The theme of alienation in the works of Albert Camus

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THE THEME OF ALIENATION IN THE WORKS OF ALBERT CAMUS

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Perception of the absurd leads to rejection of God, but also to alienation from man through rejection of values. An 'All or Nothing' attitude (in any case often ambiguous) further alienates the absurd hero from the moderate mass of mankind.

Caligula and others seek to reestablish values totally, through emulation of God. They fail because of their inadequate imitation, and are alienated from men through their absurd vision. Yet most of Camus's heroes seek union with man and the world.

A quantitative concept of living is gradually abandoned for qualitative concepts such as 'compréhension'. There is a movement from 'All or Nothing' towards 'limits', from solitude towards solidarity, but only within the human sphere : since the universe cannot be explained, there is economy of effort in concerning oneself only with man. Rieux for example seeks consolation for man's condition through its temporary improvement.

'Limits' presuppose accepted values. The saint without God seeks to discover these independent of God, and faces too the problem of imposing values without causing harm. This leads to the passive approach of 'compréhension', and the movement from a search for principles to a faith in intuitive goodness.

Man's innocence is a prerequisite to his establishing of values independent of God. Camus focuses upon particular examples of communion among men leading to happiness through escape from human alienation, whilst preserving lucid rejection in principle of man's condition.

CONTENTS

Note.

It was felt convenient to follow chapter titles with a brief summary of contents before the main text.

INTRODUCTION

> ...ce qui est absurde, c'est la confrontation de cet irrationnel et de ce désir éperdu de clarté dont l'appel résonne au plus profond de l'homme. (1)

This situation is seen by Camus as universal. Moreover, not only is every man capable of experiencing the absurd in the midst of his daily life, but all men are of equal dignity if they have lucidity :

> Un surnuméraire aux Postes est l'égal d'un conquérant si la conscience leur est commune. (2)

Nevertheless this lucidity, though potentially universal, does not lead to the unity one might expect among those aware of a common condition, but rather to isolation of the individual who becomes susceptible to the absurd:

> L'homme absurde ne peut que tout épuiser, et s'épuiser. L'absurde est sa tension la plus extrême, celle qu'il maintient constamment d'un effort solitaire... (3)

Thus the situation of the absurd man, as seen in Le Mythe de Sisyphe, is essentially that of the individual.

Whether Camus holds to this position consistently is another matter. His ideas are based firmly upon the concept of the absurd given above. In his work however there appears to be considerable conflict between his intellectual adherence to the absurd concept, and his natural yearning for unity, coherence and solidarity.

(1) MS - E 113
(2) MS - E 150
(3) MS - E 139

He recognized this 'désir éperdu de clarté' as fundamental to man of course, and such a conflict considerably enhances the interest of his work.

The characters in his books all have the common desire for some form of coherence, but their courses of action in its achievement, and their degrees of success, are very different. Very different too is the degree of alienation which each suffers.

Alienation itself has many different forms in the works of Camus. Foremost and most constant is alienation from God, bringing rejection of values. There is also alienation from other men, often because of the rejection of their values. Geographical exile frequently gives substance to spiritual exile.

Different aspects of these forms of alienation often occur within the same character, for Camus's characters are a good deal more complex than the simplicity of his themes would lead one to expect. It has therefore been felt appropriate that certain characters should be dealt with in more than one part of the thesis. Thus, for example, Dr. Rieux is examined in Chapter One, Sisyphus, but also finds mention in Chapter Five, Sainthood. In view of this, an Index of Characters has been given at the end of this work for the convenience of the reader. This was felt preferable to forcing the various forms of alienation into neat critical compartments.

It is the aim of this study to examine the different degrees and forms of alienation through analysis of Camus's heroes. This approach seems to be in keeping with Camus's rejection of general ethical rules for the absurd in favour of particular examples:

> Ce ne sont donc point des règles éthiques que l'esprit absurde peut chercher au bout de son raisonnement, mais des illustrations et le souffle des vies humaines. (1)

As Hanna expresses it :

> Albert Camus ... feels that the serious problems and choices that face us are not to be met through the meditation of a rational scheme, but only through a lucid and obstinate attention to the fleeting picture of human existence. (2)

Since Camus gives such 'illustrations ... des vies humaines' through the various absurd types in Le Mythe de Sisyphe, all of whom suffer some degree of alienation, this seemed a useful point of departure. It has however been used strictly as such : with no intention of taking the Mythe as a yardstick by which to gauge the rest of Camus's works. Thus, only the first four chapters have been devoted to the types outlined in the Mythe. Thereafter an examination is made of Sainthood, Judgment and Exile and the Kingdom.

This development from study of types to the concepts that govern them seems appropriate since, as I hope to show, Camus himself progressed from consideration of the individual to a wider consideration of man.

(1) MS - E 150
(2) Hanna, p.62

Certain attitudes are found in certain types of hero. Therefore, in Chapter One, under Sisyphus will be found an examination of the theme of All or Nothing, whilst in Chapter Three, Don Juan, there is a consideration of Camus's Theory of Quantity. Where, however, attitudes pass from characteristics into forming extrinsic ideals, as in the case of Sainthood, then this work gives first place to the ideal, and the characters are secondary. This parallels the movement in Camus's works from the egoistic imposition of, for example, Caligula, to the altruistic subjection of Tarrou by himself to the ideal of becoming a Saint without God.

The guiding aim in this thesis has been to trace Camus's treatment of the theme of alienation without imposing upon it a narrow critical pattern.

(Sisyphus, the theme of All or Nothing, Rieux, Grand.)

Some of Camus's heroes, though aware of the enormity against which they struggle, are prepared to content themselves with the struggle itself, counting their sustained and lucid effort as in itself a form of victory. Such are Sisyphus and Rieux, and, to a less evident degree of lucidity, Grand. Particularly in the case of Grand, the importance of the struggle itself over the stature of the person is indicated. Also, Grand and Rieux reach a middle state of joy in solidarity with other men, as does Sisyphus rather less explicably with his rock.

Sisyphus

It is not surprising that the hero of Camus's work who is involved in the most purely absurd action should be mythical :

> ...la position absurde, en acte, est inimaginable. (1)

The absurd situation of Sisyphus is uncomplicated by any other considerations. Meursault for example was so immersed in the life about him that, despite his purity of principle and consistency in its application, it was not until he was in the solitude of prison that he could fully formulate his philosophy. Rieux, in the medical field, is a close equivalent of Sisyphus — apart from the matter of choice — in trying to roll back

(1) HR - E418

inevitable death and always being beaten. Nevertheless, Rieux is so closely involved with life that he has little time to consider his position, or inclination, preferring to be actively occupied in living by his principle of resistance. Sisyphus, on the contrary, is in the most utter isolation. His situation seems perfect for the maintaining of absolute undiverted lucidity. For him there exist only the rock, the mountain, the compulsion under which he labours to perform his task, and the defiance with which he obeys.

He is alienated from the gods through having incurred their displeasure; being dead, he is separated from men and from the world. In him, then, alienation and the absurd reach their limits. He appears in this simplicity of situation to be the archetype of the absurd hero maintaining his dignity through lucid revolt.

Camus seems to offer him as such :

> ...Sisyphe enseigne la fidélité supérieure qui nie les dieux et soulève les rochers. (1)

If, however, it is intended that Sisyphus should be considered as an example for man, then one vital element is missing from the situation of Sisyphus which renders a comparison with men unsatisfactory : death. The eternal nature of his punishment, whilst making it more fearful, removes from it the final defeat. Eternal

(1) MS - E198

punishment enables Sisyphus to respond to the gods with eternal resistance. That Sisyphus could pursue his task even with joy is made more understandable, since, though he could never succeed, at least he could never be finally beaten. In this eternal stalemate, the removal of death takes away the factor which gives man's situation its greatest futility. Sisyphus may be given as a model, but can never be an example.

At best, a comparison could be made of Sisyphus with the plight of the human race, which fails with each death yet is ever regenerated. Even this comparison does not bear close examination against the context of the Mythe, when one considers the highly individualistic outlook of its absurd men, in a situation in which each must ask himself whether he should continue to live, and each must seek lucidity in his own life, be it ever so trivial. As Cruickshank observes :

> The absurd, as he [Camus] interprets it, seems to produce a solipsistic moral world. (1)

Thus the situation of Sisyphus, with its proportions of perpetual martyrdom yet perpetual resistance, bears little resemblance to that of the individual man.

A more serious doubt over the validity of the story of Sisyphus in human terms arises over his final attitude. His passive refusal to pay homage to fate,

(1) Cruickshank - p.88

even while performing a hopeless task, develops into a lyrical victory of the spirit. That Sisyphus should make the best of his situation is understandable, but there seems to be a degree of connivance with the gods towards the end :

Lui aussi juge que tout est bien... (1)

Tout est bien! It is as though one were confronted with Voltaire's Candide stripped of all irony, and it is remarkable that this, of all phrases, should come out of Camus's questionings. It is easy to accept that Camus is more a moralist than a logician; indeed, to study him constructively one needs to treat him thus, judging him by his views rather than his arguments. At the same time, one seems justified, in view of the analytical criticism to which he subjects other philosophies in the Mythe, in criticising him in similar fashion for this sudden surge of optimism which is so like the 'leap' to conclusions of the various philosophers whose ideas he considers in the same work.

The very strength of Sisyphus seemed to reside in his lucidity in the midst of a terrible isolation, and the dignity of his defiance. Yet with the final description of his rock —

chaque éclat minéral ... (2)

— there seems a great danger of his falling into the

(1) MS - E 198
(2) MS - E 198

temptation of seeking consdation at the sacrifice of lucidity.

> 'Je juge que tout est bien', dit OEdipe, et cette parole est sacrée...Elle fait du destin une affaire d'homme, qui doit être réglée entre les hommes.
> Toute la joie silencieuse de Sisyphe est là. Son destin lui appartient. (1)

It seems that, in adopting Oedipus's phrase, man is supposed to achieve a triumph of the spirit. Yet his destiny is <u>not</u> his own :

> Quelle liberté peut exister au sens plein, sans assurance d'éternité? (2)

Nevertheless Camus goes straight on from the words of Oedipus to apply the lesson of Sisyphus to man :

> De même, l'homme absurde ... (3)

Sisyphus is victorious only in his attitude. In this he is master, through scorn of the impositions of fate, and this one can accept insofar as the hero is in a position to maintain eternal defiance. It is hard however to agree that

> l'homme absurde ...se sait le maître de ses jours.(4

The acceptance of despair over death is only a conquest of the spirit, not of death. The validity of such victory depends on the question of the validity of belief relative to the 'real', and cannot be dealt with here. At all events, for Sisyphus to draw even joy

(1) <u>MS</u> - <u>E</u> 197
(2) <u>MS</u> - <u>E</u> 141
(3) <u>MS</u> - <u>E</u> 197
(4) <u>MS</u> - <u>E</u> 197-8

from necessity seems a somersault that outdoes some of the 'leaps' which Camus attacks.

The matter of freedom of choice was not one which greatly interested Camus :

> Il est sûrement faux de dire que la vie est un choix perpétuel... (1)

One can therefore accept that, for him, an attitude of rebellion could in itself be valid as a form of freedom.

To understand the final reaction of joy in the Mythe de Sisyphe, it is necessary to consider the characteristic attitudes of Camus towards life.

> Il faut* imaginer Sisyphe heureux. (2)

One may suspect from the tone of this phrase that the origin of the sentiment springs less from Camus's reason than from his temperament. It surely arises from the same vital optimism that can find happiness for Meursault even on the eve of his execution. The peremptory way in which Camus urges us to think of Sisyphus as happy is only one of many indications that Camus's strength must be looked for not in any power of logic, even in so reflective a work as the Mythe, but in an ardent and effective representation of his outlook. Remembering Camus's intense enjoyment of life shown in, for example, Noces, one can reasonably expect that in a hopeless situation he would decide to make

(1) HR - E 417
(2) MS - E 198
* The underlining is mine.

the best of things, and this is precisely the attitude that Camus lends to Sisyphus.

Taking the Mythe as the vehicle of an attitude rather than proof of an argument — and the triumph of Sisyphus is in his attitude — it can be accepted as an exhortation to man to be happy in spite of desperate circumstances, since without happiness man would have achieved no worthwhile victory. There is however another point in Camus's outlook which helps to explain the movement in Le Mythe de Sisyphe from contemplation of suicide to proclamation of joy.

Speaking of surrealism, in L'Homme Révolté, Camus discusses what he calls

> le thème du Tout ou Rien. (1)

The reaction of All or Nothing is in fact a recurrent one in Camus's heroes. An examination of a few should suffice to show this.

Caligula begins with phrases in which the word 'rien' occurs again and again. This first section of dialogue in the play ends with Caligula's reported answer as to whether anything was the matter :

> PREMIER PATRICIEN Un seul mot : "Rien". (2)

The significance of this word becomes clear when one learns what Caligula has suffered, for his grief,

(1) HR - E 505
(2) Cal - TRN 8

paradoxically, is all-engulfing. In contrast to this 'Rien', Caligula declares to Hélicon, during his first appearance on stage, that he wanted the moon, in other words the impossible, 'Tout'. Throughout the play, his desire to grasp everything is expressed through nihilism.

Meursault denies importance to society's ceremonies and institutions such as burial and marriage, though not necessarily to love and death. He again and again declares things 'of no importance', yet at the same time is totally immersed in enjoying life to the last detail. And following total denial of himself to others with total giving of himself to 'the world', he says at the end of L'Etranger :

> ...je m'ouvrais pour la première fois à la tendre indifférence du monde. (1)

This attitude of All or Nothing is found too in Rieux,

> décidé à refuser, pour sa part, l'injustice et les concessions. (2)

Grand too is an example of this attitude. His aim is nothing less than perfection in his writing, yet his action is to burn the manuscript when he thinks he is dying of the plague. Indeed, examples of the attitude of All or Nothing in La Peste could be extended to many

(1) Et - TRN 1209
(2) P - TRN 1225

pages. The only notable exception is Paneloux, whose story terminates with the verdict 'Cas douteux', but this may be taken rather as an expression of Camus's attitude towards religion. For Paneloux dies only after a fierce struggle between extremes :

> Dieu faisait aujourd'hui à ses créatures la faveur de les mettre dans un malheur tel qu'il leur fallait retrouver et assumer la plus grande vertu qui est celle du Tout ou Rien. (1)

With Sisyphus, 'All or Nothing' becomes the paradox of 'All and Nothing' in a way that is possible only at the level of the purely mythical. Moreover, there is a disturbing ambivalence in the final position of Sisyphus, for his joy seems to be born of total acceptance of his situation, whereas one was led to expect total rejection. In the very midst of a situation of total rejection —

> Il n'est pas de destin qui ne se surmonte par le mépris (2)

— Sisyphus rebounds into joy, founded on the words 'Tout est bien'. The overbalancing from one aspect of this ambivalence to the other is sudden, contrasting with the methodical development of ideas through much of the earlier part of the Mythe de Sisyphe. At this stage in Camus's thinking there is no mean between All and Nothing. The reader is taken from contemplation of suicide through to a triumphant affirmation of the worth

(1) P - TRN 1401
(2) MS - E 196

of life.

The attitude of 'All or Nothing' greatly enhances the stature of many of Camus's characters. Refusing compromise even in the face of inevitable destruction, they lead lives that gain the dimensions of tragedy. Their attitude also accounts in part for their alienation. They stand apart from the reader in the way that the heroes of high tragedy stand apart, even whilst engaging sympathy, models for living rather than everyday examples from life.

In this respect they lose, too. They are less human. One of the most human characters in the works of Camus is Rambert. This is in part because he tries so hard to escape the duty to fight the plague, and even when he does join in the fight he does not relinquish his intention of escaping from the city when he can. Hélicon, too, rings very true to human nature, for example in his answer to Caligula's words that men die and are not happy:

> Allons, Caïus, c'est une vérité dont on s'arrange très bien. Regarde autour de toi. Ce n'est pas cela qui les empêche de déjeuner. (1)

Since most men exist in a state of compromise and connivance in order to achieve some degree of comfort, Camus's heroes by virtue of their 'All or Nothing' attitude find themselves in isolation. Sisyphus

(1) Cal - TRN 16

shows this taken to its logical limits, in the pure myth, of almost total alienation, from gods, from men, and from the world.

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Rieux. La Peste moves far from the realm of pure myth, with its mixture of symbolism and allegory and chronicle.

> Les mythes n'ont pas de vie par eux-mêmes. Ils attendent que nous les incarnions. (1)

At least one character in La Peste, Tarrou, incarnates the myth in his conscious struggle against evil at the highest level. Camus also, however, through his choice of subject, brings myth closer to man. Plague carries overtones of the ancient, going back at least as far as biblical Egypt for the general reader, yet also attunes to the modern consciousness of the fight against disease. It is thus a danger sufficiently far removed to be able to support a mythical context at times, but real enough to carry the weight of a detailed human struggle.

The plague, when taken on one of its several planes, as the power of evil which man must constantly fight against, reveals Dr. Rieux as closely resembling Sisyphus, as already suggested (p.5). Any victory is only provisional, and the whole book ends on a note of provisional victory, with the reminder that the

(1) L'Eté - E 843

plague never dies.

The difference between Rieux and Sisyphus is only in the range of action. In attitude, Rieux has the determination of Sisyphus:

> Son rôle à lui était de faire ce qu'il fallait. (1)

Rieux sees himself as

> un homme lassé du monde où il vivait, ayant pourtant le goût de ses semblables et décidé à refuser, pour sa part, l'injustice et les concessions. (2)

The end of the latter quotation was used (page 12) to exemplify the attitude of 'Tout ou Rien' in Rieux. Throughout the novel Rieux maintains an uncompromising struggle, to which he is totally committed, and from which he expects ultimately to gain nothing. To this extent he suffers a certain alienation from men; for example, from Rambert, to whom he was speaking in the last passage quoted. Whilst Rambert replies:

> Je crois que je vous comprends (3)

it is not until much later in the novel that he joins in the struggle against the plague. Rieux does not try to close this gap by any form of persuasion. He seems largely content to act for himself alone.

The beginning of the quotation, however, with the admission of 'le goût de ses semblables', introduces another aspect of Rieux's resemblance to Sisyphus.

(1) P - TRN 1287
(2) P - TRN 1225
(3) P - TRN 1225

For Sisyphus, the task was the rock, and he learned to find beauty in the rock, and a joy that lay beyond despair. For Rieux, the fight is against the death of fellow-humans, and any joy is in temporary victory and the struggle on behalf of fellow-men, in short, in a sense of solidarity.

The main difference between the lots of Sisyphus and of Rieux arises from the different source of their joy. Sisyphus was utterly isolated. Rieux, on the contrary, by the very nature of his work is much among men. At first he is working for them, and later, through his link with Tarrou and his 'formations sanitaires', with them, too. Resembling Sisyphus in his concentration on a hopeless task, he differs in carrying on his struggle within the context of mankind, enjoying a limited and provisional utility.

He is even further alienated from God or the gods, however, than is Sisyphus. The enemy for Sisyphus is divine, and even defiance creates a sort of link. Rieux, on the otherhand, discounts God completely. In his practical and efficient way he turns entirely to the problem of combating manifest evil, without concerning himself with its possible source:

> J'étais jeune et mon dégoût croyait s'adresser à l'ordre même du monde. Depuis, je suis devenu plus modeste. (1)

(1) P -TRN 1321

And Camus's observation on conservation of one's mental energies might well apply to the practical attitude of Rieux :

> La plus grande économie qu'on puisse réaliser dans l'ordre de la pensée c'est d'accepter la non-intelligibilité du monde — et de s'occuper de l'homme. (1)

Thus Rieux is even more alienated from God than is Tarrou. Tarrou wishes to find out if it is possible to be a saint without God, and this implies some degree of comparison with God, whatever the denial. Rieux prefers to struggle

> sans lever les yeux vers ce ciel où il se tait. (2)

To discount God can lead to a form of estrangement from men. In a world where so many men are governed in the name of a deity, the complete atheist may find himself regarding things from quite a different point of view from the majority of his fellows. This is clearly shown in the case of Meursault. For most men, the nostalgia for coherence in life is compensated by religion which imposes unity from above, or politics imposing totality far around. The man who has glimpsed the absurdity of life is liable to find himself alienated from other men through his rejection of their values.

Perhaps from this springs the impression that Rieux, certainly in the earlier parts of La Peste, is

(1) Carnets II 113
(2) P - TRN 1321

working for men rather than with them. Without his work he would have little contact with other men; he is hardly ever shown at leisure among them. They do not influence his views.

He is redeemed from the dangers of such concentration on his personal struggle by not being in any way a fanatic. He shows tolerance, for example, towards Rambert's efforts to leave the city, despite the inherent danger to other men. It is largely because of his own separation from his wife that he understands so deeply the suffering of Rambert. This judgment of leniency towards Rambert is one of the very few arising from his private situation, which here wins over his professional viewpoint. His attitude towards Grand is kindly, furthermore, with a touch of the humour of Camus's treatment of Jonas. This is shown in his thoughts when Grand reveals his ambition to make publishers take off their hats to him :

> Quoique peu averti des usages de la littérature, Rieux avait cependant l'impression ... que, par exemple, les éditeurs, dans leurs bureaux, devaient être nu-tête. (1)

He appreciates the pathetic grandeur of Grand. Nevertheless, apart from very rare interchanges, chiefly with Tarrou, Rieux shares little of his personality with others, however much he may give in effort.

(1) P - TRN 1301

The scope for solidarity is mostly seen through Tarrou (who is discussed more fully in Chapter V). Tarrou shows that solidarity is neither charity nor political idealism, but based on a deep understanding of men, their failings and their aspirations. Through him, La Peste moves right away from the egoïstic attitude of the absurd man of Noces, Caligula, L'Etranger, and Le Mythe de Sisyphe.

Germaine Brée wrote :

> Caligula is a young man's play (1)

and Le Mythe de Sisyphe might well be considered as a young man's philosophy, with its plethora of absolute statements and its confident individualism. La Peste, on the other hand, shows maturity, wisdom, and tolerance. There is a softening of attitude, an acceptance of 'limits', and a complexity of outlook born of greater experience and the taking into consideration of more aspects of human life.

So, whilst Rieux maintains his fight against death with all the obstinate perseverance of an absurd hero, and with full lucidity in the face of inevitable defeat, or worse,

> une interminable défaite, (2)

it is no longer a struggle carried on in the solitude

(1) Brée - Camus 149
(2) P - TRN 1322

of Sisyphus. Full solidarity is far from being attained in La Peste, but at least grim satisfaction in defiance is increased by the sense of fighting for all men.

To fight for something implies faith. The danger is then that, just as Sisyphus became joyful in the contemplation of his rock, Rieux might lose sight of the essential absurdity of life in concentrating upon solidarity with men in whose essential innocence — or at least preponderant goodness — he believes :

> Les hommes sont plutôt bons que mauvais... (1)

One of the basic tenets for the maintaining of the absurd situation is constant lucidity:

> L'absurde naît de cette confrontation entre l'appel humain et le silence déraisonnable du monde. C'est cela qu'il ne faut pas oublier. (2)

Solidarity with men, if allowed to become a source of consolation and an end in itself, could lead to a 'leap' even less acceptable than that of religion. For religion claims to offer an answer to what has hitherto been unanswerable, and, through its stipulation of faith, refuses to be proved or disproved. Solidarity with men, on the other hand, incurs the danger of simply losing oneself in the problem, man containing one term of the absurd situation, and also

(1) P - TRN 1324
(2) MS - E 117-118

much of the evil, in a more general sense, against which a fight is led in La Peste.

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Grand

Joseph Grand is the Sisyphus of creative work, ever beginning his task again, never entertaining the possibility of desisting. When he orders his work to be burned as he appears to be on the point of dying, it is only to take it up all over again upon recovery.

The struggle towards perfection in writing shows Grand the individual, the absurd hero. The choice of such an insignificant man may in part be due to the influence of the anti-hero trend in literature, in part to an aim of offering an example for that part of Le Mythe de Sisyphe (quoted on p.1) which says that even the most ordinary man can be an equal of the conqueror, if he shares his lucidity.

Camus does in fact say that if La Peste must have a hero, it is Grand,

> ce héros insignifiant..qui n'avait pour lui qu'un peu de bonté au coeur et un idéal apparemment ridicule. (1)

This is not, however, on account of his solitary aesthetic struggle so much as his modest rôle in the fight against the plague. Grand, then, in his humble part as statistician of the plague, is regarded as the true hero of the book, although in his marriage,

(1) P - TRN 1329

his work, and almost certainly in his writing too, he is a failure. There is emphasis on the nobility of the struggle itself, regardless of the stature of the person.

The heroic value of Grand is in his movement from solitude to solidarity. This is not without sacrifice:

> Il essayait honnêtement alors de ne plus penser à son amazone et de faire seulement ce qu'il fallait. (1)

The last words are reminiscent of Rieux's attitude to his work and to life. Grand has moved away from a semi-abstract problem to a concrete problem, humanity's suffering. There is evidence quite early in the story of his goodheartedness and potential solidarity. In the affair of Cottard's attempted suicide, he offers to watch him through the night, although he does not know him, saying quite simply :

> Mais il faut bien s'entr-aider. (2)

And so Grand learns to put his manuscript second, and becomes part of that solidarity of resistance sought by such men as Rieux and Tarrou.

