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The Strains of Cynical Consciousness In Albert Camus

Robert Mercado

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in

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ABSTRACT

The Strains of Cynical Consciousness in Albert Camus

Robert Mercado

The aim of this thesis is to determine that which constitutes cynical consciousness within the works of Albert Camus, as well as to consider the ways in which Camus' thought is guided by his intention to put forth a theory that is guided by humanistic valuations. It is therefore necessary to probe the interplay of the leading influences in Camus' intellectual make-up, which bring forth the tensions within Camus' humanistic project. It is shown that the strains of cynical consciousness arise from Camus' admiration for both the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and the literature of Fyodor Dostoevsky, with Dostoevsky understood as being a particularly authoritative figure within Camus' intellectual and creative temperament. The argument, then, is that Camus' fiction can be understood as an internal dialogue between the precepts of his humanistic stance and Dostoevsky's Christian existentialist position. As a result, Camus' humanism is characterized by the concepts of rehabilitation and reform, and his literary works can thus be understood as a critical assessment of the Nietzschean ideas of affirmation and metaphysical rebellion. It is concluded that Camus' unfettered zeal for Dostoevsky's "literature of interiority" is likewise driven by the idea of metaphysical rebellion. At the same time, it is argued that the pervasiveness of both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky's influence on Camus' thought severely limits the viability of Camus' humanist ethics and therefore restricts Camus' creative license.

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this thesis is directed towards determining what constitutes the strains of cynical consciousness in Albert Camus' work. To do so, it is necessary to probe the interplay of influences of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Friedrich Nietzsche upon Camus' creative thought. The German novelist Thomas Mann wrote an essay in 1945 that was a reflection on the legacies left behind by both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. Mann describes them as the "two great invalids" whose respective creative outputs amounted to a testament of "paralytic enlightenment". The fascination for Mann was the paradoxes found in the lives of both men. How could such individuals, condemned to circumstances coloured by bad physical and mental health, produce works that spoke in terms of an abundance of power? Mann saw spiritual significance in the reversal of disease into a conception of power, which he claims is the case in the works of Dostoevsky and those of Nietzsche. He points out that it is the ethic of self-sacrifice found in both men that rendered them as "crucified victims" in the advancement of humanity's soul and intellect:

> This is the reason for the devoutness that clearly surrounds the lives of these men and deeply affects their self-consciousness. It is the reason for the anticipatory feelings which *these victims have of power and accomplishment of a vastly intensified life despite all suffering...*[1] (Emphasis mine)

Mann's description of their total immersion into the task of their works to a point where they became victims of their own self-absorption is couched in the language of authenticity. More importantly, Mann's description captures the essence of their strivings for authenticity based on the recognition found in both men that the lining of suffering encapsulated within their works led them to believe in their heightened experience of life. This idea of suffering as a valuation of authenticity should be noted, as it figures prominently in this excursus into cynical consciousness in Camus' work.

Mann quite convincingly describes Nietzsche's admiration for Dostoevsky. Mann claims that for Nietzsche, Dostoevsky represented a "liberator" from bourgeois morality, a thinker free of "humanistic inhibitions," and an "Eastern brother-in-spirit" whose background contained the seeds of Nietzsche's own desire to shake-off his Germanism.[2] Mann goes further and explores the affinities in Dostoevsky's literature with central conceptions found in Nietzsche's philosophy. He points to the Russian's thematics concerning "the superman," which are reflective of Nietzsche's own doctrine of the overman. He even suggests a direct correlation between Nietzsche's conception of "the Eternal Recurrence," with that of Ivan Karamazov's dialogue with the Devil—that Mann infers was perhaps a sub-conscious appropriation on the part of Nietzsche due to his having read the novel The Brothers Karamazov.[3]

Let me now clarify what is purely speculative in Mann's observations and what should be considered as Nietzsche's recognition of Dostoevsky in the scope of his creativity. First in order is Mann's assertion that, in Dostoevsky, Nietzsche found a kindred spirit and an ally who gave him a sense of liberation from the baggage of his German heritage, its bourgeois morality and its intellectual guise of humanism. Mann gives no references for these claims, but they can be traced to a section of Twilight of the Idols aptly titled "Expeditions of An Untimely Man" (aphorism 45) and "The Criminal and What is Related to Him." It is here that Nietzsche pays tribute to the insight of Dostoevsky's Russian autumn heart, bestowing accolades to the novelist's psychological acumen that grasped the creative inspiration within the criminal element. In the aphorism, Nietzsche refers to Dostoevsky as "the profound human being" whose hatred of "superficial Germans" was "ten times justified". No wonder that Nietzsche regarded the discovery of Dostoevsky in that period as "the happiest accident" of his life, surpassing even the thrill of earlier years when he had quite by chance come upon a copy of Stendhal's Le Rouge et le Noir.

The euphoria expressed by Nietzsche, having discovered Dostoevsky, was simultaneously in sync with a vindictive affirmation against German culture. This is quite explicable by virtue of the fact that the first work Nietzsche ever read by Dostoevsky was *Notes from Underground.* A piece of fiction by the Russian that employs his literary device of *the frank confession* to spew out the author's own vehement disdain for European ideals, it especially gives no quarter to the Germans. His actual coming into contact with the book occurred on February 23rd, 1887 and this initiated him to explore other works by Dostoevsky.[4] It should be noted that the arbitrary circumstances that brought Nietzsche into Dostoevsky's fold suited his own sense of uniqueness. Look to Ecce Homo and we find that Nietzsche always prided himself on the singularity of his way of coming into inspiration, which to his mind was an attestation to marking "an epoch" in his life.[5] That is why if we return to R.J. Hollingdale's comments in the glossary, where he shows reticence in trying to determine if Nietzsche, after having read *Notes from Underground* and a few other minor works, still afterwards maintained a "sustained enthusiasm" for Dostoevsky. There seems to be a panic over intertextuality, a fear of reading affinities as direct influences that undermine and sap so much intellectual energy when it needs not! It is true that, as Hollingdale observes, Dostoevsky entered rather late in the scheme of things in relation to Nietzsche's creative output but it can nevertheless be substantiated that Dostoevsky inspired Nietzsche in the final critical and most melancholic phase of his writing.

There are a number of sections in the abandoned work The Will to Power that point to Nietzsche's continued exploration of Dostoevsky after 1887, and spanning up to the period that produced his last testament Ecce Homo. In Book Three of The Will to Power ("Principles of a New Evaluation;" section 821), Nietzsche describes the tragic circumstances of Dostoevsky's craft, which is the revelation that the Russian's creative energy and his "deification of existence" are linked to the condition of epilepsy. This is the true nature of Dostoevsky's influence on Nietzsche, the valuation gained by the insight found in pain and suffering with its correlative perspective of power. For Nietzsche, this insight becomes pervasive in the last cycle of his quest to attain a "revaluation of all values". Go back again to the earlier "Expeditions of an Untimely Man" in Twilight of the Idols (section 17), and we find Nietzsche expounding on pain as a boon for those kindred spirits whose capacities can tap into a heightened awareness of existence. It is why, according to Mann's assertions that Nietzsche co-opted Dostoevsky's ideas, Nietzsche's notion of the Eternal Recurrence fades away from the notion of influence to that of affinities. What I am suggesting is that the notion of influence of Dostoevsky in Nietzsche's work should be considered on the level of consciousness, as in the example just cited of Nietzsche's valuations of pain and suffering as marking the profound in his the last phase of his work.

It was definitely more than just a chance meeting when Nietzsche picked up *Notes from Underground*, with the opening lines laid down a cross-collateralization of minds between the two:

> I'm a sick man... I'm a spiteful. I am an unattractive man. I believe my liver is diseased. However, I know nothing at all about my disease, and do not know for certain what ails me.[6]

It must have been like adrenaline for Nietzsche reading this in the downslide of his ever-growing deteriorating circumstances of health. How could it not work its way into inspiring his later autobiographical account—the radiance of morbid euphoria that was to become Ecce Homo? It is a cataloguing of his ailments psychic and physical that played his life, a guidebook on the do's and don'ts of moral hygiene for securing of good physiology. Only an individual such as Dostoevsky, who was 23 years Nietzsche's senior and who had lived constantly under the sign of the *condemned man*, could inspire the philosopher who was now past the mid-point of his own free-fall to paralytic collapse.

Dostoevsky came within a hair of execution and instead was granted a last-minute reprieve that turned into an eight-year prison term in Omask, Siberia. Dostoevsky was an incessant gambler whose habit often left him poverty-stricken at the gates of debtors' prison, and in order to preserve his creative freedom, he would have to flee abroad to Europe to escape the land of his creditors.[7] And finally, Dostoevsky was an artist burdened by the ostracizing conditions of "the falling down sickness" (the reference for epilepsy in his time) and was also at home a political exile held in contempt by all stripes in the political spectrum.[8]

In Ecce Homo, Nietzsche also speaks in terms of sentimental hygiene in the language of the condemned man. Like Nietzsche's Underground correspondent, Nietzsche relates his status as an *outsider*, "condemned" to an existence that was shrouded in the banality of German culture, of which he concludes that both he and Wagner "suffered" the similar fates of being totally misunderstood (pp. 60-62 in Ecce Homo).[9] When Nietzsche, in the section that I earlier referred to in The Will To Power (821), concludes "how liberating is Dostoevsky," Nietzsche is confirming the Russian's valuations that validate his own synaptic diagram of cynical consciousness. Dostoevsky, for Nietzsche, is substance, an opiate much in the same vein that Wagner's music once inspired him. But those were different days, when his admiration for Wagner coincided with a cynicism (Kynic) that held such vitality. It was very different from his end days as an all-too-modern cynic whose insight projected itself from the intricacies of pain—the creature features of Dostoevsky's landscapes of interiority. Dostoevsky's Russia represents a significant metaphysical Other, a vestibule of fiction that aids Nietzsche in preserving the integrity of his subjective agency.

This could only occur to an intellectual of the stature of Nietzsche by way of the excessive bouts of melancholia that he experienced. In such a state, the rigors of intellectualism fall short in invigorating a sense of oneself, particularly when existence is encompassed by pain. As Czech novelist and essayist Milan Kundera explains, the composite of the self in such a state can be found in Dostoevsky's Russia—"the land of feeling"—where pain reigns as truth:

> I think therefore I am is the statement of an intellectual who underrates toothaches. I feel, therefore, therefore I am is a truth much more universally valid, and it applies to everything that's alive. My self does not

> differ substantially from yours in terms of its thought. Many people, few ideas: we all think more or less the same, and we exchange, borrow, steal thoughts from one another. However, when someone steps on y foot, only I feel pain. The basis of the self is not thought but suffering, which is the most fundamental of all feelings... In *intense suffering the world disappears and each of us is alone with his self. Suffering is the university of egocentrism.* (Emphasis mine).[10]

What is essential is Kundera's assessment of Dostoevsky's preference for valuations steeped in sentimentalism, whereby consciousness procures a more profound and authentic sense of the self than that of the transitoriness of intellectual stimuli. As Kundera points out, suffering "the most fundamental of all feelings" is when excesses plunge consciousness into total self-absorption to the exclusion of the external world. Kundera's analysis targets two of Dostoevsky's works, which he considers exemplar of this phenomenon. The first is the novel The Idiot, in reference to which Kundera discusses the interplay of dialogue between the main protagonist Prince Myshkin and other minor characters who manifest their truths through the valuations of sentimental hygiene. The second work, which Kundera does not overtly identify but makes a veiled reference to, is Notes from the Underground and is signified by the imagery of the intellectual who "underrates toothaches."

