55. Camus', "Lyrical and Critical", (Trans. by) Philosophy, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1967, P. 251.

analyse what would happen if man did not accept what is handed down to him conventionally. He seemed to be implying, as his novel showed 'The Outsider' in the end, that it can lead to the annihilation of one's life.

The necessity of legal constraints was acknowledged by Camus. Infact, Camus traced the origin and necessity of such restraints when he wrote: "The freedom of each finds its limits in that of others, no one has a right to absolute freedom. The limit where freedom begins and ends, where its rights and duties come together, is called law, and the state itself must bow to the law."<sup>56</sup> He sees the need for the laws to change as time Passes. He says "the laws final justification is in the good it does or fails to do to the society of a given Place or time."<sup>57</sup> But Camus also realised that in the name of protecting law, order and justice, the state may act in a way which, in effect would result in the curtailment of man's freedom. The state may be able to justify its actions to its citizens convincingly.<sup>58</sup> This is the reason why he

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56. Camus', "Resistance, Rebellion, and Death", op.cit., p. 101.

57. Ibid, p. 178.

58. Like in the case of Fascism.

feels justice must be checked so that freedom may breathe freely and vice-versa. He wrote, therefore, absolute "freedom mocks at justice," and absolute "justice denies freedom."<sup>59</sup> There must be a balance between the two concepts, in other words, "the two ideas must find their limits in one another."<sup>60</sup>

Death, Camus feels is another constraint on freedom. Man has to achieve freedom inside the boundaries of life. And once it is understood that absolutism of any sort leads to death, those paths are wrong and must not be chosen. Camus' says through Dr. Rieux in his novel 'The Plague', "since the order of the world is shaped by death, mightn't it be better for God if we refuse to believe in Him, and struggle with all our might against death, without raising our eyes towards the heavens where He sits in silence?"<sup>61</sup> Camus does not want People to accept death as "the scourge of God";<sup>62</sup> or try to escape from it temporarily by finding solace in other things and leading a shallow life; or resort to immoral things on the logic

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59. Camus, "The Rebel", op. cit, p. 255.

60. Ibid.

61. Camus' "The Plague", (Trans.by) Stuart Gilbert, London, Penguin, 1987, p. 107-108.

62. Ibid., p. 80.

that - as we all have to die, we might as well have fun while we can; or leave it to fate or a false hope. Camus wants man to face up to this phenomena of death and see it as an incentive for us so that we all work towards a better future instead of letting it bogg us down. The metaphysical grounds of this proposition are reflected in his concept of 'the absurd' and 'Absurd Freedom'.

The "absurd" is defined by Camus as "the gap between his [man's] powers of explanation and the irrationality of the world and of experience;" as "that divorce between the mind that desires [to know] and the world that disappoints"; as "the break between the world and ... mind";<sup>63</sup> and the realization of the meaninglessness of life and the universe. "Absurd is not in man ... nor in the world, but in their presence together".<sup>64</sup> The sudden and inexplicable death of someone very near and dear, for instance, triggers off this state of absurdity. In 'The Outsider' this state comes to Meursault, in 'The Just' the assassin Kaliyev's sentence to death and subsequent death made his comrade Dora experience this state of mind. In 'Cross-purpose' a similar feeling engulfed the mother

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63. Camus', "The Myth of Sisyphus", op.cit., pp. 36, 50 and 52 respectively.

64. Ibid, p. 34.

after she realized that she had killed, her own son. In the posthumously published novel "A Happy Death", Meursault experiences it after killing his crippled friend Zagreus. And in 'Caligula' the young king experiences the same feeling after his sister Drusilla dies. Camus is trying to show then that the 'absurd' is not an abstract concept but is tangible concept and also common to man. But the concept 'absurd' is not a notion which Camus comes at unaided. Absurdity has its roots, so it seems, in the Philosophy of nihilism. Nihilism is essentially of two kinds: (i), a state of being when an individual realizes that no morals or values are rationally and logically justified, hence, anything goes, and men can follow any course of action and do as they pleased and (ii), the realization of the meaninglessness of life and the insignificance of man in the universe. The first leads to a state of normlessness which Durkheim called 'anomie'. Both kinds of nihilism however, are manifested in the writings of Dostoevsky (especially in "The Brothers Karamazov", and the novel which Camus later turned into a play, "The Possessed"). "God is put on trial"<sup>65</sup> by Dostoevsky as he cannot understand why innocent children

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65. Camus, "The Rebel", op.cit., p. 50. Also pp. 62-63, and 72-75.

should suffer and die.<sup>66</sup> Ivan seemed to be saying that "even if God existed"<sup>67</sup> such monstrosity cannot be permitted, and if this is permitted, then everything should be allowed. "Nihilism is not only despair and negation, but above all the desire to despair and to negate"<sup>68</sup> observed Camus. The main characters in Camus' fiction writings actually knew exactly what they were doing, or to put it differently, were sensually totally aware of their actions at any particular moment. So a sort of nihilism was knowingly experienced by them all. Nietzsche, on the other hand, "recognized nihilism for what it was and examined it like a clinical fact."<sup>69</sup> Camus saw two types of rebels emerging from nihilism, those "who want to die and those who want to cause death."<sup>70</sup> The former type tend to commit suicide, the latter type were like Caligula on one side, and Marxists and Fascists on the other, who take it upon themselves to rectify the present system for which even killing is permissible.

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66. See, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, "The Brothers Karanazov", (Trans. by) Constance Garnett, New York: Signet, 1980, pp. 224-226.

67. The Rebel, op.cit., p. 51.

68. Ibid, p. 52.

69. Ibid, p. 57

70. Ibid, p. 73.

Camus rejected nihilism in the above forms because they all lead to violence. Instead he saw a positive side of it which seems to have been ignored. Camus feels that nihilism leads to solitude, but the absurd leads to unity. Nihilism tries to end absurdity by ending oneself, which does not solve the problem, but just eludes it. Absurdity is to face up to the meaninglessness and learn to live with it. "The important thing ... is not to be cured, but to live with one's ailments."<sup>71</sup> The concept of the absurd has a history. Its roots can be traced as far back as to the Stoics and Plato. Plato saw a distance and difference between the Physical world and the world of Ideas.<sup>72</sup> The Stoics saw a difference between the body and the soul.<sup>73</sup> In both the cases the body or the Physical world is perishable, but the soul and the world of Ideas is not. Some scholars call it a distinction between the world of the intellect and the world of the senses, or even between appearance or reality.<sup>74</sup> Barker rightly observed that "the affinities of Plato are with

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71. "The Myth of Sisyphus", op.cit., pp. 40-41.

72. A.S. Bogomolov, "History of Ancient Philosophy", Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985, p. 185.

73. Ibid, pp. 286-291.

74. Bertrand Russell, "A History of Western Philosophy", op.cit, pp. 139 and 143.

Descartes," because we see a Cartesean dualism emerge which distinguishes and points to the gap between the 'mind' and the 'body'.<sup>75</sup> The gap can be narrowed, but never be filled completely. Immanuel Kant followed up this tradition and distinguished the 'reason' of man with the 'thing-in-itself'. The things-in-itself have no consciousness of its own so the only way they can be known is through us, thereby maintaining a sort of distance. This is why Kant writes, "the thing in itself, is not known, and cannot be known."<sup>76</sup>

Hegel saw two types of gaps. One that existed between "being-for-itself," which is aware of its conscience and its consciousness; and "being-in-itself", which either does not possess a consciousness of its consciousness or does not have a conscience at all, like for example infants.<sup>77</sup> The other is 'alienation' or 'estrangement' that man feels from the manifestations of himself or his being, and the absolute being or Giest. Hegel believed the Giest to be the ultimate manifestation of man. The feeling that the substance of man's life is

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75. Margaret Dauler Wilson, "Descartes", London, 1978, pp. 178-180.

76. "Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason", (Trans. by) Norman Kemp Smith, London: Macmillan, 1958, p. 74.

77. Inwood, "Hegel", London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, pp. 99-100.



beyond him, is the "essence of alienation."<sup>78</sup> So man has to move towards Giest to realise himself; to merge his own consciousness with that of the "universal consciousness" and thereby experience a "unity with the absolute."<sup>79</sup> Alienation, in Hegel, then provides the motion for the transformation from the "Particularity" to the whole; from subjective to the objective.<sup>80</sup> Marx elaborated and modified this latter definition of estrangement, alienation, or 'gap', but Camus' is trying to revive the previous concept and tradition, which seemed to have been side-tracked after Hegel. Sartre, however, also adopted the Marxian conception and the nihilistic concept of Dostoevsky, but practically unaltered. He did, nevertheless reflect in quite detail on the Kantian conception and maintained the gap between the "things-in-themselves" and "things-for-themselves"<sup>81</sup>, but our concern is not this.

Camus seemed to want to include only or strictly, the metaphysical tradition in his concept of absurdity. That is why we find a similarity between the Kierkegaardian and

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78. Charles Taylor, "Hegel", London, 1975, p. 178.