Little is said to reveal Grand's degree of lucidity. His literary efforts may be a defence against his failure in life and his overwhelming mediocrity. Against his wild dream that one day publishers will 'take off their

(1) P - TRN 1329
(2) P - TRN 1230

hats' to his work, stands the fact that he is ageing, unloved, and unsuccessful. Thus his secret work may develop into a barrier against lucidity, a refuge from the truth of his existence. But Camus states in Le Mythe de Sisyphe :

> On aurait tort ... de croire que l'oeuvre d'art puisse être considérée...comme un refuge à l'absurde.. Elle est au contraire un des signes de ce mal qui le répercute dans toute la pensée d'un homme. (1

Therefore Grand's change in priorities seems to mark a growth of lucidity with regard to the situation of man. It marks too an abandonment of the 'Tout ou Rien' attitude. From aspiration towards literary perfection at the risk of utter failure, as well as loss of lucidity, Grand moves on to join in the humdrum effort on the road of resistance.

His degree of alienation is therefore diminished. He had been solitary in his daily life, separated from his wife, and had no hopes of promotion or even of fair payment to involve him more wholeheartedly in his work. From the alienation and refuge of creative work, he comes forth to take a humbly active part in the fight against the plague. This development seems to mark a rejection by Camus of the original stand of man as modelled on Sisyphus.

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(1) MS - E 174

(2)

II : THE CONQUERORS

(Caligula, Clamence, Meursault.)

Several of Camus's heroes adopt a far more more intransigent attitude towards their condition than do Sisyphus, Rieux or Grand, and on account of this attitude they stand in far more evident alienation from other men. For them there is no contentment with the struggle itself, no joy in defiance alone.

Caligula, Clamence and Meursault all seek to break from isolation into a form of union with the world, a union which they see either as entire or as nothing. They show most clearly the cause of the 'All or Nothing' attitude : a lack of any scale of values to bridge the two extremes, and in their case a refusal to acknowledge any values that do not create universal coherence.

Each, in his aspiration towards unity, adopts in this effort at conquest one aspect of God : Caligula the Destroyer, Clamence the Judge and Martyr, Meursault the Indifferent.

They are plunged into recognition of the absurd, and the ensuing estrangement from God and man, through something akin to revelation. Paradoxically, Caligula destroys senselessly because he cannot bear the apparently senseless destruction wreaked by the gods, when he learns of the death of Drusilla; Clamence,

when he finds he is less than perfect, judges in order to escape being judged, in a monologue of penitence that is an intellectual confidence-trick; Meursault, more reasonably, tries to achieve total indifference because of a realisation of the equal unimportance of all things under the shadow of death. In the case of Caligula and Meursault, the revelation of the absurd precedes the drama or story, and, whilst in the case of Clamence this revelation forms a substantial flashback, it seems in all three cases that it is not the source or cause of revelation of the absurd that interests Camus, so much as his heroes' reaction to it.

Their approaches to the problem of coming to terms with their view of the world are widely different. Caligula's is immoral : struck by the absurdity of death and misery set against man's desire for life and happiness, he increases the misery of men in order to bring home to them the absurdity. Blatantly illogical, he talks of logic. His irrational actions are an ironic commentary upon the incomprehensible cruelty of fate. Clamence's approach is moral : he wishes all men to recognise their guilt. In this way he will no longer feel alone under the burden of conscience. Meursault's attitude is amoral : by indifference to human values, he seeks to submerge himself in the

indifference of the world, a sort of socialist pacifist and fellow-traveller, who will take advantage of the pleasures and comforts of society without struggling for them.

Certain quotations may be made from La Conquête in Le Mythe de Sisyphe which seem to appertain to these heroes in varying degrees.

> ...une seule vérité ... si elle est évidente, suffit à la conduite d'une existence. (1)

All three men act upon one truth. Meursault alone finds its reality; Caligula merely finds that he has chosen a false path; Clamence, most unhappy of all, remains in a limbo of falsity.

> ...privé de l'éternel, je veux m'allier au temps.(2)

It is the common lot of Camus's heroes to feel that the present life is the only life, but Meursault alone of those under discussion in this chapter seeks anything approaching an 'alliance' with the present.

> Il n'y a qu'une action utile, celle qui referait l'homme et la terre. Je ne referai jamais les hommes. Mais il faut faire 'comme si'. (3)

Caligula and Clamence try to follow this impossible path of reshaping man.

> J'installe ma lucidité au milieu de ce qui la nie. (4)

This fits all three heroes; it is in their mode of action that they differ after the establishment of

(1) MS - E 164
(2) MS - E 165
(3) MS - E 166
(4) MS - E 166

their lucidity.

These quotations are not made with any intention of strait-jacketing three very different characters into conforming with the declarations of the Conqueror, but in order to bring out certain points relating to their actions. Indeed, the most obvious one, that none of the three fits in with all the above statements in the same way, is a clue to their failure : each, as suggested above, can see only part of the way to attaining unity with the world and achieving coherence. Through their denial of any fixed values in the order of creation, each seeks to conquer in absolute manner the realms of the physical and metaphysical, and by violence, connivance, or preaching to achieve a unity in which all meaning will be established through his own interpretation.

A point which they all have in common is their egotism. It is this which distinguishes what are classed here as the Conquerors from such characters as Tarrou. The latter also attempts to take on one aspect of God, omniscience, and seeks union with the world through what he calls 'compréhension', and with man through both this and a sense of solidarity. But he has an ideal outside his immediate self, that of Sainthood without God, whereas the other three heroes are essentially and entirely egoistic.

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Caligula. It is upon the death of his sister Drusilla that Caligula becomes fully aware of man's condition. Camus is careful to indicate at an early point in the play (p.16) that Caligula's subsequent conduct is not a result of mere personal grief. Caligula tells Hélicon :

> Cette mort n'est rien, je te le jure; elle est seulement le signe d'une vérité... (1)

This truth is the fundamental absurdity, that

> Les hommes meurent et ils ne sont pas heureux (2)

whereas, it is understood, man wishes to live and to be happy.

In keeping with the 'All or Nothing' approach of the Camusian hero, Caligula's reaction is to aspire to the impossible.

> Ce monde, tel qu'il est fait, n'est pas supportable. J'ai donc besoin de la lune, ou du bonheur, ou de l'immortalité, de quelque chose qui soit dément peut-être, mais qui ne soit pas de ce monde. (3)

Not only is he lucidly intent upon achieving the impossible, but rationally too, since revolt rather than success counts for Camus's heroes. Any lesser revolt would mean some degree of acceptance of the human condition.

The moon as a symbol of the impossible is peculiarly appropriate for Caligula's aspirations,

(1) Caligula - TRN 16
(2) do. - TRN 16
(3) do. - TRN 15

with the suggestion of lunacy. It accords also with the idea that great lucidity may bring a person near to madness. The underlying association with the vision of genius is supported by the fact that a poet, Scipion, is the only person fully to understand Caligula's vision. Furthermore, Scipion is spared because he is not afraid to speak the truth. Cherea too, though he has not only seen Caligula's point of view but also rejected it, goes unharmed, because he too shows sincerity.

It is in the sparing of Scipion and Cherea, contrasted with the lot of many a fearful and fawning patrician, that Caligula shows most favourably. He is not entirely nihilistic : where a man recognizes the truth and speaks it, he is spared.

Thus two qualities are admitted, those of luddity and sincerity. It is these which alienate Caligula from the mass of mankind. Very early on he learns that other men are unwilling to face up to their absurd condition. Hélicon says of it :

> Allons, Caïus, c'est une vérité dont on s'arrangetrès bien. (1)

Thus it is primarily his lucidity which alienates Caligula from other men, and the aim to impose or impart lucidity dominates the rest of the action of

(1) Caligula - TRN16

the play. Moreover, as Caligula points out:

> ...j'ai les moyens de les faire vivre dans la vérité. (1)

Caligula remains lucid throughout the play. Even when pushing his nihilistic 'logic' to extremes, he is aware that the logical result of destroying the world is his own destruction. Hélicon remarks to the old patrician, regarding the suspicion of Caligula that men were plotting against him :

> Il ne croit pas, il le sait. Mais je suppose qu'au fond, il le désire un peu. (2)

There is, then, a strong element of the suicidal in Caligula's nihilistic course of action, and this estranges him further from most of those around him, who are driven, in contrast, to fear for their lives. This fear is in one respect an achievement for Caligula, in his campaign to rouse men from their metaphysical lethargy, but his actions take him further and further from them.

His motive, however, in 'levelling' mankind is to establish some form of coherence; if he can convert other men to the idea that life has no set values, no sense, they will become like himself, and his alienation from them will end. His actions have the opposite effect, and even Cherea, who sees his point

(1) Caligula - TRN 16
do. - TRN 38

of view, rejects it because he realises that man must establish some code of limits in order to maintain coexistence. In short, Cherea opts for life, with all its absurdity.

Caligula's alienation, like Meursault's, stems largely from a lack of faith in any universal values. Like Meursault, he is opposed by the massive faith of society in human values based on the notion of divine order. As Hanna puts it :

> ...against Caligula there is formed an opposition which draws its strength not from eternal values, nor from sanctified social institutions, but from a defense of needs which are felt native to human existence. (1)

There is, in L'Etranger, much evidence of sanctified social institutions, and at least a framework of eternal values made out in the name of God, for the common defence of man. Ultimately, Meursault was executed because he was a threat to the security of society. Similarly, though with an absence of talk of institutions and values that is understandable in a simpler and pagan society where the Emperor had become the source of law, in Caligula too the death of the hero is the result of society's determination to defend itself.

Society cannot survive without common acceptance of certain values as permanent. The absurd man,

(1) Hanna, p.59

standing standing aside from such values, is alienated from other people who have opted for society and mutual protection. Like Meursault, Caligula, having been motivated by an initial perception of the absurdity of the world, rejects all values outside the one value — or non-value — within his vision. Such is the absolute nature of the absurd philosophy. But denial of other values does not take away the power of those who believe in them to destroy.

Such total rejection is in keeping with the absurd line of thought, and so too is the final outcome, destruction, since no man could survive the logical extreme of the absurd life.

True to the 'All or Nothing' attitude, Caligula never contemplates anything so moderate as using his powers to alleviate man's lot this side of death. That would be tantamount to connivance with Fate.

If God is seen as evil, it would appear more logical for Caligula — who bandies the word logic — to use his immense powers to promote good, and if God is seen as indifferent and unjust, to establish sensitivity and justice. On the contrary, Caligula's answer to 'men die and are not happy' is to make them die before their time or live in the misery of fear. The argument that he does this in order to make men see their true condition through awareness of death

cannot be taken very far if Caligula is to be regarded as in any way a rebel against God. His action is rather like Clamence's, for the latter, instead of trying to find an answer to the sense of guilt, merely tries to spread the load of it over all mankind.

Caligula's flattering imitation of God (if indeed imitation is a form of flattery) in effect resembles submission. Only, therefore, if considered as an ironic condemnation of the ways of God, can Caligula's actions be accepted as those of the absurd rebel. The same ambiguity of total acceptance or total rejection as found in Sisyphus is perceptible. Caligula dons all the trappings of absolute and senseless power which he revolts against in God.

His limitation is in seeing and imitating only one aspect of divine power. Striving to imitate God by dealing out universal and irrational death, he never thinks to create or construct. One is reminded of the petty man aping the great man only in his tics.

It seems more appropriate to speak of God than of the gods when discussing Caligula:

> Ce que je désire de toutes mes forces, aujourd'hui, est au-dessus des dieux. Je prends en charge un royaume où l'impossible est roi. (1)

Caligula's whole concept of supernatural powers seems

(1) Caligula - TRN 27

to turn upon one supreme source of destruction and injustice.

The Mythe de Sisyphe warns the reader against denying either of the terms of the absurd, a denial which leads to either physical or philosophical suicide. Caligula's course is doomed, metaphysically, because he attempts to be one of the terms. His imitation of Fate is motivated by a desire for a coherence which he is intent upon imposing on mankind, that of universal awareness of the absurd. But his means are small :

> Après tout, je n'ai pas tellement de façons de prouver que je suis libre. On est toujours libre au dépens de quelqu'un. (1)

The last words indicate a cause of his weakness. He can only be convinced of his liberty, or of his power, through the reactions of men. Even his belief in the absurdity of man's condition must be strengthened through conversion of men.

> Et sur tous les visages ... tordus par la haine et l'angoisse, je reconnais ... le seul dieu que j'aie adoré en ce monde : misérable et lâche comme le coeur humain. (2)

He speaks, in answer to Scipion, of the day when men will take vengeance upon him. There is a hint of Meursault in this desire to see human hatred around him in his last moments, and it will be for him a

(1) Caligula - TRN 46
do. TRN 69

reflection of himself, his only god. Thus, in wreaking despair upon man it is in order to see the reflection of his own despair.

There seems here to be a strange mixture of egoism and dependence upon mankind. His vision of the world makes other men appear to exist on a lower plane, of insincerity and connivance with fate. They become mere objects for him, yet, as indicated, it is through the 'human heart' that he tries to see reflected his own absurd vision. Personal conviction is not enough. It must be universal, and universality for him is seen in terms of humanity. Both his attitude and his actions alienate him from humanity.

They finally alienate him also from himself. The device of the mirror, though never made specifically symbolic within the play, seems to represent the need in which he was to depend only upon himself. Camus points out the final degree of alienation of the absurd man in his Carnets, and with reference to Caligula :

> L'absurde, c'est l'homme tragique devant un miroir (Caligula). Il n'est donc pas seul. Il y a le germe d'une satisfaction ou d'une complaisance. Maintenant, il faut supprimer le miroir. (1)

And at the end of Caligula the mirror is broken, perhaps to symbolise Caligula's alienation even from

(1) Carnets II 94

himself. Certainly there is no room for any self-satisfaction. Speaking to the image in the mirror, Caligula cries :

> ...toujours toi en face de moi, et je suis pour toi plein de haine. (1)

Then he tries to attack the image in the mirror, and, but for the need for some historical accuracy, no doubt the logical result of his destructiveness would have been suicide. Having sought to deal in men's destinies, he is driven in the end to recognize his own injustice, the very fault with which he reproached the gods. Denying men's right to judge him, he has nevertheless to face his own judgment.

Despite his talk of logic, he has tried to deal with a problem in which man is one term by nothing more than rearrangement of that term. All his actions are within the problem.

> Et lorsque tout sera aplani, l'impossible enfin sur terre, la lune dans mes mains, alors, peut-être, moi-même je serai transformé et le monde avec moi, alors enfin les hommes ne mourront pas et ils seront heureux. (2)

He confuses problem and answer, moon and men, in a blind nihilism that apparently aims to better the human condition by making it far worse.

Caligula's pursuance of total destruction is quite convincing if taken as a protest. The more

(1) Caligula - TRN 107-8
(2) do. TRN 27

ridiculous his actions, the more they satirise the incomprehensible ways of the gods.

> On ne comprend pas le destin et c'est pourquoi je me suis fait destin. (1)

One is prevented from dismissing Caligula as an utter madman because of the understanding of him shown by Cherea, and more particularly by Scipion. Thus if the ways of God have some mysterious justification, then Caligula's unjust actions could be taken as a challenge to God to explain. But Caligula's imitation of Fate is impelled by a desire to impose coherence upon the world, whereas his ideas are in the main incoherent.

He seeks to impose coherence in the totalitarian spirit that Camus detested. Caligula's hope of union with mankind lies in reducing every man to the same lucid suffering as himself. The conquest at which he aims is a conquest of the mind and spirit, but the more he becomes absolute in order to impart his vision, the more men cringe from him. The gap widens, and there are no mediators, no advisers, and certainly no apostles, by the end. For Caligula, God is alien to man and his desires, and therefore it is logical at least that in imitating God Caligula should be taken progressively further away from men.

(1) Caligula - TRN 69

At least, nevertheless, Caligula is consistent in his reaction to that initial revelation of the absurdity of man's lot, and remains lucid at any rate in face of the absurd. Whilst he stands as a hero of the absurd by virtue of his lucidity, his eventual realisation of his mistaken course shows that, in his actions, he has tried only one way of revolt. The outcome proves consistent with the words of the Mythe de Sisyphe :

> Tout est permis ne signifie pas que rien n'est défendu. (1)

Certainly Caligula represents the absurd man in adhering to the principle of quantitative living.* He turns his destructive impulse upon everything, and the play shows a range of negative actions extending from buffoonery to sadism.

Camus's 'ethic of quantity' is surely one of his most dubious, with its apparent rejection of depth of expérience in favour of breadth. It is a plea for superficiality from a man who had already achieved quality and depth of experience, for it is evident from Noces, for example, that Camus's inner life was rich with profoundly-felt experience though built on quite a narrow basis.

(1) MS - E 149

* L'homme absurde multiplie encore ici ce qu'il ne peut unifier. (MS - E 155)

In the case of Caligula, the notion of living by quantity rather than quality is justified in terms of historical accuracy, since the emperor was recorded as being incapable of deep sensation. Cherea quotes him as saying :

Ce que j'admire le plus, c'est mon insensibilité.(1)

Violent action only just penetrates his being :

Quand je ne tue pas, je me sens seul. (2)

One is reminded of the central characters of many of Sade's works, who astound not by the ingenuity or refinement in their crimes so much as by their quantity.

Such lack of sensitivity is unusual in Camus's heroes. Meursault may be unreflective through most of L'Etranger, but is acutely observant and sensuous. Dr. Rieux has never accustomed himself to seeing people die. Clamence is sensitive to the point of sickness. Caligula's state can best be attributed to the effect of a glimpse of the absurd, killing all compassion in a world peopled by doomed men, just as in Meursault it killed all desire for positive thought or action.

Caligula lives quantitatively also in his mode of action. He is by turns the Don Juan (in taking the wife of Mucius, p.43), the Actor (in his mime, pp.87-8), the writer and artist (with mention of his treatise, Le Glaive, p.45, and in his judgment of poetry,

(1) Caligula - TRN 86
(2) do. TRN 102

pp. 98-100), and throughout, the conqueror in acting as though he could reshape men and the world.*

Quantitative living is justified, in Le Mythe de Sisyphe, as a substitute for unification. Unity would need to be achieved through establishing values, and for Caligula there are no set values. As he declares to Caesonia :

> Tout est sur le même pied; la grandeur de Rome et tes crises d'arthritisme. (1)

Or, to Cherea :

> Ce monde est sans importance et qui le reconnaît conquiert sa liberté. (2)

The world can be reduced to one value, or non-value, only by the totalitarian action Caligula follows, not through unification. The weight of men's diversity is against him, and above all their desire to live and to be happy for a while. Thus Caligula is alienated from God or the gods by his initial perception of the absurd and by his whole attitude thereafter, and from men too by his imitation of God the destroyer, then finally from himself when he sees that his course has been mistaken.

All he can positively say, in the end, is :

> Grâce à elle [cette liberté épouvantable], j'ai conquis la divine clairvoyance du solitaire. (3)

He has seen the relationship between divinity and solitude.

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* See MS 166, quoted on p.27 (note 3) of this study.

(1) Caligula - TRN 21
(2) do. TRN 25
(3) do. TRN 106

Clamence. The experience of lucidity undergone by Clamence is very similar to that of Caligula :

> Du jour où je fus alerté, la lucidité me vint, je reçus toutes les blessures en même temps et je perdis mes forces d'un seul coup. L'univers entier se mit alors à rire autour de moi. (1)

The suddenness, the profound effect, are the same. There is too the complete change in the course of the hero's life. Each man finds himself irrevocably opposed to the world as created. All values are called into question, leaving the hero to create and impose his own.

The deep wound to the spirit, the derision of the gods, are the same for each, but there is one difference which leaves Clamence by far the unhappier of the two. This is over the question of innocence. Caligula saw the gods as unjust, and man as their victim. Man might stupidly refuse to face up to the absurdity of his existence, but at least he was innocent. Throughout the play Caligula rebels against his state as victim, and only does as he is done by in order to make men realise their situation. When he eventually realises that he has taken the wrong course of action, at least this is a reflection only upon his judgment and wisdom, not upon his integrity.

Caligula's life ends with the realisation that he

(1) La Chute - TRN 1514

has made a mistake. Clamence's life as a judge-penitent begins with this realisation, and he loses in addition all self-respect. For his guilt there is no expiation, only a variable respite in convincing others that they share his guilt. There is nothing left to do but talk. As Cruickshank observes :

> Man is seen more as continually falling than fallen... this is the main psychological reason for Clamence's voluble monologue. (1)

As the end of the monologue shows, Clamence realises that he can change nothing, and that it will always be too late — 'heureusement'. Happily, because there will be no risk of a second test of his courage, and because in his bottomless and endless guilt there is one fixed point, its irremediability.

There is no expiation for his guilt because he does not believe in grace, no mitigation because he will accept no scale of values. In his eyes, his great sin is to have failed himself. This reduces him to nothing, whereas, before, he had been all-important. Before his fall, which came in effect when lucidity brought self-revelation, he was the epitome of conceit. Having discovered that he was a coward, his whole opinion of himself was undermined. Since he measured everything, including himself, against himself, when self-esteem fails him he is left with no values at all,

(1) J. Cruickshank, pp.187-8

and is thrown into the position of the absurd hero. In his case, there is a warning against the dangers and folly of total egoism.

He is left with only one certainty, a sense of his own guilt, and one fixed point, its irremediability. Yet, paradoxically, there is an implicit acceptance of the values of the society that he condemns. The converse of his guilt is, that one should summon up the courage to save somebody from drowning. Thus, beneath the sham chatter about his own and others' guilt which Clamence keeps up throughout the book, lies a basic admission not only of the absurd situation but of the need for solidarity.

Clamence has been compared, in certain aspects of his character, with Camus, and certainly seems to show that Camus, whilst holding to the original notion of the absurd, had nevertheless reached an acceptance of certain standards necessary for the preservation of society.

Clamence denies such standards because he would stand guilty before society. His reaction is very similar to that of Caligula. Perversely, instead of following some constructive course through which, by the standards of society, he might compensate for his failure, he pursues an entirely negative course of trying to prove that nobody is any better than himself.

The absence, in the framework of absurd thought, of any values, leaves it possible for every man to be his own judge. It is realisation of this that gives Clamence at the same time moral liberty and moral responsibility towards himself. He finds in his own judgment only self-contempt. His judgment of others is merely a clever piece of court-rhetoric.

His extreme egoism is a major source of Clamence's alienation. At first sight, Clamence is one of the least alienated of Camus's heroes. He seeks out people, talks to them, and superficially remains as sociable after his fall as before. At least on the current of his own oratory, he seems convinced that others can see themselves as like him. True, his aim of a two-way bond of judgment and penitence leads him, with such phrases as 'nos frères hitlériens' (TRN 1479) into establishing links more universal and rather less than cordial. Nevertheless the link is there; he talks, and the other man listens and occasionally interjects an unrecorded comment. Gradually, however, accumulate phrases which show Clamence's outlook to be that of the outsider.

> Paris est un vrai trompe-l'oeil, un superbe décor habité par quatre millions de silhouettes. (1)

There is also the sweeping judgment he makes of

(1) La Chute - TRN 1476

modern man :

...il forniquait et lisait des journaux. (1)

His view of other Parisians as so many silhouettes indicates that, like Caligula, he considers other people as mere objects, or even mere shapes against the light of his own intense subjectivity, just as his talk seeks only a listener.

This objective view of men is one against which a constant fight is maintained by the more positive characters in Camus's works. It is the subjective value of man that is in question in Les Justes, when the worth of innocent lives is balanced against idealistic objectives. It is a recurrent theme in the dialogue of the play :

KALIAYEV Mais nous aimons notre peuple.
DORA ...Et le peuple, lui, nous aime-t-il?...
KALIAYEV Mais c'est cela l'amour, tout donner, tout sacrifier sans espoir de retour.
DORA Peut-être. C'est l'amour absolu, la joie pure et solitaire...A certaines heures, pourtant, je me demande si l'amour n'est pas autre chose, s'il peut cesser d'être un monologue, et s'il n'y a pas une réponse, quelquefois. (2)

In Caligula, an egoistic and objective view of the world is partly justified by the fact that he has had a vision of the absurdity of the world which makes most men by contrast appear to exist on a lower plane. Clamence's monologue is not only less excusable, it

(1) La Chute - TRN 1477
(2) Les Justes - TRN 351

involves a similar paradox of dependence. Whilst not according any noteworthy degree of separate existence to those around him, for whom he has the ruthless objectivity of a Don Juan, Clamence nevertheless is dependent upon others. In the first phase of his existence, upto the fall, he looks to others for praise and esteem by which to boost his self-satisfaction. Nor is the situation basically altered by his fall from self-approval. He still depends on other men for relief from his burden of guilt, just as Caligula did for a reflection of the absurd condition.

Thus, whilst at first sight Clamence does not seem alienated from other men, on closer examination he is estranged, even from his listener, by his supreme egoism. Other people serve only as sharers of his guilt after the fall. So he can say :

Je n'ai plus d'amis, je n'ai que des complices. (1)

As suggested, the implicit value in his judgment and self-judgment is the opinion of other men. Previously he had used it to bolster his self-esteem, but after the fall, when this goes, he slips into a shifting scale of value which moves with the opinion and worth of each fresh listener. Tarrou's ideal of saints without God involved the creation by man of a scale of values independent of external forces, yet nevertheless fixed

(1) La Chute - TRN 1511

in being permanently recognized. Clamence's plight exemplifies what can happen when there is failure to create any fixed values.

Without values, the only meaning can be in totality. Coherence must be entire. Like Caligula, Clamence sets out to draw everyone else into his own situation of lucidity, in this case awareness of man's guilt, where Caligula was in revolt against the guilt of the gods. Like Caligula, he sets out to create not unity but conformity, seeking intellectual conquest where Caligula's was conquest by physical terror.