Briefly then, let me discuss the significance of "the toothache" and its bearing in Dostoevsky's Notes from the Underground. In this way, I will be able to draw the work of Albert Camus into the triangle of cynical consciousness with Dostoevsky and Nietzsche. The Underground Man, as intellectual, symbolizes the weariness of a theory that finds its resting-place in inertia. The Underground Man recognizes that his scraping away in contemplation for "forty years" in "the cellar" has revealed that the postulated civilizing influences of Enlightenment amount to a fallacy in contrast to the way the real world (objective culture) runs. Humanistic doctrines founded on reason have distorted human nature. His historical analysis of the past and present lead him to conclude that the blood, lust and barbarity of the past, used to achieve the ends of justice, were less hypocritical than current practices and in a sense preserved a clearer state of conscience among those who perpetuated the acts. The subtlety of instrumental means executed by the civilized "slaughterers" to achieve justice has stripped human dignity by denying the recognition of its volition in destructive acts. As a consequence, bloodletting among moderns is exceedingly more vile.[11]

The "extraordinarily rational," which is the term the Underground Man uses to describe instrumentalism, is at heart of his critique against modernity. For him, the structured relation (The Palace Crystal) that it presupposes reduces the individual's destiny to pure inauthenticity: “something of the nature of a piano-key or the stop of an organ.” It is why the Underground man mockingly suggests that moderns banish these logarithms of "rationalism to the winds." The invigoration of the modern's own sense of integrity lies in reverting back to "the devil" you know - the caprices of the will where the motivation of self-interest remains intact and unadulterated.[12]

In this way, one could cut through the ambiguity and deception that *the lovers of mankind*, with their charade of "so-called virtues and duties," have suppressed those human instincts that run accordingly to the laws of nature. This insight is supposed to demonstrate how the modern superstructure of rationalism/instrumentalism has leveled human instincts. It is elemental, then, for the Underground Man, that the capacities for action among those who operate in such a narrow utilitarian set-up is contingent on their "limited" intelligence, which in turn is in conformity with superficial progressivist notions of "European civilization."[13]

However, his recommendation to abandon oneself to the caprices of the will as a counter-movement to oppressive conditions of the Enlightenment holds only for the masses, and not for an intellectual of his standing; a brief stint of nihilism for him can only be a bit of comic relief. His is the fate of a "suffering" contemplative type—because he "understands it all" (the implacability of objective culture). This vouches for his ironic superior sensibility that makes-up the content of his theories of "luxurious inertia", and those "conscious" enough to grasp the import of his theories understand that "inertia," as doing "nothing," is best.[14] But the certainty his of intellectual retreat—his "hurrah for the underground" is a refusal to take part in what he sees as the shallow instrumentalism of objective culture. Moreover, this perspective is as Kundera maintained: informed by the valuation of pain.

The Underground Man's perspectivism, which is predominantly informed by valuations of pain, goes to great lengths to reduce the significance of the outside world; his route to preserve his sense of subjective authenticity. Turning back to Nietzsche, it is necessary to keep this final aim of the Underground Man in mind. In The Will To Power (Book Four, "Discipline and Breeding", section 866) we find Nietzsche engaged in a similar critique of modernity's infrastructure of an instrumentalism bolstered by a hubristic utilitarian impulse. Incidentally, this section coincides with the period that Nietzsche came into contact with Dostoevsky's literature. There is, however, no indication on Kaufmann's part that suggests any correlation, so it is left open to interpretation as to the import of Dostoevsky's Underground correspondent weighing in on Nietzsche's perspectives.

However, Nietzsche's views are in line with the intellectual in Notes from Underground, whose maintains that the organizing principles of the modern/economic infrastructure renders human beings as "preeminently characterless creatures."[15]

Nietzsche, for his part, also observes that the instrumentalism implicit in the dictates of economic management seek to harness the pool of diversity in human resources, and then further breaks them down to "specialized" functions to service the economy. He is of the opinion that "the economic optimism" which celebrates this "leveling" imperative is misguided in its assumptions and that this represents the harnessing of human potentialities. It is the very opposite, to Nietzsche, that seems to be the case, for it presupposes the very sapping of human creativity and therefore "amounts to a collective loss."

Let us be aware that the Underground Man's perspectives up to this point are coeval with those of Nietzsche, but only to the juncture that the Underground Man chooses to flee the scene—the Underground Man's further participation in the world would represent the sum total of inertia. To his mind, that would be following the system's categorical imperative that translates like instructions to function actively—the said requirements or necessities of a drone-like intelligence ("stupid and limited."). Hence, the Underground Man's reasoning arrives at the ironic conclusion that to perform under such conditions necessitates a diminishment of the human condition which he likens to the "characterless" behavior patterns of insects.[16] The Underground Man's concocted superior vantage-point calls for a rebellion against the inauthentic rendition of inertia, because this version suggests an ignorance about its origins. This represents a level of impasse and is unsatisfactory to his way of thinking. His thought responds in kind. If it is a genuine and authentic version of inertia that is at issue here, then the conditions of the Underground offer an ideal setting for the true workings of inertia to emerge: "conscious" inertia.

It can be gathered that from his pain-laden metaphysical baggage, the Underground Man embodies a passive nihilism. His claim to a superior sensibility, that is exercised by way of his recourse to irony, serves only as a pretence and validates his withdrawal from the superficial setting of objective culture. But in no way could this be considered the ultimate criterion that defines his choice of disengagement. Simply put, there is just too much self-loathing that coincides with his decision to withdraw, even though he claims to "understand it all." The impasse represented by objective culture antagonizes him still in his underground comportment:

> ... if it disgusts you to be reconciled to it; by the way of the most inevitable logical confirmations *to reach the most revolting conclusions on the everlasting theme, that even for the stone wall you yourself are somehow to blame...* (Emphasis mine).[17]

Since he lacks the so-called sophistication of a high-ranking ironist, he seemingly cannot resolve the impasse with that "ever-lasting theme" of shallow culture. He must therefore revert back to pain as the central criterion of insight. By doing so, he can secure a phyrric victory for his subjective agency by submitting his painful experience to an aesthetic appeal (relativism). It becomes a matter of what ails him more, the unconscious inertia of drone culture or the "conscious inertia" of fringe culture in the underground? His answer of course is:

> "Ha, ha ha,! You will be finding enjoyment in toothache next," you cry, with a laugh. "Well? Even in toothaches there is enjoyment," I answer.[18]

This is as creative as his cynical consciousness can get in mapping-out an escape route away from the "leveling" imperative, which Nietzsche also maintains, that leads to "the dwarfing of mankind." From a political standpoint, the oscillation of the Underground Man's inner tensions accepts a rather marginal position on freedom. In contrast to the Underground Man's cynicism, melancholy or not, Nietzsche's "inner state" always held the requisite armaments that made him a supreme ironist.[19] That is pretty much the way Nietzsche saw himself, a commanding figure in "the heights" where the fusion of the philosopher and artist create "a world historical monster." And those daring enough to follow him require subtlety of mind and a courageous character to gain access to his dose of "hand truths."[20]

A superior sensibility such as this can dismiss the impasse of the Underground Man's stonewall. Nietzsche's response to a shortsighted liberalism that produces a "dwarfing of mankind" is to say so be it. Let the "tremendous clockwork" of instrumentalism harvest the pool of mediocrity, they are just a "secretion of a luxury surplus of mankind" and a "precondition" that allows the gestation of high ranking aristocracy (the overman) to emerge with "new aims" for the not-so-distant future. One can come to the conclusion that those are the advantages of being an *untimely* thinker, you can secure potential bragging rights even though you may not be around at some future date to collect the spoils of the war of ideas that were waged in your name. If you are as hell-bent and possessed like Nietzsche, you will wage every last vestige of your living-time at crafting that potential outcome. The will to power, with distinctions, is the way of the "prepatory beings" who submit their lives to harnessing knowledge for "the higher age" to come: "live dangerously" at all costs is the far-flung ideal that is their mantra.[21] From these directives, there is a willful ignorance towards necessity-driven reality, and therefore, the conception of instrumentalism as described by Nietzsche as that "tremendous clock" in The Will to Power remains essentially unchallenged. The question therefore goes back to the previously discussed aphorism relating to "the prepatory beings." How could they fulfill their obligations to make the conditions optimum for that "higher age" to come if the present regime of instrumentalism (economics) controls their movement? It would be difficult to see how they would control "their own working days" as Nietzsche claims, and if they did, would they not still be of no consequence, given that Nietzsche describes them as all being isolated individuals?

Nietzsche, a methodical nihilist despite his disclaimer to "distrust all systemizers," sticks to the course of his philosophical fatalism, pushing a destructive form of instrumentalism to its logical ends. It becomes a matter of something has got to give! But why should it, if the present socio-economic structure provides beneficial circumstances for those staking their claim to fame while shutting down those more profound? In this scenario, Nietzsche's excessive metaphysical speculation with his doctrine of the overman ends up blunting the sharp-edged political critique that had once been so prevalent in his gravitation toward the Kynic impulse. In that cycle, the caliber of his contemplation was antagonistic enough to challenge the leveling imperatives of 19th century capitalism and never leaves a deficient and overbearing conception of instrumentalism slip past his nose.[22] Many scholars and critics of Nietzsche's earlier phase of philosophy have chosen to characterize a more "positivist" (a will to reason type) Nietzsche. In plain language, Nietzsche said in Daybreak: "the problems of philosophy are in the street." That line symbolizes the dimension of his critical faculties of his early philosophizing and stresses reciprocal relations with pragmatic representations of external reality. Nietzsche, who is later preoccupied with the Will to Power and the metaphysical smoke and mirrors of the overman, has also become increasingly absorbed with the uniqueness of his own thought. Therefore, the doctrine of the overman can also be a metaphor for Nietzsche's political disengagement. With his would-be overman, he may mock and sneer at the shallow reality that propels objective culture forward, but at the same time he is conferring a quality of permanency to the order of its valuations. This is the fodder of vanity and decadence coming together to celebrate the nihilistic logic of self-innovative destruction, with no revolution in sight. His fatalistic end days acquiesce to oligarchy not democracy.

That pattern of acquiescence is apparent in Dostoevsky's depiction of his metaphysical rebels in that the composite of their identities are solely defined by their own constant activity, the obsessive preoccupation with metaphysical speculation. My earlier discussion pertaining to the Underground man captured this aspect. Dostoevsky's character of Raskolnikov is also an example of the Russian's literature of interiority bordering on the hyper-real. When Dostoevsky first presents us with Raskolnikov in the early going of Crime and Punishment, his outward portrayal is a picture-perfect depiction of male grace. This is immediately offset by the revelation that the true nature of the character's identity lies inward. Raskolnikov is really a murky metaphysician suffering from the motion sickness of thinking, whose recognition is quite devoid of any traffic with the hustle-bustle surroundings of his environment.[23] The contradictory dynamics that are presented in the character make-up of Raskolnikov are exemplary of the fate that Dostoevsky casts on his rebels. The identities of Dostoevsky's rebels are defined more by intellectual activity than anything else.