79. Ibid, p. 179.

80. Ibid, p. 181.

81. For Examples, see, Rene Marill-Alberes, "Jean Paul Sartre: Philosophy Without Fate", London, 1964, pp. 48-49.

Heideggerian "anxiety" and Camus' "absurdity". For Kierkegaard a particular sort of 'objective anxiety' that leads to freedom become the aspect that is a "mood" for Heidegger, which "discloses the world as world" and "reveals" to the "human beings the being of the possibility of being one's own, that means, of being free for the freedom of choosing and defining oneself."<sup>82</sup> Camus was aware of these two views as he mentioned them repeatedly in "The Myth of Sisyphus",<sup>83</sup> but his thesis is quite different because in the same essay, Camus' also gave a detailed analysis and stages of realization due to absurdity that lead to the need for freedom. Man realizes the various contradictions' first,<sup>84</sup> then certain 'truisms' are realized so that one may check his reason and make sure that the first realization is not wrong or insane. "All thought is anthropomorphic", "man is mortal,"<sup>85</sup> etc... which are truisms and all fragments of understanding but which do not add up to make one coherent picture. Man turns to science for answers but is disappointed because it offers him a "choice between a description that is sure but that teaches ... nothing and

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82. Grossmann, "Phenomenology and Existentialism", op.cit., pp. 160-161.

83. Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus", e.g., pp. 27-30.

84. Ibid, p. 22.

85. Ibid, p. 23.

hypotheses that claim to teach ... but are not sure."<sup>86</sup> Religion too, fails to explain anything. Man lives "devoid of hope and conscious of being" in other words, does not "belong to the future" and loses conception of time.<sup>87</sup> All that matters is now, the present. This is exactly what Meursault does in "The Outsider," that is why the phrase 'at that point' is repeated several times in the novel, amongst other indicators.<sup>88</sup> So, an "Absurd Freedom" is created which demands 'unity', 'clarity' and 'cohesion',<sup>89</sup> because all of humanity is in the same soup, as it were. "The absurd does not liberate; it binds. It does not authorize all actions."<sup>90</sup> The only 'authorized' action, as Camus saw it was revolt. And the way one can stay on this track is by remaining on a "middle path where the intelligence can remain clear"<sup>91</sup> because "Reason and the irrational lead to the same preaching."<sup>92</sup> The

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86. Ibid, p. 25

87. Ibid, p. 35.

88. Like, 'a while', 'I don't know how long' etc ... see "The Outsider", op.cit.

89. "The Myth of Sisyphus", op.cit., p. 54.

90. Ibid, p. 65.

91. Ibid, p. 42.

92. Ibid, p. 48.

solution does not lie in doing anything alone, but together, so as to check oneself whether; along the way; we are moving on the right path. The right path in "The Plague" is shown to Dr. Rieux, for example, by the extremes that he noted in his town; one which accepted the Plague and was either worried about it (like the Father) or happy about it (like Cottard). The other; which was constantly trying to fly from the reality of the epidemic and till very late, did not accept it. We too must choose our path between the violent path of Marxism and Stalinism, and the evolutionary way of bourgeoisie democracy. For this, one must learn "all over again how to see, [by] directing one's consciousness, [and] making of every image a privileged place."<sup>93</sup> So one should not reject previous observations and existing alternatives as "Polemical games ... Their truth must be preserved, which consists in not being satisfied."<sup>94</sup> And only then will we know what to do and how to go about doing it.

Put concisely, three main things happen when the individual is hit by 'the absurd'. One, the state of mind magnifies the "odd state of the soul in which the void becomes eloquent," 'the void' being what has previously been discussed as 'gap'.

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93. Ibid, p. 44.

94. Ibid, p. 50.

daily gestures is broken," as nothing makes sense anymore and the meaninglessness of everything blairs down on the individual mind. And three, "the heart vainly seeks the link that will connect it again,"<sup>95</sup> hence the movement of people to escape from it. But Camus wants man to face this absurdity and collectively move towards closing the 'gap', rejoining the broken 'chain' and thereby be our authentic self. To "understand" this "is to unify"<sup>96</sup> humanity, as in the realization that "everything begins with consciousness and nothing is worth anything except through it."<sup>97</sup> So in the writings of Camus an appeal can be seen which is humanitarian and collective. That is why some scholars think Camus is preaching "heroic humanism."<sup>98</sup>

So, Camus' understanding of freedom is both at the individual as well as the collective level. He recognises the power of conventions. He realizes that the Machiavellian theory : the increase of power on one side means the equal and opposite decrease in the power on the other; can be applied to freedom as well. The presence of

95. Camus', "The Myth of Sisyphus", op.cit., p. 19.

96. Ibid, p. 22.

97. Ibid, p. 19

98. See, Martin J. Walsh, "A History of Philosophy", London, 1985, pp. 597-549.

'other' is always a constraint to freedom, so freedom must not be seen at an individual level, if at all it is to be attained. Camus understood the need for the state in the sense that it becomes the collective identity of the individuals. This is why when he talked of laws, he says they must be periodically changed so that the character of the present generation is reflected in it and an old doctrine is not forcibly imposed on people. This was the exact reason why a Tiananamen Square massacre had to be conducted by the state to remain dominant. Camus also sees constraint to freedom in the bourgeoisie state because by emphasising economic freedom it actually hides economic exploitation. The power to choose between alternatives was, as mentioned earlier, first noted by Aristotle, and then Kant and Sartre and Marcuse.<sup>99</sup> But they all, at the most emphasised the power of an individual to choose between the ends of the alternatives in front of them. Camus, however, goes much beyond this tradition as he acknowledges the power of man to create alternatives.

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99. Herbert Marcuse's views on the dominant form of ideology, 'art', and 'language' can be gauged by his writings, especially "One-Dimensional Man", which establishes a close resemblance between Camus and him. But when it comes to making a choice, Marcuse feels that alternatives present for man at a particular historical moment include all possible alternative available to man. (See, "One-Dimensional Man", London: Sphere, 1970, pp. 58, 121).

This is why Camus offers us a theory of rebellion because he does not want us to become passive, he does not want us to uncritically accept what is handed down to us from the past. The 'absurd' plays a very important role in this. "Accepting the absurdity of everything around us is a stage, a necessary experience: it should not become a dead end. It arouses a revolt which can become fruitful. An analysis of the concept of revolt could help us to discover notions capable of restoring a relative meaning to existence, although a meaning that would always be in danger."<sup>100</sup> This is exactly what we shall do in the next chapter.

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100. Camus, "Lyrical and Critical", op.cit., P. 259.

## COLLECTIVE ACTION

It has become clear by now that Absurd freedom leads to the rebellion which Camus talks of, but it has yet to be seen how this theory of individual action takes the form of a collective one; how it is different from the rest of the evolutionary, revolutionary or spontaneous actions that we know of; and how, if at all, this form of action is feasible.

Before discussing all the afore mentioned it becomes extremely necessary to know the nature of revolt itself. Unlike any previous definition of it, or even the one that is provided by Jaspers,<sup>1</sup> Camus feels revolt is constituted of a few basic ingredients; why, we will soon find out Camus' revolt starts from what was previously thought to be a dead-end, that is nihilism or as Durkheim<sup>2</sup>

1. Karl Jaspers, "Philosophy", Vol.III, (Trans. by) E.B. Aston, Chicago, 1978, pp. 64-66.

2. Durkheim believed there to be certain "suicidogenic impulses" in a society which mainly affected, "two types of men, those who are too detached from the social group and those who are not detached enough" (Raymond Aron, "Main Currents in Sociological thought" Vol. II, London: Pelican, 1988, p.42) Camus seems to start with the previous category in his early writings, like "The Outsider" and "Caligula" and towards the end of his writings his characters are closer to the second category, like Gibert Jonas, (in "Exile and the Kingdom"), and Clamanse in "The Fall".



calls it 'anomie'. Nihilism, which is a state of normlessness, despair and realization of the meaninglessness of life, leads man to believe not only the Nietzschean doctrine that 'God is dead' and man is alone in the universe, but also that, as Ivan Karamazov puts it, 'everything is permitted.'<sup>3</sup> For in the previous case suicide seems to be the best way out and in the second, even the permission to kill one's own father is granted. Why then does Camus find optimism in this depressing state of affairs and why does he want to maintain dignity even though it seems to have lost its meaning? Simply because he believes man has a few gifts which no other living thing possesses, and without these few things man is reduced to lower animals. These are passion for knowledge, life, meaning and survival; and Camus feels so because without these basic requirements man and his civilization would not have reached as far as it has today. But this does not necessarily imply that all is well for there are negative aspects too which have grown with the growth of rebellion and civilization, and Camus gives them much importance too. They are 'guilt' and 'innocence'. The guilt of having to step on dead human flesh to reach the so called 'civilized' stage has subconsciously been inflicted into every single mind of

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3. Albert Camus, "The Rebel", (Trans. by) Anthony Bower, London: Penguin, 1982, P. 52.

this world as Camus says through Caligula's mouth "we shall be for ever guilty... [for] the sum of human sorrows."<sup>4</sup> And the reason we accept this reality is because "we should like, at the same time, to cease being guilty and yet not to make the effort of cleansing ourselves",<sup>5</sup> says Clamence in 'The Fall'. The reason why Camus takes this stand is that he believes "we cannot assert the innocence of anyone, whereas we can state with certainty the guilt of all".<sup>6</sup> In other words, Camus is trying desperately to separate the two which seem to be so distorted now that they seem to hold almost the same meaning, primarily because the "idea that comes almost naturally to man, as if from his very nature, is the idea of his innocence",<sup>7</sup> and secondly because these days "crime always finds lawyers, and innocence only rarely".<sup>8</sup> So, a whisper is enough to stain a clean personality but even shouting of one's innocence falls on deaf ears. 'The Fall' in fact has been interpreted by some scholars as a

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4. "Collected Plays of Albert Camus," London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965, P. 65.