Caligula, having perceived the absurdity of man's condition, looked entirely outwards in an effort to impose his version of the truth coherently — that is, totally — upon the world. His vision alienated him from the ordinary man, who therefore had to be converted. Clamence is similarly alienated. He frequently sees himself on solitary heights ; eg.,

> J'ai encore trouvé un sommet, où je suis seul à grimper et d'où je peux juger tout le monde. (1)

But the truth that he finds, his own guilt, constantly throws him back upon himself.

There he finds only further alienation, for he is estranged from himself through awareness of his contemptibility. As discussed, this implies some concept

(1) La Chute - TRN 1546

of man's worth. At the centre of Clamence's failings however is the inability to forgive.

> Oui, nous avons perdu la lumière, les matins, la sainte innocence de celui qui se pardonne à lui-même. (1)

He has only one quality of the saint, awareness of his own sinfulness, but has none of the generosity or 'compréhension' of Tarrou.* Clamence is the anti-saint. If Caligula tries perversely to be a god only through his powers of destruction, Clamence perversely tries to be as Christ with an even greater reversal of his rôle, striving to share the weight of his sin with other men, instead of taking theirs upon himself.

Turned back upon himself, there is no consolation.

> Mon image souriait dans la glace, mais il me sembla que mon sourire était double ... (2)

This duality — and one is reminded of Caligula too looking at himself in a mirror — holds for Clamence the most intolerable form of alienation, division within oneself. Caligula tried to bring man lucidly to face his fate, in a union of the world and man in which man would clearly condemn his situation, and he acted with the singlemindedness of the man who is convinced that he is right. All Clamence's efforts on the other hand are an attempt to unite and harmonise, through the extenuating circumstance of proving all men as bad, two parts of

(1) La Chute - TRN 1548

* This point is dealt with at length on pp.142-145

(2) La Chute - TRN 1493

himself which are opposed : his yearning for innocence and his sense of guilt.

Clamence suffers more from self-alienation than any of Camus's heroes. An interesting supposition in this respect may be made over the end of the book. Who is Clamence talking to? Another man also a lawyer, also from Paris? The coincidence is surprising. It seems possible that in the end Clamence is left facing what he has always considered the supreme judge, himself. For he speaks of fever :

> ...la fièvre qu'avec délices je sens monter en ce moment (1)

and may well be left talking to himself at the end :

> ...parlant sans trêve et à personne...(2)

He faces the prospect of telling and re-telling his story in a hell of repetition like that of Sisyphus :

> Alors, racontez-moi, je vous prie, ce qui vous est arrivé un soir sur les quais de la Seine... (3)

Like Caligula, Clamence sees no middle course. It is 'All or Nothing', total persuasion or total failure. There is again the ambiguity found in Le Mythe de Sisyphe, is Clamence's line of action one of total acceptance or total rejection? —

> Depuis que j'ai trouvé ma solution, je m'abandonne à tout, aux femmes, à l'orgueil, à l'ennui, au ressentiment....Je règne enfin, mais pour toujours.(4

(1) La Chute - TRN 1546
(2) do. TRN 1549
(3) do. TRN 1549
(4) do. TRN 1546

— A reign? This seems the ostrich kingdom of Meursault, who was sunk in his surroundings in order to simulate total harmony with the world, except that Clamence chooses to imagine himself upon a summit. The fiction of control of environment is the same. He enters upon an attempt at total conquest of the world through judgment, even as he admits his total subjection through penitence. With the first he tries to escape the second, and vice versa. But abandoning himself to immorality does not overcome his basic acceptance of some morality that must underlie any sense of guilt. The whole judge-penitent situation is highly ambivalent.

The situation is unresolved at the end of the book, leaving Clamence in a limbo of perpetual oratory. There is nothing for him to do but keep talking, keep persuading others that they share his guilt, in order that their admission may reassure him that he is not alone. The volubility of his talk is a camouflage of the untenability of his situation.

With Clamence, the 'All or Nothing' attitude coincides with what will be found common in Camus's heroes : an attempt to play a dual rôle in order to bestride the absurd. Caligula tried to be god as well as man, destroyer yet undestroyed. Meursault tried to be both indifferent to society and to benefit from it. Clamence seeks to stand on an eminence as the judge of

all mankind, and at the same time enjoy the comforting anonymity of being only one of a world of sinners.

There is a further duality, of pleasure and suffering. Clamence declares :

> Seulement, la confession de mes fautes me permet de recommencer plus légèrement et de jouir deux fois, de ma nature d'abord, et ensuite d'un charmant repentir. (1)

This reliving of his sins seems akin to the quantitative aspect of the creative artist's life :

> Créer, c'est vivre deux fois. (2)

With the Baudelairian phrase 'un charmant repentir', there is more than a hint of pleasure in confession.

Even so, there seems to lie beyond Clamence's confession the supreme hope of converting listeners so that he will no longer be alone, and the hope that if he goes on long enough he will achieve a sort of intellectual and moral totalitarianism. His assertion of a perverse solidarity of the guilty is the course he takes to escape the sense of alienation springing from his absurd lucidity.

On the contrary, his assertions of solidarity are a cause of his alienation. Like Paneloux, he progresses from 'vous' to 'nous', (and the comparison is not so unlikely when one remembers that other figure of

(1) La Chute - TRN 1546
(2) MS - E 173

religion, the Renegade), but his refusal of concessions through such concepts as mercy and grace estrange him from the ordinary man.

> Pas d'excuses, jamais, pour personne, voilà mon principe, au départ. Je nie la bonne intention, l'erreur estimable, le faux pas, la circonstance atténuante. Chez moi, on ne bénit pas, on ne distribue pas d'absolution. (1)

He suffers that alienation of Camus's heroes which arises from refusal to compromise. It is an attitude found in Rieux, and Tarrou, to a lesser extent, as well as in Clamence. As Brisville remarks :

> Peut-être, enfin, la fascination de l'absolu, cette fureur du tout ou rien, qui est au fond de l'erreur même d'un Clamence, est-elle pour Camus, philosophe de la mesure, une tentation constante. (2)

The return to the utter egoism of the absurd man seems on first sight surprising, after the progress made towards solidarity and understanding in La Peste. It is less so, considered in the light of a sentence from Le Mythe de Sisyphe :

> On reconnaît sa voie en découvrant les chemins qui s'en éloignent. (3)

This sums up well Camus's philosophic method, trial by error. A believer in dealing with the immediate and visible, Camus naturally turned to eliminating false turnings on a path towards a goal he could not yet descry.

(1) La Chute - TRN 1541
(2) Brisville, p.72
(3) MS - E 189
(4)

Thody sees La Chute as at least

> ...an objective denunciation of the sins of our time (1)

and as expressing Camus's awareness of the need

> to re-establish the tradition of dialogues and approximations. (2)

Thus from Clamence's attitude may be deduced the opposite, Camus's reiteration of the need to set limits to human actions, no matter how great the conviction at their root.

> Si la révolte pouvait fonder une philosophie, au contraire, ce serait une philosophie des limites... (3)

Camus had already set as his goal in La Peste the concept of sainthood without God, and this is closely linked with the idea of moderation and of causing no harm.*

There is another possible reason for the apparently retrograde step of La Chute after the positive progress of La Peste. Perhaps, after establishing to his satisfaction the need for human solidarity, Camus was drawn more towards the problem of human guilt. Such works as L'Homme Révolté and Les Justes in the years intervening between publication of La Peste and La Chute show his concern with this problem. The necessity of limits is dealt with, and the problem of

(1) Thody II p.176
(2) do. p.177
(3) HR - E 693
* This is dealt with in the chapter on Sainthood.

action for good without engendering as well as causing evil. Such problems are inherent to revolutionary action :

> Il y a, semble-t-il, une opposition irréductible entre le mouvement de la révolte et les acquisitions de la révolution. (1)

Innocence of man is axiomatic in much of Camus's earlier writings. Noces is a song of pagan innocence; Caligula implies man's innocence as a victim of the gods; Meursault seems incapable of a sense of guilt even over taking a life, though any taking of life was to concern Camus very much in Les Justes and L'Homme Révolté. With La Peste, the situation of man the victim and God the unjust is partially obscured, through Camus's translation of myth to the plane of everyday existence. There is ambiguity over whether the source of evil is in powers external to man or in man himself. As Cruickshank observes of Camus:

> He equates war with the plague, evil with illness, and then looks round for humanist medicaments. (2)

Therefore, whilst much of the artistic value of the book is in the different levels of symbolism, from the metaphysical point of view it is less satisfactory. La Peste leaves the impression that Camus was not sure whom to blame for the evil in the world, but was still borne up by optimism.

(1) HR - E 691
(2) Cruickshank p.177

Perhaps because of intervening world events which greatly preoccupied him, whilst the problem of evil still exists in La Chute much of Camus's optimism is gone, since solidarity is dependent upon understanding and goodwill.

It seems an acknowledgment that evil is in man, that in La Chute it should be concentrated in one character, whom it is shown to isolate. At the same time, there is the suggestion of a solidarity of the guilty :

> La mort est solitaire, tandis que la servitude est collective. (1)

Is the future way then to lie through admission of human guilt as universal? Not at all, for the motive constantly behind Clamence's persuasions is that of lessening his own guilt.

> Chacun exige d'être innocent, à tout prix, même si, pour cela, il faut accuser le genre humain et le ciel. (2)

The accusation of mankind is Clamence's line of action, but with talk of accusing the heavens, there is an uncomfortable reminder of Caligula. Perhaps Caligula's protestations over the injustice of the gods concealed the guilt of men. They did have to die, but they did not have to be so unhappy.

(1) La Chute - TRN 1543
(2) do. TRN 1515

Thus it is nostalgia for innocence that makes Clamence talk on. A diminution of guilt through solidarity of the guilty is his only answer to the hostile laughter of the universe.

Solidarity of men with faith in their own goodness against some evil is a common outcome of religion and even politics. Such a bond amongst the guilty seems unlikely, since, as shown in La Peste, a basis of goodwill is necessary, and particularly the aim of harming nobody, in order to achieve true solidarity. But the real weakness of Clamence's attitude is in being so sure of his own guilt without admitting that it must arise from some code of morals. Perhaps his attitude is best taken as a revolt against the impossibility of remaining innocent.

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Meursault. The question of the degree of Meursault's lucidity is not easily resolved, yet is of vital importance with regard to the nature of his alienation. Is it the alienation of the absurd man or simply of a man who happens to be innately different?

Maquet observes that :

> ...it is remarkable that up to then [the last page] his life has obeyed, according to all appearance, the absurd orthodoxy. He therefore presents this singular case of a conscious mind lulled to sleep but linked with a behavior that

(1)

supposes a wide-awake state.
With Meursault, the absurd is like a congenital infirmity... (1)

To support the last observation, can be found such phrases as

... je n'avais jamais pu regretter vraiment quelque chose (2)

and

Je n'ai jamais eu de véritable imagination. (3)

On the other hand there is the remark Meursault makes about his past hopes :

Quand j'étais étudiant, j'avais beaucoup d'ambitions de ce genre. Mais quand j'ai dû abandonner mes études, j'ai très vite compris que tout cela était sans importance réelle. (4)

The solution seems to lie in a remark in Le Mythe de Sisyphe* about the absurd types :

Tous s'essaient à mimer, à répéter et à recréer la réalité qui est la leur. Nous finissons toujours par avoir le visage de nos vérités. (5)

This suggests that Meursault may already have achieved recognition of the absurd when the reader meets him. It would correspond to Caligula, where the change is wrought before the hero appears on stage, and to La Chute, where Clamence has been altered by events

(1) Maquet, p.53
(2) L'Etranger - TRN 1195
(3) do. TRN 1203
(4) do. TRN 1154
(5) MS - E 174

* There is no intention of judging L'Etranger by MS, but nowhere more than in MS does Camus make statements about the absurd, to which, in the main, he is faithful in subsequent books.

before he is seen in the bar in Amsterdam. Each has the 'face of his truth'. Caligula aspires to the impossible, having seen the impossibility of happiness; Clamence's sneers about 'l'estimable gorille' at the very start of his monologue set the tone at once of his loss of faith in mankind, which has already occurred; Meursault's indifference, similarly at the start, reflects his realisation of the indifferent value of all things.

It seems clear from the remark about his student days that he has suffered some sort of disillusionment which has reduced all matters to equal unimportance for him. It may be conjectured that some crisis, such as the tuberculosis that struck Camus, may have confronted Meursault with the inevitability of death, since death is a key factor in the absurd condition. At any rate, it is important to see him as having been at some point lucid in his disillusionment.

Unfortunately, his very reaction to disillusion, the shunning of thought in favour of sensation, and of expression in favour of experience, precludes any hope of reading lucidity direct from Meursault's account. The most that one can conclude in this respect, and on the strength of the comment about his student-days, (and he does after all say 'j'ai <u>très vite</u> compris...') is that there was a definite period at which he

rejected consciously all values, though this led him to reject thought too, leading him paradoxically into a mere instinctive awareness of the absurd.

Thus too his attitude is less a reflection of his personality than of his view of life. If one were to judge from his reactions, then his failure to express emotions throughout most of the book could leave an impression that he is incapable of emotion. His failure to make any clear statements about his beliefs might suggest that, until the very end of his life, he had never thought. In some of his phrases, for example that expressing his dislike of Sundays, he has been seen * as reflecting a childlike candour, and a 'nostalgie de l'innocence'. Yet surely this is all part of his refusal to accord importance, either through actions or thought, to anything.

Externally, then, his attitude might suggest that of an unthinking man who realises too late that life was worth while. One learns however from the story of Sisyphus that, in his powerlessness, it is only through his attitude that the absurd man is capable of showing his resistance. Meursault's attitude is, in all matters concerning the great issues of the absurd, a reflection of the absurd conviction that no values are sacred or paramount, and he behaves

* Cruickshank, p.156

with all the consistency of the absurd hero.

His resistance is, on account of the neutral stand he has adopted with regard to society, confined only to the absurd situation. Thus his impassivity upon the news of the death of his mother is a rejection of death from his existence, not of his mother. Indeed, he makes a statement bordering on the mystic, with regard to his mother :

> A travers les lignes de cyprès... je comprenais maman. (1)

Comprehension; there is a hint here of the future Camusian man as depicted in Tarrou, even though, in Meursault, this is excluded from development on account of the attitude of indifference which he adopts as his form of revolt. Again, Meursault's offhand attitude to the prospect of marriage with Marie is more a rejection of the social concept of love with pretensions to permanence than of Marie, though he does not love her. The absurd man lives for the present, since he can believe in no permanence, and Meursault clearly does this, being sensitive even to the slightest detail of Marie's dress. Therefore it is the public grief, and solemnising of nuptials, that Meursault dismisses.

If, then, he does not articulately formulate the

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1133

wisdom he has acquired, until shortly before his death, nevertheless he has already lived unswervingly by the dictates of that wisdom. His chosen line of indifference involves rejection of thought, and, given the initial vision, failure to express his views explicitly or even to think about them cannot be taken as necessarily showing a lack of lucidity.

Upon this question of lucidity hinges the problem of the degree to which Meursault is a stranger to himself. At this point some definition is essential. What is it to be 'a stranger to oneself'?

> Ce coeur en moi ... Je puis dessiner un à un tous les visages qu'il sait prendre, tous ceux aussi qu'on lui a donnés, cette éducation, cette origine, cette ardeur ou ces silences, cette grandeur ou cette bassesse. Mais on n'additionne pas des visages. Ce coeur même qui est le mien me restera à jamais indéfinissable. Entre la certitude que j'ai de mon existence et le contenu que j'essaie de donner à cette assurance, le fossé ne sera jamais comblé. Pour toujours, je serai étranger à moi-même. (1)

There is evidently a gap between the ordinary concept of being 'a stranger to oneself', which would be overcome by understanding one's mental and emotional workings and is summed up in the 'Know thyself' of Socrates, that Camus goes on to reject, and Camus's own concept. For him, self-knowledge is — or rather, would be — a total evaluation of his being. It is

(1) MS - E 111

not a question merely of what he is, but how and why.

Meursault is certainly no stranger to himself in the ordinary sense of the phrase. Indeed, he has the measure of his capabilities and desires, and lives within them harmoniously. 'Un Homme Heureux' was in fact one of the alternative titles which Camus considered for the book. Meursault's happiness is largely due to his having no ambitions :

Vouloir, c'est susciter les paradoxes. (1)

Meursault opts for peace of mind in renunciation of desires for anything beyond the living world. And Camus's definition of self-knowledge is as unattainable as knowledge of why the world exists. This form of ignorance of oneself is part of the absurd condition, and Camus's own advice is to remain aware of the absurd, without hoping to explain it.

Thus there are two distinct concepts of self-knowledge, that of Camus, and that of Socrates. It seems that whilst the Socratic concept concerns a knowledge that can with wisdom and patience be attained, Camus's, being part of the absurd, is not only unattainable in the case of Meursault, but universally so. Therefore, whilst several critics borrow the

(1) MS - E 112

phrase 'étranger à moi-même', they generally apply it in the Socratic sense. It is hoped moreover to show that even in this latter sense the phrase is not particularly applicable to Meursault, despite the title L'Etranger.

Much space is devoted by B.T.Fitch to demonstrating how Meursault becomes a stranger to himself, and though he finally remarks that the estrangement is more apparent than real*, he attributes the apparent nature of this self-estrangement to the

> laps de temps qui sépare le narrateur des événements qu'il raconte...et qui a été plus ou moins dissimulé au lecteur par l'auteur. Il ne s'agirait donc, en fin de compte, que des faiblesses de la mémoire effective de Meursault. (1)

The explanation of Meursault's passivity towards events as resulting from the objective view of memoirs written in prison goes against nearly all the evidence of the text.

From the opening sentences onward, with their present tense and associated perfect, an impression is created of casual jottings made close to the time of events. The closeness underlines the casualness. 'Aujourd'hui maman est morte' etc. loses all impact of indifference if we are to learn, cheated until the end, that Meursault has written these lines about a

* B.T.Fitch p.203
(1) do. p.203

year later. In a text without dates, moreover, such conjectures as 'où peut-être hier' regarding the death of his mother, if written at any time but the current, would be quite devoid of significance. And the subsequent use of the future tense as Meursault contemplates his coming journey to the funeral would, if written a year later, be an artistic subterfuge quite untypical of Meursault. Throughout he is shown as unreflecting, unpremeditating, and uncomplicated.

The very detail of the diary shows its recent writing. If one accepts that the whole of the narrative was written in prison, then one is obliged, far from seeing Meursault's memory as weak, in line with the suggestion made in the words quoted from Fitch above, to regard it as remarkable. Even were this feat of memory attributed to the leisure of a prisoner to recreate the past, it goes against Meursault's own account of his thoughts in prison.

At first, he had had such longings as to be able to go down to the sea*; afterwards 'des pensées de prisonnier' occupied him, such as awaiting the daily walk or his lawyer's visit. He had always lived for the present moment, and regret or recapitulation of

* L'Etranger - TRN 1178

past events does not occupy him even in prison:

> ...Je ne pensais jamais à Marie particulièrement (1)

He does not regret or miss things which are part of his past, only those which could undoubtedly be part of his present, such as the sea. It is interesting to note that, when he does think back in detail to his past, one could scarcely call it thinking back to his past life. He does not consider actions, or persons, but turns mentally to cataloguing all the objects which were in his room.* This corresponds curiously to the only pastime he ever mentions, that of collecting newspaper cuttings**, and certainly reflects his peculiarly incoherent view of life, where events have lost for him any causality and people have no significance, leaving objects to dominate.

Meursault's indifference to all but the present moment is consistent, right from the death of his mother onwards. It is no effect of memoirs long after the events; for the same tone continues in prison :

> L'idée m'est venue aussi qu'elle [Marie] était peut-être malade ou morte. C'était dans l'ordre des choses. (2)

Any doubt about this attitude is dispelled by the

(1) L'Etranger TRN 1178
(2) do. TRN 1204
* do. TRN 1179
** do. TRN 1138

explanation that follows :

> A partir de ce moment, d'ailleurs, le souvenir de Marie m'aurait été indifférent. Morte, elle ne m'intéressait plus. (1)

An examination of events in relation to time of writing has been very effectively sketched out by Carina Gadourek-Backer*, who earlier (p.69) describes Fitch's hypothesis as 'insoutenable'. On the other side, Champigny argues that the writing is not a diary, that this is unlikely

> étant donné le caractère de Meursault. (2)

Yet surely a diary is about the only form of writing in which a man who lived purely for the present could become engaged :

> Pour l'homme absurde, il ne s'agit plus d'expliquer et de résoudre, mais d'éprouver et de décrire. Tout commence par l'indifférence clairvoyante. (3)

L'Etranger, with its absence of reasoning and of conjecture, is that absurd creative work, pure description.

There is a tendency, early on, for a chapter to be allotted to each day, reinforcing the idea of a diary. Particularly in evidence are such phrases as

> Aujourd'hui j'ai beaucoup travaillé au bureau (4)

which has all the banality of a daily journal, and :

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1205
(2) Champigny p.146
(3) MS - E 174
(4) L'Etranger - TRN 1141
* Gadourek-Backer p.76

> c'est aujourd'hui samedi. Je l'avais pour ainsi dire oublié... (1)

Champigny advances the theory that Meursault puts himself 'back into the present' through

> un désir de justesse (2)

but it seems remarkable that, if writing in prison, Meursault should make no reference at all* even when describing his imprisonment, to the recalling of past events, particularly as he describes passing his time remembering the objects in his room. To recall what may be gone, events and people, even Marie, is outside Meursault's practice of living for the present.

The book seems to fall into three main sections as regards time of writing :

(a) A diary, mostly day-to-day

(b) The verdict makes Meursault take up his diary again, summarising events and sensations from the time of his arrest, after quite a break :

> ...au bout des onze mois qu'a duré cette instruction... (3)

Being in prison, this is still his present, particularly in view of its monotony. A possible reason is given for his having abandoned his diary until then :

> Il y a des choses dont je n'ai jamais aimé parler... Plus tard je n'ai plus trouvé d'importance à ces répugnances... (4)

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1136
(2) Champigny, p.147
(3) L'Etranger - TRN 1174
(4) do. TRN 1175

* He thinks about the women he has known (p.1178) but only in general, and himself attributes it to sexual frustration, so that it is an outcome of the present.

Possibly, too, the letter from Marie has set him writing again.

(c) The present tense returns at the start of Chapter V, after the verdict has been delivered, and clearly marks off what has preceded this part :

> Pour la troisième fois, j'ai refusé de recevoir l'aumonier. Je n'ai rien à lui dire... (1)

The phrases which might contradict this probability of a diary are few. Writing of the funeral vigil, Meursault says :

> J'avais même l'impression que cette morte, couchée au milieu d'eux, ne signifiait rien à leurs yeux. Mais je crois maintenant que c'était une impression fausse. (2)

Certainly this proves afterthought, of a sort rare in the book, but could well be at the end of the day when the diary was brought upto date. Under this interpretation, it could be one of those sparing touches of irony* which Camus puts in from time to time. If, on the other hand, one regards it as part of an account written long afterwards, when society had brought home to Meursault in the trial all the importance that it attached to death, it would constitute a remarkably gauche attempt at understatement.

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1200
(2) do. - TRN 1130

* cf. Meursault's impression, p.1130, that the old people watching over his mother's bier were there to judge him.

Again, Meursault states :

> Tout s'est passé ensuite avec tant de précipitation, de certitude et de naturel, que je ne me souviens plus de rien. Une chose seulement... (1)

The chapter ends with the 'bus-journey back to Algiers, so that theediary must have been written up very late that day. Surely the present tense 'je ne me souviens plus...' relates to facts soon forgotten, not to facts that could not be recalled a year later. That he should not remember more of the funeral, a year later, when he remembered so much , from the smoking of a cigarette to the boiling of potatoes, seems improbable. His avowal seems in fact a way of skipping much of lesser importance that had happened, with a quick summary of events. Whilst this is an artistic matter of selection by the author, it is also in keeping with the style of diaries; it is not in keeping with the style of a man building up memoirs, intent, to judge from certain passages, upon forgetting no detail.

The theory that Meursault's apparent indifference is due to the recording of events long after they have happened, quite apart from detracting from the main impact of the story upon the reader, also fails to correspond with the events themselves. Judging from Meursault's report of the dialogue* in which Marie

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1134-5
* do. TRN 1154

proposes marriage, he certainly showed considerable indifference at that very time.

There is an abundance of short phrases in the book, such as 'ça m'était égal' (p.1144) and 'cela ne signifiait rien' (p.1137) which reinforce the impression of Meursault's indifference at the actual time of events.

To establish this indifference is of great importance, since it is through his indifference that Meursault is alienated from society. Indifference is his particular reaction to the absurd vision, since ultimately death reduces all things to nothing.

Meursault is a man who lives for the present, attaching no importance to the future, as is shown for example by his refusal of a post in Paris, and his offhandedness over marriage. He is incapable of such sentiments as regret, for example over separation from Marie when he is in prison, which would bind him to a part of the past.

Furthermore, a diary is not only a form of writing appropriate to this day to day existence, it is typical of Camus's method of achieving realism through non-fictional forms. L'Etranger is comparable in this respect with La Peste, where emphasis is laid upon the documentary nature of the account. La Chute too has the realistic immediacy of a tape-recording

in the urgency of the monologue. Thus, in his longer fiction works, Camus avoids the more 'fictional' forms of the story.