Intellectualism in these terms has become a supreme valuation by virtue of its perpetual presence in the composite of their reality. This enables Dostoevsky's characterizations to transpose a virtual display of their subjectivity. George Steiner's observations of the world of Dostoevsky's characters, though not particularly focused on these aspects, essentially captures the intensification of life that is predominantly brokered by incessant intellectual activity:

> Dostoevsky's characters—even the neediest among them—always have leisure for chaos or unpremeditated total involvement. They are available day and night; no one need go ferret them out of a factory or an established business.[24]

What becomes evident is that their "leisure for chaos," as Steiner describes it, is their obsession with metaphysical preoccupations and is contingent on their representations being devoid of instrumentalist concerns. In the embodiment of the Underground Man, it was shown that this resulted in his choice of "conscious" inertia ("luxurious inertia") over that of the "unconscious" variant. The conclusion of the former is that representing intellectualism had no value in the superficial dynamism that generated the outgrowth of objective culture, while the latter was deemed having a utility value. And this dichotomy is to be found cropping up throughout Dostoevsky's major works.[25] However, there are instances when the franchise of theory is shown attempting to transcend this dichotomy which is the case in Crime and Punishment. When it does so, such as in Raskolnikov's attempt to translate the principles of his theories into practice, the articulation of its principles are reduced to an expedient ideological fodder that proposes perverse means-end rationalism for the attainment of its goals.[26] What is notable is that the ends of his political persuasion resemble the cut and dry instrumentalist rationale that it espouses to loathe. It is bad enough that the ends of Raskolnikov's theoretical speculation gain simultaneity with pure instrumentalist ends, which according to his views are regarded as a debasement in the ranking order of human nature. But it gets worse, for when his theories cross over into practice, they appear even cruder in form. This is crystallized in the "panic" stricken state with which Raskolnikov carries out his murderous act, which in turn infers a quality of involuntariness to it.[27] Of course, Dostoevsky will portray Raskolnikov as having an ironic self-awareness of his lack of resoluteness in contrast to his theory of superhumanity, which purported an elitist qualified right to legitimate murder. His recognition of the ineptitude of his theories in practice brings us back to the same revelation in the domains of the Underground Man's cynical consciousness, with the metaphor of the "toothache" supposedly representative of the endemic paralysis of intellectualism. In mocking reflection, Raskolnikov comes to the same conclusion:

> Oh, I'm an aesthetic louse and nothing more..., `Yes, I really am a louse', *he went on clinging to the idea with malicious glee, fumbling in it, playing and having fun with it.* (Emphasis mine).[28]

That intellectualism in Dostoevsky's fiction reaches its most absurd proportions and results in indelible portraitures of nihilism which are the creation of his metaphysical rebels and bespeaks of the ideological subterfuge that resides at the core of Dostoevsky's own portrayal of his crisis of faith. Briefly let me explain. In his correspondences Dostoevsky relates the "torturous" circumstances of his desire to ground himself in Christian theist based convictions against the seductive pull of atheist sensibilities:

> Je vous dirai de moi-même que je suis un enfant du siècle, l'enfant de l'incroyance et du doute, je le suis à ce jour et (je sais cela) jusqu'à la pierre tombé. Quel d'atroces tortures m'a coûtees et me coûte encore maintenant cette soif de corne qui est d'autant plus forte et mon âme qu'il y a en moi plus d'argument contraire.[29]

Dostoevsky identifies his inner struggle for faith as being indicative of the plight of 19th century culture, as defined by a gulf of tensions between Christian faith and intellectualism's discourse. It should be noted that references to his struggle for faith occur between 1850-1870. During that period, he writes Notes from Underground (1864), Crime and Punishment (1866) and The Idiot (1869). All of these works in a varying degrees provide him with a platform to aim counter-attacks at the strains of intellectual thought that stem from French and German Enlightenment traditions making inroads into Russian intellectual circles. Remember that Raskolnikov is an ardent fan of Napoleon and a follower of Hegelianism. When he catches sight of himself in the flawed design of murder, he laughs at how he could have compared himself to the grandeur of Napoleon. But then he quickly snaps out of it and rationalizes the landlady's death: "I didn't kill a human being - I killed a principle!" I have touched upon Dostoevsky' a condition of political ostracization—his failed attempt to distance himself from the intellectual circles in order to gain grace among the conservative ruling classes. Well, it can't be said that he didn't make an effort to bow to the Czar!

These ideological undercurrents should be taken into account when considering Dostoevsky's display of pessimism towards Enlightenment's rationale because these projections in his literature have specific bearing on the orientation of Camus' thought and therefore resonates in a larger sense with postmodern political theory. In this context, consider the conflictual nature of Dostoevsky's struggle for faith, where he relates that there are "counter-arguments" that inwardly oppose his desire to believe in God. He is referring no less to the dialectics that he equates with atheist sensibilities. However, placing dialectics within the configuration of his inner struggle for faith is also to characterize its very nature by inwardness. Therefore, despite the apparent antagonistic relations between his intellectual acumen and his desire for faith, both appeals have common ground in that they are usually associated with the private sphere of life. The act of faith presupposes a separation of the immediacy of external world, as does the act of contemplation. Both require a degree of solitude.

Now these observations posit a common arching point between the crisis of Dostoevsky's faith and his intellectualism and in an arbitrary manner he resolves it. In the end, the securing of his Christian conviction amounts to no more than an aesthetic appeal. It becomes a matter of what dimension in his internal divide provides him the highest degree of metaphysical certainty. Dostoevsky considered the vistas of interiority as the alternate vantage-point to authentically appraise existence:

> I am neither depressed nor demoralized. Life is life wherever it is, life is in ourselves and not in external things.... Life is a gift, life is happiness, every minute could be an eternity of happiness.[30]

From his reflections, not only is it clear that he derives the character of existence purely in subjectivist terms, but this emphasis validates existence as preferential to associations based on eternal concerns than those of temporal matters. There is an event that symbolically captures and exteriorizes this fusion between subjectivism and the Christian aesthetic. In Dostoevsky's wife's eyewitness account, Dostoevsky came into contact with Hans Holbein's painting in the Basel museum while on their journey to Geneva in 1867. His second wife, Anna Snitkin, who incidentally was his stenographer, describes Dostoevsky as being overwhelmed at the sight of Holbein's grotesque depiction of a decomposed Christ being taken down from the cross:

> On his agitated face there was the frightened expression I often noticed on it during the first moments of his epileptic fits. He had no fit at the time, but he could never forget the sensation he had experienced in Basel museum in 1867. In his notes to The Idiot and in the novel itself he returns again and again to this theme.[31]

The creation of the character of Prince Myshkin contained the seeds Dostoevsky's own autobiographical account of that event. Through the intuitions of epilepsy, the Prince reveals his movement of faith, the fusion between "beauty and prayer" which is "the highest synthesis of life," an eternal verité which defies the course of rationalist explanations.[32] This scene in The Idiot is reflective of Dostoevsky's own resolve to diffuse the appeal of atheist rationalism that comprised his crisis of faith. The self-sufficiency which the Prince attains through his synthesis mirrors the hygiene of sentimentalism and further defines Dostoevsky's understanding of existence as inner freedom. The promises of enlightened rationality, in this case Hegelian dialectics, cannot provide the metaphysical certainty that his subjective agency craves. Hence, the sum total of the Hegelian synthesis of absolute knowledge of history stands for an absolute distortion of existence, oppressive in nature when confronted with the world of necessity. It is in this realization that lay salvation for the crimes committed by that "aesthetic lout" Raskolnikov:

> But he could not think of anything long and continuously that evening or concentrate on anything. *Besides, now he would hardly have been able to solve any of his problems consciously; he could only feel. Life had taken the place of dialectics, and something quite different had to work itself out in his mind.* (Emphasis mine).[33]

Of course, the answer lay "under his pillow" in the form of the New Testament with the story of the raising of Lazarus as a metaphor for Raskolnikov's potential comeback wager of immortality.[34] Raskolnikov's rehabilitation is therefore prefaced by Dostoevsky's belief that the wager of immortality is inextricably linked to faith. The failure to make this essential connection, in Dostoevsky's view, renders existence absurd and intolerable, leaving the individual mired in self-absorption and open to the sway of nihilistic impulses.[35]

In Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky establishes this correlation by juxtaposing the ethical Christian humanism of Raskolnikov's girlfriend Sonia with "the plague-ridden people" in Raskolnikov's nightmares, those whose bodies have been colonized by tyrannical virus called the Enlightenment.[36] The character Sonia is no doubt for Dostoevsky the real hero of the novel. She has suffered immeasurably more in life than Raskolnikov has and yet demonstrates an unwavering commitment to resolute action. Her suffering is not at an impasse and the experience of it translates into a performance enhancement of her Christian ethic of spontaneous infinite love. Pain for her is a gain that culminates in religious intelligence. The perfection of her Christian heroism is not a surprising outcome as it is in line with Dostoevsky's pro-Czarist absolutist politics. After all, the edicts of the Czar were coeval with God's representation on earth. The Church in the East was always the true keeper of the faith in opposition to that heresy of the Papacy in Rome, that bastion of "Antichrist teachings" organized by fuming Jesuitry.[37] In the Prince's view, then, the Papacy's perversion of Christianity accounts for the spread of atheist intellectualism through Europe and its incursion into Russia. Its doctrines of rational terror as encompassed in the

French Revolution and its offspring in German idealism, Hegel's pantheism and the negation of God, and socialism. All preach the Anti-Christ gospel of "base temporal power," which are dangerous deceptions for Russia's quest for nationhood. But again, Dostoevsky portrays everything in the light of impasse, as in the *Stonewall* that compromises the Underground Man's economy of inertia. Only this time, it is the authenticity of Russian thought that comprehends God and Christ against the inauthentic Christianity represented by the objectified cultural forces of Europe. The dichotomy is replayed again in Ivan Karamazov's tale of 'The Grand Inquisitor.' Here, Christ in his impromptu return is guided by "Enlightenment" idealism and is quickly rebuffed by the 'beyond good and evil' politics of the Inquisitor. He is told that the terms of his lofty abstract notions of freedom represent a chaotic fragmentation (the same imagery that is the stuff of Raskolnikov's nightmares of Enlightenment). Christ's abstract notion therefore must be reduced to a pragmatic conception that preserves order analogous to an "ant-hill".[38]

The Grand Inquisitor's revelation is the same as the Underground Man's critique of modernity as both organized barbarity and as a theory of slavery according to a utilitarian calculus. Its claims to truth are also broken by the same sentimentalism stemming from the purges of introspection—the burden of an underground intellectualism that "understands it all." In this instance, however, the difference is that underground intellectualism, as embodied in the Grand Inquisitor, refuses the marginalized position of "conscious inertia" and instead transfers the burden of acting to the administering (applied contemplatism) of the political dynamics constituted by a population whose intellectual capacities represent a low-level of consciousness.[39] Karamazov's allegorical tale therefore achieves the desired effect that Dostoevsky's work aims at—to establish an epistemological loss of faith in reason. The Grand Inquisitor then is really a 'what if' tale of underground intellectualism. It does not conclude with the recognition of its pursuit as constituting essentially inactivity, and had instead persisted to realize it claims to truth in the external world. Dostoevsky demonstrates the potential consequences in the display of The Grand Inquisitor's interior logic of nihilism as well as the drive of his arbitrary subjectivity that determines truth according to the dictates of a ruthless instrumentality. Dostoevsky's conclusion, then, on the relation between reason and truth, is that the 'truth of reason' is a Sophistic ruse, and from it a tyranny arises that seeks domination over the rhythms and patterns of human intercourse.

Dostoevsky's excessive preoccupation with metaphysics over that of the political has the effect to establish a certainty that the two spheres remain irreproachable to one other. The absurdist demands of Ivan Karamazov's rebellion are illustrative of this constant feature of Dostoevsky's work.[40] The Grand Inquisitor is therefore the reference that signifies the destructive consequences when this gulf is breached. The avoidance of such a scenario is the containment of intellectualism that is Dostoevsky's creation of the Underground man. Intellectualism is presented in all its neurotic introspection, ideologically neutered and depoliticized—Dostoevsky's ideological manoeuvre to stave off political opposition to Czarist absolutism. Montesquieu, well before Dostoevsky's era, considered the effects of authoritarian governance on Russia's capacity to develop a diffuse political culture and institutional framework. For the foreseeable future, Montesquieu saw only systemic strife for Russia.[41]

I have discussed how Nietzsche, in the period spanning The Twilight of The Idols, had identified with Dostoevsky and had even considered Russia as a destination where the possibility of grand-style politics could be realized in contra-distinction to "pitiable European petty-state politics." In retrospect, that his judgment was so misplaced on this matter speaks to the credibility of the latter stages of Nietzschean perspectivism, which I've maintained has to be rethought in relation to the inertia of the crippled metaphysician, the Underground Man. However, the scope of this intellectual dilemma is far more pronounced within Camus' moral and political perspectives. To consider the import of Dostoevsky on the development of Camus' thought is to recognize how the Russian's literature presents itself in the formation of Camus thought on two levels or stages. On the first level, which comes into play through Camus' output in 1940's in his tackling the themes of the absurd and the existential problems concerning the search for meaning in a cosmos of vast indifference. Here his dialogue with Dostoevsky centers on matters pertaining to salvation and the obvious tension between atheist and Christian perspectives. Although this tension exists between them, there is still a good measure of concurrence in their perspectives. At this stage in Camus' life he fully complies with Dostoevsky's position that passion for given existence takes precedence over man's rational aspirations.[42] In The Myth of Sisyphus, Camus probes Dostoevsky's excursus into the theme of the absurd as linked to logical suicide in the novel The Possessed. Here, Dostoevsky explores the nature of the character—Kirslov as a proponent of the claim that the act of suicide is the only ultimate value that can be substantiated in a chaotic and meaningless universe.[43]

In part, Camus agrees with Dostoevsky that Kirilov's nihilism is a refusal to recognize the irreconcilability between rational aspirations with the immeasurable flows of existence. However, he refuses Dostoevsky's conclusion that this renders life intolerable and therefore necessitates the leap to faith as the only recourse. Camus responds by choosing to affirm the situation whereby the rhythm of the universe is not discernable in the configuration of the rational. Existence for the most part is engulfed in circumstances of absurdity. The absurdity of life and its fleeting nature, which for Dostoevsky is a negative predicament, is in Camus' atheist optics a source of inspiration. The arbitrary flows of existence, which for Camus represent a plenitude of given reality, should in his estimation reinforce the conviction in the individual to invest their passion in the here and now, in order to experience it in all of its dimensions. The leap of faith into a beyond may very well devalue the recognition of the preciousness of the life process in all its immediacy.[44] This example of Camus' opposition to Dostoevsky shows that on this matter he is closer aligned to Nietzsche's anti-Christian pagan sense of affirmation, a view that posits the given reality of the world as the only object worthy of sanctity. And yet despite the apparent opposition to Dostoevsky, the dimensions of Camus' response are still supplanted by the Russian's aestheticization of pain as a revelation of reality. In this period of Camus' life, he identifies his chronic condition of tuberculosis as a perpetual death-sentence hanging over his head. He views its ramifications for his life very much in the spirit of the condemned man.