5. Albert Camus', "The Fall", (Trans. by) Justin O'Brien, London : Penguin, 1988, P. 62.

6. Ibid, P. 81.

7. Ibid, P. 60

8. Ibid, P. 82.

discourse on the quest of man to overcome the "universal guilt" that we all share. That is correct, and as man has experienced a 'fall from grace' of this different kind (in contrast to the religious 'fall' of Abraham). The title of the monologue-novel is justified. In fact, "the novel may be seen as an appeal for moderation: between the two absolutes of innocence and guilt, man must make his difficult way".<sup>9</sup> Because these two aspects have become 'absolutes' one has interpreted them as negative in the beginning of this argument.

In addition, to the afore mentioned commonalties of man, Camus also finds that 'culture' too is a binding force. He observes "that throughout the world, beside the impulse toward coercion and death that is darkening history, there is a growing impulse toward persuasion and life, a vast emancipatory movement called culture that is made up both of free creation and of free work".<sup>10</sup> Culture, having been defined, Camus goes on to place it in the context of how it is to be realised, maintained, and perpetuated for a better existence for man in the existing society. "Our daily task, our long vocation is to add to

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9. B.G. Garnham, "Albert Camus' - Lachute", London, 1971, P. xxxiii.

10. Albert Camus', "Resistance, Rebellion, and Death," (Trans. by) Justin O'Brien, New York : Vintage, 1974, P. 164.

the culture by our labours and not to subtract, even temporarily, anything from it. But our proudest duty is to defend personally to the very end, against the impulse toward coercion and death, the freedom of that culture—in other words, the freedom of work and of creation."<sup>11</sup> It is this 'freedom of work' which is labour and creativity (both in action and thought), or even artistic creativity, which keeps a society alive and sees to its progression. As is clear by now, Camus creates linkage between freedom, culture, labor, justice and collective action. He observes, "freedom... made up... of privileges, insults labour and separates it from culture"<sup>12</sup> and when "freedom's duties" precedes "over its privileges, freedom joins together labor and culture and sets in motion the only force that can effectively serve justice",<sup>13</sup> and here the words 'only force' are important. Going a little further Camus observes", everything that humiliates labour also humiliates the intelligence", <sup>14</sup> and thereby stating, as did Lenin, that it would be "criminal to try to make one dominate the other" for the labour and intelligence

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11. Ibid.

12. Ibid, P. 96

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

are the "two aristocracies" of man and society.<sup>15</sup> The bourgeois societies and dictatorships both try to separate the two, which is fallacious, according to Camus for without one the other is meaningless; in other words the workers without intellectuals are headless and the intellectuals without workers to give shape to their ideology, are bodyless. Labourers both manual and intellectual ... gave body to freedom and helped her progress in the world until she has become the very basis of our thought, the air we cannot do without, that we breathe without even noticing it until the time comes when, deprived of it, we feel that we are dying".<sup>16</sup> But today we find freedom, labour and culture, lost because, "the devices for enslavement have never been so cynically chosen or so effective", and the "real defenders [of freedom], through fatigue, through despair or through a false idea of strategy and efficiency have turned away from her."<sup>17</sup>.

So, a balance between freedom and justice, culture and labour (both 'intellectual' and 'manual' as Camus puts it) must be created so that man in society can

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15.Ibid, P. 95

16.Ibid, P. 89.

17.Ibid, P. 90.

progress and live creatively and freely. For this "the blood-stained face [that] history has taken today"<sup>18</sup> must be cleaned.

We find that Camus has progressed from the individual to the community, and back to the individual without hesitation; this is so because humanity suffers together, lives together, breathes the same air, lives on the same planet, and shares "the same load of the future and the past".<sup>19</sup> But man when he dies, dies alone, the universe does not pause when he dies, instead, life goes on, and this is the reason why if we talk of freedom justice, culture, they must always be seen in a collective way, as must be action. Their realization must also be experienced during one's lifetime and not left to the future as Marxism does.<sup>20</sup> That is why when the condemned terrorist Kaliayev is told by the Grand-Duchess that we all would be united by God after death, he replies, " But not on this earth, and it is this earth that counts",<sup>21</sup> Camus wants to unite mankind now, not in imagination but in reality. Although one "doesn't ask for life... one is

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18. Ibid, P. 71

19. "Collected Plays of Albert Camus", op.cit., P. 35.

20. Camus', "Resistance, Rebellion and Death", op.cit., P. 91.

21. "Collected Plays of Albert Camus", op.cit., P. 167.

given it",<sup>22</sup> one is not given freedom or justice, one has to gain it. These are the kind of paradoxes we must understand if we are to achieve anything vaguely as close to what is best. This is why we see Camus say "that the indispensable conditions for intellectual creation and historical justice are liberty and the free confronting of differences",<sup>23</sup> within the present historical setting.

Values, Camus feels, are another integrating factor in man and his world, for, "the individual is not, in himself, an embodiment of the values he wishes to defend. It needs at least all humanity to comprise them".<sup>24</sup> As values have meaning only when taken universally, so does rebellion, which is yet another binding factor: "Not every value leads to rebellion, but every rebellion tacitly invokes a value."<sup>25</sup>

What exactly is a revolt then? Camus gives an elementary answer when he says it is the power to say "no". But this "no" does not mean a total rejection; it

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22. Ibid, P. 160.

23. "Resistance, Rebellion and Death," op.cit., P.

24. Camus', 'The Rebel', op.cit., P. 22.

25. Ibid, P. 20.

involves the affirmation of a certain 'limit' or a "borderline' beyond which a negation arises.<sup>26</sup> Put differently, Camus does not want to negate the system itself, but the way it is functioning. The slave while saying "no" not only affirms the power of the master, which is of "superiority", but also confirms his own power of choice which questions his own "subordination" as well as exposes the fact that both are dependent on each others acknowledgment of the structure of this system.<sup>27</sup> Once one of the two refuses it, the system collapses. And the aspect which makes an individual realize that 'this is it', is consciousness. "An awakening of consciousness, no matter how confused it may be, develops from any act of rebellion and is represented by the sudden realization that something exists with which the rebel can identify himself"<sup>28</sup> as a part separate from the existing whole, and a dynamic part of that, which has power to change or alter the situation. So the "act of rebellion" takes the rebel "beyond the point he reached by simply refusing."<sup>29</sup>

Till now we can confer that a state of rebellion rises when "the irrational "joins hands with "an unjust

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26. Ibid, P. 19

27. Ibid, P. 19.

28. Ibid, P. 30.

29. Ibid, P. 20.



and incomprehensible condition",<sup>30</sup> and that there is a positive value in rebellion itself because one is trying to create a better situation. That is also why an "act of rebellion is not, essentially, an egoistic act "although" it can have egoistic aims".<sup>31</sup> The rebel, therefore, simultaneously feels a "revulsion at the infringement of his rights" and a "complete and spontaneous loyalty to certain aspects of himself"<sup>32</sup> and so he "commits himself completely".<sup>33</sup>

One basic thing that Camus' theory of action takes into account as apriori is that there does exist such a thing as "human nature", for it is this assumption that catapults the individual revolt into a collective rebellion.<sup>34</sup> This is why Camus writes an individual feels he is not alone and the experience that he experiences are not his only. "The unhappiness experienced by a single man becomes collective unhappiness". In other words, Camus is moving from the "I" of "The Myth of Sisyphus" to the "we" of "The Rebel", that is why he writes that in the "absurdist experience suffering is individual. But from

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30. Ibid.

31. Ibid, P. 16.

32. Ibid, P. 22.

33. Ibid, P. 19

34. Ibid.

the moment that a movement of rebellion begins, suffering is seen as a collective experience".<sup>35</sup> In "The Plague" for example the realization comes to Father Paneloux in the second sermon that all are condemned to death, and so an individualistic reference is of no use anymore.<sup>36</sup> The absurd arouses in man the age-old question that ever since Shakespeare have bothered man-

"To be, or not to be,- that is the question :-  
Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer  
The Slings and arrows of outrageous  
fortune, or to take arms against a sea of  
troubles, And by opposing end them?"<sup>37</sup>

Camus would answer affirmatively to the second half of this philosophical question.