It is therefore particularly difficult to accept Fitch's second point (see thesis p.64) that the time-gap has been 'plus ou moins dissimulé au lecteur par l'auteur'. There comes to mind of course the instance of Dr. Rieux, whose identity is concealed from the reader until near the end of La Peste. That, however, is a device enabling Camus to narrate events in the third person yet with an impression given of firsthand experience, ehhancing the factual and unemotional aspects of the narration. In L'Etranger, not only is no evidence provided by Camus of a similar device as it is occasionally in La Peste, but also it would serve no purpose at all. On the contrary, it would take all impact from that indifference, at the very moment of events, which is the basis of Meursault's oddness. Such remarks of Meursault as that 'the old people seemed there to judge him' would be converted from dramatic irony into inept pieces of wisdom after the event.

Cruickshank summarises the effective difference between Meursault and Rieux as narrators :

> The narrative method here [in La Peste] is largely the reverse of that in L'Etranger. Meursault revealed himself directly to the reader in recounting events towards which he felt a

> complete outsider. His way of telling his story emphasized his rôle as a victim. Conversely, Rieux conceals his identity from the reader whilst speaking of events in which he is deeply involved. His way of telling his story emphasizes his rôle as a witness, and he is as deeply committed in act as he is detached in narration. (1)

Lastly, Fitch supports his theory of Meursault's self-alienation with the evidence of Meursault's failure to see himself as society sees him, and, when he does manage to glimpse this view,

> la nature de ses expériences ... l'ont marqué d'une manière permanente. Il est devenu véritablement étranger à lui-même. (2)

Yet Meursault's reactions, and selfconsciousness, at the trial, are surely the reactions and feelings of the ordinary man when put in full view of the public. His feeling of being 'de trop' is taken by Fitch (p.210) as showing extreme selfconsciousness, but in its context* it seems to indicate a separateness that results from all the other people in court talking to one another, or at the very least falling into comfortable social categories of journalist, juror, etc.; as Meursault remarks, like a club.

This certainly conveys alienation, but from society, and isolation in that Meursault is the only criminal present. There is indicated that gap between

(1) Cruickshank, pp. 174-5
(2) Fitch, p. 207
* L'Etranger - TRN 1183

society and the victim that is so much regretted by Tarrou :

> Le sommeil des hommes est plus sacré que la vie pour les pestiférés... (1)

Besides, selfconsciousness is surely not a measure of alienation from oneself, but of uncomfortable awareness of the different view of oneself by others. It marks a personal alienation from other men.

Failure to see oneself as society sees one — quite apart from being only too common — begs the point of whether society is necessarily the better judge. If Meursault does not recognize the portrait made of him by society* it is always possible that society is inaccurate. Indeed, unless one is to take Camus as siding with society, then to make clear the false judgments of society upon the victim would seem to be one of the main aims of the book. Meursault does become aware of how others see him, but never renounces his own principles, as becomes evident in the final outburst against the priest.

Therefore it is a good deal easier to concur with Castex who sees Meursault as

> Etranger à la société, présent à lui-même. (2)

(1) La Peste - TRN 1422
(2) Castex, p.91
* Fitch, p.204

Far from being a 'stranger to himself', Meursault enjoys a way of life utterly in keeping with what he wants within this life, so that, with his rejection of values and consequently of ambition, he is never provoked into dissatisfaction and the thought he has renounced. He knows what he wants. Unlike several of Camus's heroes, he does not even suffer from geographical exile; opting for the physical existence, he is able to live exactly as he chooses.

It might be argued that Meursault is a stranger to himself in that he is not aware of his own philosophy until shortly before his death, but this does not seem by any means true. His remark about his student-days stands alone, but unequivocal.

The little incident in which Meursault notices the young journalist in court, and comments :

> Et j'ai eu l'impression bizarre d'être regardé par moi-même (1)

is an interesting artistic refinement of narrative.

> Camus says that he 'put himself into the story' in the person of this young journalist. (2)

Camus had had experience of being a journalist present at court cases, and, accepting some identification of author and hero, one can appreciate that Meursault would indeed feel as though he were being looked at by himself.

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1184
(2) L'Etranger - Footnote p.104 - Methuen 1958, edited by Brée and Lynes.

Whilst it is not within the field of this study to examine the extent to which an author can be identified with his characters, in this instance some degree of identification can be substantiated by quoting an observation by Camus :

> Trois personnages sont entrés dans la composition de L'Etranger : deux hommes (dont moi) et une femme. (1)

The importance of the journalist-Meursault moment is in showing the subjective-objective development of the hero. Caligula and Clamence are both alienated from mankind through their inability to treat other men as anything more than objects in the scope of their absurd vision. Meursault suffers from a similar alienation, though his more neutral reaction to other men renders him comparatively harmless.

His objective attitude is caused by indifference which denies any causal relationship between himself and others, whereas that of Caligula and Clamence arises from seeing themselves as above all mankind, with a message to impose. Nevertheless the attitude is the same. Therefore, the development of some ability to see himself as others see him (even though society too was guilty of obectivity in its viewpoint, that objectivity which allows men to go to the

(1) Carnets II, p.34

guillotine without imagining its horrors, and which labels Meursault 'criminal' and 'antichrist') creates a sort of bond between Meursault and society. One feels that, had Meursault survived, his alienation from society might have been lessened by a certain caution towards its opinions.*

Whether Meursault achieves any accord between his view of himself and society's view is another matter. If any link is created between him and the outlook of society through his increased awareness, any acceptance is disproved by his final outburst against the prison chaplain. Had Meursault survived, he might have been obliged to have a care for outer appearances, but with nothing to lose and even because all his lost, he is able at the end fully to declare faith in himself. It is the world, with its 'tendre indifférence,' that he finds 'fraternel'** , and, in wanting the cries of hatred of a crowd at his execution, he shows merely his tendency throughout to use people in order to affirm his own existence.

The trial did no more than make him aware of the gulf between his attitude and that demanded by

* It is interesting to note the divergence between Camus and his hero by the time he came to write the Preface to the American Edition (dated 1955) in which he assures the reader that he had spoken of Meursault as 'le seul Crhist que nous méritions' without any intention of blasphemy. A care for public opinion never found in Meursault!

** L'Etranger -TRN 1209

society. Only in this respect did he lack lucidity. He had been aware, all along, of the absurdity of life, but with the trial he came to see the further absurdity of society living as though life were not absurd. His sincerity and his fidelity to the absurd concept survive upto his death against the pressure of society's conventions.

It is in fact only in the matter of conventions that he is alienated from society, and even then only on the question of basic beliefs. There is no rift with society in his daily life. His manner of living is rather ordinary. His attitude is passive : he simply seeks to maintain his own 'natural' mode of living, through

> the absorption of subject in sensation. (1)

Caligula's reaction, upon discovery of the absurdity of the world, was to try to make the world share his own conception of absurdity, evincing the nostalgia for unity which is one of the root-sentiments of man in his struggle with the incomprehensibility of creation. His method was to conquer by imposing his own disorder upon the world, to reduce it to a state as meaningless as life for him, in a fury of conversion by ordeal.

Meursault too seeks union with the world, but

(1) Nicolas - quoted by B.T.Fitch, p.176, in discussion of Noces.

his method is quite different. He attempts to merge into and become a part of the life around him; he is at one with nature, and with his own nature too, sincere to his own sensations. Having reached an opinion upon the absurdity of the world, he allows no complications of thought between himself and people.

His error is in this attempt to extend his union to include society. Noces with nature is one thing, Noces with society proves unworkable. Society is not passive, though Meursault tries to treat it as simply the human medium in which he lives. Society has a whole system of self-protective accepted beliefs by which to identify the socially unacceptable, and mark out the socially dangerous.

In seeking to achieve Noces with society, Meursault makes the same mistake as Jan in his effort to be accepted in his own family like a son whilst still a stranger.* Both fail to allow for the full potential in the reactions of other people. Each tries to bestride the absurd; in Meursault's case he attempts to maintain fidelity to the concept of the absurd, driven by a philosophic urge to refute all values, yet enjoy a civilised way of life in the midst of the society to which he will make no coneessions.

* This is dealt with in Chapter III.

This proves possible only so long as he remains unchallenged, for, basically sincere, Meursault takes little prompting to make him express his views. He remains so even when he is awaiting trial, and this sincerity is partly due to his living entirely for the present, so that he does not indulge in considerations of what may happen to him as a result of speaking the truth as he sees it. It is also because he is indeed

a kind of Adam. (1)

He resembles the savage in Huxley's Brave New World insofar as he wishes to lead a life 'natural' by his own standards. For Meursault such a life consists in following the inclination of his senses :

> ...je lui ai expliqué que j'avais une nature telle que mes besoins physiques dérangeaient souvent mes sentiments. (2)

However, unlike Huxley's 'savage', Meursault is prepared to go along with society in many ways which should have appeared intolerably absurd. He works regularly, living within the framework of many day-to-day conventions. He does not absolutely reject society by the absolute of the absurd, as one would expect. There is none of the 'All or Nothing' reaction towards men of Caligula or Clamence.

All is nothing for Meursault; he does not have

(1) Brée p.109
(2) L'Etranger - TRN 1170

even Caligula's or Clamence's aspiration to change men. His alienation from men rests purely upon a rejection of values which leaves only egoistical physical enjoyment.

Apart from this, there is no shade of alienation from men. He is not even 'antisocial' in the trivial sense of the word. It is evident that he gets on well with people. He knows many of the girls who pass below his balcony in the street, for they even wave to him*. His employer's offer of a post in Paris suggests that he is quite satisfactory in his work. Salamano finds him a sympathetic listener. To Raymond— though for the latter's selfish ends — he is a 'copain'.

> ...un honnête homme, un travailleur régulier, infatigable, fidèle à la maison qui l'employait, aimé de tous et compatissant aux misères d'autrui... fils modèle qui avait soutenu sa mère aussi longtemps qu'il l'avait pu. (1)

The words of Meursault's lawyer ring true to all the external facts. Evidently Camus builds up this positive side of Meursault's personality in order to give more ironic emphasis to society's reasons for condemning him.

Thus his extirpation from society results entirely from his unflinching sincerity in face of conventions with which he cannot agree. This is confined — so much may be said for his connivance with society — strictly to matters of importance to the absurd man,

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1197
* do. TRN 1139

such as the non-sanctity of life, and of the dead.

Meursault proves a misfit, even then, only when he drifts into a position of direct challenge to society. So passive is his stand that society is not even aware that he lives in opposition to its vital standards until open transgression of its formal laws leads to the trial at which all the details of his estrangement from conventions are gathered to build up the picture of an antichrist.

The murder serves to bring a clash between the two concepts, true living and right living. The criminal aspect of Meursault's action is diminished by Camus in order no doubt to give prominence to what for him was the main issue, the incompatibility of Meursault's sincerity with the artificiality of society.

> ...le héros du livre est condamné parce qu'il ne joue pas le jeu. En ce sens, il est étranger à la société où il vit... (1)

Nevertheless, the reader may be left feeling, despite Camus's emphasis upon the value of a good lawyer* and the meaninglessness of much of social morality, that, as Meursault himself observed about Jan :

> [il] l'avait un peu mérité. (2)

Much has been written of Meursault's essential innocence. For example : (P.T.O.)

(1) Preface to American University Edition, TRN 1920
(2) L'Etranger - TRN 1180
* do. - TRN 1197

> La deuxième partie du récit est commandée par le regard de la justice sur cet homme essentiellement innocent. (1)

> Innocence is the expression of that sincerity with which we recognize ourselves as what we are. Innocence and honesty to one's self and condition are the basis for the integrity of the characters of Camus's plays and novels. Caligula's tyranny, Martha's unrepentant bitterness, and Meursault's eventual revolt, are fundamentally innocent. (2)

> Coupable aux yeux de la justice, il reste cependant innocent. Son crime ne le concerne pas et il éprouv à son égard plus d'ennui que de vrai regret. (3)

The last words are almost a direct quotation from Camus's preface to the American edition, but introduce a notion of innocence that is not to be found in Camus's observations. What Camus is concerned with is Meursault's fundamental sincerity, and the fact that Meursault :s

> ... contrairement aux apparences, ne veut pas simplifier la vie. (4)

Meursault is presumably against generalisations which compromise and are therefore not entirely accurate.

As for Hanna's definition of innocence, it seems more a definition of personal maturity or refusal to deal in self-deception. 'One with no knowledge of evil' is the definition of the innocent in Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary which comes closest to Brisville's concept, and none resembles Hanna's.

(1) Brisville, p.54
(2) Hanna, p.7
(3) Brisville, p.67
(4) Preface to American Edition of L'Etranger -TRN 1920

'One with no knowledge of evil' seems upon first sight to fit Meursault very well. However, his is not so much ignorance of good and evil, as refusal to draw distinctions and find subsequent values through reflection upon good and evil. Accepting Meursault's having reached some awareness of the absurd before the story beginds, one may suppose that he asserts a denial of good and evil from a position of anterior knowledge. His ruling characteristic is not ignorance but indifference. His fatal attitude is his sincerity in this indifference. His ignorance would seem to be wilful, even if one assumes that he merely followed instinctively the absurd line of living. To imply no knowledge of evil would be to equate Meursault's 'innocence' with that of the animal when it kills, and confine his life as an absurd hero, lucid and dignified, to the last page or two of the book.

It could even be inferred from his frequent use of such phrases as 'that was of no importance' that he needs to remind himself and entrench himself in his chosen attitude. True 'innocence' would need to make no such assertions. Lastly, nowhere in the book does Camus seem to intend Meursault as a study of innocence; the central idea is that a man is condemned for not playing the social game of mourning and reverence.

Society's label of 'antichrist' for Meursault

places it as judging from a standpoint of Christian conformity. Camus shows however that this demand for conformity infringes upon the individual far more deeply than in the mere requirement of outer gestures, and trespasses upon the realm of private emotions. The priest, even after utter rejection by Meursault, still declares :

Je prierai pour vous. (1)

Thus, in the rôle of 'antichrist', that is thrust upon him, Meursault is not merely alienated from 'society', or even 'social conventions', but more specifically from a social and conventional God.

In Camus's characters, one of the chief factors in alienation from other men is the rejection of belief in God. Religion creates a bond in the habit of worship and conformity of outlook. The importance of this in holding men together is recognized historically by the efforts of many states at various times to impose one form of a religion upon all their subjects.

'Antichrist' is a term which, but for the anachronism, could aptly have been applied to Caligula, who is indeed anti-God rather than anti-gods. Used with reference to Meursault, the quiet inoffensive clerk, it is an exaggeration to the heights of irony. He would never have risen to such satanic opposition.

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1208

One feels that, at most, his comment about God would have been 'cela n'a pas d'importance', with no more defiant a gesture than a shrug. However, society, having found a misfit, requires a label to mark it clearly as being external to its own body of beliefs and acceptances.

The label is in a sense more a definition of society than of Meursault. It asserts that society is God-fearing; Meursault is put out of society not only because he is a danger to the social order on a more practical level in being capable of violence, but because the evidence of his past life shows disrespect for vital tenets of society such as grief and respect for the dead. This, ironically, is raised to greater prominence than respect for life.

Like Le Mythe de Sisyphe, and La Peste too in view of the inevitable defeat of for example Rieux, L'Etranger is a work expressing a philosophical attitude rather than offering philosophical debate. Having realised the absurdity of the human condition and the non-value of things of this life, Meursault takes up his position, and further thought would be of no use. Even his final outburst against the priest is more a justification and clarification of his whole former way of life than a mark of any sudden revolt. There is a parallel between his final rage

and then sudden peace, and the joy of Sisyphus. Meursault passes from a deliberately animal existence reminiscent of Noces to the full dignity of revolt, not through any basic change in outlook, but rather through a crystallisation of his attitude. Passive resistance is pin-pointed in anger that brings the simple peace of knowing that he has always been right. His initial concept of the absurd at last finds a voice in explicit declaration. His belief shows no basic change.

There is nevertheless a noteworthy development in Meursault's concept of a 'style de vie'. He had got the most out of life through living for the present, through utter awareness of each moment. To subject his sensations to rational considerations would have been to cloud his pleasure with the same sort of artificiality as that which society imposes through conventions. Lebesque notes a duality :

> ...un double ton : celui de l'instant et celui de l'éternité. (1)

The tones seem, however, consecutive rather than double. Meursault moves from the moment to eternity, from the deliberate non-thinking enjoyment of the quantitative way of life, to an overt admission of life's total value when his life is narrowed down to a point at

(1) Lebesque, p.44

which he is forced to resort to contemplation. There is a movement towards quality and depth. This is supported by Meursault's own statement :

> J'ai compris alors qu'un homme qui n'aurait vécu qu'un seul jour pourrait sans peine vivre cent ans dans une prison. (1)

In sum, it may be said that regarding self-alienation Meursault is entirely in harmony mentally with his physical way of life, living by the absurd concept of non-values as long as society permits him. His final tirade against the priest is merely an expression of what has been throughout implicit in his way of life; this way of life on principle denied expression, with its concentration on the senses and rejection of enquiry as useless. In Camus's sense of 'étranger à moi-même' Meursault is neither more nor less a stranger than anybody else, since all are victims of the absurd condition. No wisdom can conquer this; at the end, Meursault still continues with his life of the senses, in hoping for cries of hatred from the crowd at his execution. His lucidity is unclouded throughout the story, though his refusal to think reflectively may have become a dangerous habit :

J'ai répondu cependant que j'avais un peu perdu

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1180

l'habitude de m'interroger... (1)

and

...j'y ai renoncé par paresse. (2)

As with Clamence and Caligula, there is a perception of the absurd which leads to a loss of the old values, and a subsequent reorientation of the hero towards a demand (however different its expression in each case) for complete unity in one value, or non-value. In the case of Meursault, too, this expression remains negative, with the denial of relative values, eg:

Le chien de Salamano valait autant que sa femme (3)*

to the end, but there is an assertion near the end of the supreme value of this life. There are two climaxes in Meursault's awareness of the absurd, one in his student days, the other in the face of execution, and possibly both through confrontation with death. Between the two, since he lives in accordance with his principles, there may be said to be no estrangement of Meursault from himself. He suffers none of the final disillusionment of Caligula, nor the permanent failure of self-reconciliation suffered by Clamence.

Regarding alienation from other men, there is,

* Cf. Caligula's words, quotation (1) p.41.

(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1170
(2) do. - TRN 1171
(3) do. TRN 1209

in Meursault's more articulate and defiant wisdom about the world and the absurd when confronted with the social orthodoxy of the chaplain, a realisation of what existence is for others. From purely egoistic enjoyment of life in which other people are merely objects and the social order is doubly absurd but convenient, he passes to realisation that everybody else too faces death:

> Tout le monde était privilégié. (1)

From seeing himself only as faced with death, he comes to see that the whole world is a place of condemned men. But is this new wisdom or new expression? His practice throughout most of the book of dismissing deep thought makes it difficult to assess. However, his last words declare clearly his need to be with other men, whatever their situation :

> Pour que tout soit consommé, pour que je me sente moins seul... (2)

And it is noteworthy that he does not vilify men in the matter of his execution, putting it rather in the broader context of the fate that awaits all men. Alone amidst men only on account of his different values, he makes his one and only attempt to convert others to his viewpoint when he turns upon the priest. His solitude is not of his choosing.

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(1) L'Etranger - TRN 1209
(2) do. TRN 1209-10

III : ACTOR AND ARTIST

(Jan; Grand, Jonas, Scipion.)

Jan. A parcourir ainsi les siècles et les esprits, à mimer l'homme tel qu'il peut être et tel qu'il est, l'acteur rejoint cet autre personnage absurde qui est le voyageur. (1)

The actor, as depicted in Le Mythe de Sisyphe, is an example of the absurd hero by virtue of his art. He acts out many rôles, fulfilling symbolically the exhortation to live by quantity. Actor and traveller combine in Le Malentendu in the person of Jan.

Cruickshank points out that Camus interprets acting

> as a symbol, not a practical application, of the same ethical attitude (2)

i.e., as Don Juan, and goes on to observe that :

> by insisting on the need for the actor to identify himself as completely as possible with the dramatic character whom he portrays, Camus largely ignores the conception of lucidity and weakens the actor's symbolic rôle as an absurdist hero. (3)

The first point is readily acceptable, but raises the question, did Camus perhaps in any case regard the symbol as of equal validity with the action?

> Encore une fois, ce ne sont pas des morales que ces images proposent et elles n'engagent pas de jugements : ce sont des dessins. Ils figurent seulement un style de vie. L'amant, le comédien ou l'aventurier jouent l'absurde. Mais aussi bien, s'ils le veulent, le chaste, le fonctionnaire

(1) MS - E 159
(2) J. Cruickshank, p.77
(3) do. p.78

ou le président de la république. Il suffit de savoir et de ne rien masquer. (1)

The phrases 'style de vie' and in particular 'jouent l'absurde' suggest that the absurd action is anyway only a demonstration. It can be nothing more in face of inevitable defeat. It is not action that counts, but attitude ; of this Sisyphus is the best example. Evidently attitude affects action, as with Meursault, but still remains of primary importance. Even Caligula's deeds constitute above all a vast gesture of defiance. Certainly before the development in his work of the idea of solidarity, with its implication of a limited utility in action, Camus seems to regard an attitude of revolt as equivalent to action in revolt. Lucidity is sufficient : 'il suffit de savoir et de ne rien masquer'.

This brings one to the second point, as to whether the actor is compatible with the concept of the absurd hero in the matter of lucidity.

Lucidity and intensity of acting seem to be contradictory. The better the actor, the more he is immersed in his part, then the less lucid he must be. Yet lucidity can never be sacrificed entirely by the transformation of actor into act; in a hundred rôles, there will always be distinguishable a common factor

(1) MS - E 169

that marks the essential personality of the actor himself, so that

> un homme se définit aussi bien par ses comédies que par ses élans sincères. (1)

Furthermore, to live quantitatively with any significance, the actor must believe in the part he is acting to a point at which he is all but identified with it. Intensity of belief in his part is the actor's form of sincerity.

Lucidity is not necessarily precluded by such intensity. There seems here a parallel between the absurd actor and Meursault. In the case of each, the validity of intense living depends not upon the way of life chosen but upon the lucidity of the vision and the resolve that led up to the choice. In the case of the actor, the whole dramatic process is preceded by a decision to act. The lucidity of the actor, even at the heights of dramatic sincerity, is easily shown through contrast with, for example, the involuntary day-dreamer.

A deliberate step is taken into a fictional world, and out of it again when the actor goes off to dine in town.

> La création, c'est le grand mime. (2)

(1) MS - E 106
(2) MS - E 174

Provided it does not become a refuge, creative art is a way of 'living twice'. There seems justification for a comparison between the actor and the reader. Each recreates a work of art, and to do so with any success or satisfaction he must achieve suspension of disbelief, but either would, if challenged at any point, admit the artificiality.

Thus the intense quantitative living of the absurd man, whether it be temporary belief in a part he plays, or refusal to reflect further on philosophic matters, is initiated by a lucid choice in his search for a 'style de vie'. Intensity does not necessarily mean loss of lucidity. Meursault gives himself up to a sensuous animal existence, but can still comment upon the equal unimportance of all things. Rieux is dedicated to curing sickness, but at no time claims more than a provisional victory.

The life of the actor, as of the Don Juan, is repetitive, quantitative, and doomed to pointlessness. The only redemption is an intellectual one, in the realisation of the pointlessness. A poignant example of the double absurdity of an actor whose audience is not aware that he is more than playing a part, is given in La Peste, where 'Orpheus' is taken ill on stage :

> Pendant tout le premier acte, Orphée se plaignit avec facilité ... C'est à peine si on

> remarqua qu'Orphée introduisait, dans son air du deuxième acte, des tremblements qui n'y figuraient pas, et demandait avec un léger excès de pathétique, au maître des Enfers, de se laisser toucher par ses pleurs... la peste sur la scène sous l'aspect d'un histrion désarticulé et,dans la salle, tout un luxe devenu inutile...(1)

A similar scene occurs in L'Etat de Siège*, perhaps indicating the attraction which the idea held for Camus. Certainly the total effect of the episode in La Peste is to show the enormous absurdity of an actor caught in another action engulfing his very opera, and an irony made sharper by the pleas that he had to make as part of his ostensible rôle.

It is this situation of the actor that is taken up in Le Malentendu. Jan decides to play a certain part, but is caught up in a fatality beyond the terms of the drama as he saw it.

Jan is lucid within the bounds of his own knowledge and ideas :

> ...on ne peut pas toujours rester un étranger. Je veux retrouver mon pays, rendre heureux tous ceux que j'aime. Je ne vois pas plus loin. (2)

The last phrase defines the limits of his aspirations and intentions, and within these he is consistent. Within these , too, he is lucid :

> Elle [ma méthode] est la bonne puisque, par elle, je saurai si, oui ou non, j'ai raison d'avoir ces rêves. (3)

(1) P - TRN 1379-80
(2) M - TRN 127
(3) M - TRN 128
* ES- TRN 206

He is clear then over his ideas, and aware that his ideas are at stake. He is as consistent in his course, which is one of calculated insincerity, as was Meursault in his indifference on account of the unimportance of all things. In his outlook, however, Jan shares Meursault's blindness to the full dangers that can arise from the active retaliation of other people.

Jan is lucid in his awareness of a sense of exile, and in his desire to overcome it through reunion and recognition, and in his method, which is to test his personal value by returning to his family in the guise of a stranger. He is not to know that his mother and sister are criminals.