But Camus' choice to counter Dostoevsky's pain-laden route of creativity to the inexorable path to faith was to reformulate the orbit of pain in his own existential view. Camus' artistic bent translates the Nietzschean sense of affirmation in a far more pragmatic manner. The hedonistic calculus becomes a considerable factor in the Camusian sense of affirmation. The reflections on suicide in Myth of Sisyphus, which address the question of finding inspiration to choose life despite "the silence of the world" to the plight of the human condition, has real implications for Camus. From time to time, he required having his lungs collapsed in order to counter the severity of his condition. The question of despair and suicide defined by tensions between rational aspirations and the hedonistic impulse, as found in The Myth of Sisyphus, figure prominently in Camus' fiction in 1940's—most notably L'étranger (The Stranger), the play Caligula and the novel La Peste (The Plague) are composed of Camus' absurd heroes and anti-heroes interacting under the code of the condemned man. How Camus portrays his characters confronting a world defined by the absurd are presented in glaring contrasts. Merseault, the main character of L'étranger, and Caligula, the main protagonist in the play of the same name, are for all intensive purposes *outsiders* in relation to their worlds. But the way they go about confronting their destinies puts them at extreme opposites of the spectrum. Merseault the hedonist really stands for the flight from metaphysics, while Caligula is driven in the other direction by a fanatical pursuit for metaphysical certainty. The novel The Plague, on the other hand, with the main characters Dr. Rieux and Tarrou, is really an attempt at a mediation between these polar opposite view-points.

The Plague is a transitional work for Camus, as his dialogue with Dostoevsky and the Christian existentialist position on terms of salvation and the human condition, now meld the theme of metaphysical rebellion with its political significance. Camus' secondary preoccupation with Dostoevsky, which deepens in aftermath of the Second World War, is already outlined in Camus' response to Dostoevsky two-pronged attack against rationalism and atheism as explored in The Myth of Sisyphus. When Camus, in The Myth of Sisyphus, formulates the perspective that "the absurd is lucid reason noting its limits," he is already beginning to grapple with a way to contain the moral nihilism and cynical power perspective within Ivan Karamazov's credo of metaphysical rebellion: "Everything is permitted" if God as moral valuation is no longer sustainable.[45] Camus' fascination with the character Ivan had stretched back to 1938 when Camus appeared in the role of Ivan in a staged production of The Brothers Karamazov. But the dimensions of the character's metaphysical revolt impacts thoroughly on Camus' political and moral development during the Second World War and in the aftermath of its post-war politics. Literary theorist Ray Davison obverses that Camus reinterprets Karamazov's credo within the nihilistic politics of Nazism and Stalinism.[46]

Ray Davison's insights are valid as Camus did identify with the basic proposition of Karamazov's revolt, in that refusing the leap of faith entails a denial of the faculties of reason. In Karamazov's metaphysical rebellion, Camus could identify his own aspirations of a "philosophical revolt" that endeavoured to provide a meaningful meditation on morality from an atheist perspective, therefore challenging the primacy of Christian-inspired codes of moral conduct:

> Camus anguish came from the fact that no morality was imposed by an atheist or agnostic world.... He did not agree with Dostoevsky that if God did not exist, all was possible. Certain arts which are crimes must be rejected.[47]

Though Camus did identify with elements of Karamazov's rebellion, which holds some common features with Nietzsche's own revolt against Christian morality, he could never fully distance himself from the authoritative sway of Dostoevsky's perspectives. Dostoevsky's precautionary pronouncements on the advent of Western nihilism will occupy Camus' Cold War imagination. And, in effect, Dostoevsky will coerce Camus' coming to grips with the articulation of a legitimate conception of metaphysical revolt that is not vulnerable to the Russian's critique.

As the Cold War intensifies in the early part of 1950's, Camus writes his most overtly political and philosophical work The Rebel, in which he tries to trace the genealogy of nihilism in Western intellectualism's projections that have given rise to the manifestation of totalitarianism in the twentieth century. Camus's analysis of Marx's messianism leading to the road of Stalinism, or Nietzsche's overman doctrine degenerating into the politics of Nazi "sub-men," are largely analyzed within the boundaries of Dostoevsky's indictment against Western thought.[48]

In the following chapters, I will describe how this internal dialogue with Dostoevsky shapes the development of Camus' work. It will be shown that at times Dostoevsky's critique of Western intellectualism provokes in Camus an antagonistic relation to the Russian's conclusions, and in other instances, demonstrates a measure of confluence. The dynamics of Camus' dialogue with Dostoevsky may have provided him with an important source of inspiration for his fiction, but the pessimism of Dostoevsky's view towards Western thought severely undermines the viability of Camus' project of humanism and also results in hampering his creative endeavours. Camus extends far too much credibility to Dostoevsky's portrayal of metaphysical rebellion as a mad logic, without also questioning the ideological factors that motivated Dostoevsky's portrayal. In doing so, Camus aligns his own intellectual trajectory far too closely with the predicament represented in Dostoevsky's rebels. The result is that metaphysics subsumes the political world of representation to the point of irreconcilability. The absurdist demands of Karamazov's rebellion are illustrative of this and that is how Dostoevsky would have it—Christian absolutism and its political hierarchy is more stable than the ideological fodder and fragmentation that is the chaos of the Enlightenment.

Camus obviously could not accept the basic premise of these conclusions, and so he formulates his responses within boundaries that reduce the political and philosophical significance of his humanism analogous to a project of rehabilitation and reform. Camus responds to Dostoevsky because when he considers metaphysical rebellion and its forms of political nihilism in the twentieth-century, the Russian's literary insights appear to him to have prophesied those movements. But, as I indicated in the early stages of the essay, Dostoevsky's depiction of intellectualism is always a destructive affair—a self-satisfied rationalism in which the real criterion is a hyper-sentimentalism that results in an amoral destructive act. This always serves Dostoevsky as a perfect backdrop to propagandize the boundless, non-calculating, infinitely-giving Christian soul. In Dostoevsky's literature of interiority, intellectualism is primarily a display that reveals itself as a sick obsession with authenticity. Camus' view in The Myth of Sisyphus, whereby "the absurd" is "lucid reason noting its limits" or in The Rebel, where Camus calls for "moderation" as the essence of rebellion, is of conceptions that are meant to counter the general thrust of Dostoevsky's perspective. At the same time, this enables Camus to identify with the political spirit of

Dostoevsky's atheist rebels whose efforts are directed towards the question of justice in the here and now.

This situation of Camus' thought is therefore closely aligned to Dostoevsky's depictions of metaphysical rebellion and has direct implications also for Camus' calling with Nietzsche. It is from this interplay that the differing strains of cynical consciousness emerge in Camus' works. The following chapters will be devoted to exploring various modes of cynical consciousness in Camus' work. The drive to subjective authenticity in various guises is a dominant feature within the scope of cynical consciousness expressed through Camus' work. Chapter One features the play Caligula, where Camus transforms the will to power into an obsession for metaphysical certainty. The quest for metaphysical certainty, which is the anti-hero Caligula's revolt against the absurd, rests on his bid for a reversal of values. However, the theme of the Nietzschean will to power in the play becomes synonymous with the character's display or willful ignorance. Camus regarded the play as a "tragedy of intelligence," and we can see these linkages later on in The Rebel with Camus' analysis of Nietzschean affirmation. But this depiction of tragic intelligence is also reflective of Dostoevsky's portrayal of intellectualism degenerating into amoral logic and cynical power. However, Camus does counter-balance the inevitability of these conclusions through the stoic character Cherea, whose position is close to that of Camus' own humanism. In Chapter Two, I analyze L'étranger/The Stranger as a work that stands in direct opposition to Caligula in that the main character, Merseault, is devoid of metaphysical preoccupations. His fate is characterized as flight from metaphysics, and the formation of his cynicism is guided by a crude relativism that expresses a narrow pursuit of subjective integrity. The character is not unlike the blasé victim in Georg Simmel's Philosophy of Money, who levels everything with the refrain "how much," except that Merseault levels everything according to his hedonistic calculus "what is it for me immediately"? His expression of cynicism is somewhat in line with that of the postmodern analysis of Peter Sloterdijk's non-committal depoliticized cynics. In reference to Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, Camus' Merseault is the polar opposite: he is ahistorical and devoid of any strivings towards notions of immortality.

In Chapter Three, Camus' novel La Chute is analyzed and is considered his most complete and sophisticated excursus into cynical consciousness. With La Chute, we enter into Camus' most pronounced Dostoevskian style of novel, which is attributable to the influences of Notes from the Underground. As the novel that is noted for having autobiographical links to Camus' own persona, it is really a reflection of disenchanted intellectualism. The main character, Clamence, stands as a vessel of "paralytic enlightenment," fitting somewhat within the spirit of Mann's commentary on Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. In the character Clamence, then, we find a drive to subjective authenticity that manifests the curious mixture of a Nietzschean-like ironic superior sensibility crossed with the bitter cynical polemic of the Underground Man's critique of modernity. The character's confession, which is synonymous with a deconstruction of intellectualism, relates the pursuit of intellectualism motivated by a will to tyranny. In this respect La Chute features similar sentiments that can be found expressed in Sloterdijk's postmodern analysis Critique of Cynical Reason.