Another kind of rebellion is observed by Camus which seems to arise as a direct or immediate consequence of absurdity or the realization of the meaninglessness of the universe and human life; this he calls metaphysical rebellion. It is a sort of rebellion which one is forced towards because one is frustrated as not even pure science can explain it for it falls short by creatively

35. Ibid, P. 27.

36. Albert Camus', "The Plague", (Trans. by) Stuart Gilbert, London: Penguin, 1987, P. 182.

37. See, "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark", in "The Work of William Shakespeare", New York: Wlater J. Black, 1972, P. 1145.

hypotheses, at the most.<sup>38</sup> We have only theories as to where we have come from and where we are going (both in terms of human existence and our solar system or this part of the galaxy or the universe as a whole). "Metaphysical rebellion is the means by which a man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation. It is metaphysical because it disputes the ends of man and of creation".<sup>39</sup> It also calls for human solidarity against the suffering of life and death" for it "protests against the incompleteness of human life, expressed by death, and its dispersion, expressed by evil".<sup>40</sup> So actually a rebel "is seeking, without knowing it, a moral philosophy or a religion".<sup>41</sup> But Camus is very careful as he does not

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38. Albert Camus', "The Myth of Sisyphus", London: Penguin, 1988, P. 25, In "The Rebel" Camus' also mentioned about this, he wrote: "The quantum theory, relatively, the uncertainty of interrelationships define a world which has no definable reality except on the scale of average greatness which is our own." (The Rebel", op.cit. p. 258). Similar claims have also been made by Stephen M. Stinger in his chapter "The Measurement of Uncertainty in" Nineteenth Century Social Science", in the book "The Probabilistic revolution, Vol. 1 - Ideas in History", edited by Lorenz Kruger, Lorraine T. Dastan and Michael Heidelberger, London, 1987, PP. 287-292.

39. "The Rebel", op. cit ., P. 29.

40. Ibid, P. 30.

41. Ibid, P. 73.

want us to think that this rejection of the existing answers for the explanation of man and universe provided by religion makes him an atheist. "The metaphysical rebel is.... certainly not an a theist... but ..a blasphemer. He simply blasphemes, primarily in the name of order, by denouncing God as the origin of death" and religion's explanatory powers with "supreme disillusionment".<sup>42</sup> So reason and the search for order on the basis of reason is the foundation that creates the ground for the building of metaphysical rebellion, and also a justification.

Camus' claim, further on, is that this metaphysical rebellion would lead man to open the gates of historical rebellion. This historical rebellion is probably the most important aspect of Camus' philosophical discourse because it is this that provides us with his own and completely different theory of collective action. Observing the historical development in Europe and America both in thought and action, he realizes that in place of rebellion, "revolution is only the logical consequence of metaphysical rebellion",<sup>43</sup> it does not mean that revolution is logically correct. Elucidating the differences between rebellion and revolution Camus" argues

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42. Ibid, PP. 30,31.

43. Ibid, P. 76.

that - i) "Revolution is an attempt to shape actions to ideas: to fit the world in a theoretical frame". Rebellion is just the opposite. It is "the movement which leads from individual experience into the realm of ideas". In other words revolution "originates in the realm of ideas" and 'injects' these "ideas into historical experience", while rebellion being much less metaphysically and nihilistically influenced, tries to "struggle with facts" <sup>44</sup> which have no pattern and do not fit watertightly into any theory; with "the primitive values of rebellion" which want to maintain peace and the 'survival' of all.<sup>45</sup> ii) "Total revolution ends by demanding... the control of the world" or nature, while rebellion being "limited in scope" does not believe in absolutes, and wants to work with nature and opposed destruction. Put differently, revolution justifies destruction on the basis of justice and freedom in the future, whereas rebellion is in strict opposition to any kind of violence or murder or destruction".<sup>46</sup> iii) "Absolute revolution... supposes the absolute malleability of human nature and its possible reduction

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44. Ibid, P. 77.

45. Ibid, P. 213.

46. Ibid, PP. 77, 78.

to the condition of a historical force. But rebellion... is the refusal to be treated as an object and to be reduced to simple historical terms. It is the affirmation of a nature common to all men, which eludes the world of power".<sup>47</sup> So history must not be considered as a God and the process of its unfolding must not be blindly followed by man; In this sense we must put "a limit to history". Camus' feels that "rebellion at grips with history adds that instead of killing and dying in order to produce the being that we are not, we have to live and let live in order to create what we are".<sup>48</sup>

Taking these three points as providing the basic nature of political collective action we can safely conclude that what Camus is saying is that man has a human nature common to all because we are after all the same species and in the past or the present existing structure should not be allowed to dictate our actions and our future; that freedom and justice should work hand in hand to create a better now; that violence and murder can never be justified no matter how much it is glorified; that man in by nature not power hungry but peace loving and believes in co-existence on an equal footing and not

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47.Ibid, P. 216.

48.Ibid, P. 218

dominance : and that instead of crossing the limits and becoming barbarian, man can stay within limits thereby saving the face of innocence as it has lost its original meaning today.

This means that Camus is trying to point out that history has taken a wrong turn, and instead of coming back to the right track it is happy in traveling amongst a scenery of bloodshed and ruins. Its about time that we realize this and try to do something about it. But how do we realize it, and once we do, presumably realize it, how do we go about fighting this absurd situation that man has come to? The answer to all these questions seem to be lying hidden in "The Plague".

The first thing that strikes one while reading the novel is that man has become a habitual 'escapist', he is always running away from reality or the existing conditions. That is why we notice that till very late in the novel the people of Oran are finding refuge in various things even though the gates are shut and they all know that there is no escape from death. That is also why we see the following noted by Tarrou in his diary: "In the early days, when they thought this epidemic was much like other epidemics, religion held its ground. But, once these people realized their instant peril, they gave their

thoughts to pleasure".<sup>49</sup> Camus also acknowledges the role of religion in society, but there is superstition which overrides religion<sup>50</sup> and one must go further than both, (to create a basis for rebellion) that is, to reason.

Camus is also monitoring in "The Plague" the change in behaviour of people as the realization of the seriousness of the plague dawns on them. First reaction was to escape from the town<sup>51</sup> and crime increased; there was also a lot of interest in what the position of the plague was and how many had died so far, but even that interest was lost;<sup>52</sup> then they all "appeared to have a clearer idea of where their interests lay and on their own initiative asked for what might be most beneficial<sup>53</sup>", and this is from where the real struggle against the plague starts and total solidarity is observed in every single action. When this happened the tables turned.<sup>54</sup> This is what is the true collective behaviour towards which Camus

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49. Camus, 'The Plague', op.cit., P. 102.

50. Ibid, P. 181.

51. Ibid, P. 89.

52. Ibid, P. 153.

53. Ibid, P. 211.

54. Ibid, P. 219.



wants us all to work towards. So Whatever formulates they applied for fighting the plague and its "abstraction" 55 (i.e. death), they should also be applicable to fight the historical diversion one talked of earlier. Taking this as given, we must make sure that everyone is well informed about the situation that man is in today vis-a-vis his future, his past, and his present,<sup>56</sup> then they must be told in a similar fashion what is to be done about it. Camus' seems to be implying, as he mentions in "The Plague", that the only way to fight the existing situation is "common decency" <sup>57</sup> and this decency can reach much further beyond what religion or Marxism or Totalitarianism have reached in the past and our time, and make man "a saint without God".<sup>58</sup> Camus says this for another reason

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55. Camus' defines 'abstraction' as "a divorce from reality" (IBD, P. 75), the term is also used by him to denote alienation as well. Infact, the novel can be defined in one sentence as an account "the dreary struggle in progress between each man's happiness and the abstractions of the plague" (IBD, P. 77).

56. This is done in 'The Plague' by such things as "The Plague Chronicle", a newspaper, (IBD, P. 100) and by giving speeches as the Prefect and Father Paneloux do.

57. Ibid, P. 136.

58. Tarron wanted to know whether it is possible to become a saint without God or the religious values it offers man. (Ibid, P. 208), and Camus' answers this query in the novel itself, although indirectly, and shows that it is possible to be a saint without God.

as well, he thinks that if one today totally rejects the existing situation then it is logical that it is opposed with all strength, the result of which would be a violent revolution as in the case of Marxism or Fascism or even suicide; and if the present is 'blindly' accepted, then it also would prove to be disastrous because this would mean we are giving license to the present woped definitions of innocence, freedom, justice etc.. which are, if not, exactly the opposite of what they actually mean, are at least extremely far from it.<sup>59</sup> So Camus wants us to disprove of the existing reality but not totally reject it because it should be treated as what it is i.e. reality. One must understand also that a change should be sought as it is necessary but not by destroying the present or accepting it totally, but trying to 'alter' it. It is precisely on this ground that Sartre and Camus had a serious quarrel,<sup>60</sup> but then, what Camus implies is totally

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59. 'The Rebel', P. 73.

60. Sartre wrote: "The revolutionary wants to change the world; he transcends it and moves towards the future, towards an order of values which he himself invents. The rebel is careful to preserve the abuses from which he suffers so that he can go on rebelling against them. He always shows signs of bad conscience and of something resembling a feeling of guilt. He does not want to destroy or transcend the existing order; he simply wants to rise up against it. The more he attacks

unique, revolutionary and compelling.