An impression that Jan lacks clarity in his views may be caused by the reticence he shows towards his wife, With Maria, he speaks in terms of duty. She sees through him, and says :

tes rêves, ou tes devoirs, c'est la même chose. (1)

Also, he cannot justify what is a purely instinctive desire, for unity with his family through their spontaneous recognition without his having to resort to the easy way out of stating his name. This seems motivated by a belief that between those of the same

(1) M - TRN 126

blood there must surely be a solidarity that spans years and bridges mere physical change.

The instinctive nature of this yearning for solidarity is akin to that of Camus :

> Camus doit bien avouer que, cet appel à la justice, il ne le prouve pas, il le subit comme un goût violent... (1)

Justice, solidarity, the absurd (which Camus himself describes as a 'passion') are all matters of faith with Camus rather than of reason. As for Jan's situation in this respect, Germaine Brée describes it well :

> All through the play, the illogical blind accident is opposed by a 'truth of the heart'. (2)

Thus Jan is the authentic absurd man, in trying to maintain resistance in face of blind unreasoning fate.

His ideas are never made very clear, perhaps because they are so much a matter of instinct. The hoped for outcome is reunion followed by the bringing of material happiness to mother and daughter. He tests his instinctive desires by requiring instinctive recognition.

Thus he proceeds, as author-actor, to create a dramatic situation for which others must provide the dénouement. Like Orpheus in La Peste, he is struck by forces outside the concepts of his closed family

(1) Simon, p.113
(2) Brée, p.177

drama.

> Ce divorce entre l'homme et sa vie, l'acteur et son décor, c'est proprement le sentiment de l'absurdité. (1)

He does of course have memories of his home country, but has left it for a land which, while happier, is not his home. It is to end the divorce between himself and his surroundings, and his family, that he returns.

Alienation is at the source of his actions. We are told nothing of his reasons for leaving home and country, but obviously no happiness retained him. Perhaps he was very similar to Martha in his aspirations, and, as a man, could set off to attain them. His very nostalgia for reunion partially alienates him from his wife. He either cannot or will not share his hopes with her. His ideas remain his secret.

C'est la voix de ta solitude,(2)

she says, when he refers to his dreams. It is a solitude she cannot share, for she is not of his land. And the actions springing from his ideas lead to their final separation.

In contrast to her fears, stands his confidence:

Je crois bien que je pourrai tout concilier. (3)

Tout concilier; in two words one has a summary of his

(1) MS - E 101
(2) M - TRN 127
(3) M - TRN 126

aims. Of his motives he remarks :

> ... on ne peut pas être heureux dans l'exil ou dans l'oubli. (1)

L'exil and l'oubli are two different elements in his alienation.

His exile has been both geographical and sentimental. Geographical exile is a significant aspect of the sufferings of Camus's heroes, through Rambert in Oran to Clamence in Amsterdam to d'Arrast in Brazil. In Le Malentendu we learn of the exile indirectly, seeing only the return, but the very fact that Jan is now rich and has made a happy marriage underlines his sense of exile, since material happiness has not been sufficient to overcome his nostalgia, and his desire to help his family. The sentimental exile, vaguely patriotic and much more clearly a matter of family feeling, is made salient by the chagrin he experiences when, for example, he returns home to be offered a beer for which he must pay cash. Withholding his identity, he is lost between the two worlds of his youth and his adulthood.

'Oubli', the other element in his nostalgic experience, suggests on the other hand sentiments springing more directly from his own personality, where exile is self-imposed. Reunion is not sufficient for him. There must be a unity of spirit, a voluntary

(1) M - TRN 127

remembrance of the past, through spontaneous recognition. Evidently the value of this recognition would be reduced to nil, in terms of human bonds and personality, were he simply to declare his identity. Unmasking to end the situation as a superficial comedy of error could not satisfy the deeper needs of his personality.

He tells Maria :

> ...je vais essayer de m'orienter, de mieux connaître celles que j'aime et d'apprendre à les rendre heureuses. (1)

Thus such is his alienation that he feels he needs a period of adjustment before his identity is learned. It seems that he does not wish the recognition to be immediate, indeed he intends to make the most of his incognito.

One can sympathise therefore with Martha, for a moment, when she rebuffs his efforts at friendliness as not appropriate in a stranger. Jan fails to come across to his mother and sister in human terms unsupported by family ties,

> faire un fils d'un étranger. (2)

His failure to find the words which would have led to his acceptance as a son, arises from his reluctance to believe that without a word from him he is no more than a stranger. He appears to hope for recognition, or

(1) M -TRN 126
(2) M -TRN 123

at least friendly acceptance, on the strength of his personality.

Out of this desire, sincere and 'from the heart', springs the contrived insincerity by which he aspires to the rôle of actor-dramatist, controlling and at the same time playing out a dramatic irony which makes no allowances for the irony of a fatality exterior to his little play. He must maintain himself in the dual rôle of son and stranger, parts united only by his superior knowledge and by the background idea of being his family's benefactor. Like the actor, he is sincere within the terms of his own part, as a man desiring recognition, but artificial with reference to the external world.

He fails to allow for the gulf between the two parts of son and stranger. Speaking as the son, taking advantage of his incognito, he observes :

> Je vais profiter de l'occasion, les voir un peu de l'extérieur. (1)

As Quilliot remarks :

> ...il entendait forcer sa solitude [de la demeure familiale] pour mieux rompre la sianne...(2)

He thus puts himself in a position of taking without giving. So, in ~~taking~~ commanding a dual rôle, Jan seeks to impose a pattern of events upon the destiny of his family, maintaining control of the situation,

(1) M - TRN 123
(2) Quilliot - Mer et Prisons p.132

as he thinks, by withholding the knowledge of his identity. At any moment he could have brought together the world of his wife and fortune and a sunny land, and the sunless landlocked world of his mother and sister. He could have brought them together with a word, a name. This would have ended his wife's apprehensions, and Martha's bitter yearning. Instead, he withholds this degree of happiness and unity which it is within his power to bestow, in the hope of recognition.

There seems too a pleasure of power in the way he keeps this precarious superiority over his family, based on greater knowledge. He may fail to find the words to bring reunion, but evidently enjoys too an opportunity that he felt was too good to miss. This characteristic accords with his complacent view of himself as their future benefactor, which holds another form of power. His commands through irony and through wealth come together with a ring of complacency:

> Je ne suis pas très pauvre et, pour bien des raisons, j'en suis content. (1)

Already he is potentially ending alienation, and envisaging reunion. Perhaps Martha's evident hardness deters his unmasking, through fear of disillusion. His gift of wealth in a sunny land may have come too late. There is certainly a strong streak of egoism

(1) M - TRN 130

in his posing as a stranger, and even more in his inability to accept that he may remain nothing but a stranger for his own mother, that the years may have obliterated all hope of recognition. Estrangement, though based on failure to make physical recognition, is also a challenge to his personality. It is as though a son should be recognized simply because he is a son.

Thus reunion never passes beyond the idea, and Jan is perhaps reluctant to risk the disillusion which is all that Martha can promise. She makes this clear, breaking into his 'alter ego' of the returning son:

> Un fils qui entrerait ici trouverait ce que n'importe quel client est assuré d'y trouver: une indifférence bienveillante. (1)

As for the mother:

> Le coeur s'use, Monsieur. (2)

Yet, perhaps because of his persistent idea, that he can put everything right in ending their poverty, Jan fails to perceive fully the hardness of mother and daughter.

His fatal error is in taking on the dual rôle of son and stranger, without seeing that his family may also exist as strangers for him, as well as relatives, and, as strangers, be capable of hostile actions.

(1) M - TRN 139
(2) M - TRN 139

When the hoped for recognition does not come about easily, he shows himself prepared to make a long patient effort :

> L'intimité ne s'improvise pas. Il faut y mettre du temps. (1)

A tragic reminder of Caligula comes in Maria's phrase :

> Mais ta méthode n'est pas la bonne. (2)

Jan's answer — that it is right because it will prove whether or not he is justified in having dreams— is a lucid declaration of faith in the affections of family and country, instinctive affection that must break through superficial estrangement. To test this he devises an ironic situation which will benefit nobody, but merely test his beliefs.

Calicula mimicked God in his destructiveness. Jan mimics God through reserving to himself greater knowledge, and the ability to give good things. Each creates a fiction of control which eventually results in his own destruction. Caligula lucidly saw the full dangers of his course. Perhaps one is expected to sense this awareness in Jan, quite apart from the dramatic irony, when he says :

> Oui, c'est dans cette chambre que tout sera réglé. (3)

(1) M -TRN 136
(2) M -TRN 128
(3) M -TRN 152

Jan further imitates God in leaving it to people to find a way out of the situation towards truth : they must achieve voluntary recognition, without his all-too-easy intervention and revelation.

The greatest criticism that can be levelled against Jan is over his lack of sincerity, and it is unfortunate that Camus does not make clearer and stronger Jan's motives for this insincerity. Meursault's comment was:

> De toute façon, je trouvais que le voyageur l'avait un peu mérité et qu'il ne faut jamais jouer. (1)

This is the comment one might expect from a man who dies because of his refusal to sacrifice his sincerity to the demands of social convention.

It is easier for Meursault to be sincere, because he is not in exile, and can enjoy the life of the present. Jan, on the other hand, is not entirely happy with the present, and all his efforts are directed to reunion with the past. In fact, Jan suffers a great deal more from alienation than does Meursault.

Neither Le Malentendu nor L'Etranger should be judged very much by its title. Le Malentendu, despite the title, which presumbaly bears upon the central event, contains much less of pure accident than L'Etranger, with its involuntary killing, for Jan's death evolves from his deliberate insincerity, whereas Meursault kills

(1) L'Etranger -TRN 1180

in haphazard fashion because of the indifference and subjection to natural surroundings to which he has committed himself.

Similarly, whilst the 'outsider' is at least at home in the natural world with its fringe of object-people, Jan is far more a stranger. He finds he is still exiled from his native land, estranged from his family, and becomes separated from his wife. Each man is unable to grasp the potential of other people's actions, yet of the two Jan seems far more completely out of touch with reality. Both works, with their evidence of the false assessments of men by men, might be seen as examples of that order,

celui où personne n'est jamais reconnu, (1)

of which Martha speaks. Jan, however, aggravates this alienation of men through failure to understand, by pretending.

It is in the matter of self-alienation that the two men are most different. Meursault's way of life has been so closely knit to his beliefs that at the end the outcome of all his thoughts is an affirmation of his previous existence. Jan, on the other hand, has ideas of a human solidarity that will transcend years and change, recognizing and reuniting past to present, but to be true to this he should surely have

(1) M - TRN 178

declared at once his own recognition and joy in reunion. His resolve to test his ideas shows a doubt of the very beliefs he lives by.

The most disturbing factor in judging the situation of Jan is, however, the concept of an active Fate. In L'Etranger the hero is in opposition to the conventional morality of society. There is, too, the force of the sun; this seems important however only for an aesthetic purpose, to diminish the guilt of the hero, and to explain his action, in order to give prominence to the injustice of the sentence delivered by society. At any rate, never in L'Etranger is there a triangle of forces, nor is the sun ever depicted as more than an inanimate influence.

In Le Malentendu, however, Fate plays a disturbingly active part considering Camus's habitual rejection of God as a meaningful part of man's existence. There is little doubt that we are meant to see

> le Destin lui-même, incarné par un vieux domestique muet. (1)

We may accept, with Lebesque, that

> notre existence se joue sur des hasards qui n'ont rien à envier à ceux du Malentendu. (2)

Yet 'hasard' suggests chance, pure and simple, whereas there are several instances of deliberate actions by the old servant which suggest not only interference

(1) Lebesque, p.51
(2) Lebesque, p.52

with the course of events but even malevolence. Quilliot* suggests for the play the subtitle 'Dieu ne répond pas', which is in keeping with the rôle of God in the absurd concept particularly as seen in Le Mythe de Sisyphe, but by no means fits in with Fate as seen in Le Malentendu. The 'Non' of the old man at the end of the play is both dramatically and metaphysically striking, yet comes from a being who can tamper with passports.

It is true that in the Preface to Le Malentendu Camus writes:

> Le Malentendu tente de reprendre dans une affabulation contemporaine les thèmes anciens de la fatalité (1)

thus acknowledging a return in some measure to Greek drama. The concept of Fate as personalised and capable of detailed acts of retribution may fit into the perspective of Greek drama, but introduces into the terms of the absurd an imbalance, activity where before there was only silence. There seems a state of battle rather than of revolt. Given society as it is, Meursault's fate was entirely the result of his actions. So too was that of Caligula. With Jan, however, there is petty interference by fate with the course of the action, and his punishment seems out of all proportion

(1) Preface - TRN 1785
* Mer et Prisons, p.134

to his error. Certainly the position of Martha relative to Fate is more one of revolt, but even there the failure to achieve happiness is less the absurd failure, in serene despair, than a sense of thwarted aspirations. Thus the introduction of a personalised fate complicates the drama with a third force in a way not found in, for example, the personalisation of the plague in L'Etat de Siège.

This obscures the workings of alienation in the plight of Jan, but, even without the factor of an active Fate, Jan's estrangement from his family is such that it is difficult to envisage a happy outcome of his return. He has a wife, a fortune, and a home in a sunny land. Martha is bitter in her deprivation of love, and ruthless in striving for money that will take her to a sunnier clime, but one may well feel that she is beyond the softening influence of an easier life and gratified desires. Her first reaction upon discovering that it is her own brother that they have murdered is:

Mère! vous n'allez pas me laisser seule? (1)

And it is clear from the ensuing dialogue that this sentiment is not fear of being left alone to face her crime or her conscience, but pure selfishness, heightened by jealousy of the brother who has had so much more out of life than she has.

(1) M - TRN 165

In short, the respective lots of Jan and Martha have been too different for too long to leave any hope of an ending to their estrangement.

The mother is much more complex. Age has brought religious misgivings, a certain softening. She does not have Martha's justification of crime by ends any more, that bears a resemblance to that of Dostoievsky's Raskolnikov. Yet the mother's very mellowing of outlook, taking her a little away from the things of this world, suggests that a change of material fortune or even the return of a son would not mean much to her any more.

Thus there has grown up a deep-rooted estrangement of personality between Jan and his family.

Hanna sees the murder as presenting the problem of

> ... the difference between murder of a stranger and murder of a son. (1)

Jan's whole problem is in his attempt to deny any difference, to close the gap between stranger and son without formal revelation of his identity. He seems to rely on some bond of family blood.

As for the murder of son or stranger, the play seems tacitly to put the broader question of that greater and wilful alienation which makes it easier for men to kill fellowmen. This was a problem with

(1) Hanna, p.49.

which Camus was concerned right from mass-murder to the cold action of the legal executioner. In Le Malentendu is raised the subject-object relationship found in the outlook of Caligula or Clamence. For example, the mother sees the killing of strangers as a mere 'intervention;

> un léger coup de pouce donné à des vies inconnues. (1)

Ironically she equates her action with those of the Fate which is so drastically to affect the course of Jan's life. There is indeed an echo of the characters of Sade, with their frequent assertions that they are helping nature by converting men back to dust. Furthermore, the mother's writing off of destroyed lives as 'inconnues' shows how important it is to her that the victims should be strangers. Whilst her words may be a retort made in self-justification on account of the growing sense of religious feeling that age is bringing to her, they do put the 'objective' point of view from which man so often condones killing, the alienation of the victim under such labels as Jew, Imperialist, Red. Thus, just as in the case of L'Etranger, society dubbed Meursault 'antichrist', in Le Malentendu the mother dismisses Jan as 'inconnu'.

Therefore the real tragedy of Le Malentendu springs not so much from accident as the title suggests,

(1) M - TRN 119

as from Jan's reluctance to accept the most absurd form of his alienation : that, incognito, a son can remain a stranger, and an actor be identified with his rôle.

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The Artist. (Grand, Jonas, Scipion.)

Artists figure very infrequently in the pages of Camus's fiction, considering the metaphysical and aesthetic importance accorded them in, for example, Le Mythe de Sisyphe and L'Homme Révolté. There is Grand in La Peste, Scipion in Caligula, and Jonas in the short story of that name.

Their characters and situations are very different, but they have one major factor in common. Each is faced with the problem of réconciling art and life.

> ...la joie absurde par excellence, c'est la création. (1)

But there is the danger of the joy outshining the dark lucidity of the absurd struggle. There may be a divorce from 'real life'.

Of this danger Grand is the clearest example. For Grand, writing is an oasis in a wilderness of wasted years. He can keep before him an ideal of perfection in a lifetime of failures, and clings to the hope of achieving a striking success which will lift him from his mediocrity. The ideal and the hope, with no answer to despair but tenacity, are part of

(1) MS - E 173

the outlook of the authentic absurd man. The danger is that his art may become more a source of consolation than of truth. Grand's redemption is in sacrificing much of his time to helping, in his own small way, in the fight against the plague. He does not abandon his writing entirely, but when there is a choice to be made between general human happiness and inward individual satisfaction, he chooses the former. With this decision he also escapes for a time from his isolation.

In the case of Grand, the nature of his art reflects the problem of his life. He is painfully aware that he has never proved effective, either in his work or in his marriage. His art is correspondingly ineffectual : its progress, such as it is, is towards an ever-narrowing detail and loss of broad vision, perfection of the word obscuring the conception of the work. It moves towards greater unreality, in reaction to the sad reality of his daily life.

> Elle [l'oeuvre d'art] marque à la fois la mort d'une expérience et sa multiplication. (1)

Grand's work however does not fulfil the demand for experience, or consequently, 'multiplication'. It is redeemed, and only extrinsically, by Grand's ardour for perfection.

(1) MS - E 174

> On aurait tort [illegible] de croire que l'oeuvre d'art puisse être considérée enfin comme un refuge à l'absurde. Elle est elle-même un phénomène absurde... (1)

Art is even a symptom :

> Elle est au contraire un des signes de ce mal qui le répercute dans toute la pensée d'un homme. (2)

And Grand makes the mistake of believing in his art for its own sake. It is only outside his art that he finds a valid form of revolt against the absurd and a degree of relief from alienation.

For Jonas the choice is the same, between art and solidarity with men, but his situation is very different. Whereas Grand is motivated by a desire for success, success itself causes Jonas's problem, taking away a certain solitude that is the very breath of his art. We know nothing of the work of Jonas except that he succeeds in putting his problem on to canvas. Whether he chooses solitude or solidarity is deliberately left ambiguous, suggesting that Camus regards art as born of both.

Grand and Jonas both find themselves inescapably faced with the problem of the alienation of the artist and the need for solidarity. For Scipion, on the contrary, life's problems and his art are very closely united.

(1) MS - E 174
(2) MS - E 174

> L'artiste, qu'il le veuille ou non, ne peut plus être un solitaire... (1)

This is the predicament faced by Grand and Jonas, each in his own way, and solitude and solidarity polarise the dilemma of reconciling art with life. For Scipion the first directly expresses the second; two or three lines of his poem are sufficient to show Caligula that another man has reached absurd lucidity. His comment to Scipion is:

> Tu es bien jeune pour connaître les vraies leçons de la mort. (2)

His reaction is to spare Scipion derision and death.

For Scipion maintains lucidity in his art:

> Fêtes uniques et sauvages, mon délire sans espoir... (3)

This is an echo of Noces. Also art is here 'multiplying' the absurd perception.

Scipion is confronted with what Camus regards as the great nihilistic challenge of our times for the artist.* His answer is an unflinching triumph in lucidity, and its impact is enhanced by the reaction of Caligula himself, the nihilist conqueror: approbation.

(1) HR - E 678
(2) Cal- TRN 100
(3) HR - E 678

* Un des sens de l'histoire d'aujourd'hui, et plus encore de demain, est la lutte entre les artistes et les nouveaux conquérants, entre les témoins de la révolution créatrice et les bâtisseurs de la révolution nihiliste. (HR - E 678)

The three writers discussed having nothing directly in common. Grand's work is a symptom of inner dissatisfaction which finds a temporary solution at least in the solidarity of the fight against the plague, after a form of alienation which runs the risk of becoming self-exalting. Jonas, reducing his art to the absurdity of one word upon a canvas, seeks to resolve through art the conflict between a desire for solidarity and a need for solitude. Scipion comes close for a few moments to a sort of solidarity and certainly sympathy with Caligula, but is separated from him because in despair Scipion can still find joy, or what he at least describes as 'délire'. Nevertheless, in the case of each of the three artists, their work is concerned in some way with the problems of the absurd, and all are affected by some aspect of alienation.

IV : DON JUAN

(Theory of Quantity; women in the works of Camus; Camus himself.)

Don Juan is the best example in Le Mythe de Sisyphe of the man who evaluates life in terms of quantity. Camus draws a distinction between quantity and quality :

> Ce que Don Juan met en acte, c'est une éthique de la quantité, au contraire du saint, qui tend vers la qualité. (1)

Camus's theory of quantity is one of his most dubious, seen in the light of what he wrote and thought. Indeed, to judge by the above quotation, since Camus came to see a form of sainthood as man's goal, there seems an acknowledgment that quantitative living must eventually be superseded by qualitative living.

Evaluation of life in terms of quantity must therefore be taken, like the notion of the absurd itself, as only a point of departure for the absurd man. At this point, he cannot believe in depth to life, since all human achievement is made shallow by the inevitability of death. Death, the most absurd aspect of life, justifies quantitative living since an absolute end negates meaning in life.

(1) MS - E 154

Yet even as early as L'Etranger there are signs that Camus would not pursue very far the ethic of quantity. As discussed in Chapter II (Meursault), there becomes evident in Meursault a development from the moment to eternity, from grasping at the superficial and unrelated to an appreciation of the profound, as he sees life as a whole of inestimable worth. To have lived one day is, he thinks, sufficient to fill a man's thoughts indefinitely.

Camus himself was instinctively qualitative in his reactions to the world. Right from Noces, through L'Etranger to La Peste, there is sensitivity towards life and a search for depth. There seems indeed a determination to instil some meaning, whether through sensations or through symbolism, where death states that there can be no permanent meaning, just as Sisyphus drew joy from despair.

Thus the whole trend of Camus's writing is away from any notion of frivolous multiplication of experiences. For to govern one's life through the ethic of quantity would be deliberately to thwart that nostalgia for union in significance which is such a constant feature of the lives of Camus's heroes. The quantitative outlook isolates, leading to a series of incidents without evident causal relationship, as exemplified throughout most of L'Etranger. The

qualitative outlook relates, bringing man nearer to that ideal of an all-unifying value, an imposition, by the will, of meaning even where an overall meaning seems denied by ultimate death; an outlook that Tarrou summed up as 'la compréhension'.

Certainly the qualitative ethic creates its own problems. It inevitably leads to the drawing of distinctions, and so to the admission of values, and the difficulty of establishing limits. At least, however, it is positive, and in accord with Camus's need to find voice for his instinctive optimism, and the desire to find significance for humanity within its own terms.

Quantitative evaluation of life, on the contrary, involves the ruthless treatment of persons as things. This is the outlook of Don Juan, and the same object-treatment of humanity that is found in the reactions of Caligula to the discovery of the absurd, for he perversely makes man's condition worse in order to underline its hopelessness. It is the reaction too of Meursault in order to escape those ties with people which would have led him into admitting relative importances where he will accord no importance at all.

Denial of the ethic of quality goes together with denial of values. It even involves a deliberate isolation, the conservation of one's own identity through apartness.

> Il y a plusieurs façons de se suicider, dont l'une est le don total et l'oubli de sa propre personne. (1)

Here the contrast with Camus's later thought becomes more evident. On the one hand there is the suggestion that giving oneself is a form of suicide, thus limiting the absurd man typically to a self-centred world. On the other, particularly in La Peste, the sacrifice of at least a part of oneself offers one a way towards unity with men. With Rieux there is a total dedication to a fight on behalf of mankind ; with Grand it is partial in his sacrifice of his writing. Tarrou's is a lifelong sacrifice, Rambert's is temporary. In every case, however, there is a giving of oneself, and this helps each man to overcome his state of alienation. Rambert in particular achieves a form of happiness where thought for others is closely bound with self-respect.

Quantitative living results from rejection of a meaning in life, and even of coherence within it :

> L'homme absurde multiplie ... ce qu'il ne peut unifier. (2)

Rejection of meaning is concomitant with rejection of God, who offers a source of meaning for all things. Like the Dandy, Don Juan cultivates superficiality

(1) MS - E 154
(2) MS - E 155

as a form of revolt.

He is alienated from humans through refusing to recognize depth of feeling in them or in himself, thus precluding any close relationship. As for God,

> à la colère divine il n'a qu'une réponse et c'est l'honneur humain. (1)

'Honneur' is a peculiarly apt word to use of Don Juan, signifying the determination to defend one's rights and dignity against all assailants, and is redolent of the egoism which is fundamental to the absurd man. Since he has no faith in God or in any coherence in life, Don Juan must have faith in himself as the centre of life. This egoism is the basis of his alienation.

The absence of any definite Don Juan character in the works of Camus, outside the discussion of his type in the Mythe de Sisyphe, may be partly due, as suggested, to the untenability of the ethic of quantity for Camus in face of his instinctive and consistent search for depth in life beyond despair. Nostalgia for significance and coherence is indeed one of the main drives in his writing. His discussion of the ethic of quantity, like his choice of heroes who follow erroneous courses of action, seems, then, in

(1) MS - E 153

part of his technique of trial by error. This theory is distinguished by having received a tacit and early rejection, before being disproved by example.

A further reason for the absence of Don Juan from the pages of Camus is the comparative fewness and unimportance of women in his works.