CHAPTER ONE

CALIGULA: METAPHYSICAL SPECULATION AND WILFUL IGNORANCE

In the introduction I attempted to draw parallels between the latter stages of Nietzsche's philosophy and Dostoevsky's fiction. It was my intention to show how Nietzsche, during his most melancholic phase of writings, identified with Dostoevsky's tone and temperament. The intention was not so much to show how Dostoevsky influenced Nietzsche, but rather to illustrate how Dostoevsky's depiction of intellectualism as neurotic introspection is due to an excessive preoccupation with metaphysics and as such corresponds to the cynical discharge displayed in Nietzsche's final cycle. It was also shown that Dostoevsky's negative depiction of intellectualism was linked to his Christian existentialist view of the necessity of faith in light of the arbitrary randomness of fate. Camus, it was shown, rejects this view in confronting the arbitrary circumstances of fate ('the absurd') and on this matter he is closer aligned to Nietzsche's pagan sense of individualism. However, when sizing-up the manifestations of political nihilism that have marked the twentieth century, Camus turns back to Dostoevsky as an authoritative figure on the intimations of nihilism. So authentic did Camus consider Dostoevsky's depiction of his God-less rebels that he questioned the legitimacy of the Russian's own religious faith.[49] Ray Davison further elaborates how Dostoevsky's work thoroughly impacted on Camus' consciousness:

> No doubt, Dostoevsky's great genius enabled him to create powerful and convincing characters, but Camus appears to be deeply receptive to the lives and ideas of the great rebels. He tends to treat them as real people. *They haunt his subjective life and his work and are key figures in the expression of his thought* it is certainly not simply as embodiments of particular ideas that the rebels fascinate him but as flesh and blood individuals involved in general dramas of existence.[50]

These observations detail how thoroughly Dostoevsky's literature occupied Camus consciousness, to the point where the lines between reality and fiction blurred. In relation to Camus' understanding of Nietzsche, Dostoevsky's literature of interiority was a perfect companion in providing plausible sketches of overman subjectivity. This is clearly borne out in The Rebel, where Camus' pronouncements on Nietzsche's nihilism invokes Dostoevsky as a moral authority.[51]

There is no doubt that Camus' work in The Rebel is informed by the imprint of Ivan Karamazov's rebellion. In 1957, after having received the Nobel Prize for this work, Camus acknowledged the "considerable" influence of Dostoevsky.[52] Obviously, The Rebel is a work of non-fiction and that makes it easier to identify the references to Dostoevsky. However, the three works featured for analysis show that Dostoevsky remained a constant in providing Camus with a draft of Western nihilism. It is Dostoevsky's aestheticization of subjectivity that provides Camus' inspiration for the form and substance of his characters. The first work examined, the play Caligula, drafted in the late 1930's and then redrafted in its finalized version in the 1940's, features a theme of Nietzschean metaphysical rebellion gone mad. It is Camus' 'theater of the absurd' and is representative of his position in the myth of Sisyphus -- "the absurd is lucid reason noting its limits." Obviously, with a name like Caligula, one does not recognize limits. The play's unfolding does to a degree show a divergence on Camus' part in tackling the theme of the absurd, and differs from those of Dostoevsky's notions. Nevertheless, his portrayal of Caligula's tragedy of intelligence is depicted very much in accordance with the Russian's depiction of intellectualism. That is, "underground" intellectualism is a destructive endeavour. The interior logic of Caligula's nihilism is consistent with characters of Dostoevsky's literature such as the Grand Inquisitor, Ivan Karamazov and Raskolnikov. Again, it is pertinent to recall Dostoevsky's perspectives on rationalism as a principle driving atheistic reality, and therefore inevitably leading to a way of life cynically self-absorbed. Camus rejects Dostoevsky's linkage of atheism with rationalism as essentially leading to a nihilistic consciousness. It is not the denial of God in Camus' view that makes "the metaphysical rebel" a "blasphemer", it is rather the denial of his or her own mortality and is effectively also a denial of the conditions of given existence which are the cause of a destructive cynicism.[53]

This condemnation of the metaphysical rebel's failure to accept the limits of mortality is also what is operative in Camus' critique of Nietzsche's philosophy. According to Camus, Nietzsche's theoretical leap to the doctrine of the Overman amounted to a betrayal of the core-principles motivating his perspectivism. Camus interprets Nietzsche "theory of superhumanity," as well as messianic Marxism, as theoretical attempts to replace the Christian "Beyond" with a "later-on". Camus sees the projections of the Overman doctrine as undermining the core principles of Nietzsche's own philosophy, which is intended to define valuations in accordance with the given state of reality in all its immediacy.[54] In many respects, then, the theoretical groundwork encountered here in The Rebel found its first utterances and gesticulations in the thematics explored in the play Caligula. In Camus'

Cold War imagination, rebellion had become synonymous with the task of grounding values. Camus understood metaphysical rebellion as a protest against the random decrees of fate, as essentially "a demand for clarity and unity." However, in the context of the play Caligula, that demand is taken to the extremes. In a real sense, Caligula is Camus' dramaticization of the Nietzschean conception of *Absolute Affirmation*, which later becomes the subject of his theoretical treatments in The Rebel. This excerpt from The Rebel could very well serve as an epilogue to Caligula.

> In a certain sense, rebellion, with Nietzsche, ends again in the exaltation of evil. The difference is that evil is no longer revenge. It is accepted as one of the possible aspects of good and, with rather more conviction, as part of destiny... He dreamed of tyrants who were artists, but tyranny comes more naturally than art to mediocre men. 'Rather Caesar Borgia than Parsifal.'[55]

The observation by Camus that Nietzsche longed for tyrants who were artists is a connection that can be made with the play Caligula. The play's first draft in the 1930s is motivated by Camus' leftist leanings and his opposition to Hitler and the general fascist tide that was afoot in Europe.[56] This connotation is retained throughout Camus' successive draft of the play in the postwar. However, in the later drafts, the accent is widened to the notion of Nietzschean metaphysics as it falls within Camus' assessment of totalitarianism and his fascination with the Karamazov rebellion. As was earlier alluded to, Karamazov's "if God is dead everything is permitted" valuation becomes central to Camus' postwar analysis of Western nihilism. This certainly is the case in The Rebel, where Camus deconstructs the totalizing ideologies of communism and fascism, which also signaled a certain distancing from his leftist political roots. Camus' decided shift towards Dostoevsky definitely took on political dimensions. In his fallout with the French Communists, his gravitation towards Dostoevsky was perceived as a larger movement in Western literature which was seen as utilizing Dostoevsky in order to oppose Marx's writings.[57]

Setting aside this ideological rift between Camus and the communists, The Rebel featured the most pronounced alignment of Camus' analysis of political nihilism with that of the Dostoevskian indictment against Western values. However, the deepening of Dostoevsky's political significance really begins in the mid-1940's with La Peste. To a certain degree, I've touched on this facet by noting Camus' shift of preoccupation with Dostoevsky on the theme of the absurd and logical suicide toward the political implications of metaphysical rebellion. With La Peste, the notions connected with the absurd become fused with the political connotations of metaphysical rebellion. The metaphysical problem of evil is one of the central concerns of Camus in La Peste, which he relates through his character Rieux as he struggles to come to terms with the death of a child at the hands of the plague.[58] It is here that we see a strong identification of Camus with elements of Ivan Karamazov's gnostic rebellion.[59] Hence, through the character Rieux, Camus relays what he accepts as positive determinations in Karamazov's rebellion, which rejects the fatalistic appeal of divine providence over matters concerning temporal justice. As Karamazov declares: "and while I'm on earth, I hasten to take my own measures."[60] This view rings true of Camus' own sense of rebellion and to the appeal of his Stoic-like humanism. But ultimately Camus refuses the ends of the Karamazov rebellion, because it too embraces a fatalism by virtue of an 'all or nothing logic' that clings to a methodical nihilism and eventually sanctions a means end form of justice. Camus is well aware that to a point his conclusion somewhat validates Dostoevsky's attack against humanism, which he characterized as tyrannical in nature.

La Peste is also indicative in revealing the magnitude with which Camus' internal dialogue with Dostoevsky shapes the direction of his work. The substance of dialogue between the characters of Doctor Rieux and Father Paneloux is essentially a microcosm of this internal dialogue. Consider, for instance, Rieux's description of Paneloux's demands upon his congregation, particularly that they unconditionally submit themselves to the divine will of God in the midst of the plague.[61] Clearly, Camus is using Rieux as a vehicle to counter Dostoevsky's critique of humanism. By reversing the tables, he shows that an intransigent religiosity also embraces fatalism, because it is also led by an 'all or nothing' rationale. Camus therefore uses the character of Rieux as the voice of moderation. His stance is more that of an agnostic than an outright atheist. The character Rieux therefore attempts to bridge a common ground between his outlook and the Priest's fatalistic view in order to form a unified front to resist the plague, which metaphorically stood for resistance against the German occupation.[62] Rieux is reflective of Camus' thought in the postwar years. It is in this period that Camus develops the concept of "limited revolt" and the "qualitative ethic." These aspects of his thought also figure prominently in the character Cherea, whose role in the play Caligula is really that of "anti-nihilist" who stands in opposition to the Emperor nihilist Caligula.[63] David Sprintzen also views the character development of Cherea along the same lines. He specifically points to Camus' 1947 revision of the play whereby the character is given a fuller elaboration as a counter-measure to the "totalizing logic" of Caligula.[64] Sprintzen maintains that the socially conscious moderate Cherea has a lot in common with the persona of Camus.

Camus tended to be evasive on the matter of drawing analogies between himself and his characters, and he usually dismissed any such comparison. However, there is a very telling entry in one of Camus notebooks during 1947 that corresponds thereabouts to the period where he was undertaking his revision of the play Caligula. In this entry, Camus suggests a possible direction for Western discourse to consider in order to overcome its nihilistic predicament:

> Si, pour depasser le nihilisme, il faut revenir, a un christianisme, on peut bien suivre alors le mouvement et dépasser le christianisme dans l'hellenisme.[65]

The suggestion by Camus, that perhaps by looking back to the sources of antiquity the problem of modern nihilism could be overcome, is essentially the philosophical disposition found animating the character Cherea in his opposition to Caligula's rampant nihilism. This harkening back to the ancients for inspiration does in fact later become part of Camus' own conceptions of ethical rebellion—"moderation" becoming synonymously intertwined with his idea of rebellion.[66] The play Caligula therefore provides a good indication of the gestation of those ideas and concepts. From these observation one can say that the aspirations of the character Cherea and the writer Camus are very much in sync.

As sources of inspiration for Caligula's nihilistic predicament, Camus of course draws upon his favorite source which are Dostoevsky's depictions of underground intellectualism. Camus definitely casts the figure of Caligula within the mold of the Russian's metaphysical rebels. The concerns that guide Caligula's reign are purely metaphysical in nature. This is established in *Act I*, when he declares to his right-hand man Helicon that the order that governs human existence is quite intolerable: "men die; and they are not happy."[67] This is the so-called revelation that sets the course of his rebellion. As mentioned previously, the tragedy of Caligula's intelligence can be understood with reference to Dostoevsky's depictions of underground intellectualism. Caligula therefore can be viewed as a cross between Raskolnikov and the Grand Inquisitor. For example, Caligula's self-serving logic claims a unique insight into what constitutes reality as opposed to the public perception, which he claims can only wallow in "self deception".[68] Caligula's rhetoric is analogous to the self-serving rhetoric found in Raskolnikov's attempt to legitimize the clarity of his theories, despite the fact that they lead to murder.[69] As for the influences of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, parallels can be drawn between the Inquisitor's arbitrary paternalism[70] and Caligula's mission to set the human dolts straight on their condition of existential status.[71] Camus commentator Edward Freeman views something else as operative in the idea of Caligula being the Emperor presiding over the order of things:

> And yet Camus, with a fair degree of credibility and ingenuity, has created a highly pregnant first act interval by making it clear that it is the tyrant who has ideals. For once the outsider who has taken upon himself the task of transforming society is endowed with immense power.[72]

There are some relevant points in Freeman's take on *Act I*, as Camus does establish that there is world of difference between Caligula and his entourage (the Patricians). At the outset of the play, while Caligula is incommunicado, Camus presents us with the image of the Patricians as a shallow-minded callous bunch who are solely motivated by their personal self-interests. This is underlined in their various exchanges in which they try to weigh the ramifications of the death of Caligula's lover on his ability to rule. Incidentally, Caligula's lover was also his sister Drusilla. Despite this glaringly perverse anomaly, the Patricians are of the consensus that there is no real cause for alarm.[73] Camus contrasts this unanimity of the patricians with the characters of Cherea, whose position is that of the skeptic voice of caution, and Helicon, a cynical agitator who chides the smugness of the Patricians. David Sprintzen views the unflattering depiction of the Patricians as stemming from Camus' own personal disdain for "the financial and intellectual elites" who became increasingly prevalent in postwar years in Paris:

> Most particularly, he had developed a heightened sense of the hypocrisy of the liberal intelligentsia, who were quite willing to defend freedom with the lives of others, but were quite often unwilling to expend their personal privileges on behalf of the "lower" classes.[74]

Sprintzen's observations in the context of Caligula are well-taken considering the generic form of representation that the Patricians receive in the play. Camus assigns to their identities no intimate detailing, they are presented as Patrician One, Patrician Two, etc. This was Camus' way of symbolically portraying the elites as characterless and without ethical dimension. This distate on Camus' part for the liberal intelligentsia is something that will be further examined as it is one of the focal points in The Fall. But for now, this idea of a contemptible elite further expands on the points earlier made with Freeman's commentary, where it was noted that at outset of the play, it is Caligula *the outsider* who appears to be the only character who holds any ideals.