There may be some complaint after reading the theory of rebellion presented by Camus so far that it is not very cohesive, because he does mention clearly what the role of the workers and the intellegensia must be (as mentioned previously) to see that a political rebellion is successful. The role that the intellegensia must play has been discussed quite in detail by Camus, as we notice in his "Resistance, Rebellion, and Death", in conclusion, as if, Camus observes: "Groupings of intellectuals can, in certain cases, and particularly when the liberty of the

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it, the more he secretly respects it. In the depths of his heart he preserves the rights which he challenges in public. If they disappear, his own raison detre would disappear with them. He would suddenly find himself **plunged** into a **gratuitousness** which frightens him. "(Sartre, "Baudelaire" (Trns. by) Turnell, Paris, 1949, P. 50). It is extremely unfortunate that rebellion is considered neither progressive nor transcending in nature by Sartre while Camus' carefully formulates his thesis to make rebellion just that.

masses and of the spirit is mortally threatened, constitute a strength and exert an influence<sup>61</sup>". As "many intellectuals have consequently come to the conclusion that values and words derive their meaning altogether from force." It becomes the duty of the intellectuals to "distinguish... the respective limits of force and justice."<sup>62</sup> Just as Pascal had analysed so did Camus that: "since it is impossible for Justice alone to regulate men's minds without external force, physical power is legitimised; so that justice and force combined, peace, the greatest of all blessings, is the result."<sup>63</sup> Camus wants, not only to "save intelligence", but also to solve this age old problem of which thinkers have known about but have not done much about.

Rebellion has shown its influence in art as well, Camus believes. "Art... is a revolt against everything fleeting and unfinished in the world"<sup>64</sup>". In the other words, art wants to capture and freeze what we all want to escape from, reality. Camus feels, infact, that "the

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61. Camus', 'Resistance, Rebellion, and death', op.cit., p. 170.

62. Ibid, P. 121.

63. Blaise Pascal, "Pensees", (Trns. by) Issac Taylore, New York, 1968, p. 324.

64. 'Resistance, Rebellion, and death', op.cit., P. 264.

greatest of art lies in the perpetual tension between beauty and pain, the love of men and the madness of creation unbearable solitude and the exhausting crowd, rejection and consent. Art, advances between two chasms, which are frivolity and propaganda<sup>65</sup>. And he shows just this in his short story, "The Artist at Work". But just as political rebellion is the work of collective action, art is the work of "collective passion"<sup>66</sup> as art becomes the outlet for it.

What I have presented till now is the nature of rebellion including its relation to the absurd, abstraction, nihilism, its difference from revolution, and its positive values, Who is a rebel, and how revolt changes from an individually experienced phenomenon to a collective action. The various types of rebellion have also been elaborated, that are; primary rebellion or slave against master revolt; metaphysical rebellion in which man revolts against the absurdity of life, the universe and the world we live in; political revolution and rebellion (esp. how different they are from one another) or political rebellion, and artistic rebellion<sup>67</sup>.

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65.Ibid, P. 268.

66.Camus infact feels art has become the 'reportage' of these "collective passions", ('The Rebel', op.cit., P. 239).

67.Just a glance at the contents of 'The Rebel' would be enough to confirm this.

But before we continue we must know whether Camus had actually any idea of collective behaviour pertaining to action or not. Niel J. Smelser points out to the four basic components necessary for collective action: 1) the generalized ends, or values, which provide the broadest guides to purposive social behaviour; 2) the regulatory rules governing the pursuit of these goals, rules which are to be found in norms; 3) the mobilization of individual energy to achieve the defined ends within the normative framework (or motivation); 4) the available situational facilities, which the actor utilizes as means; these include knowledge of the environment, predictability of consequences of action, and tools and skills.<sup>68</sup> Where, values are, "the most general statements of legitimate ends which guide social action"<sup>69</sup>; it is a "construct" which "refers to one aspect of social action which is not physically and temporally, isolable"<sup>70</sup>; and can be challenged. "Norms... are more specific than general values, for they specify certain regulatory principles which are necessary if these values are to be realised". The values and norms on their own are not enough for they "do not determine the form of organization

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68.Neil. J. Smelser, "Theory of Collective Behaviour", New York, 1962, PP. 24-25.

69.Ibid, P. 25.

70.Ibid, P. 26.

of human action... they do not specify.. who will be the agents in the pursuit of valued end, how the actions of these agents will be structured into concrete roles and organizations and how they will be rewarded" for the right and responsible action. This is where the "Mobilization of Motivation into Organized Action" comes in <sup>71</sup>. And in "situational facilities", one will have to understand "the means and obstacles which facility or hinder the attainment of concrete goals .. the actor's knowledge of opportunities and limitations of the environment and, in some cases, his knowledge of his own ability to influence the environment".<sup>72</sup>

A closer look at "The Plague" reveals that Camus has thought of all the above mentioned requirements. It is a clear indication to us that he wants his text to be taken extremely seriously and as a practical experiment on how rebellion can actually be practiced. In Context, therefore, we get to know that the values which guide Dr. Rieux and his associates to fight the plague are not based on religion; the norms or 'regulatory rules' which emerge are preservation of life, solidarity and commitment<sup>73</sup>. The organization which emerges out of the voluntary

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71.Ibid, P. 27.

72.Ibid, P. 28

73.Based on thier own "Code of Morals". ('The Plague', op.cit., P. 109).

'sanitary squads' is fully responsible and loyal towards the above cause and works professionally. The 'facilities' that are availed of are all 'situational' right from the anti-plague serum, to the conversion of buildings into make-shift hospitals and the Sports Ground into a massive camp; observation of 'extreme cleanliness' by the citizens; reducing the use of lights in the streets to conserve energy and so on. It is extremely interesting to note all this, because Camus is trying to say that the fight for a better situation or authentic existence is the responsibility of a few, or as he puts it, "Some men's duty... [but]... the concern of all"<sup>74</sup>. So in individual action, the collective is born and realised. The fact that man "struggle against absurd and oppressive conditions and rebels against being stimulus bound" have led certain scholars who agree with Camus to call man a "Radical man"<sup>76</sup>.

Having discussed in detail all the very major points Camus has to say about collective action, it is still very essential to know broadly, what Camus felt about the nature of man and his position in a society.

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74. Ibid, P. 111

75. See, C. Hampden-Turner, "Radical Man", London, 1971, PP. 114, 99, 127. For a practical demonstration of the Camusean claim of "I rebel, therefore, we exist", see chapter 5, "Dissent and Rebellion in the Laboratory", PP. 113-147.



Camus is totally against division of society on religious, race, colour or class basis; that is precisely why he did not want that Algeria should become an Arab state alone without considering the other people who exist in the state<sup>77</sup>, he wanted all to live in harmony. He also did not believe in the division in a society on the basis of intellect, for he gave both the workers and intellectuals equal importance, dignity was to be felt in any work a person did as he would be respected for it.

Man was not driven by his ego or 'will for power' as Machiavelli and Hobbes thought, unlike the contractualists, it was not human nature to follow in whatever direction the society moved even if it was to jeopardise one's own activity or freedom, by aligning with the rest of the community for their own safety Camus also did not believe that man and the society was moving towards a predestined future, but was to create their own; he did not see society as a living organism and that every part has a precise role to play and therefore there already existed in society a very high degree of harmony. He felt that harmony was yet to be achieved "by the effort of

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77. See, 'Resistance, Rebellion and Death', PP.111-153. Also see, Edward W. Said, 'Narrative, Geography and interpretation', in 'New Left Review', (No. 180, March/April, 1990), P. 91 (footnotes).

each and the union of all".<sup>78</sup> Nor did he agree with the main thesis of Marxism that the basic "system of relations" in a society are the "relations of production" and once that is understood and controlled, the whole society is too. Because once that is done man is not seen as a living being having the capacity to think and create freely (as socialism claimed) but actually ends up being seen either as a friend of the system or a foe, and if it is believed he is the latter, he must be eliminated, which is exactly what Stalin had done. After reading "The Plague" one gets the impression that Camus also wants selfless, non-materialistic, and philosophical leadership which would show the way to the rest of the community, by not thinking of the problems that arise abstractly but ones who are actively involved in the happenings without demanding any sort of special treatment to be given to them.

"Death" for Marx, "seems to be a harsh victory of the species over the particular individual and to contradict their unity"<sup>79</sup>, but for Camus that seems the sole unifying factor. 'As we all die, would it not be better if we would come together and create a better world where there

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78. 'Resistance, Rebellion and Death', op.cit., P. 97.

79. Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844", Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977, P. 100.

is happiness, harmony, peace and freedom, instead of restricting ourselves and our lives to a narrow and mundane existence which is extremely solitary?' Camus seems to be asking. "For the man of today there is a sort of solitude, which is certainly the harshest thing our era forces upon us"<sup>80</sup>.

Camus wants a well organised movement of the labour, the culture of critical thinking, the freedom of press, removal of poverty, the freedom of creation and art, and the support and guidance of the intellegensia; so that the true meaning of peace, justice, freedom, love and brotherhood and solidarity may reveal themselves every day and in every sphere of life, to us all. He painted a picture of a society which is violence free and where all are equal, and one can be sure that he would have lived to write more, he would have elaborated on this aspect.

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80. 'Resistance, Rebellion and Death', op.cit., P. 247.