The men of La Peste are mostly separated from women and are, with rare exceptions, not profoundly influenced by them. It is of interest to note that in the realms of prose fiction and drama, where women are so often a key influence, Camus's heroes stand apart. Even Rambert, whose desire to rejoin his mistress in Paris is the main motive most of the time behind his attitude and actions, achieves the happiness of solidarity through relegating reunion to an uncertain date. Rieux meets many people in the course of his work, but this aspect of a doctor's life is used chiefly for the aesthetic end of artistic unity. He is depicted for the most part as a hard-working taciturn man with little time for human relationships, even where there is occasional inclination. His wife is very soon removed from the scenes of the novel, leaving him free — plot-wise — to concentrate upon action against the plague. His mother is conspicuous through her silences. Grand, separated from his wife, fights alone for perfection in writing,

and one feels that such an aesthetic struggle would probably have been extinguished by a fuller domestic life, given Grand's rather feeble personality. The early reuniting of the Castels* stands as a rare exception, where the desire of people to be together proves stronger than fear of the plague, yet the Castels' relationship has been of dubious harmony, and only the plague has brought home to them their need to be together.

The isolation of the men of La Peste from immediate personal associations is an artistic device : it silhouettes men against their problems, and enhances their tragic grandeur. Yet only men are so dealt with. Camus noted :

> Faire ainsi du thème de la séparation le grand thème du roman (1)

but the only example of a woman suffering through separation is in the briefest of glimpses of Rieux's wife.

Nor is any alliance to be seen between love and the desire for solidarity. A clue to this lack may be found in one of Rieux's thoughts:

> Pour lutter contre l'abstraction, il faut un peu lui ressembler. (2)

This justifies the adoption of an impersonal approach

(1) Carnets II 80
(2) La Peste TRN 1291
* do. TRN 1273

in recording events and suggests the need to shed the trammels of personal ties in order to be free for the fight. As Rieux explains of his narrative method:

> Mais ce que, personnellement, il avait à dire, son attente, ses épreuves, il devait les taire. (1)

Camus seems reluctant elsewhere too to examine, in any detail or depth, human relationships. (Grand and his wife stand as an exception, a touching account being given of romance and marriage, but it is seen from a point at which it has become a hopeless separation.) Where he does attempt to portray a passionate relationship, as between Diego and Victoria in L'Etat de Siège, the lyricism is unconvincing, and the love at any rate of Diego seems very feeble:

> DIEGO Les fleurs tomberont!
> VICTORIA Les fruits t'attendent!
> DIEGO L'hiver viendra! (2)

and Diego can declare :

> Ah! Je hais ta beauté, puisqu'elle doit me survivre! Maudite qui servira à d'autres! (Il l'écrase contre lui.) Là! Je ne serai pas seul... (3)

This latter action is reminiscent of the scene in La Peste where a plague-ridden man takes into his arms a woman, but in La Peste it is the first woman he finds, which gives considerable extenuation, and he himself is an anonymous example of desperate fear. The

(1) La Peste - TRN 1466
(2) ES - TRN 201
(3) ES - TRN 260

selfishness and possessiveness of Diego stand in very poor light when compared with the dignified restraint of the main characters of La Peste.

Victoria's love is much more powerful:

> Si tu devais mourir, j'envierais jusqu'à la terre qui épouserait ton corps! (1)

This has overtones of Heathcliff, whom Camus mentions in the Carnets, and corresponds with Camus's own passionately earthly lyricism. Yet it is Diego* who shows himself more powerful than the plague through his fearlessness, and who later offers himself** to die in place of Victoria.

Perhaps the nearest to an important and convincing man-woman relationship where the woman is not a secondary character is in Les Justes, but the love of Dora and Kaliayev highlights rather than influences the central action of the play.

There seem to be two main reasons for the exclusion of women from rôles of importance in the works of Camus : the nature of his themes and of his situations. His themes are intellectual, his situations often involve prolonged physical struggle, and for Camus the world of intellectual and physical struggle is a man's world. Even in the case of Caligula,

(1) ES - TRN 261
* ES - TRN 273
** ES - TRN 287

whose initial grief is over the death of a woman, it is made clear* that this death is nothing compared with the truth it has revealed. In Caligula there is the intellectual perception and also the physical strife. In L'Etranger the lack of any deep union between Meursault and Marie accords with the theme of the novel, being an aspect of the lack of real contact of Meursault with other people because of a profound difference in outlook. The clearest example of alienation of men from women through the claims of the intellect has already been discussed (Chapter III); it is the attitude of Jan towards Maria.

Martha stands as an exception in the world of men, but is unfeminine in her ruthless pursuit of material happiness through violent means, and stands in strong sexual contrast to, for example, the gentleness of Maria. Her relationship with other characters in the play is scarcely that of a woman. Any womanliness in her has grown bitterly hard:

> Je suis restée...enfoncée au coeur du continent et j'ai grandi dans l'épaisseur des terres. Personne n'a embrassé ma bouche et même vous, n'avez vu mon corps sans vêtements. (1)

Her words to her mother reveal that there is a strong sexual aspect to her alienation from people, which stands in contrast to, for example, Rambert's

(1) M - TRN 168
* Caligula -TRN 16

renunciation of sexual ties for a time in favour of a greater solidarity. And Martha's envy of her brother is because he has been able to lead the freer life of a man.

The reason for the absence of women as a significantly feminine force lies in the field of Camus's situations. He is concerned with the world of ideas and actions, not of emotions and sentiments, despite the strongly emotional basis of his own thought. He himself comments on the fact that he is an intellectual rather than a psychological writer :

> Mon oeuvre pendant ces deux premiers cycles : des êtres sans mensonges, donc non réels. Ils ne sont pas au monde. C'est pourquoi sans doute et jusqu'ici je ne suis pas un romancier au sens où on l'entend. (1)

And the scenes of for example L'Etat de Siège are clearly dominated not by 'real people' but by such ideas as, To defy evil is to defeat it, and the Justes-style idea of a life given for a life.

One form of human relationship is recurrent in the works of Camus, that of mother and son. It is found in L'Envers et l'Endroit, in La Peste, and obliquely in L'Etranger. In Le Malentendu its reestablishment stands as a central hope. The most striking feature of such relationships, however, is the silence of the understanding. It is as though

(1) Carnets II 325

Camus had to rely heavily on the reader's sympathy from personal experience to give credit and substance to this understanding. Certainly such taciturnity, over such a close relationship, does not seem to promise well for the unity of mankind in general, where so many misunderstandings need to be cleared up.

As for physical love, there is the example in Noces* of Vincent, whose level of satisfaction seems to equate a woman with a good square meal. This is consistent with Camus's preference for the uncomplicated life of the natural world, and is taken up again in the relations of Meursault and Marie. Camus's comment on Gide in the above-mentioned passage of Noces shows his opinion of the unnatural refinement of love, when treated as an instrument of intellectualised enjoyment.

Yet such is precisely the attitude of a Don Juan in revolt.

The nearest to the Don Juan character in the pages of Camus, and then only in one facet of his personality, is found in Clamence. There is the insatiability of Don Juan :

Chaque joie m'en faisait désirer une autre. (1)

There is the shallow quantity-over-quality ethic,

(1) La Chute - TRN 1488
* Noces - E 69, footnote.

to the end of preserving intact one's own personality :

> Je les aimais, selon l'expression consacrée, ce qui revient à dire que je n'en ai jamais aimé aucune. (1)

And finally, there is the objective attitude that marks Don Juan, as it did Caligula, revealed when Clamence declares :

> En somme, pour que je vive heureux, il fallait que les êtres que j'élisais ne vécussent point. Ils ne devaient recevoir leur vie, de loin en loin, que de mon bon plaisir. (2)

Yet even Clamence abandons this course of quantitative living and objectivity which seems to seek almost self-dehumanisation in the midst of self-esteem. His subsequent search for others to share his guilt certainly has a large measure of egoism in its motivation, but there is a reorientation towards a more subjective attitude in that he wishes others to participate in his judgment and in his guilt.

And Camus himself is the Don Juan of Noces :

> ...cette démesure charnelle, cette fièvre de vie qui animeront aussi bien le Don Juan que le conquérant du Mythe de Sisyphe ne sont qu'une ardente réplique du 'grand libertinage de la nature et de la mer'. (3)

Camus too, in Noces, is insatiable:

> Je sais que jamais je ne m'approcherai assez du monde. (4)

(1) La Chute - TRN 1503
(2) do. TRN 1508
(3) Quilliot, Mer et Prisons, p.50
(4) Noces - E 57

The driving-force behind his insatiability is the knowledge that one day he must lose all, and he clings all the more to the transient :

> ...qu'ai-je à faire d'une vérité qui ne doive pas pourrir? (1)

Thus he seizes at everything in the clear knowledge that he can keep nothing. It is towards nature itself however that he shows his Don Juanism. Perhaps his instinct for justice prevented his treating other human beings as mere objects.

The 'grand libertinage de la nature' is responded to by Janine, 'La Femme Adultère'. She is solitary. Travelling with her husband only because he needs her, going through unfamiliar districts, she has reached a point of estrangement even from herself: she sees herself as growing ungracefully old, and even finds her Christian name ridiculous.

In her own way, she too tries to escape her alienation, seeking to embrace all nature, in a way reminiscent of Meursault towards his end.* But her final answer to her husband is

> ce n'est rien... (2)

This may be simply through failure to communicate. She could not explain and he could not understand.

(1) Noces - E 87
(2) La Femme Adultère - TRN 1573
* ...je m'ouvrais pour la première fois à la tendre indifférence du monde. (L'Etranger - TRN 1209)

On the other hand, with the ambiguity that Camus can turn to such effect, he may be conveying that Janine realises that, though she has achieved momentarily a sort of universal union, she has held on to nothing from her experience. Her 'rien', in this context, is reminiscent of that of Caligula.

The essential intangibility of nature is part of the experience of Camus in Noces :

> Et je suivais tout le long de ce pays quelque chose qui n'était pas à moi, mais de lui... (1)

It is the characteristic experience of the Don Juan hero, dignified only with the lucidity of realising that it is the human lot to attain nothing significant, and that wisdom lies in learning not to hope.

The alienation of the Don Juan is chiefly in his denial of subjective existence to others in his pursuit of quantity rather than quality, and he shows conspicuously the original absurd concept of the human condition as a highly individual problem. He is at the opposite pole from, for example, Les Justes, and, in discounting the notion of solidarity, stands quite apart from the men of La Peste. As for Don Juanism towards the natural world, the reciprocation of the 'libertinage de la nature', it figures less and less prominently in Camus's work with his growing awareness

(1) Noces - E 63

(particularly from Lettres à un ami allemand onwards) that values for oneself must have some validity for other people, and therefore be above all relative, whether or not they are absolute.

V: SAINTHOOD

The general development of Camus's thought seems to be from a negative to a positive attitude. From Sisyphus with his dignity in despair and solitude, one passes on to Rieux who has the same dignity but for whom ultimate despair does not figure so large because of his sense of solidarity and consequent utility of his work at least for the immediate future. There is a development from an attitude of revolt towards constructive action.

Parallel with this development, or shift of position, there is a change in Camus's intellectual method of exploration. From the method of doubt, with exploration of philosophical impasses blocked by death or desolation for his heroes, he moves on to a more essentialist approach, with the gradual construction of ideals.

Of these, the figure of the Saint without God is perhaps the most persistently recurrent. Implicit or explicit, he appears often in the work, and, with the development of Camus's thought towards constructive ends, the saint is modified in accordance with Camus's changing conception of man's duty if not his situation.

In Noces, there is the saint in the wilderness :

> Mais il peut arriver qu'à un certain degré de lucidité, un homme se sente le coeur fermé et, sans révolte ni revendication, tourne le dos à ce qu'il prenait jusqu'ici pour sa vie, je veux dire son agitation. (1)

Here is the individual who reaches a higher joy through deserts of disillusion. Already, in the refusal of religion's consolation, it is the life of this world that is sacred and paramount :

> ...j'apprenais à consentir à la terre et à brûler dans la flamme sombre de ses fêtes. (2)

Thus the way to a joy without illusions is through a sort of ascetic sensuality :

> Je veux porter ma lucidité jusqu'au bout et regarder ma fin avec toute la profusion de ma jalousie et de mon horreur. (3)

Others share his sensations; he is

> conscient et orgueilleux de le partager [l'amour] avec toute une race... (4)

though communion with other men in this is not yet contemplated. Supernatural values are rejected:

> ...qu'ai-je à faire d'une vérité qui ne doive pas pourrir? Elle n'est pas à ma mesure. (5)

The finality of death makes life priceless, and man rejects God to concentrate all the more upon his only life. At this stage in Camus's thought, however,

(1) Noces - E 88
(2) do. E 88
(3) do. E 65
(4) do. E 60
(5) do. E 87

the reaction is entirely individual, and each man must make the most of life for himself.

Because of the negative nature of this attitude with regard to mankind there are dangers in trying to remain even neutral, as the fate of Meursault demonstrates. It suggests that a man trying to live a neutral life is in peril of drifting into destruction, since society is capable not only of misinterpreting but of retaliation. Society is one of the terms of Meursault's problem, but it is from this that he is most alienated, and this alienation arises ffom the lucidity leading to that state described in Noces where he can

> tourne le dos à ... son agitation. (1)

Thus one aspect of the saint is explored, that of self-fulfilment, but for mankind in general this is still irrelevant. Neutrality moreover is not enough. It is not sufficient not to do harm; that is only part of Tarrou's concept of sainthood:

> Je sais seulement qu'il faut faire ce qu'il faut pour ne plus être un pestiféré et que c'est là ce qui peut, seul, nous faire espérer la paix, ou une bonne mort à son défaut. C'est cela qui peut soulager les hommes et, sinon les sauver, du moins leur faire le moins de mal possible et même parfois un peu de bien. (2)

In speaking these words, Tarrou is concerned

(1) Noces - E 88
(2) La Peste - TRN 1423

with the evil of inflicting death. One of the great unsolved problems of Camus is how one can convert others to a belief without violence, and, as discussed in L'Homme Révolté, guide people without becoming an oppressor in place of the former tyrants. At any rate, Tarrou shows the move towards active goodness to one's fellows. Such a positive attitude is necessary, if one is to have a counter-effect in a society basing its standards on the ultimate of the death-penalty.

The clarification of the ideal of sainthood goes with the polarisation of evil in the idea of the plague. The struggle becomes clearer when it has an object. For the germs of basic human evil are in all men :

> Ce qui est naturel, c'est le microbe. Le reste, la santé, l'intégrité, la pureté, si vous voulez, c'est un effet de la volonté et d'une volonté qui ne doit jamais s'arrêter. (1)

Nevertheless, with the plague, this evil is concentrated into one form in one place.

The question of whether death may be inflicted for ideological ends was raised by Camus in Les Justes, and given the very dubious solution that a life could be paid for by a life given voluntarily. As Mounier

(1) La Peste - TRN 1424

remarks of this ethic :

> L'argument est faible : comme si l'on annulait la mort par la mort! (1)

In La Peste where sainthood becomes for the first time a main theme, Tarrou reveals that he has been through experiences of revolution which, bringing idealists face to face with firing-squads, were not unlike those of Les Justes. From the dilemma of Les Justes as to whether innocent children may be killed, Tarrou takes the reader of Camus on to a point at which all human life is sacrosanct.

There is no clear progress towards this position, but the concept of the saint without God certainly goes a long way back in the thought of Camus, and a passage of great importance in tracing out a path towards sainthood was written by him under the title of Sans Lendemain as early as 1942 :

> Qu'est-ce que je médite de plus grand que moi et que j'éprouve sans pouvoir le définir? Une sorte de marche difficile vers une sainteté de la négation — un héroïsme sans Dieu — l'homme pur enfin. Toutes les vertus humaines, y compris la solitude à l'égard de Dieu.
>
> Qu'est-ce qui fait la supériorité d'exemple (la seule) du christianisme? Le Christ et ses saints — la recherche d'un style de vie. Cette oeuvre comptera autant de formes que d'étapes sur le chemin d'une perfection sans récompense. L'Etranger est le point zéro. Id. le Mythe. La Peste est un progrès, non du zéro vers l'infini, mais vers une complexité plus profonde qui reste à définir. Le dernier point sera le saint, mais il aura sa valeur arithmétique —mesurable comme l'homme (2)

(1) Mounier, p.137
(2) Carnets II 31

The first sentence, with its envisagement of something vast yet vague, supports the impression that Camus's faith in the goodness of man — what Quilliot calls, in talking of the views of Tarrou,

> une mystique laïque (1)

— springs from his temperament rather than from reasoning. The 'marche difficile' being described as 'plus grand que moi' indicates some overriding instinct towards goodness. 'La négation' in the context of the above passage seems to imply a negative attitude only towards God. Thus Camus's expression of faith is based firmly on humanity. Hanna regards the authentic thought of Camus as being essential in basis;

> Camus's thought rests solidly on a certain conception of human nature. (2)

This conception is revealed as a matter of instinctive morality versus logical evil in the reaction of Cherea to Caligula, arising, as Hanna puts it,*

> from a defense of needs which are felt native to human existence. (3)

Yet this defence is surely very similar to that raised by society against Meursault, whose failure to be acquitted was in part due anyway to his indifference over defending himself. The only big difference is

(1) Quilliot - 'Notes et Variantes' - TRN 1983
(2) Hanna - Introduction, p.xv.
(3) Hanna, p.59
* Quoted more fully on p. 32 of thesis.

that, in the defence of human needs as put forward by Tarrou, lies central a revulsion for the death-sentence.

Yet men must protect themselves against killing. There exists the same quandary for Kaliayev in Les Justes, the same as that of rebel versus tyrant in L'Homme Révolté, and ultimately it is one of the two great problems of the saint without God : to further goodness without doing harm, and at the same time reject any faith or ideology which would normally justify the end by the means.

If Caligula shows that a general human reaction may be relied upon against the pushing of the logic of the absurd to its limits, then one may infer that a certain degree of solidarity can arise simply from men's instinctive desire for good. La Peste shows that this solidarity is the stronger, the more universal and yet tangible the evil becomes. Rieux observes that there is more good than bad in men, encouraging hopes of an overbalancing of forces in the fight against evil, even if there can be no final victory. Therefore, since the saint without God can identify his hopes with at least a part of all men's hopes, the aspiration towards sainthood seems to hold also the possibility of man's escape from alienation from mankind in general.

The growth of this possibility of solidarity for the saint is linked with the 'complexité' of which Camus writes in Sans Lendemain. The admission of such complexity in human life is liable to be made once the absurd man looks beyond himself and his situation. There is an abandonment of the individualistic simplicity that is one of the most arresting features of Noces, Le Mythe de Sisyphe and L'Etranger.

One of the problems of the saint is the furthering of goodness without doing harm. The other seems to be one of justification. Once the rest of humanity is included in one's scheme of thought, there is the difficulty of establishing values by which to act. The complexity of mankind is only one cause of difficulty. Towards God at least Camus maintains an attitude of simplicity, that of unrelenting rejection. Yet this rejection leaves a vacuum of values, particularly since in L'Homme Révolté Camus shows disillusionment with many manmade ideologies.

There is certainly, parallel with the movement from non-values to values, a movement from quantitative towards qualitative ethics, but with the latter there is the difficulty of establishing permanent values without faith in anything external to mankind. Thus,

in the development of ethics more and more centred upon man, there is necessary a belief in the basic goodness of men. The saint has come down from the mountains, and is engaged in the human struggle. His situation is very different from that of Dora in Les Justes :

> Nous ne sommes pas de ce monde, nous sommes des justes. Il y a une chaleur qui n'est pas pour nous. (Se détournant.) Ah! pitié pour les justes! (1)

which Thody compares to that of Vigny's Moses.* With the insistence upon human goodness, the difficulty is that the answer must be found within the problem, since the only accepted term is humanity.

Tarrou sees that the first requirement, to combat the more obvious evils of human complexity, is sincerity :

> ...j'ai compris que tout le malheur des hommes venait de ce qu'ils ne tenaient pas un langage clair. J'ai pris le parti alors de parler et d'agir clairement... (2)

This is, however, only one problem in man's alienation from fellow-men. Tarrou's statements are frequently dogmatic to a point of chronic oversimplification, and in this instance, whilst considering men's failure to communicate, and their insincerity, he does not take into account sincerely held differences in ideals.

(1) Les Justes - TRN 353
(2) La Peste - TRN 1424
* Thody I, p.47

Tarrou seems to make dogmatic assertions in an attempt to cut clean through to a solution, but they are tempered by his studied tolerance. Whilst in his statement 'J'ai pris..le parti de parler... clairement' he is too baldly optimistic, overlooking basic driving-forces in men such as ambition and acquisitiveness, which hold much potential evil, he nevertheless seeks also entirely to understand men.

Despite his uncompromising hatred of death-dealing justice which is a more salient aspect of his hostility towards evil, there is in Tarrou a tolerant and profound grasp of the nature of mankind and the causes of its suffering.

The intimation of such wisdom comes through the enigmatic notes which he makes. Oddities which may seem insignificant appear to hold a special meaning for Tarrou, and eventually prove to be relevant to his problems. When he refers to the bedridden old man with asthma, and considers the possibility of his being a saint*, one feels that, beyond the whimsicality, Tarrou is exercising the 'compréhension' of which he subsequently speaks. But it is much later**, with the outlining of his concept of a saint as a man who does the minimum of harm, before the question of the asthmatic man's candidature for sainthood really

* La Peste - TRN 1313-4
** do. TRN 1423

makes sense. For underlying Tarrou's concept of sainthood is the question of whether one can risk doing anything — more than passing peas from one pot to another — without the danger of harming somebody somehow, just as Christ could be held responsible for Herod's massacre of the innocents.

The gradual putting of factors into a place where they make sense, after their initial isolation and apparent incongruity, is part of a technique constantly used by Camus in La Peste. It is exercised notably with Grand, author intriguing reader by the revelation of fresh facts very sparingly, often at long intervals. This method, applied to Tarrou, hints at a gradual progress towards making sense of life. Thus even Tarrou's most whimsical and least explained thoughts may have some deeper and more coherent significance. Tarrou seems to perceive, beyond the superficial quirks of humanity, mysterious unifying truths.

Such references as, for example, that to the man who spat on cats, are reminiscent of the woman in L'Etranger who sat ticking off radio programmes. This latter detail has a Kafkaesque effect, enhancing with the unknown, for the need to mention the woman is never explained, nor why she attended the trial, yet the whole story is noteworthy for its economy of

detail. The effect in L'Etranger is to suggest the weight of unknown factors which may be set against a man whose life is being evaluated by society. In La Peste, the effect is to make the reader feel that he has not yet attained the wisdom of Tarrou, and gives the impression of much yet to be achieved on the road to sainthood.

For Tarrou, the attempt at all-embracing wisdom is summed up in the word 'compréhension'*. Here is the nostalgia for a grasp on existence in its entirety that marks out so many of Camus's heroes. Tarrou's aspiration does not class him with the 'Conquerors', however, for his ideals are superior to mere egoism.

The word 'compréhension', as Tarrou uses it, suggests total understanding of the world, comprehension and comprehensiveness. Once again escape from alienation is sought, but now through a form of conquest intellectualised and far removed from the destructive rampagings of a Caligula. Egoism is only in the desire for conquest of oneself. Thence one can pass on to service to others.

Through comprehension of the complexity of man the saint can move towards solidarity. What exactly is to be achieved, and how, Camus does not make clear, perhaps because at this stage it was still not clear

* La Peste - TRN 1323

to himself. There is a pervading nostalgia for human harmony, and a feeling that man can attain a deeper degree of wisdom about mankind. There is too the hope of a solidarity based on rejection of man - dealt death, just as the absurd revolt is against God-dealt death and its whole prelude of unhappiness.

The wisdom of Tarrou is cryptic. Rieux says:

Croyez-vous tout connaître de la vie?

Tarrou replies:

Oui. (1)

And Quilliot observes that the suppression of the words 'Dans un sens' which had originally followed this 'oui'

> accentue le caractère mystique, d'une mystique laïque, des convictions de Tarrou. (2)

Thus, though Tarrou has chosen the existence of a lone observer, his comments give the impression that he has already achieved a 'solidarity of the heart'.

Tarrou and Rieux are remarkably similar in the direction of their efforts to sustain human dignity against the absurd. Tarrou might be taken as Camus the keeper of 'Carnets', Rieux as the Camus of the Résistance. Tarrou talks of being a saint, Rieux of being a man. Their aim is similar, but as

(1) La Peste - TRN 1323
(2) Quilliot "Notes et Variantes" - TRN 1983

Thody remarks of Rieux, he

> serve[s] man in a relative and limited way without aspiring to the eternal or absolute. (1)

Rieux limits his aims by concentrating on doing a job well which has only a relative utility. Talking to Paneloux*, he settles for 'santé' rather than 'salut'.

Rieux is concerned with doing good, Tarrou with the problem of goodness. Of the two men, it is therefore Tarrou to whom one must turn for an indication of the way to sainthood without God, because of his extra dimension of metaphysical thought.

The main impression from Sans Lendemain was that there was still only a movement towards an answer not yet perceptible. Nevertheless, La Peste does indeed show progress, for to solidarity of action there is added solidarity of comprehension. The absurd concept of dignity in hopeless revolt, originally considered in a way that tended to isolate a man, becomes, with these two factors, a means of movement towards unity.

With the purely absurd philosophy of Le Mythe de Sisyphe, the supreme value was lucidity in rejection of man's condition and God's terms. With the concept of solidarity however there arises the problem of

(1) Thody II p.97
* La Peste - TRN 1395

relations with other men, from which point values become less absolute, more relative and consequently more complex.