The motif of the outsider is a reoccurring theme that permeates Camus' literature. It is an image that is usually associated with the character of Meursault in L'étranger, but it could just as well apply to Clamence in La Chute. One could also say that this is a motif which is also found in Dostoevsky's literature; consider the marginalized status of characters such as Raskolnikov or the Underground Man. How can such a status then apply to Caligula? After all, the character as Emperor holds the reins of power and has more in common with the political insider that is Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor. This would be so if it were not for the Nietzschean connotation of the "artist tyrant" which Camus conveys through the character Cherea as he comments on Caligula's temperament:

> An artistic emperor is an anomaly. I grant misfits happen in the best of empires. But others had the good taste to remember they were public servants.[75]

I had mentioned how Camus in the play's first draft in 1938 was partly motivated by his opposition to Hitler and fascism. In relation to this notion of the outsider, it has been well-documented that Hitler identified himself precisely as such. Historian Modris Ekstein states that Hitler felt that his talents had been marginalized by the artistic establishment in Vienna. Ekstein maintains that as consequence, Hitler took on the role of an artist of "adversarial culture;" believing himself to be Nietzsche's incarnation of the "artist tyrant" and the executor of Wagner's "dictatorship of genius."[76] In The Rebel, Camus does make a linkage between the ideals of Nietzsche's philosophic enterprise playing into the hands of the "rabid nihilism" of Hitler's National Socialism:

> Philosophy secularizes the ideal. But tyrants appear who soon secularize the philosophies which gives them their rights.[77]

Camus does conclude that Nietzsche's philosophy must bear a degree of responsibility for agitating the development of totalitarian structures. He bases his view on what he considers to be Nietzsche's unleashing of a metaphysical insurrection within the theory of the Overman.[78] Camus contends that Nietzsche first destabilizes the optics of truth by propagating the death of God as a historical and cultural fact, and then posits the Overman as a concrete goal to fill the vacuum and reestablish the equilibrium of truth with valuations that are in accordance with man and his terrestrial existence. But Camus, like most Nietzsche defenders, is quick to point out that the bastardization of Nietzsche's philosophy was a terrible injustice done to the philosopher, and it was a development that tragically Nietzsche himself foresaw and attempted to denounce in advance.[79] Camus therefore draws upon this whole notion that the tragedy of Nietzsche's intelligence is a failing on Nietzsche's part to grasp the dividing line between the autonomy afforded to the philosopher and his ideas, in contrast to the dissemination of those ideas into the wider framework of society:

> He confused freedom, as do all proud spirits. His profound solitude at midday and at midnight was nevertheless lost in the mechanized hordes which finally inundated Europe.[80]

Camus' idea here is that Nietzsche's philosophy left itself open for a vulgar and degraded secularization of its ideals. This follows the pattern that is found in Dostoevsky's depiction of his metaphysical rebels. The idealism of Raskolnikov's theories, for example, and their crude realization in practice are illustrative. It is litter wonder, then, when Camus pinpoints excerpts from Nietzsche's theorizing, which are the earmarks of Nietzschean immoralism, we find Dostoevsky's cautionary figure looming in the background.[81]

These elements of Nietzsche's philosophy, which Camus draws upon in The Rebel, are the same elements that animate Caligula's rebellion. The pattern of Caligula's metaphysical rebellion therefore flows from Camus' perspective on the devolution of Nietzsche's philosophy into a crude secularized form. This is depicted through the dialogue between Caligula and the character Ceasonia whose role in the play is that of a personal confidant to the Emperor. Camus has his character Caligula fashioning himself as an Overman-type legislator, a man-god whose grandiose initiative call for an overhauling of the metaphysical order so as to orient man's existential status.[82] But Caligula's bid is articulated in the hyper-sentimentalist language of authenticity that is so characteristic to the styling of Dostoevsky's rebels. Caligula therefore can be interpreted in the context of Camus' understanding of Dostoevsky's Inquisitor as a portrait of "bitter" knowledge and despairing nihilism.[83] At the same time, the mind-set of the Inquisitor within the scope of Caligula's characterization also signifies the domination of the body politic by instrumentalist terminology. The Grand Inquisitor is after all a cynical pragmatic realist. He informs an idealistic Jesus, upon his return, that the masses he wishes to reach are mere creatures of necessity, far removed from the lofty notions of freedom he is proposing; freedom for them consists only in the accessibility to concrete goods in the here and now.[84] This nuts-and-bolts pragmatic realism can be said to be the same ruling principle that also guides Caligula's vision. For, despite all of his histrionic musings on the arduous task of overhauling the metaphysical order, in the end the implementation of his vision comes down to establishing complete control over the economic levers of the state.[85]

That the authenticity of Caligula's revolt becomes checkered by virtue of the means pursued is what Camus refers to as 'une revolte qui se retourne contre elle-même.'[86] But, as has I have tried to indicate throughout, this depiction of revolt contradicting its fundamental principles and imploding on itself is elemental Dostoevsky's depiction of his rebels. Raskolnikov definitely serves as the prime example with his lame rationalization of the landlady's murder, which ends up as a concoction of a perverse utilitarian schema.[87] However, Raskolnikov's homicidal equation is tailor-made to conform to Dostoevsky's critique of rationalism as the handmaiden of atheism, which together spawn the godless tyranny of socialism. Dostoevsky's perspective is even more pronounced with Ivan Karamazov's revolt against God's kingdom of divine justice. The progression of the Karamazov's logic also ends up sanctioning murder. However, it could not be otherwise in Dostoevsky's universe, simply because there is no possibility of creating legitimate values outside the domain of divine authority. Obviously, Camus cannot subscribe to this aspect of Dostoevsky's critique, which is essentially a dim view of human volition. As I have commented elsewhere, Dostoevsky's critique therefore has ramifications for Camus' own aspiring humanism. But, as Davison correctly points out, Camus assesses the positive and negative determinations of the Karamazov revolt.[88] In doing so, the grounds for authentic revolt are derived:

> This rejection of a future possible happiness in the name of an immediate love of other human beings becomes a crucial determinant in Camus' notion of authentic revolt and fuels his opposition to those political philosophies which justify present tyrannies in the name of some future good which will redeem the deaths of their victims.[89]

To further expand on Davison's points, the notions that Camus encounters in the Karamazov's sense of revolt become critical factors in determining his own concepts of limited revolt and the qualitative ethic. This is indicative in the dialogue which I referred to in The Plague between the character of the priest Paneloux and Dr. Rieux. The Plague demonstrates how Dostoevsky had grown in political significance for Camus. The Plague centers around the theme of totalitarianism, with the response to it on one side characterized by the Augustinian-type fatalism of the priest Paneloux, and on the other, Rieux's politics of resistance that Camus identified with.[90] It has been mentioned that the dialogue between these two characters could, on a different level, also be understood as Camus' own internal dialogue with Dostoevsky's Christian existentialist reasoning. By extension, the same could be said of the interplay between the character of Cherea and that of Caligula. However, in this scenario, the dimension of Camus' internal dialogue is tilted towards grappling with the rebel's side of the equation. That is why it so beneficial to link the play Caligula to his work in The Plague. Not only does it enhance this aspect of Camus' internal dialogue with Dostoevsky, but it is as well a tangible representation of Camus' idealism and is articulated through the main character. For what is Rieux's refusal to cave into the Priest Paneloux's Augustinian-type fatalism, or Cherea's counter to Caligula's nihilism? What are they if not approximations of Camus' cautious political optimism as best expressed in his notebooks?[91]

Camus thought, by looking back to the ancient Greeks, that he would be able to go beyond the impasses posed by Christianity and the constructs of modern nihilism. Hence, in fashioning his characters, Camus took inspiration from ancient valuations. In The Plague, this is clearly expressed through the idyllic friendship that transpires between Rieux and

Tarrou amidst the dire conditions that surround their city of Oran. Despite the foreboding circumstances, they manage to secure a good measured dose of Epicurean escapism by way of a night swim in the harbour.[92] This is also the case with the character Cherea, given the character's stoic comportment and the setting of the play. The playing of Cherea, the man of moderation, against Caligula the extremist is really Camus' attempt to establish an ethics that strikes a balance between the faculties of the rational and those of the passions. The emergence of characters such as Cherea and Rieux is also Camus' realization of the political shortcomings of the earlier phases of his work.. His work in The Myth of Sisyphus and L'étranger are really works of less political significance, and if there is an ethic that clearly emerges, it is that of an individualist ethic. Meursault is of course the most striking example, as he lives solely by the hedonist code showing no inclination towards a social conscience. Rieux therefore can be considered Camus' counter to the unreason of Meursault; a thinking man's atheist with a sense of purpose. This is why Rieux's night swim with Tarrou is meant by Camus to hold such symbolic resonance. This night swim reveals the dynamics of Camus stoic humanism and is steeped in the realization that the contrast of both drives are in fact complementary in that they seek to affirm the preciousness of life:

> Go for a swim. It's one of these harmless pleasures that even a saint-to-be can indulge in, don't you agree? '... Really it's too damn silly living only in and for The Plague. Of course a man should fight for victims, but, if he ceases caring for anything outside that, what's the use of his fighting?'[93]

Camus' choice of swimming as an activity is meant to convey this image of a vital humanism that was also interwoven with the author's own life experience. Swimming had been a favourite pastime of his youth, and therefore it was no accident it was also the favoured activity of his character Meursault. It is likewise with Cherea as well; he is cut from the same cloth of this Camusian-type stoicism. Camus portrays him as having the intellectual compunction to comprehend the seductive trappings of arbitrary power (decadence) therein of Caligula's logic. Yet, at the same time, Cherea is grounded by the common considerations of the 'everyman,' which forms the basis of his opposition to Caligula's fanatical logic.[94] It is also evident that the form of Cherea's rebuke of Caligula's logic falls under the rubric of Dostoevsky's depiction of a *possessed* individualism, where the root cause is always to be found in the obsession for metaphysical certainty. But, Caligula's quest for metaphysical certainty is really the desperate desire for subjective authenticity. It bases itself on relativist grounds, thereby creating a leveling logic that celebrates a decadent and base form (willful ignorance) of the will to power.[95] It is out of these exchanges between Caligula and Cherea that we encounter the beginnings of Camus' notions of limited revolt and the qualitative ethic. The emergence of the qualitative ethic is meant to offset the chaos represented by Caligula's leveling logic, which is none other than the logic of totalitarianism. In the exchange between Caligula and Cherea, where they mull over the praiseworthiness of certain actions as opposed to others, Camus portrays Caligula's logic as total arbitrariness. The casting of Caligula's logic in such a light is Camus' poke at the idea of affirmation during the Second World War, particularly with the cause of Nazism. Historian Peter Novick works in this area and considers the role that the notion of affirmation played within the totalitarian power bases. Novick describes the attack on moral relativism during the war years as an ideological tactic to bolster the "tone of affirmation".[96]

Novick's main point is that the attack on moral relativism during the war years was very much a creature of ideology, with the goal being to set a "tone of affirmation" in the struggle against totalitarianism. Affirmation grew in stature because moral relativism was seen as fostering indecisiveness and therefore as leading to indifference and apathy. The idea of affirmation became a cardinal principle for the Germans—not only was moral relativism shunned but intellectual acumen itself became denuded of its critical powers of discernment. Nowhere was this more evident than in German historical circles where the goal of objectivity was dislodged by the wiles of aesthetics. The new mantras of "spirit" and "intuition" became the substance of historical understanding.[97] As Modris Ekstein further elaborates, however, the proliferation of subjectivist tendencies among academics merely reflects the dominance of the avant-garde's influences over the wider stream of European consciousness's perception of war-time reality.[98] Nazism was therefore a "cult" that flourished in this landscape of subjectivism, and Hitler was its "lodestar":