## REBELLION

Looking back into the theories that have been presented from time to time in western philosophy, on the relation of the individual and society, two trends emerge: namely, the 'atomistic', 'individualistic' tradition and the collectivist organistic tradition. Where does the individual stand vis-a-vis the society as a whole, and what role the society plays in the development of the individual, are questions that differentiate the two traditions. Camus' political ideas can be understood better when we examine his response to these questions. The 'atomistic' tradition which sees man as the centre of the universe and "the measure of all things" is, in a manner of speaking as old as the ancient Greek philosophy.<sup>1</sup> However, it was in the post-Renaissance period that it found a systematic expression. Hobbes and Locke maintained that society is a sum total of its individual parts: namely, individuals. The individual constituted the basic components of the society. Consequently to understand the functioning of a complex entity like society we must break it up into its constituent parts and understand the nature and functioning of these parts. In other words, by

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1. A.S. Bogomolov, "History of Ancient Philosophy", Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985, P. 125.

understanding the essential attributes of human nature; its needs and desires, we could also understand the nature of society and the kind of institutions that were required for it to operate smoothly. All the attributes of society were, in their view derived from or an aggregate of the attributes of particular individuals who form that whole.

The collectivist tradition, on the other hand, gives primacy to society. The individual, it agrees, can develop only in a society. In sharp contrast to the atomistic tradition, it maintains that the whole (society in this instance) cannot be reduced to its parts (individual human beings). Not all its various characteristics and attributes can be derived from its parts. To put it differently, it is not a sum total of various individual parts. Just as a forest is not merely an aggregate of trees; it has attributes that individual trees do not have, similarly, as a collectivity society must be analysed in its complex form. When we break the complex entity into its simpler parts we lose sight of the way in which individual parts are related to one another. Within this framework, some theorists compared society to an organism which is a web of interdependent systems. Several units combine together to form particular systems and each system performs its specific function and promotes the wellbeing of the whole. It provides stability and

equilibrium to it. Other theorists, however, have viewed society as a structured whole in which the precise manner in which the individual parts are related make a crucial difference. This kind of thinking found an expression in the writings of German idealists,<sup>2</sup> Herbert Spencer,<sup>3</sup> and Karl Marx. The Marxian framework has been infused the belief that to understand the individual we must refer to the structure of economic organization in society. The distinctive attribute of existentialist marxism was its attempt to redefine this relationship of the individual to his society and the entire course of social development. Sartre, for example demanded that a deep study be made on not only the "epoch which shapes the individual", but also "the individual which shapes the epoch".<sup>4</sup> Analysing the manner in which contemporary capitalist/industrialised societies have shaped the person and psyche of the individual, Marcuse tries to carve a space of individual spontaneity and creativity.<sup>5</sup>

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2. T.Z. Lauine, "From Socrates to Sartre", New York: Bantam, 1984, PP. 210-213.

3. C.E.M. Joad, "Intorduction to Modern Political Theory", Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982, pp. 24-27.

4. Anthony De Crespigny and Kenneth Minogue, (ed.), "Contemporary Political Philosophers", London: Methuen, 1976 p. 214.

5. Raymond Aron, "Progress and Disillusion", Middlesex: Penguin, 1972, pp. 195-196.

The writings of Albert Camus combine many of these individual beliefs. Excepting the Cartesian belief that individual experience is personal. He endorses the Marcusean conviction that society as a whole is dehumanising man. In making this argument he continues to regard man as the measure of all things and believes that the structure of society has with time become more complex. Recognising the independence of the individual and the state he tries to create a balance between the extremes of collectivism and individualism. He wanted that a society<sup>6</sup> which respects the individual and his independence of thought and criticism be created so that a natural growth of both man and society could take place. 'There must be similar experiences in the one so that a common ground is found for the many'. For this reason he takes the help of death and 'absurdity' as the lowest common factor; both death and absurdity are, at one level, extremely individualistic experiences, but because they are common to the lot of man, a common ground is created. This is the crux of the individualism-collectivism, which Camus talks about.<sup>7</sup> So even though on the face of it a contradiction may seem to exist, a closer

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6. As one may have noticed, 'society' and 'state' have been loosely used so that they both may be thought as synonymous when they are not, but this is done deliberately because Camus does the same.

7. See introduction for detail.

examination proves otherwise. Camus perceived the individual as a member of the collectivity, but one who's presence is neither obliterated nor subsumed by the collectivity. Collectivity, for Camus, is natural and fundamental; it emerges from the reciprocity of needs, be they economic, social, or psychological. And as all these needs require the presence of others, the individual by himself is incomplete. At the same time Camus also maintains that collectivity is not over and above the individual. Hence if it turns against the individual, it has to be checked.

Collectivity, according to Camus, is represented in the form of culture;<sup>8</sup> society recognises it and is based on it as well. In other words, there are certain commonalties between the members of a community, and this can be proved definitely by considering that if there were no commonalties, there would not be any bars, restraints, festivals, ceremonies, norms, cinemas, etc. in any given society. But this also does not mean that all experiences of individuals are identical; each has one's own background and experiences which act as reference point for further experiences. To give Camus' own example: if the slave and master were to consider the meaning of

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8. For detail see previous chapter.



freedom, it would have different meaning to both as they both have extremely different, if not opposite, experiences of the same thing; if nothing else, because of their respective positions in the society. But again, as they both see and experience things within the existing social structure, it is more likely that the slave would look beyond the present setup, than would the master. Certain phenomenon like absurdity, death, nihilism are still common to both, and because their experience is similar to all, Camus believes that a 'human nature' exists. This factor divorces Camus' philosophy immediately from that of Sartre who was too individualistically oriented to acknowledge any sort of commonalities.<sup>9</sup> The previous chapter discussed Camus' conception of political action. What remains ambiguous still is under which kind of action does 'rebellion' fall? If one looks at the two extremes present for man (in terms of action and change) to choose form, Camus' position becomes clearer. The two forms of change are: evolutionary and revolutionary. Evolutionism which Camus was concerned with was neither the 'organic' evolutionism of Darwin, nor the 'physical evolutionism' of geology. In 'The Rebel' Camus was talking of 'metaphysical

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9. Thomas L. Thorson, "Albert Camus and The Right of Man", Ethics, LXXIV (4), July 1964, P. 186.

evolutionism in the past few centuries. He traced how man, having rejected the values provided by religion, starting with Nietzsche, has tried to go beyond its immediate value system. But Camus also realized that man always kept coming back to this religion-bound value systems again and again like a flagging to its nest. Progress, or change, Camus observed, "has consisted of gradually enlarging the enclosure where, according to his own rules, man without God brutally wields power".<sup>10</sup> This view was not new, it was expressed before by Schopenhauer who thought that "absolute reality is will, an unconscious, striving, irrational power, beyond space and time, which 'objectifies' itself in the phenomenal world", wherein 'objectification' is, a "process of cosmic geological, and biological evolution".<sup>11</sup> History becomes the history of this 'objectification'. Nietzsche also believed that "Man is something that shall be overcome" <sup>12</sup> because "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end",<sup>13</sup> so even he saw man as evolving and

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10. Camus, "The Rebel", (Trans. by), Anthony Bower, London: Penguin, 1982, P. 74.

11. Philip P. Wiener (ed.), "Dictionary of The History of Ideas", Vol. II, New York, 1973, P. 182.

12. Walter Kaufmann (ed.) "The Portable Nietzsche". New York: Penguin, 1976, P. 124. 4. Ibid, P. 127.

13. Ibid, P. 127.

progressing. Hegel <sup>14</sup> only reiterated the principles that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche had laid down, in this sense, (that man and the society is progressively evolving) and agreed to the evolutionary character of history.

The major shift from this evolutionary tradition comes from Marx mainly because he notices and refers to and implies the progress of human civilization as 'smooth', uninterrupted, and continuous mainly because, economic relations remaining constant, the social relations have also been largely the same and no change has come about in this sphere. In the "Manifesto of the Communist Party", Marx wrote, along with Engels that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle ... [between] oppressor and oppressed ... [leading to] a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes".<sup>15</sup> This led to an interpretation of history that not only saw "the continuity of past, present and future" as "clearly established",<sup>16</sup> but also thought that history progressed as

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14. See, T.Z. Lavine, op.cit., PP. 210-213. Also See First Chapter of this work.

15. Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of The Communist Party", Moscow: Progress, 1975, PP. 40-41.

16. This kind of analysis of history was first offered by Saint-Simon. See, E.H. Carr, "Studies In Revolution", London, 1962, P. 3.

clockwork, in a precise and predetermined and predictable fashion. So, as "All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of the minorities",<sup>17</sup> i.e. infavour of the ruling class, it was about time that the majority, or the working-class, unite and create a new and equal society. Marx argued that the French revolution had only "abolished feudal property in favour of bourgeoise property"<sup>18</sup> that is why inequality remained. So, a 'true revolution', a violent overthrow, which would lead to a complete disjunction with the past, had yet to be conducted. And it is no secret that V.I. Lening did just this in 1917 in Russia.