Only the question of God in relation to man remains simple. The dismissal of Paneloux's death as 'cas douteux' seems to indicate once again Camus's reluctance to admit any value at all relating man to God. Moving no nearer to positive belief in God which would allow a system of ready-made values to evolve, he replaces faith with lucidity :

> A l'acte de foi, Camus entend substituer l'acte de lucidité... (1)

The concept of lucidity has the simplicity of faith, but unlike faith it offers only a starting-point. To maintain one's lucidity in face of the absurd may satisfy the maintenance of dignity, but does not answer the demand for happiness . . The absurd happiness born of the knowledge of final despair does not conceal the possibility of lessening or increasing relative happiness within the bounds of mankind's life before the inevitable death. This was a possibility which Caligula chose to ignore, swept by the advent of death. Camus, in La Peste, arrives at a concern which is relative and humanistic.

The problem of the saint without God is to find

(1) Devaux, p.19.

a set of values independent of the concept of God by which man can live and act relative to other men. Adoption of the word 'saint' seems automatically to postulate the ideal of goodness. As with all Camus's constructive thought, this is bound up with the notion of unity. Just as the nostalgia of the absurd man as an individual was for some form of unity through coherence with the universe, so that of the men in La Peste is still for unity, but now in a relative and limited form, solidarity. Other men are the greatest threat to human happiness. Thus solidarity becomes the basic ethic for values.

Against the concept of solidarity stands the evident diversity of the world. Tarrou's whimsical comment :

> il était absolument impossible de savoir si, en réalité, le tambourin se montrait plus efficace que les mesures prophylactiques. (1)

reflects, in its unwillingness to discount anything, his desire for 'compréhension' taken to its limits. There still survives, with the word 'absolument', the demand for a complete answer, the absoluteness being far more important than whether the answer be yes or no. The question may well be insignificant,

(1) La Peste - TRN 1293

but insignificance underlines the absolute nature of the questioner's search, which will omit nothing, and there is a hint of Zen Buddhism in this wisdom sought through absurdities.

Two or three pages of the Carnets are devoted to an analysis of insignificance*, and certain conclusions accord with both the method and outlook of Tarrou. For example :

> ...l'insignifiance est chose relative. Elle a de la relation à quelque chose qui n'est pas l'insignifiance... (1)

and:

> La conclusion générale est qu'il y a de l'incertitude dans le cas de l'insignifiance. (2)

Moreover, in these same pages**there is mention of 'le vieux et le chat' which was later to appear in the notes of Tarrou.

Tarrou's reflections upon the possible medical properties of the tambourine imply that equating of all things found in Caligula and L'Etranger. The underlying desire for uniformity of values is the same. It is the attitude that has changed : Caligula's destructive negation of superior values is replaced by what, in Tarrou, is not so much scepticism as a sort of benevolent credulity.

(1) Carnets II 84
(2) Carnets II 85
* do. 83-6
** do. 85

He declares to the night-porter at his hotel:

> La seule chose qui m'intéresse...c'est de trouver la paix intérieure. (1)

Camus's proclivity for absolute statements here gives Tarrou's philosophy an inward-looking Oriental aspect not in keeping with the man's attitude elsewhere. Tarrou is vitally concerned for others, with his absorption in the problems of revolution, capital punishment, etc. At most one can say that with the solution of these he would find also inner peace.

The comprehensive tolerance he extends to most beliefs he extends consequently to most men also, not excluding even Cottard, who has 'sided with the enemy', and who is on this account the most lonely man in La Peste. Tarrou reports a remark that he made to Cottard, that

> la seule façon de ne pas être séparé des autres, c'était après tout d'avoir une bonne conscience...(2)

This goes to the root of Cottard's alienation : on the side of the plague, as it were defeated and subdued by it yet profiting from it, its subject and its collaborator, Cottard is alone because he has chosen evil. Thus Tarrou implies that unity of men must lie in some common goodness. This brings us back to Camus's essential optimism about mankind.

(1) La Peste - TRN 1236
(2) do. TRN 1376

The evolvement of his ideas from temperament, rather than logical deduction or even observation, shows in its optimism a vital faith in the goodness of man. Hence it is reasonable that Camus should seek greater goodness through collective action:

> Dans l'expérience absurde, la souffrance est individuelle. A partir du mouvement de révolte, elle a conscience d'être collective, elle est l'aventure de tous. (1)

The need to revolt is based on man's desire for happiness, or at the very least the mitigation of his misery. Faith in any success is based on faith in his goodness. The desire to be happy is of course no proof that man ought to be happy; there is in Camus a trust in instinct which, at the risk of otherwise being involved in philosophies of perception, one must accept in order to consider his views sympathetically. The same seems true of his faith in man's goodness.

Unfortunately the means is no more clear than the end. In refusing force, and rebuffing the concept of historical ends, Camus cuts away most of the field for 'justifiable' action. Hence perhaps his use of the phrase 'marche difficile' of the path towards sainthood without God.

This lack of clarity over both means and ends

(1) HR - E 431-2

perhaps leads him, too, to revert to the method of search, after La Peste, which he had employed before. In Caligula and L'Etranger he was, as it were, exploring blind alleys in order to be quite sure that there was nothing at the end of them. In La Chute, similarly, he seeks definition through exclusion.

There seems little doubt that Clamence is meant to exemplify a man following a mistaken course. Thody observes in this respect :

> It is certainly Camus's intention to satirise people who pass unmerciful judgment on their fellows,

despite the fact that Camus

> seems emotionally to have shared many of Clamence's attitudes. (1)

Camus shows some identification of himself with Clamence in the Carnets:

> Quant au rôle 'noble' d'avertisseur, il y faudrait une conscience sans tache. Et la seule vocation que je me sente, c'est de dire aux consciences qu'elles ne sont pas sans tache... (2)

There is even an expression of pity:

> Qui pourra dire la détresse de l'homme qui a pris le parti de la créature contre le créateur et qui, perdant l'idée de sa propre innocence, et de celle des autres, juge la créature, et lui-même, aussi criminelle que le créateur. (3)

(1) Thody II p.179
(2) Carnets II 274-5
(3) do. 281

Nevertheless, involvement or even emotional sympathy does not necessarily signify moral approbation, any more than an author would have for the villain of his tale. The main issue is the reversion, if one accepts Thody's view, of Camus to the type of hero who makes a fatal mistake.

With La Peste the search for a 'style de vie' seems to be leading towards solidarity in terms of everyday effort. Rieux observes that there is more good than bad in man. Then comes La Chute, which seems to throw the reader back into the depths of the problem of human goodness. It is as though Camus has halted on the road to sainthood, in order to get his bearings by examining other ways. Certainly La Peste was not expected to reach the goal, being referred to in Sans Lendemain as 'un progrès,' no more.

Why then the pause? Camus has been criticised* for using the plague, on the symbolic level of evil, as an enemy external to man where it is really a part of man. Perhaps he felt this shortcoming of the treatment of the plague, for, in La Chute, the only enemy is oneself.

The absence of a unifying danger, after La Peste, is like passing into á postwar period of aimlessness. Clamence, lost, is more anxious to define himself than

* Cruickshank, pp.176-7

to help other men, and more concerned with his sinfulness than with the nature of sin. Other men are only useful insofar as they help this self-definement and lighten his burden.

He nevertheless nears sainthood in one respect: he has a profound awareness of his own sinfulness. But this negative aspect of the saint is developed until it denies all the positive possibilities of which La Peste makes the reader aware. Instead of solidarity in a struggle against evil, Clamence seeks solidarity in its admission. His insistence on other men's sharing his guilt (as discussed in Chapter II Clamence) raises the whole question of innocence and guilt, to a much greater extent than is found in La Peste.

Judging from Tarrou's remark to Cottard about a clear conscience, innocence would bring men together, guilt would alienate. This does seem to correspond with the position of people relative to one another in Oran, and the situation of Clamence in Amsterdam.

Despair in Le Mythe de Sisyphe is a point of departure, in La Chute it becomes an end. Clamence has a whole gospel of guilt and despair. He is the 'anti-saint'. There is given, in a moral and metaphysical perspective, a warning that is reiterated throughout L'Homme Révolté : men must not set themselves up as absolute masters of other men, or

as their judges. They must neither seek to rule, nor to impose standards of their own choosing.

Thus, to probe deeper the problem of how to be a saint without God, from the angle of innocence and guilt, Camus has explored in La Chute a negative path, in order to eliminate it from his consideration. In his search for values he acknowledges that values must not be imposed when there is no external evil to bring about solidarity based on self-evident need for resistance, but, whilst finding no positive answer to the problem of evil, consistently condemns pessimism. Precisely because so much suffering is of interhuman origin, he places his hope in the concept of solidarity.

La Peste may show progress towards solidarity, but whether to any great extent the common fight overcomes man's more personal alienation from man is doubtful. As discussed in the previous chapter, no relationship between the characters of La Peste is developed to any noteworthy extent. They are mostly lone men, working for people rather than with them. This no doubt accounts in part for the impact of the passage in which Tarrou and Rieux go for a bathe. It stands as a rare example of real communion, a theme Camus was to examine more fully in L'Exil et le Royaume.

Though the declared intention of Camus in La Peste was to treat the theme of separation, the absence from its pages of any profound and lasting relationships is striking since its author was striving towards solidarity. There is certainly solidarity in resistance, but one is left very much doubting whether this unity will survive the abatement of the plague and of a common aim. Grand has his manuscript, Rieux has his work; Rambert is united with his mistress again, but the doubts he has even at the moment of their reunion* scarcely bode well for its future.

Thus there seems to be established little real basis for hopes of a wider solidarity. Where plague provides the aspirant to sainthood with a tangible foe, and even aids him by furthering the creation of a wartime solidarity, the latter is at its strongest. Where the 'enemy' is at its most abstract, as in for example Le Mythe de Sisyphe or La Chute, man stands most isolated. There seems an admission that such is the gulf between men that only a threat to mankind in general is likely to bring about any degree of unity.

La Chute is a move only towards a perverse 'solidarity of the guilty', which Camus implicitly condemns. The idea of man bearing all the guilt of

* ...si ce visage enfoui au creux de son épaule était celui dont il avait tant rêvé ou au contraire celui d'une étrangère. Il saurait plus tard si son soupçon était vrai. (La Peste - TRN 1461.)

his condition is dismissed, yet no positive concept takes its place, just as, with La Peste, the disappearance of the plague leaves behind no positive unity. It seems that, at the point reached in La Peste, the saint, despite his concern for mankind, can at best achieve union only within his own intellect. He can bridge alienation only through 'compréhension'. In other respects, he must stand almost as much alone as the early absurd hero, because he looks out from the realm of ideas rather than on from the results of experience.

After rejection of man's total responsibility for his guilt, in La Chute, there is a reorientation in the quest for union. With L'Exil et le Royaume Camus appears to change his position, moving from a basis of principles to one of examples.

VI : JUDGMENT

(Othon, Casado, Clamence, Les Justes.)

Before considering Kingdom and Exile there is one other aspect of Camus's thought to examine. It is the problem of judgment.

Whilst Camus explores several very different manners of revolt against the absurd situation, it remains constant that most of the discredit for failure of his heroes goes to God or the absurd order. Certainly his heroes make mistakes, but the ultimate blame is not left to rest with them. Camus's antipathy over the question of evil is reserved chiefly not for human beings but for God. At most, a God-orientated group, such as society in L'Etranger, is held to blame. Even in Le Malentandu, with a criminal character such as Martha, there is a strong implication that she has become hard because of lack of the simple — God-given? — joys of life which she is desperately intent upon purchasing with her crimes. And Caligula, too, receives a large degree of sympathy because of his struggle against the impossibilities of the human situation, despite the nihilistic approach which he adopts.

An exception to this general sympathy is the judge. Throughout Camus's work, he shows towards judges, right from the professional man to the self-

appointed, an unfailing animosity. Thody makes the observation that

> Camus fell victim to that Romantic dislike of bourgeois society which leads to preferring pimps to judges, (1)

with regard to Sintès in L'Etranger. Whilst this may be true of the preference, particularly in the case cited, it is by no means the whole truth about the dislike. In L'Etranger certainly bourgeois society is the target of criticism for condemning a man to death, but in L'Homme Révolté this target is extended to include also totalitarian society.

In each case the crime is seen as the condemning to death of people on the strength of moral convictions, be they religious or ideological. Camus's hatred of judges seems to be based ultimately on the cardinal though narrow point of their right to inflict capital punishment. It spreads however to hostility towards any men who set themselves up to judge their fellows.

Having called into question all values, Camus extends his doubt to those men who administer by the established values. They stand as obstructions to the introduction of the new values that he seeks, that minimal requirement that man should not harm man and may even manage to do some good. The more firmly

(1) Thody II p,43

the present judges are established, the more they are hated, since their entrenchment makes it all the harder for the Camusian rebel to avoid the violence which he detests.

There is in La Peste a broad sympathy for men, which extends from Rambert even when he is seeking to escape with the full knowledge that he may be liable to spread the plague, to the piteous Cottard who is so desperate to have men think well of him and strengthen his hand against the judgment he fears. The general tone of the novel is objective and restrained, and against this the description of Othon forms a strong contrast. He is first seen at dinner with his family, and even in this setting is addicted to passing ponderous little judgments. Tarrou records and comments :

> 'Nicole, vous vous montrez souverainement antipathique!' Et la petite fille est prête à pleurer. C'est ce qu'il faut. (1)

Tarrou's short comment seems loaded with contempt for the man who uses his moral position to reduce a little girl almost to tears. It is the moral heights assumed by the man, and the rigidity of his attitude, that irritate Tarrou.

> Ce n'est pas la loi qui compte, c'est la condamnation (2)

(1) La Peste - TRN 1237
(2) do. TRN 1336

Othon tells Tarrou on one occasion. And Quilliot notes that in the 1947 version there had been added the statement

> Les hommes sont mauvais et ils ont besoin de condamnation. (1)

The latter sentence makes clearer Camus's feeling that judges are more concerned with punishment than with justice, and thus with the maintaining of the established order rather than the better administration of that order, or the seeking of a new. This distinction is essential, for whilst he shows dislike of judges, Camus is deeply concerned over the problems of justice.

Othon's words might have come from Clamence, but for the absence of self-accusation. The alienation of such men as Othon is through the gulf between the handing out of 'justice' and the committing of crimes. For the judge, whatever his own life may be like, must necessarily arrogate a certain righteousness and confidence in his own values in order to administer justice. In the case of Othon, this belief is taken further still, to faith in the necessity of punishment quite apart from the necessity of law.

For him, a certain reprieve comes with the death of his son. This has a profound effect on his outlook, and at least one observation of his contrasts

(1) Quilliot -'Notes et Variantes'- TRN 1983

strongly with any previous assertions :

> Monsieur Othon, qui avait maigri, leva une main molle et dit, pesant ses mots, que tout le monde pouvait se tromper. (1)

The phrase 'pesant ses mots' makes it clear that his words are not the mere cliché that they might be on anyone else's lips. He admits, with the words 'tout le monde' that he too can be guilty of error. Like Paneloux, he is redeemed by having recanted belief in his own infallibility. He is no longer the rigid tyrant of the first portrayal of him at table with his family.

Suffering brings him therefore into a degree of solidarity with his fellows through his recognition that he shares their failings, and his weak gesture of the hand suggests that he no longer sees, as the only answer to failings, punishment. Furthermore, he finds solidarity on a more practical plane through staying to help in the quarantine camp. That in itself seems symbolic : instead of committing men to prison, he has gone into a medical prison to help with them. He himself sees this as mitigating alienation :

> ...je me sentirais moins séparé de mon petit garçon. (2)

He seeks respite from the greatest separation of all.

Rieux's reaction to Othon's decision is carefully

(1) La Peste -TRN 1429.
(2) do. TRN 1429

reserved from full credulity :

> Rieux le regardait. Il n'était pas possible que dans ces yeux durs et plats une douceur s'installât soudain. Mais ils étaient devenus plus brumeux, ils avaient perdu leur pureté de métal. (1)

This limited credulity, a recognition of change that is particularly grudging in such a generously humane man as Rieux, underlines the rarity of a judge losing his inflexibility.

Rigidity and self-righteousness are, for the judge, the main factors of alienation.

> Pauvre juge... il faudrait faire quelque chose pour lui. Mais comment aider un juge? (2)

Tarrou murmurs, putting a particular instance, as he so often does, into a general perspective. Judges are thus placed in isolation by virtue of their rôle. And Tarrou situates them in relation to the plague of evil as

> ...les grands pestiférés, ceux qui mettent des robes rouges... (3)

and extends the category to include all those who make absolute judgments on the strength of ideologies:

> Il me semble que l'histoire m'a donné raison, aujourd'hui c'est à qui tuera le plus. Ils sont tous dans la fureur du meurtre... (4)

(1) La Peste - TRN 1429
(2) do. TRN 1415
(3) do. TRN 1422
(4) do. TRN 1423

At least Othon is in a sense humbled by the loss of his son. There is no such moral redemption for Casado, in L'Etat de Siège. He too is rigid in his moral attitude, and convinced of his own rightness :

> Ce qu'une fois j'ai décidé, qui oserait le reprendre? (1)

And, reminiscent in tone of Othon's dictum on law and punishment :

> Je ne sers pas la loi pour ce qu'elle dit, mais parce qu'elle est la loi. (2)

Furthermore, Casado declares:

> Si le crime devient la loi, il cesse d'être crime. (3)

The irony is rather heavy, and was of course directed particularly at the German régime, but Camus's attitude is unmistakably opposed to any law that becomes faith, and is underlined by the tone of unctuous pontification. There is a foreshadowing of Clamence :

> Tout le monde a peur parce que personne n'est pur. (4)

Like Othon, Judge Casado hands out selfrighteous verbal castigation to his family :

> LA FEMME Casado, ne pouvons-nous sortir?
> LE JUGE Tu es beaucoup trop sortie dans ta vie, femme. (5)

(1) ES -TRN 250
(2) ES -TRN 251
(3) ES- TRN 251
(4) ES -TRN 252
(5) ES -TRN 210

Unlike Othon, as far as we know Othon, Casado proves less righteous than one would expect of an upholder of the law. His wife reveals* that he has made cowardly excuses to avoid a duel, has evaded conscription, and used his position to seduce a girl. Whilst these may not be indictable offences, they reveal Casado as a thorough villain, in a way typical of the treatment of L'Etat de Siège, which is in contrast to the restraint of La Peste. His wife's comments on his moral shortcomings have a predictably small effect. He is content to retort :

Femme! Ta plaidoirie n'est pas bonne! (1)

to his wife's pleas for forgiveness, for she pleads on the grounds of love. Nevertheless, if one puts aside the lack of the control in L'Etat de Siège which so much enhances La Peste, Casado strongly resembles Othon. The great difference is that Casado is never broken. The general condemnation of judges comes in a very brief dialogue:

LE JUGE Chienne!
LA FEMME Juge! (2)

In La Peste, dislike of judges is disseminated along general lines, on the whole, parallel with the generalising symbolism of the plague as evil. In L'Etat de Siège, the judge is prominent only for a

(1) ES -TRN 256
(2) ES -TRN 257
* ES -TRN 255

short time. It is extended with the intermittent appearances of Othon throughout La Peste, and the general comments on judges. However, it is in La Chute that Camus both expands and concentrates his antipathy towards judges.

Clamence, as suggested, seems the 'anti-saint', despite his awareness of his sinfulness. Instead of efforts towards 'compréhension' he offers only condemnation. Instead of an effort to be at worst no more than a 'meurtrier innocent', he proclaims universal guilt. For the solidarity of understanding he substitutes mutual recrimination. Even his show of penitence is largely aimed at coaxing his listener into admission of guilt.

In L'Etranger, society judged one man. In La Chute, one man judges society. In each, it is the element of the judge that is attacked by Camus, not the nature of the crime, for the judge is marked out from other men by his certainty over values and over his own rightness in relation to those values.

Not only does Clamence become an object of Camus's dislike for his pretensions to being a judge; he is shown, far more than Casado, to be despicable, cowardly and hypocritical. Here Camus is surely unfair in letting his prejudice run away with the character: he has combined the judge with a most contemptible

person. From this point of view, as a portrayal of a judge, the figure of Othon seems much fairer.

Besides the question of values, there is that of the innocence of man. It is loss of faith in this innocence that makes Clamence such a negative figure, and alienates him from all men:

> L'idée la plus naturelle à l'homme, celle qui lui vient naïvement, comme du fond de sa nature, est l'idée de son innocence. (1)

Innocence permeates the atmosphere of Noces; the innocence, at any rate, of man. Not only of the absurd man, for Camus writes affectionately of the

> peuple enfant de ce pays. (2)

It is also loss of faith in his own innocence that drives Clamence to find others to share his guilt:

> Chacun exige d'être innocent, à tout prix, même si, pour cela, il faut accuser le genre humain et le ciel. (3)

Moreover:

> ...il ne suffit pas de s'accuser pour s'innocenter, ou sinon je serais un pur agneau. Il faut s'accuser d'une certaine manière, qu'il m'a fallu beaucoup de temps pour mettre au point...(4)

Thus Clamence's dominating motive is to prove, if not his innocence, at least that others share his guilt, thus diminishing the weight of his own burden.

(1) La Chute - TRN 1514
(2) Noces - E 72
(3) La Chute - TRN 1515
(4) do. TRN 1522

Whilst Casado never admitted any failing in himself, and Othon only just began to do so after the death of his child had disorientated his views, Clamence, paradoxically, is fighting to return to their state of 'rightness' through judgment of himself and others.

Camus has therefore moved on from the attempt to establish values to an attempt to establish man's innocence, as a prerequisite to other values, just as one would expect the judge to be a good man before he could give good judgments. The concept of justice was one that constantly haunted Camus, and which arises the moment the absurd man sees his condition as unjust, but progress is made in La Chute with the effort to probe whether man himself has any true justice within him. For justice applied must pass from concept to system, and therein lie dangers which cannot be avoided unless man is fundamentally innocent.

This problem, of the need for values yet inherent danger in enforcing even good, is explored in Les Justes. Kaliayev declares to Stepan :

> J'ai accepté de tuer pour renverser le despotisme. Mais derrière ce que tu dis, je vois s'annoncer un despotisme qui, s'il s'installe jamais, fera de moi un assassin alors que j'essaie d'être un justicier. (1)

(1) Les Justes - TRN 338

Thus the problem of human happiness falls into two parts, the discovery of universal values, and their establishment. Les Justes are perforce Les Juges. With their faith in innocence and their instinct for men's happiness, they are the opposite of Clamence. Inevitably, with the theme of values there recurs the problem of judgment in Les Justes. Kaliayev says* that he considered his fellow-conspirators as his only judges. And the Arch-Duchess, a Christian, observes to Kaliayev :

> Vous voulez vous juger et vous sauver seul. Vous ne le pouvez pas. Dieu le pourra... (1)

This is not unlike the appeal of the priest to Meursault, and is likewise rejected. For Kaliayev, man must save himself.

The problem is once again that of solving difficulties within the terms of those difficulties, once supernatural forces are rejected. Dora, in a phrase reminiscent of Sans Lendemain with its 'Qu'est-ce que je médite de plus grand que moi-même?' cries:

> Marche! Nous voilà condamnés à être plus grands que nous-mêmes...L'amour plutôt que la justice! (2)

With the last words Camus is once more thrown back upon instinct, expressing a feeling rather than

(1) J - TRN 376
(2) J - TRN 386
* J - TRN 333

arriving at any solution.

God may be rejected, but there is still the divinity of conscience, implicit with the belief in goodness, and man's essential innocence. Even the choice of love rather than justice is a choice of one aspect of goodness rather than another.

As for the problem of putting justice into action, the curious solution of a life for a life has already been discussed (pp.136-7). At best the giving of one's life in such circumstances shows absolute faith in one's convictions; at worst it shows connivance over capital punishment of a voluntary order.

The situation of the judge, at any rate, is one in which he must assume his own innocence in order to give judgment with a good conscience. This assumption of greater innocence in the judge than in his fellowmen is what is so repugnant to Camus. The alienation of the judge is in his aspiring to moral heights far removed from other men, and this is caricatured in Clamence. He frequently sees himself on an eminence above all men. And he declares his alienation :

> Je n'ai plus d'amis, je n'ai que des complices. En revanche, leur nombre a augmenté, ils sont le genre humain. (1)

(1) La Chute - TRN 1511

The alienation of Les Justes, despite the fervently positive approach of such men as Kaliayev, is similar to that of Clamence because they too have a vision which is not as yet shared by other men:

> Nous ne sommes pas de ce monde, nous sommes des justes. (1)

Yet all their hopes are of this world, as witnessed by Kaliayev :

> ...mes rendez-vous sont sur cette terre. (2)

As he had said,

> L'injustice sépare, la honte, la douleur, le mal qu'on fait aux autres, le crime sépare. (3)

He is in the same exile as Cottard. Cottard however was in a minority of evil men in a world that Rieux at any rate considered composed of more good than bad, whereas Kaliayev is in a minority of criminals with a clear conscience, clearer, as he sees things, than that of the turgid mass of humanity.

The situation at the basis of the problem of Les Justes is therefore one of alienation. With 'a life for a life' there is an attempt to discover acceptable limits to action, and it is with this concept of limits that there seems most hope of ending alienation. The rejection of the 'All or Nothing' attitude in itself brings men closer together.