> History, then, became merely an extension of Hitler's own personality and his own fate. In this context the deed took the place of deliberation, action replaced ethics.[99]

From Ecstein's observations, a pattern emerges as to the socio-cultural dynamics that were conducive to furthering fascism's appeal. The widespread embrace of subjectivism was contingent on a lapse into irrationalism fascilated by a marked retreat of intellectualism. This last point has much in common with Novick's own views of the period, and what he saw as a liquidation of the criterion of objectivity. Furthermore, both key in on the idea of affirmation as a central theme of the war, especially as it related to the fascist cause. Therefore, in this ensemble, their perspectives present quite a divergent view of fascism's cultural climate, as opposed to what is depicted in Caligula. In Caligula, the metaphysics of totalitarianism are shown to be a consequence of an excessive and hence oppressive logic. These are the assertions that Cherea makes, maintaining that the torrent of such logic drains the contents of human meaning and as such renders human existence absurd. The ascendancy of such a logic in Cherea's view must inevitably take its cues from the arbitrary whims of human impulse, including those of the homicidal kind.[100] Hence, Cherea's prognostications take on the strictures of Dostoevskian indictment of intellectualism as a pursuit of nihilism:

> I cannot endure Caligula's carrying out his theories to the end. He is converting his philosophy into corpses unfortunately for us - it's a philosophy that's logical from start to finish, and where one can't refute, one strikes.[101]

At the outset, I discussed how this particular focus, that Camus pursues in Caligula, foreshadows the direction that his critique take it in The Rebel, especially as it relates to his analysis of Nietzschean metaphysics and its implications for totalitarian logic.

As has been discussed throughout this chapter, Camus leans toward Dostoevsky and his consideration of Dostoevsky as an authoritative voice was based on his enthusiastic reception of Dostoevsky's sketches of subjectivity. However, did Camus' zeal for Dostoevsky sketches of subjectivity take into consideration the Russian's own prejudices towards European Enlightenment? This is a crucial factor, given the credence Camus puts on Dostoevsky's derelict depictions of intellectualism. In seeing Dostoevsky as modernity's bone-fide prophet of nihilism, Camus was foregoing a necessary critical distance, and this despite the noted existential gulf between the two writers! Unfortunately, with Caligula, the drawing upon Dostoevsky becomes all too transparent and works to the detriment of the play's insight into fascism. The theme of the play is dominated by the Dostoevskian equation of logic-gone–over-the-edge with the totalitarianism inherent in such logic. José Ortega y Gassett, an older contemporary of Camus, would have taken to task such an equation, given his own first hand insight into fascism's organizing capacities. For Ortega, the trend towards fascism was a doing away with culture and it signaled a period of re-babarization.[102] What is striking in his analysis is his emphasis on the total wane of intellectual currents in the societal landscape, notably the diminished space for deliberation. This, as we saw, was a focal point where the respective works of historians Novick and Ekstein's converge. Ortega therefore saw barbararism as the tendency toward disassociation, "the triumph of the reason of unreason," and that's what he considered the ascendancy of fascism to be.[103] How else could this period be viewed, considering that those Nazi "kitch-men" professed Gotterdamnerung (destruction) as a revelatory insight?[104]

The propagandistic ploys and aesthetic props utilized by the Nazi 'kitch-men,' such as Goebbels, is a theme that Camus could have definitely exploited in Caligula, and dare I say would have made the play more enduring and less of a dated work. In fact, for an all-too-brief segment in the opening of *Act Three,* Camus does somewhat embark in this direction, as his character Caligula and his entourage stage a mock simulation of an Olympic god's descent to earth.[105] In the end, however, as maintained throughout, the overbearing theme of logic as a malevolent destabilizing element and harbinger of chaos prevails. Of course, it is Cherea, Caligula's thinking counterpart in the play, who remarks that what Caligula philosophizes about can hardly be considered "philosophizing." And yet:

> Still there's no denying it's remarkable, the effect this man has all with whom he comes in contact. He forces one to think. There is nothing like insecurity for stimulating the brain. That, of course, is why he's so much hated.[106]

But, if you notice in Cherea's remarks, there is a degree of approbation for Caligula's efforts despite there nihilistic intent. This is because Caligula manages to disrupt the social discourse governed by the business-as-usual elites. As far as these elites go, they have a low threshold for social discourse in general, even if the terms are legitimate such as those put forward by moderate liberals like Cherea:

> Would you be kind enough to stop philosophizing. It's something I particularly dislike.[107]

Recall that Camus, with his play, had an axe to grind with the elites who he saw as hypocritical in their call to arms and sacrifice, particularly when they themselves would never have to put their own lives in the line of fire.

However, there is something else at work here—the sense that there already exists in Camus a creeping skepticism that questions the viability of his own project of ethics. It has been discussed in earlier segments that Camus' conception of an ethical individualism garnered itself on the Greek notion of moderation, and this carried through to his later work in The Rebel with his idea of limited revolt. However, although Hellenistic valuations were prominent in rounding out Camus' conception of ethics, he nevertheless had little conviction that Hellenistic thought could have any impact on the modern soul.[108] But then again, Camus always had a nagging doubt about the merits of his own talents and work.[109] For now, it suffices to say that Cherea embodied those ideas as they were coming together in Camus. Camus was therefore always looking for that elusive middle-way, something akin to trying to strike the balance in that Heraclitean fragment 'not enough and too much.' In Caligula, the character Cherea represented a median man that was there to offset the banality of the elites and also as a counter to the inquisitor-type knowledge represented by Caligula. But Camus' notion of ethical individualism was also, as will be shown in the next chapter, a response to criticism of his character Meursault.

CHAPTER 2

L'ÉTRANGER: A FLIGHT FROM METAPHYSICS IN THE PURSUIT OF SUBJECTIVE INTEGRITY

> The greater the stakes, the greater the loss. (The more one puts oneself at the mercy of chance). The more chance will involve one in the laws of necessity and inevitability. (Herakleitos, Fragment 70)

This fragment from Herakleitos serves almost like a prologue for what is the central dilemma of the protagonist of L'étranger (The Stranger). The main character, Meursault, is quite remarkable for his knack of leaving himself open to the arbitrary whims of fate. Meursault is also remarkably unintellectual, cutting somewhat the figure of Ortega's version of the last man who lives by "the reason of unreason." However, Camus ambiguously portrays Meursault as a metaphysical innocent: "poor, naked and in love with the sun."[110] But if Meursault is poor, he is so culturally speaking—with no thoughts that go beyond his layers of indifference. That is where the roots of his cynicism lie. He is therefore the polar opposite of Raskolnikov. He is far removed from the Nietzschean call of being a "prepatory man"; whereas a Raskolnikov romanticizes about being in league with the higher legislators of mankind. Meursault, on the other hand, seems to fit that nasty little critique by Camus' main character in The Fall, Jean Baptiste Clamence, who states unequivocally that his fellow Frenchmen can be summed up in "a single sentence"... "he fornicated and read newspapers."[111]

Meursault, then, is really a character that is out of the loop, because he holds no convictions of any kind. That is what makes him a `stranger,' or within the theme of the `outsider.' Meursault falls outside the frame of reference that Camus alludes to in The Rebel, understood as that mundane secularization of the Nietzschean ideal among "the mechanized hordes which finally inundated Europe."[112] On the face of it, Meursault does not fit in with the scheme of those "mechanized hordes," nor does he demonstrate any cosmopolitan inclinations or ambitions; he is self-satisfied with his own little lot with the sea nearby. That is why he rebuffs the boss's offer to send him to Paris to expand the company's business.[113] He definitely also does not fit Peter Sloterdijk's postmodern cynical urbanite, as that quality of introspection is totally lacking in Meursault.[114] It should be noted that the setting of L'étranger is never fully disclosed, though it does culminate out of the author's impressions of his days in Algiers. Meursault's reality flowed from the gamut of Camus' experiences, such as his stint as a courtroom reporter for the Algier Republican, which sent him to small towns like Tianet southeast of Oran.[115] There were also the getaways to the beaches of Bouiseville, which Camus relished as it took him away from the city of Oran. Camus even made his own Hitchcock—like his appearance in the novel as a trial reporter.[116]

To further the understanding of what animates a character such as Meursault necessitates consideration of the style of narrative applied by Camus in L'étranger. As Camus translator Matthew Ward observes, Camus made reference to employing an "American method" in L'étranger, which entailed using short punchy sentences.[117] Ward goes on to note that this method emphasizes the depiction of the character as one without a conscience, and as such accentuated by a "tough guy tone," close to the styling of Hemmingway or Faulkner.[118] There is definitely an American feel to the dimension of his work in L'étranger, and Camus certainly identified with the works of those influential authors. The tough-guy tone had also become a staple of American film in the 1940s and 50s. Camus liked the lure of that and he particularly liked Humprey Bogart, as he often mused about himself and the aura of Bogart.[119] The tough-guy persona in the film often coincided with the portrayal of the wiles of youth gone astray. Director Nicholas Ray's films were archetypal of this genre. In 1954, he directed Bogart in the film "Knock on Any Door," and in 1955, he directed James Dean in "Rebel Without a Cause." In "Knock on Any Door," Humprey Bogart played a lawyer who takes the case of childhood friend "Pretty Boy Nick Romano," who is accused of killing a cop. The character Romano has a similar outlook on life as Meursault does in The Stranger. Nick Romano has no ambition except for getting in on the next joy ride. Romano's motto is plain and simple: "live fast die young and have a good looking corpse." Meursault's belief system is not dissimilar from that of Romano's, but it is perhaps a tad more extravagant. When Meursault is confronted by the Priest just prior to his execution, the Priest insinuates that Meursault's must have desired something other than this fate. Meursault answers, in turn, quite plainly:

> I said of course I had, but it didn't mean any more than to be rich, to be able to swim faster, or to have a more nicely shaped mouth.[120]

In Meursault's second-chance scenario, there is still no trace of an aim or goal, and that is what makes his cynicism so compelling. His embrace of indifference is the basis of his cynicism and fosters a disturbing type of nihilism that, with it is blandness, is such a contrast to Raskolnikov's superiority-complex inspired nihilism. Whichever of the two has a greater capacity for mayhem is hard to say.

Throughout I have referred to characters and personas that fall under the rubric of underground intellectualism. In the world of Camus' characters, there can be no more succinct example than his character in La Chute (The Fall), Jean Baptiste Clamence. Camus' Clamence is a French version of the Underground Man. He had sprung from the internals of Camus' own life. This was widely recognized by Camus' closest peers.[121] Camus, it must be noted, suffered from severe bouts of anxiety and depression. William Styron's meditation, on mental illness among those of the artist/thinker types, made reference to Camus' bouts of depression. The author even went so far as to categorize the character of Clamence in The Fall as an example of clinical depression.[122] There seems to be some form of depression that goes with the territory that occupies the position of underground intellectualism. Certainly, for Camus, there was enough in the human condition for the aura of the underground to pervade his own psyche. Camus' quoting of Dostoevsky taps the nerve that his mindset that would eventually produce in The Fall, and also in his alter-ego Clamence: "As Dostoevsky said...can a conscious man ever respect himself, even a little?"[123] Dostoevsky's statement serves as mantra for underground intellectualism. The Underground Man's view confirms the tale of the tape on *paralytic enlightenment.*

> Now I'm living out my life in my corner, taunting myself with the spiteful and useless consolation that intelligent man cannot become anything seriously and it is only the fool who becomes anything.[124]

This is nothing short of a loathing recognition that maintains this within which modernity's concourse of intellectualism has no concrete value. It has been alluded to elsewhere how the Underground Man takes on this embodiment of paralytic enlightenment.