Yet another revolution emerged in this century of which all the thinkers were aware: namely, Fascism. It was a system which came to power, either by force or democratic election (as in the case of Hitler), and revolutionised not only the economy of the country, but also its ideology and art. The choice became clear. Either one accepts the slow evolutionary process of development through liberal, electoral based process, or through the revolutionary way of Marxism and Fascism or Totalitarianism.

The concept of revolution is not new at all.

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17. Marx and Engles, op.cit., P. 58.

18. Ibid, P. 62.

Aristotle understood well that inequality could lead to a revolution, for in man there is a craving for economic equality.<sup>19</sup> This view was from the ruler's point of view which Machiavelli onwards, stayed so. Hobbes, it seems was the first to provide the people the right to "complete overhaul" of the sovereignty if the natural rights are not protected by it.<sup>20</sup> Locke and Rousseau continued this trend.

Aristotle however stated a very important truth; namely, if the ruler wants to hold power longer he should understand that "Extremes provoke resistance: the mean should be observed".<sup>21</sup> Camus used the same formula but saw it from the point of view of the masses. Camus was against revolutionary change, but he was also against the slow evolutionary model that capitalism provided. Camus rejected revolution primarily because it "tries to realize itself from top to bottom",<sup>22</sup> or from the urbanised part of the population the influence for change is created

19.W.A. Dunning, "History of Political Theories", Allahabad, 1970, PP. 84-90. And C.C. Maxey, "Political Philosophies", New York, 1938, PP. 73-74; Also See, Thomas Kiernan (ed.), "Aristotle's Dictionary", London, 1962, PP. 153, 433.

20.D.A. Zoll, "Reason and Rebellion", Englewood Cliffs; Prentice Hall, 1963, P. 158.

21.W.A. Dunning, op.cit., PP. 89-90.

22.Camus', "The Rebel", op.cti., P. 262.

which on its own, trickles down to the rural part. The alternative that Camus provided was a 'rebellion' which, unlike revolution, did not justify murder and violence on the pretext of a 'positive' historical change. Rebellion <sup>which</sup> would move: from bottom to top", and it would base itself not in the city but in "the country village, where the living heart of things and of men are to be found". And when rebellion "causes history to advance and alleviate the sufferings of mankind, it does so without terror, if not without violence, and in the most dissimilar political conditions"<sup>23</sup> Although Camus agrees to the fact that society and the human civilization has progressed, he rejects the way it has evolved and the way the evolutionary theories defend its development. Rebellion presents a new path for evolution. But even "re-bellion forgets its original purpose" when it "tires of the tension caused by its positive and negative attitude, and finally abandons itself to complete negation or total submission"<sup>24</sup> which takes the form of Marxism and Fascism respectively. What Camus is trying to say is: "Absolute domination by the law does not represent liberty, but nor does absolute freedom of choice".<sup>25</sup> A midway, which is

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23. Ibid.

24. Camus', "The Rebel", op.cit., P. 31.

25. Ibid, P. 62.

present already, has to be recognized and its path carved out carefully so that it appears very clear for us all. He does not want man to have the 'que sera sera' attitude and leave everything to take its own course and evolve on its own and not to become passive and mute spectators to the goings-on. Camus observes, "For Marx nature is to be subjugated in order to obey history, in Nietzsche nature is to be obeyed in order to subjugate history",<sup>26</sup> where history is distinguished from nature precisely by the fact that "it transforms, by means of will, science and passion", while nature has its own rules.<sup>27</sup> So Camus is looking for a nature-friendly progression of man which would neither subjugate history totally nor indeed nature.

In "The Rebel" then, we see how the phenomenon of slavery has led to the defiance of the slave to the master, and now this 'rebellion' has, through the ages, developed and become more complex so much that even now man is a 'slave' to the system he lives in. Socially, intellectually, economically, and legally he is tied down or restricted. We also see that rebellion, be it in the primary, historical or metaphysical has created a certain section in society which has always tried to break away

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26. Ibid, P. 62.

27. Ibid, P. 166.

from these limitations and false notions of freedom, equality, and justice. In other words, Camus understood well that it is foolish to see history as having a pattern of its own which is so systematic that a ladder of progression can clearly be seen. Camus feels that if history is progressing, it is not doing so in a predetermined pattern; the elements, sections or units interacting in it, and the structure of the system all undergo changes because of both internal and external factors. Here the influence of physical conditions (as in the case of a master-slave relationship), ideological conditions (as in the case of Russian terrorism in 1905), and economic conditions (as in the case of the 1789 French revolution and the 1917 Russian revolution), all have their own influencing power; which Camus recognised. It would be wrong then to isolate any one of these factors as the only major influence on progress and change. Camus feels that one factor may have more weightage than the other in certain circumstances, but other conditions also influence progression and change. For example, rebellion against the existence of God also did not mean the total rejection of a supernatural power. This is why God still remains the 'sole provider' for the majority of



humanity.<sup>28</sup>

Knowledge or flow of information is also recognised by Camus as necessary for a successful rebellion. As each individual is not as far sighted as the other, and does not have equal capacity for acquiring knowledge, for attaining goals, as well as an equal freedom of choice it becomes extremely necessary that all have access to the knowledge of the gravity of the present situation and the alternatives available at that particular juncture in time. This aspect is well understood and equally well provided for by Camus in his novel 'The Plague'.<sup>29</sup> Camus knew well that any action without foresight and knowledge could prove to be disastrous both at the individual and the collective level. An example at both levels can be given to clarify the point just made. At the individual level, unaware of the spilt oil at a patrol pump, a man drops his burning cigarette and drives away, and a few moments later the spill catches fire and guts the whole patrol station. Here the individual is, strictly speaking, not responsible for his action because of lack of proper knowledge of the situation. At the collective

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28. Even Nietzsche, According to Camus, Maintained That, "Only the God of Morality is Rejected" (Camus. "The Rebel", op.cit., P. 60.).

29. CF. Chapter II.

level: in a factory the workers all have their bank accounts in the bank next door to the factory. One day a rumour is spread that their local bank is going at a loss and is very soon going to shut down, so everyone begins withdrawing their money from the bank. As a result the bank which is actually doing quite well, becomes bankrupt and shuts down. In this example also the people are not responsible for their actions entirely, because the misinformation was believed in, even though it led the people to a situation which they wanted to avoid totally. Knowledge, information flow and communication, therefore, play a very important role if any action is to be successful, be it a revolution or rebellion.

Hannah Arendt was also aware of the "web of human relationships" in a society which brings in a feeling of togetherness or community.<sup>30</sup> But the collectivity in Arendt ends at this point, she gives more importance to individual action and this action is not an ordinary one: it is heroic in form as one is to be prepared even to "die young"

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30. Peter Fuss, "Hannah Arendt's Conception of Political Community", In Melvyn A. Hill (ed.), "Hannah Arendt; The Recovery of The Public World", New York: St. Martin's 1979, P. 162.

so that his identity is maintained.<sup>31</sup> Although Camus recognised the 'web of relationships' in a society, he fought with all his intellectual might against the Arendtign heroic action. A triangular principle is to be fulfilled if collective political action is to be successfully understood and practically converted. That is, the reward of each depends on the choice of all; the reward of one is the reward of all; and, the choice of each depends on the choice of all. Arendt thought the only way the above criteria can be fulfilled is through "representative thinking"<sup>32</sup> and action, Camus thought 'rebellion' would be best, and Jurgen Habermas thought "communicative action"<sup>33</sup> would be ideal.. 'Communicative action is defined as "social interactions which are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success of every individual but through the cooperative achievement of understanding among particulars".<sup>34</sup> But Habermas emphasises more on speech and utterances than on

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31. N.K. O'Sullivan, "Politics, Totalitarianism and Freedom: The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt", Political Studies, Vol. XXI (No. 2), June 1973, PP. 185 and 197.

32. Peter Fuss, op.cit., P. 174.

33. Jurgen Habermas, 'A Reply To My Critics', In "Critical Debate" (ed.), David Held, Cambridge, 1982, P. 264.

34. Ibid.

action. Within the Marxian framework Antonio Gramsci, give more importance to action and believes that the triangular principle can be fulfilled through "praxis" alone. The role of the intellectuals was informed both by Arendt or Habermas, but Gramsci and Camus both gave them special emphasis while discussing the nature of collective political action. Gramsci, infact, wants intellectuals to be an organic part of the community" who would introduce "new values" into the proletariat by slowly injecting them into their culture rather than imposing values from the top or, externally.<sup>35</sup>

Camus presents a new kind of individualism in which the traditional 'I' is replaced by the "We are". Camus elaborates: 'We are' in terms of history, and history must reckon with this 'We are' which must, in its turn, keep its place in history. I have need of others who have need of me and each other. Every collective action, every form of society supposes a discipline and the individual, without this discipline, is only a stranger, bowed down by the weight of an inimical collectivity. But society and discipline lose their direction if they deny the 'we are'. I alone, in one sense, support the common dignity that I cannot allow either myself or others to debase. This individualism is in no sense pleasure, it is

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35. Carl Boggs, "Gramsci's Marxism", London: Pluto, 1980, pp. 30-31.

perpetual struggle and, sometimes, unparalleled joy when it reaches the heights of intrepid compassion".<sup>36</sup> Camus' individualism is based on dignity the society's 'discipline' or norms, and collectivity, where a proper balance is created between and amongst the individuals: but as the present societal setup is not in favour of this individualism, the need for struggle is emphasised by Camus.