(1) J -TRN 353
(2) J -TRN 375
(3) J -TRN 375

The problem of establishing a relative justice, without sharp divisions of right and wrong, of judges and judged, is touched upon, and there emerges the necessity for men ultimately to decide by their own instincts, with no guide but 'mesure', which might be termed 'decency'. As suggested at the end of the previous chapter, this is approached a little more in L'Exil et le Royaume, with each case being considered on its merits, instead of there being a general blanketing of facts under universal principles.

VII : KINGDOM AND EXILE

It has been suggested earlier that whereas Camus usually tends to write and think from a basis of principles, from which he evolves events and symbols, in L'Exil et le Royaume there is a tendency on the contrary to draw conclusions from situations involving individual responses to life, and often very different responses. In this collection of stories it is with specific problems of human solidarity that he deals, and specific attempts to escape alienation. This corresponds far better with his natural tendency to move directly to conclusions in his thought, described by Hanna (quoted in the Introduction). Where 'lucid and obstinate attention' is given without much philosophical emphasis, the reader may find it more aesthetically satisfying since he no longer has to seek the logic which is so usually expected to accompany philosophy.

Movement from largescale symbolic situations to specific individual problems is not so much a progress as a change in priorities. It is parallel with Camus's passing from the consideration of sainthood as an ideal to consideration of the saint's goal. And ideal places of future attainment become inevitably, it seems, connoted with the happy land

of Camus's own past.

In the shift away from contemplation of the possibility of personal perfection towards consideration of involvement with others, alienation at last becomes a dominant problem. The state itself had already existed in earlier heroes, but these were more intent upon conquest of the total absurd situation than upon their individual plight. Isolation was subordinate to such considerations as lucidity. Their position, by virtue of the absurd, can never be to aspire to perfection.

> Il est vrai que ces princes sont sans royaume. Mais ils ont cet avantage sur d'autres qu'ils savent que toutes les royautés sont illusoires. Ils savent, voilà toute leur grandeur... (1)

So that rather, if they do aspire to perfection, it is with the lucid knowledge of inevitable failure.

It would be a long exercise to count and evaluate all the mentions of the word 'royaume' in the pages of Camus, but certainly by the time of the writing of L'Exil et le Royaume it has come to signify some sort of goal of happiness attainable on this earth.

> Quant au royaume dont il est question aussi, dans le titre, il coïncide avec une certaine vie libre et nue que nous avons à retrouver, pour renaître enfin. L'exil, à sa manière, nous en montre les chemins, à la seule condition que nous sachions y refuser en même temps la servitude et la possession. (2)

(1) MS - E 169
(2) ER 'Prière d'Insérer'(1957) - TRN 2031

'Le royaume', being counterbalanced with 'l'exil', seems to offer some form of escape from, or at least mitigation of, estrangement from men and the world. It involves spiritual rebirth but without the aid of religion. To reach it through avoiding both servitude and possession is to avoid the pit-falls of the master-slave alternation in revolt discussed by Camus in L'Homme Révolté, and implicit in this avoidance is the notion of a 'via media'. 'Le Royaume', like 'la Chute', has biblical connotations, and may well be intended in the gospel sense of there being a kingdom within one, when one recalls Tarrou's remark about seeking 'la paix intérieure'. But in Camus's group of short stories it is evident too that true peace also involves peace with other people.

This aspect is most positive in Les Muets and La Pierre qui Pousse, but the stories vary considerably, quite apart from the differences in literary treatment referred to by Camus in his 'Prière d'Insérer'. Faithful to his method of eliminating possible answers, Camus introduces into this small collection of stories great divergences of philosophical approach. Therefore, whilst all of them deal with the problem of alienation, some are far from finding an answer. For example Janine, in La Femme Adultère, has such a

highly personal experience that,, though she finds mystical union for a moment with the world, her alienation from her husband and way of life must at the end seem even greater than before. All she has achieved is absurd lucidity. What, in Le Mythe de Sisyphe, would have seemed sufficient in itself, is no longer enough.

> Mais il y a peut-être une transcendance vivante, dont la beauté fait la promesse, qui peut faire aimer et préférer à tout autre ce monde mortel et limité. (1)

Some such transcendence lies at the heart of Janine's experience, yet the most evident outcome is that she cannot communicate this experience. Just as Jan was partially estranged from Maria proportionate to the part played in his life by the world of his ideas, so Janine is alone with her experience. In the full communion with other humans which is to be the culmination of L'Exil et le Royaume, hers is still exile rather than the kingdom.

Le Renégat seeks parity with Christ in suffering, but suffers a terrible fall from faith. For him, as for Clamence, there is no kingdom :

> ...régner enfin par la seule parole sur une armée de méchants. (2)

might have described the aspirations of Clamence, except that the Renegade does not see any guilt in

(1) HR -E 662
(2) Le Renégat - TRN 1580

himself, turning outwards towards fanaticism.

The Renegade resembles Clamence in many ways. He too is a man of extremes, swinging from extreme Christianity to the other pole of utter paganism, just as Clamence moved from extreme sociability and self-satisfaction to utter disillusion with all men, above all himself. Both Clamence and the Renegade are driven by the extreme nature of their views to attempt to convert other men.

Each hero too moves into a voluntary geographical exile, suited to the nature of his outlook : Clamence to the mists of Amsterdam which accord with his lack of orientation, the Renegade into a savage part of Africa which will give him the sharp opposition to his beliefs that he requires.

There are contrasts, too. The Renegade goes with a strong sense of righteousness, Clamence with a sense of guilt. The Renegade's beliefs are changed by brutal forces, Clamence's by conscience that becomes a morbid growth. Each aims at conquest by conversion, but whereas the Renegade's faith is largely emotional, Clamence's lack of faith is intellectual.

It is in their intolerance that they are most similar. This is the source of their alienation. No gradations are recognized between complete goodness and utter guilt. It is known that Camus felt

the burden of the image of 'sainteté laïque' that was thrust upon him in 1947 by certain critics after the publication of La Peste. In the Carnets he writes :

> Je me suis retiré du monde non parce que j'y avais des ennemis, mais parce que j'y avais des amis ... parce qu'ils me croyaient meilleur que je ne suis. C'est un mensonge que je n'ai pu supporter. (1)

Thus the answer to be deduced from Le Renégat as from La Chute is that the morality of mankind must not be rigidly based upon faith and conversion, but upon tolerance and understanding, and the realising of partial guilt without the relinquishing of innocence. The two stories emphasise the lesson of La Peste, that in the effort towards solidarity and escape from aliénation, limits to human actions must be recognized, and egoism conquered by thought for others.

The Renegade, failing to find limits, is alienated from men both through righteousness and through wickedness. Of the characters in L'Exil et le Royaume he is furthest from attaining the kingdom.

The stories vary greatly in the extent to which the characters attain the kingdom, but in all of them there is exile. It is both spiritual and geographical. For example, in La Femme Adultère, stone gains for

(1) Carnets II, p.238.

Janine a symbolic meaning that incorporates both geographical and spiritual alienation; Janine

> ...avait rêvé aussi de palmiers et de sable doux. Elle voyait à présent que le désert n'était pas cela, mais seulement la pierre, la pierre partout... (1)

The Renegade also has to suffer exile, geographical in coming to a foreign land, spiritual through his choice of heathen places. And Yvars's last thought in Les Muets is the wish that he and Fernande could have gone across the sea. Daru is exiled between French and Algerians — the clearest case of being between 'possession et servitude' — but finds no solution. D'Arrast is taken abroad by his work. Only Jonas does not suffer geographical exile, but he finds it so difficult to carry on his work that he can scarcely call his rooms his own.

Just as myth was given substance in the setting of Oran, so Camus makes use of geographical exile to give substance to exile of the spirit. Perhaps through his own experience in Prague, and in his exile in France, Camus builds up lands of exile as being sunless, and (in Le Malentendu) landbound, so that sun and sea become symbols of promised happiness and a sort of consummation of physical paradise. Such is the dream of Martha, and the life that Meursault

(1) La Femme Adultère - TRN 1560

enjoyed so intensely, and it is to the opposite of such a life that Clamence exiles himself, in an exile as self-imposed as his judgment.

Therefore it is of particular interest that, in L'Exil et le Royaume, Camus should show that even North Africa, which may reasonably be supposed to be the tangible focus of his nostalgia, can frequently be a land of exile. The key to this apparent change may lie in 'Retour à Tipasa'. The impression is that Camus did not find it the land of his home any more. There is reiterated the discovery that even in that land he is still alone:

> Certes c'est une grande folie, et presque toujours châtiée, de revenir sur les lieux de sa jeunesse et de vouloir revivre à quarante ans ce qu'on a aimé ou dont on a fortement joui à vingt. (1)

Evidently time as well as place conspires against Camus. Thody sees the general theme of L'Exil et le Royaume as the predicament that

> as men and women age, they find the problems of separation and loneliness more and more difficult to bear. (2)

In this respect, there is a movement back towards L'Envers et l'Endroit. Camus is coming full circle. At any rate, the illusion must have ended of a simple geographical exile which could be terminated with a

(1) L'Eté - E 869
(2) Thody II p.185

journey. The increasingly difficult political situation of Algeria in whose resolution Camus unsuccessfully joined must also have affected him, and his feelings may well have been reflected in the plight of Daru.

Thus the realm of sun and sea and happiness becomes less real as Camus progresses, and is seen to be largely spun from the magic of his own youth.

In La Femme Adultère therefore Camus recognizes that the North African landscape can be unfriendly, and 'la pierre, la pierre partout...' does not provoke the reactions of Noces, where Camus could write:

> Le vent me façonnait à l'image de l'ardente nudité qui m'entourait. Et sa fugitive étreinte me donnait, pierre parmi les pierres, la solitude d'une colonne ou d'un olivier dans le ciel d'été. (1)

In Noces there is a certain youthful exhilaration in solitude that later disappears with age and the concern for solidarity.

L'Hôte shows how Camus was affected by the political problems of Algeria. His concern was not new, as can be seen from his articles on the Kabylie, but in L'Hôte there is the newer implication that there can be no place in Algeria for the Frenchman even born there. Anxious only to achieve good, Daru is caught

(1) Noces - E 62

in a limbo of misunderstanding. The 'kingdom' has become for him No-man's-land.

Thus it is striking that tales of exile are now being placed by Camus in North Africa itself, and may lead one to wonder where the 'kingdom' is to be found. Because of the simplicity of the imagery of sun and sea and stone, geographical exile is closely linked with spiritual exile, and it is in the latter that the answer seems to lie. In a concept of the world that excludes God, exile is from the human spirit, and with the notion of one united human spirit, the aspiration is towards solidarity of a human yet spiritual order. Alienation is to be cut off in some way from the general unity which is man's hope.

The theme of Les Muets is human discord through failure to understand, and failure to speak out clearly. One is reminded of Tarrou's faith in the efficacity of honnest communication. Yvars has only a dim awareness of human shortcomings.

Ah! C'est de sa faute! (1)

he says of his boss, and this is a typical human transfer of blame. It is belied, however, to some extent by his desire to escape the whole situation,

(1) ER - TRN 1606

which suggests an uncomfortable sense of wrongness. Mere awareness of this, however slight, is in itself progress.

Les Muets shows a great progress in Camus's willingness to deal with the complex interplay of human feelings. No longer are human actions subordinate to symbolic aims. All higher feelings are muted to bring the most ordinary human elements to the fore. There is no aspiring saint, and the plague is only in a vague unhappy background of dissension. The plot resembles that of Les Justes with the affirmation of a principle balanced against the suffering over, if not so much of, a child; but this is toned down to a simple refusal to commiserate with the employer over his child. Out of all this arises the pity of human failure to by-pass mere principles and poses and make simple contact.

The need, then, is to pass beyond oneself, to cut through principles and pride and reach 'truth of the heart'. The greatest progress along this road to solidarity of spirit is in La Pierre qui Pousse. In La Peste a burden was thrust upon the people of Oran. In La Pierre qui Pousse d'Arrast voluntarily shares the burden of the ship's cook, a burden very different from the pervasive plague that men like Rambert were made to feel they must share. Because

of the voluntary nature of his act as much as anything, d'Arrast finds happiness in solidarity and brotherhood.

Consistent to the last in his attitude towards God, Camus makes d'Arrast carry the stone not to the church but to the house of the ship's cook. Thus too, in a sense, whilst the burden is shared, it is still not got rid of. The problem of God is laid squarely in the house of man.

The kingdom is of this world. At its most spiritual it is in the heart of man. Exile is usually in part geographical, but this is only to give substance to the sense of alienation. In every case, exile results from some sort of rift, and the kingdom lies in unity.

There seems to be a certain progression in the group of stories. It lies in the degree of communication. In La Femme Adultère., Janine finds union with the world but cannot communicate her experience. The Renegade at least attempts to impart the idea that means so much to him, though his motive is more a desire for power than for truth. Yvars, in Les Muets, is wiser at the end, even if no happier. He has gained a glimpse of the lack of true solidarity which would bridge mere employer-employee relationships. The first three stories all show the central

character as being at only one end of the problem. The next two, L'Hôte and Jonas*, show the heroes midway between the terms of their predicament, caught between solitude and the desire for solidarity. Then lastly comes d'Arrast, who achieves a two-way communion through the solidarity that results from a burden shared.

This little group of stories shows indeed a peculiar but unmistakable parallel with Camus's main works. It may even have been deliberate, since Camus, as is clear from the Carnets**, maintained an over-all view of the development of his works. Janine is like Meursault in achieving communion with nature but not with other people; the Renegade is very similar in some respects to Clamence; Yvars, like Jan, fails to reveal himself; Daru, like Kaliayev, is caught between two forces, and is not really understood by either; Jonas is perhaps most comparable with Grand, though the former's situation results from his artistic success. D'Arrast resembles Tarrou. He consciously seeks solidarity, and there is the same impression as with Tarrou of a higher symbolistic order of thought. The ship's cook asks:

> "Et toi, n'as-tu jamais appelé, fait une promesse?
> — Si, une fois, je crois.

* Jonas is dealt with in Chapter III - The Artist.
**Carnets II p.201

— Dans un naufrage?
— Si tu veux." (1)

Whereas Tarrou would probably have said nothing further, leaving it to the imagination to represent what was symbolised by 'shipwreck', d'Arrast explains. About to turn sharply away, he checks himself and smiles. The enigmatic has been exchanged for explanations.

The main general difference between the stories of L'Exil et le Royaume and Camus's other fiction works is in the muted tone of the former. Instead of the catastrophic events of Caligula or La Peste, comparatively minor events are taken; instead of events illustrating principles, it is left very much to the reader to draw the principles from the events.

There survives consistently the faith in human goodness, except in the case of the Renegade who is shown as blinded by a faith that claims to be stronger than man. Strongest of all is the indication of the need for communication between men, leading to a higher communion in an enlightened solidarity.

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(1) ER- TRN 1670

CONCLUSION

Alienation in the works of Camus may be broken down for convenience into three forms. There is alienation from God, alienation from the world, and alienation from fellowmen.

Of these, alienation from God is the simplest, for it receives from Camus a widespread treatment throughout his works but in a way that is remarkably consistent. Having decided that interest in God's existence or non-existence is fruitless since the problem is insoluble,* he decides that in the interests of economy of effort only man is worthy of attention. Thus rejection of God is as fundamental to Camus's thought as acceptance is in religion, and with equally little foundation in argument.

Such rejection results from perception of the absurd condition of man. It continues with the maintaining of a lucid stand against God in order to uphold man's dignity. The demand is for happiness, and failure to achieve this merely strengthens the stand against God as providing evidence of the absurdity of his creation. Basic to Camus's thought is the assumption that because man longs instinctively for happiness and loathes death, then a condition free of

* Carnets II, p.113

the one and full of the other ought to be his lot. Thus, from the start, instinct is taken as superior to any moral-metaphysical arguments. From the latter point of view, alienation from God results from a strong desire for justice, and the perception that such justice does not rule in this world. Even here, Camus returns however to instinct and immediate perception : promises of compensatory justice in an afterlife hold no force for him, since he attaches all importance to the conditions in the world that he knows.

Alienation from God is by no means total in Camus's heroes. Perhaps it is at its greatest in a man such as Rieux, who simply will not lift his eyes to the heavens because there is too much to be done improving man's present lot. Paradoxically, however, there is a link with God even for certain of those who defy him. Such are the men grouped in this thesis as 'The Conquerors', together with Tarrou, who has been set apart because he lacks their highly egoistic outlook. Each of these men tries to emulate some aspect of God, incomprehensible destruction in the case of Caligula, omniscience in that of Tarrou. Their common motivating force is a nostalgia for total conquest of the world; their delusion is the establishing of a fiction of total control of environment.

Their admission, in more positive men such as Tarrou, is that even without God certain of the qualities sought in his name must be attained. Their failure is through only imitating one aspect of God, in the case of Caligula for example, or in the unsatisfactory nature of a man-God duality, in the case of Clamence. Often, too, nostalgia for total union with the world leads to an ambivalent position, notably for Sisyphus, Caligula and Meursault, between total acceptance and total rejection. Thus their alienation from God does not offer the satisfaction of total revolt. In short, the most complete alienation from God is in men such as Rieux, who are intent upon being men, and simply do not accord any of their thought to God.

Alienation from the world is usually the result of unfulfilled nostalgia for some clime which is envisaged as promising happiness. The starkest example of this is in Martha. Exile from a land of imagined happiness brings total alienation from the land in which she lives; desire for happiness with sun and sea is so great that any means is justified that attains the end. Subsidiary to such exile is the theme of separation, found notably in La Peste, where desire for reunion with one person can create desire for place. In both exile and separation there is no doubt that Camus was greatly influenced

by his own experiences. Nevertheless, in L'Exil et le Royaume, there are signs of lessening faith in what might be termed Mediterranean happiness, and the spiritual aspects of exile begin to predominate over the geographical. There is, too, a lessening of emphasis on sun and sea, and the emergence of nostalgia for youth.

By far the most complex is alienation from fellowmen. The complexity is in man himself. Certain initial causes of this alienation are, however, relatively simple, since they do not stem from man himself.

First of these is alienation from God. In a world largely governed, morally and also politically, in line with religious credences, rejection of God automatically cuts a man off from many of his fellows through the rejection of widely-held values. The lucidity of the absurd hero is therefore a noteworthy cause of his alienation from fellowmen, though, as in the case of Caligula, in the initial absurd revolt such alienation is of secondary importance. It is however true also of Tarrou, who can communicate only with such men as Riex, and for the rest must be a taker of notes and an adept in 'compréhension', against a background of rejected religious solutions and search for a humanistic solution.

A second source of alienation from men is in the ethic of quantity advocated for the absurd hero. This, in denying depth to life, leads to an objective view of other men, notably in Caligula and the projected character of Don Juan. However, with Camus's developing concern for the relative justice attainable in this world, rather than absolute justice, promised for the next, the theory of quantity gives way to that of quality. Whilst the latter does not emerge clearly until La Peste, there are signs of transition from one to the other in L'Etranger, and qualitative considerations are evidently at the root of the dilemma of 'Les Justes'.

A more persistent cause of alienation is in the attitude of 'All or Nothing', which is found even as late as Rieux, in La Peste, though his unyielding attitude relative to God and justice is tempered by his acceptance of provisional victory and temporary happiness for men. The modification of the 'All or Nothing' attitude was one of the main ways in which Camus could open up for his heroes greater scope for solidarity. The change of tone from the categorical enunciations of Le Mythe de Sisyphe to the pragmatic approach of L'Exil et le Royaume is considerable. The cause of the 'All or Nothing' attitude is the rejection of values which would have provided an intermediary scale; conversely, it is in the hope

of establishing some such values that Camus sets aside absolute demands.

Not that these are anything more than shelved; the original lucidity of the absurd man is retained with regard to the metaphysical condition of mankind, but his attention is directed to bettering that condition on the physical plane.

Originally, with rejection of God, there was rejection of values, but with the 'saint without God' there is an attempt to reinstate some form of good and permanent values in the name of man. From the essential concept of the saint in La Peste, Camus passes to the pragmatic approach of L'Exil et le Royaume, from the idea of goodness to the doing of good. From the solitary men of Les Justes , who talk and act as if bearing all the responsibility of revolution, and are aware of the immensity, there is a move towards diffusion of revolt amongst ordinary men, in ordinary forms. In La Peste, for example, Camus makes it very clear that there are no real heroes. Parallel with this there is a recognition of the complexity of human problems, and an answering tolerance. All movement is away from extremes, be they all or nothing, towards compromise, with honour; a middle way.

With the establishment of a need for limits and tolerance of what is not entirely right, Camus goes

a long way towards identifying his heroes with the 'ordinary man'. Their alienation is thus greatly lessened. Having established this approach, which is based on respect for fellowmen*, Camus has to establish man's innocence in order to justify his creating of a code of values which will finally end man's alienation from man.

Innocence, if such it is, of Meursault, is no more than indifference to right and wrong, and to the value of the life of other men. In any case, it is far removed from being a major theme of L'Etranger, whereas in La Peste it is a predominating problem. Even there, however, it is not satisfactorily analysed or traced to its source. This is left until La Chute. Innocence unites, guilt separates. Clamence is the loneliest of men. His situation indicates the need for men to unite in solidarity not of guilt but of innocence. Camus explicitly condemns the attitude of Clamence :

> Rien n'est pur, rien n'est pur voilà le cri qui a empoisonné ce siècle. (1)

Against this Camus sets all his instinctive optimism.

(1) Carnets II, p.202.

* Pour être, l'homme doit se révolter, mais sa révolte doit respecter la limite qu'elle découvre en elle-même et où les hommes, en se rejoignant, commencent d'être. (HR - E 431)

Given man's essential innocence, and assuming the desire for solidarity, there remains in the struggle against alienation the problem of breaking through one's own reticence. Much progress is made in this in La Pierre qui Pousse.

The early heroes of Camus are not only solitary, but glory in their solitude. Such are the central figure of Noces, and Sisyphus. Clamence too exults in his solitude at times, but he is paradoxically dependent on others in his rôle as judge-penitent. So too is Caligula. Thus egoism, which is a main barrier between many of Camus's heroes and other men, is seen not to be sound. Clamence in particular exemplifies this. He lives in a world where all values depend upon himself, where everything is measured by his self-esteem, and contributes to it. When he loses his self-esteem, there is no fixed value left.

Self-alienation in Camus's heroes is rare. It is philosophic, with the failure to relate essence to existence, as Camus sees it, rather than simple lack of selfknowledge. Moral self-alienation is chiefly seen in Clamence.

With Tarrou, the predicament of others begins to outweigh personal values. The problem of breaking through oneself in order to attain solidarity is found in him, but reaches its peak in Les Muets, and

an example of success is found, as mentioned, in La Pierre qui Pousse.

On the whole, there is less a development towards solidarity in the works of Camus than a shift in emphasis on priorities as he establishes different points of faith to his satisfaction. The situation of the individual had first to be resolved, then his situation in relation to other men. The desire for solidarity was probably brought to the fore by war, and a war-time atmosphere is apparent in La Peste. Albérès observes of Camu's 'perfection éthique' that

> ...Camus la poursuit dans ce hautain détachement du Mythe de Sisyphe, qui se mue, depuis les Lettres Allemandes, en désintéressement généreux... (1)

Nevertheless, notions of solidarity are found as early as the Mythe de Sisyphe :

> ...c'est le chemin moyen qui mène aux visages de l'homme qu'il s'agit de trouver. (2)

And there is :

> Visages tendus, fraternité menacée, amitié si forte et si pudique des hommes entre eux, ce sont les vraies richesses puisqu'elles sont périssables. (3)

Moreover, it is evident from the first of these two quotations from the Mythe that already Camus linked the idea of solidarity with that of moderation. It is perhaps because of his 'trial by error' method of exploring

(1) Albérès, p.132
(2) MS - E 180
(3) MS - E 167

ideas that there is a tendency to ricochet between problems rather than pursue one steady line towards a solution.

Generally speaking, any movement is away from the abstract revolt against man's situation in the universe, towards concrete concern with evil in man himself, and resistance through urging toleration and limits to men's actions.

Throughout, the most sustained feature is Camus's optimism. Gradually there arises the interpretation of human solidarity not as a solution to the absurd, but a retort.

> Ce qui équilibre l'absurde c'est la communauté des hommes en lutte contre lui. (1)

Like Rieux, having established his attitude towards God, he confines his actions and thought to the useful and the possible. Having set forth his concept of man's situation in Le Mythe de Sisyphe , he devotes most of ~~the rest of~~ his fictional work to seeking some palliation of this condition. Ultimate defeat is no deterrent.

A clue to the driving-force in Camus seems to lie in the Carnets :

Il faut se décider à introduire dans les choses

(1) Carnets II 162

> de la pensée la distinction nécessaire entre philosophie d'évidence et philosophie de préférence. Autrement dit, on peut aboutir à une philosophie qui répugne à l'esprit et au coeur mais qui s'impose. Ainsi ma philosophie d'évidence c'est l'absurde. Mais cela ne m'empêche pas d'avoir (ou plus exactement de connaître) une philosophie de préférence... Le penseur heureux est celui qui suit sa pente — le penseur exilé celui qui s'y refuse... (1)

Here Camus himself analyses the tension which animates his works. Part of his originality lies in this attitude towards his own philosophy, a reluctance so different from the complacency of many philosophers towards their intellectual contrivances. Significantly, Camus equates 'exilé' with 'malheureux'. Any union must be of man with his desires, and there can be no acceptance of man's condition so long as it is one of alienation.

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(1) Carnets II, pp.82-3.

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Similarly, Camus's volumes of Carnets, though distinguished only by dates on the covers of the edition used, have been given as I and II.

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