This struggle, however, must not be destructive or violent because Camus did not defend the claim that means are justified as long as the end is attained. Machiavelli seems to have been the primary figure who advised the Prince to resort even to control the masses by fear to stay in power and maintain sovereignty.<sup>37</sup> Hobbes also subordinated means to ends.<sup>38</sup> Centuries later the writings of Marx (as mentioned before) also did the same. At least they sanctioned the use of force for changing the existing unequal and exploitative structure of society. Subsequently, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, George Lukacs, Jean Paul Sartre, Mearleau-Ponty etc., all endorsed this doctrine, they justified violent overthrow (murder in

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36. Camus', "The Rebel", op.cit., P. 261.

37. D.A. Zoll, op.cit., P. 106.

38. Ibid, PP. 154, 155.

Camus' words) so that history may continue and progress. Karl Koutsky and Koestler on the other hand, criticised this aspect of Marxism,<sup>39</sup> but they stopped short of giving a new alternative. Camus stepped in to fill this gap.

Meanwhile another revolution was taking place in the western philosophical tradition, which got muffled under the victory cries of Marxism, which Camus tries to revive. From the time of Aristotle, utmost importance was given to reason and rationality by most all philosophers. Rationality was first challenged by Pascal. Pascal argued, as "reason itself cannot offer any argument for the existence of God, ... it needs the assistance of the passions in order to maintain "the belief in God."<sup>40</sup> This failure of reason to satisfy metaphysical problems was also realized by Descartes.<sup>41</sup> But in the case of both Pascal and Descartes "The dethronement of reason only effectuates de jure what always had been the case de facto:

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39. See, Steven Lukes, "Marxism and Morality", Oxford: Univ. Press, 1984; for details.

40. John Elster, "Ulysses and The Sirens: Studies In Rationality and Irrationality", Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1979 P. 51.

41. Ibid, PP. 54-57.

the supremacy of the passions".<sup>42</sup> Camus having accepted this, points out to the paradox that "reason is useless and there is nothing beyond reason".<sup>43</sup> This 'absurdity', Camus believes, is to be overcome by reason itself; that is why he approaches the void of metaphysical enquiry with caution and care.<sup>44</sup> He opposes the Hegelian claim that "The real is the rational and the rational is the real"<sup>45</sup> by counter-claiming that "What is rational is not entirely real, and what is real is not entirely rational".<sup>46</sup>

Summarising the conception of man that emerges from the above discussions, it may be said that Camus saw man as he normally is, in the present socio-historical situation, as he ideally can be, and also as he may be potentially. Normally, Camus thought man to be an escapist: one who always escapes from reality, is passive, and is extremely gullible. Camus thought man

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42. Ibid, P. 54.

43. Camus', "The Myth of Sisyphus", (Trans. by) Justin O'Brien, London: Penguin, 1988, P. 38.

44. CF. Introduction.

45. T.Z. Lavine, op.cit., PP. 207-208.

46. Camus', "The Rebel", op.cit., P. 259.

had the power to change the present and create his own value-system, indigenously without help externally from religion or history. Ideally, Camus paints a portrait of man with shades of courage, conviction, love of life, dignity, brotherhood, the power to choose, and discipline. And most of all, optimism. And almost as if to prove that such an individual can exist, Camus puts all the above mentioned ingredients in Dr. Rieux, and Tarrou, in his novel 'The Plague'. Camus wants to bring back the Aristotelian notion of "good life" which bases itself on ideals and the 'good sentiments' that man seems to have lost. Perhaps due to the importance that Enlightenment had given to sensuality and physicality.<sup>47</sup> This true 'self' that Aristotle talked about can be attained only through a controlled rebellion.

Albert Camus' writings are thus a blend of many traditions and thoughts. It is accordingly not surprising that he was thought to be a 'Liberal Moralist' by some and a 'Moral-Socialist' by others. This work does not wish to add another label to Camus but tries to extrapolate his position so that one may assess the nature and value of his philosophy.

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47. Charles Taylor, "Sources of the Self", Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1989, p. 373.



## CONCLUSION

The themes dealt with in this Dissertation are not systematically present in the writings of Albert Camus. They are scattered throughout his work. The attempt in this work has been to take a theme that emerges generally if a text is taken as a whole. It may be possible therefore, that a plurality of positions may emerge if each text is taken isolated from the rest of his writings, and give the impression of being contradictory to his general view as presented here. It is taking the above presumption for granted that I have proceeded in this work.

Freedom, for example, is not a notion that is only negative or only positive for Camus; it includes both. He wants man to be free from the present inauthentic existence that one is believing to be good. He wants man to encounter the true self within him and live for a better now so that the future may take care of itself. This can only be possible if free press, critical ideological exchange, non-dominant language and freedom of creativity is allowed. There must be no distinction between manual and intellectual labour, there must be respect for life rather than human sacrifice, and each should think in terms of all. Freedom is closely related to, for Camus', with justice and equality. It is also deeply connected to the power of choice that man enjoys. It does not mean that man is given

freedom to do whatever he may please, he is allowed to do only that which is in harmony with the rest of the community, on the basis that the rest of the community reciprocates and all know exactly what they are doing and that it is for their own good.

Political action for Camus' is in the form of 'rebellion' which, being as disciplined and organised as a resistance movement, is not as violent as a proletariat revolution, and not as slow as the evolutionary style of governance of the bourgeois state. Rebellion as its basis has to have the maturity of each member who may experience alone, but must think as one with the rest of the community. Each must know exactly what one is doing, as well as what one is aiming at. It is not spontaneous and is not short lived. It is not endless either, for once the goal is attained, rebellion would lose its meaning.

These two themes make him closer to the liberal tradition, because there seems to be an underlying preference towards a democratic state, but a much more mature one than the one that exists now.

Humanism seems to be a theme which flows right through the middle of all of Camus' writings. He respects labour, be it manual or intellectual, he prefers peace and brotherhood to violence and conflict, construction to

destruction, life to death, freedom to slavery, love to hatred, and the present to the past and the future. Camus was, in his own way, and in his own time, probably one of the most prominent human rights activist without knowing it. He opposed the Stalinist purges, the Hitlerian concentration-camps, the Hungarian liberation movement suppressed by the Soviet interference and the Spanish resistance movement being crushed by the state. An assessment can be drawn by reading the speeches, articles, essays and interviews compiled in 'Resistance, Rebellion, and Death'.

One basic position that emerges from the writings of Camus, is his position as a writer or his point of view when campaigned to the coloured natives of Algeria. Camus always wrote from the point of view of an Algerian white settler. So no matter how close he got to the natives through his psychologically analytical writings, there always remained a gap between the French white man, and the coloured native. It does not mean that there was a racist overtone in his writings, but there was certainly a hint of bias. Camus, generally, does not give any background of the characters he presents in his fiction writings, especially if it is an Arab. In 'The Outsider' or 'The Stranger', the character of the Arab shot is not developed at all. In 'The Plague' the death of the citizens of Oran are just deaths, but when one

white Frenchman dies, i.e. Tarrou, the story takes a change. The white Frenchman is considered to be a saviour of the toiling Arab masses. So the "French consciousness" <sup>1</sup> dominates throughout. If seen from an other angle, one would realise that Camus failed to totally abandon the white European egoism, this is why when he calls for a cease-fire within Algeria between the rebels and the Government, it is done so from the view of the state, rather than the struggling native. It seems that he fails completely in relating to the cause of the separatists on the one hand, and realising the fault of the French on the other.

On this basis it can be claimed that his theory of rebellion, freedom, absurdity etc... are entirely from a developed European country's citizen's point of view. If, for this reason, an attempt is made to apply his theories to the lesser developed nations directly, i.e. without alteration, it becomes difficult to relate to. A Bangladeshi or a Bhutaneese would not quite understand and relate to e.g., the immediacy of the rebellion, which Camus spent the entire writing career to get across to the people.

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1. Edward W. Said, "Narrative, Geography and Interpretation", New Left Review, Nov. 180, 1990, p. 92.

Another limitation which emerges from his writings, which although Camus is not responsible for, is that he wrote in French and although after English it is probably the largest spoken language in the world, the audience which he addressed himself to initially was very small. Consequently, however, his writings were translated and a larger number of people knew of him and his philosophy. But when his influence faded, then his texts found their way into the other parts of the world. This created a gap which may now have been largely filled, but still amounts to a handicap for those who wish to know more about Camus and his life and what actually he represented. It is a handicap mainly because although Camus wrote with a sort of bias, he wanted to share his discoveries and the eternal truths with everyone on earth. It would be extremely fallacious, however, to stifle one's instincts, talents and potentialities because there is a chance that one's philosophy would some day spread. It was true of most philosophers before and it is true of Camus now.

Philosophizing is one thing, getting it across to others is another, and Camus took use of all the venues available to him (in the form of plays, novels, short stories, lectures, and what have you), to put his views in front of other people.

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