To reiterate, he justifies this state by his understanding that it is a drone-like intelligence ("characterless") that prospers in a system of cogs of which, of course he wants no part. These observations are nevertheless a "useless consolation." However, when compared to the life cycle of Clamence's cynical consciousness, the Underground Man's circumstance of limited autonomy seems like a reprieve. Deluded or not, the Underground Man accepts the reasoning that serves to clarify or justify his alienation, and this ultimately preserves his sense of subjective integrity. Clamence's cynical consciousness, on the other hand, offers no such reprieve. Neither does it provide the illusion of one. The examined life here has become an intensification of neurotic introspection that obliterates the possibilities of the connivances to be had in the drives of self-interest.[125] Hence, cynical consciousness with Clamence represents utter repression. Camus relays this through Clamence in that he transforms the Nietzschean ethos of grandeur into a horrid portrait of imprisonment:

> Everyday through the unchanging constraint that stiffened his body, the condemned man learned that he was guilty and innocence consists in stretching joyously. *Can you imagine a frequenter of summits and upper decks in that cell?*[126]

The examined life, with Clamence, has turned into a cruel garden where minutiae flourishes in the 'condemned' conscience; he is condemned because the examined life has now become a pin-prick affair and leaves no stone unturned when he roots out the excrement in human nature.

To get good idea of how Meursault's conscience differs from the likes of Clamence, it would then be necessary to imagine Meursault's account of his Mother's funeral playing out, but in this case, in the likes of Clamence's mind. For example, look at the thoughts

Meursault had moments after his mother's funeral service ended, when he was finally able to breakaway from the assembled mourners. He was immediately taken aback by the "beautiful day," and he was cognizant that his fellow workers were bogged down in that early morning grind. This in turn leads him to realize how unfortunate it was that he could not take full advantage of such a situation, for after all it was the day of his mother's funeral.[127] Meursault is very concerned about notions of escape strategy and conflict avoidance, which then begs the question as to if there is a warped sense of romanticism operating in him? Were you to ask Meursault, he probably could not tell you. His response would most likely be that "I pretty much lost the habit of analysing myself."[128] Yes, he is indeed the polar opposite of that "Cartesian Frenchman," Clamence.[129] The question, then, is how did he get that way? Well, perhaps it relates back to his days as a student, when for reasons that remain unclear, he had to quit his studies. It was then that he came to this realization about his ambitions did not matter in the larger scheme of things:

> J'ai très vite compris que tout cela était sams importance réelle.[130]

The conclusions reached by Meursault that day were tantamount to closing the door on any notions connected with living the 'examined life.' Meursault's tragedy is the tragedy of decisive indifference. But this indifference follows from his flight from metaphysics, which translates through his blanket refusal to acknowledge immortality on any terms. However, it is the terms of Christian salvation that are the primary source for understanding the opposition in Meursault's refusal. Karamazov's refusal is also diametrically opposed to the terms of Christian salvation. In The Rebel, Camus observes that there is no fleeing from metaphysics in Ivan; likewise that Ivan engages "in a kind of metaphysical Don Quixotism," which therefore goes to source of his passion for justice.[131] Camus believed that this form of romanticism, although full of compassion, would never bridge any happy-medium, since so much of the source of its indignation at injustice was embedded in vanity.[132] We will see later how this becomes a crucial insight in Clamence's self-analysis and critique of the modern soul in The Fall. But as has been discussed in the previous chapter, theoretically Karamazov's rebellion is instrumental in egging Camus on to formulate a legitimate ethics of revolt. The character Doctor Rieux in The Plague was exemplary of this effort on Camus' part to ground such an ethic. Importantly as well, this effort by Camus was a form of acknowledgement of the apparent short-sighted individualism evident in his character Merseault. That being said, both Meursault and Rieux qualify as different composites of Camus' `absurd man'; Meursault is the narrowest and most raw expression of it, while Rieux is the closest to Camus' ideal conception.

One of the earliest articulations by Camus of his `absurd man' comes in the form of an essay written in 1936 entitled "The Wind at Dijemella." This excerpt lays down what may be considered the basic map of the absurd man's consciousness, which affirms the concretization of the here and now and rejects the metaphysical implications of any meta-narratives.

> Few people realize that *there is a refusal that has nothing to do with renunciation* (Emphasis mine). What meaning do words like future, improvement, good jobs have here: What is meant by the hearts progress? If I obstinately refuse all 'the later on's' of this world, it is because I have no desire to give up my present wealth. I do not want to believe that death is the gateway to another life. For me it is a closed door.[133]

From this excerpt there emerges a basic framework of valuations for the absurd man. Out this framework comes a 'refusal,' which stands in steadfast affirmation of the present without the need for a `renunciation' of metaphysical abstracts; this is a defining principle in the absurd man's identity. In Camus' fuller elaboration, in his essay The Absurd Man, written circa the early 1940's (the period encompassing The Myth of Sisyphus and L'étranger), this mode of refusal remains in tact as a defining feature in the terrain of the Absurd Man's consciousness:

> What in fact is the absurd man! He who, without negating it, does nothing for the eternal... assured of his temporarily limited freedom, of his revolt devoid of future and of his mortal consciousness, he lives out his adventure within the span of lifetime.[134]

The here and now are what counts for the absurd man with the immediacy of reality is informed by his heightened awareness of his mortality:

> ... the flesh is my only certainty, I can only live on it. The creature is my native land.[135]

Up to this point, these reflections on the Absurd Man remain somewhat consistent with the gist of those expressed in the "Wind" essay. The "certainty" of the "flesh" and the coming to terms with one's mortality is a restating of the `Wind' essay of having "no desire to give up my present wealth." Meursault's attitude towards ambition approximates this idea of mortality expressed in "The Wind at Dijemella," but in the most rudimentary sense. He arrives at it through his blasé hedonistic calculus, which is heavily reliant upon a crude relativism.[136] His basic terms of contentment are at root his desire for the preservation of his subjective agency. What more could be an amelioration of his circumstances, as he then put it, but more money and better looks? Meursault therefore stands as the limit of those notions of absurd consciousness, as expressed in "The Wind at Dijemella." Rieux, on the other hand, goes beyond this subjectivist terrain and his absurd consciousness is representative of the refinement of those notions found in Camus' "Absurd Man" essay, where intellect and passion strike a balance.[137] Rieux's 'refusal' therefore possesses what Camus refers to as a "lucid indifference,"[138] and through it the character enacts the idealism of Camus' stoic humanism, which in turn desires to reconcile the hedonism of a Meursault with the intellect of an Ivan.[139]

Meursault's indifference, however, is most definitely not lucid; he is a poster boy for the unexamined life. He is all-surface and all-feeling. Nietzsche in Daybreak observed how "often a false judgment" is attained from such a set-up.[140] From this window of judgement emerges Meursault's perception of reality, and it is interesting to note how this crude relativist can at times display such a form of extreme scepticism.

Meursault may have abandoned peering into himself and looking at his own motivations, but with others it's a different matter and there he casts a wary eye. He does not for moment doubt his own sincerity in mourning his mother's passing, despite his conflicting thoughts about what waste of a "beautiful day" it was. That does not stop him, however, from questioning the motivations of others mourning his mother:

> I even had the impression that the dead woman in front of
> them didn't mean a thing.[141]

It is an impression of the extent to which Meursault's self-serving reductionist logic will go. Notice the mode of representation in which he refers to his mother, it is very much devoid of meaning—"the dead woman." This reductionist thinking is symbolic of the distancing perspective that is related to his apathy. On a psychological level, in Meursault, this translates as a total lack of empathetic qualities. At various instances in the novel, for instance, Camus places his character Meursault in situations where circumstances could be altered by even a modicum of meaningful human interchange, let alone be transformed by outright compassion. This is shown, in cruel irony, when Meursault is confronted with the character of the old man Salamano and his concerns over the fate of his lost dog, which triggers in Meursault a vague and momentary stirring in his consciousness about his mother's own fate.[142] Of course, Meursault does not pursue that stirring any further as he is an individual who likes the fog that his lapsed thinking provides. That is the escape strategy within his apathetic indifference, and it permits him to recoil from having to put himself out for anyone or anything. But in true Camusian irony, Meursault's perpetual escape act puts him in line par excellence with the crime and punishment machine of the guillotine.

Herakleitos says that "character is fate," and for Meursault, this means following the scent of the arbitrary whim that may incite his hedonistic desire. Obviously, for Merseault, people and their problems and traumas get in the way of that desire and he therefore shuts them down with his convenient conflict avoidance mentality. Camus' treatment of the character Marie Cordona personifies this as she is nothing more than an object of titillation for him. Aside from that, he is oblivious to her on every level even though she is the most intimately connected character to him.[143] There is only one other character in the entire novel that Meursault willingly bends his ear for, and that turns out to be the low-life thug Raymond Sintez. Meursault even finds him "interesting," but that enthusiasm for Sintez has more to do with the fact that he can dangle those cheap-thrill party favours that Meursault's uncomplicated spontaneity craves.[144] However, the lure of Sintez's party favours comes with strings attached and he needs Meursault to be an accomplice for his petty cruel criminality. Meursault ends up stumbling into that role because Sintez's persuasion offers him the type of complicity that is conducive to his bent for shutting down conscious reflection. Sintez therefore reinforces Meursault's ignorance over his handling of his mother's affairs in her last days.[145] Friendship with Sintez also aligns Meursault with a timeline of random circumstances that will overwhelm his unconscious inertia thinking, and leads him into committing a senseless murder on the beach. Ultimately, it is his dissociative nature that manifests in his character an absence of empathy and drifts him towards the range of Sintez's low-level conscience. This results in his haphazardly acquiring the murder weapon that unknowingly he will end up using.[146]

The manner and sequence with which Camus presents the unfolding of Meursault's thoughts and actions epitomizes what he describes as an "absurd act." The absurd act for Camus is when the intended aims collide with the random, and in their actualization they appear in their final outcomes as totally contradictory and conflictual to the origination of their intent.[147] In this interpretation of the absurd act, Camus relies on a stoic-type assessment of character, where the focus is on the volition of the actor towards the aim as well as the ability to confront the reality of unintended consequences that are opposed to their original goal. Ultimately, for Camus, it comes down to tenacity of character, and how the rational expresses its considerations within. However, for Camus, acts that are guided by rational considerations may just as well, in their end trajectory, appear totally absurd. Camus theorist John Cruickshank states that this has to do with the way that reason's limitations are established in Camus doctrine of the absurd:

> Camus' doctrine of the absurd also recognizes the limitations of reason but then reacts in a quite different direction by accepting them holding reason as man's only link, though of course an extremely tenuous one, with reality.[148]

Camus' perspectives are borne out of the realization that the cosmological order is one characterized by randomness and is therefore unquantifiable and impervious to the designs of rationalism. Hence, for Camus, that the order of things presents itself as a presence of indifference makes reason vital in communicating a sense of coherency and orientation to the plight of the human condition:

> The absurd is born of this confrontation between human need and the unreasonable silence of the world. This must not be forgotten. This must be clung to because the whole consequence of life can depend on it. The irrational, human nostalgia, and the absurd that is born of their encounter - these are the three characters in the drama that must be necessarily end with all the logic of which an existence is capable.[149]

Meursault's timeline, down to the fatal encounter on the beach, is like an enactment of the experiencing of this confrontation with the metaphysical structure of the absurd.

Through the use of symbolism, Camus conveys Meursault's confrontation with the random and he alters the role played by external elements upon Merseault's nature that up to this point in novel had been conducive to his nature. Camus now presents them as obstacles to Meursault's uncomplicated spontaneity. The elements now harass him, particularly the sun that symbolically and tyrannically pursues him for his failed conscience.[150]

Meursault's failed conscience is as such because its' comport mimics that constant feature that defines the awareness of the absurd as a presence of total indifference to the struggle of the human condition. To Camus' mind, awareness of the absurd's relational structure as one of estrangement towards human need should therefore foster a "conscious dissatisfaction" with the existential arrangement and gives impetus toward bringing meaning to the human journey.[151] Meursault's way of indifference goes in the opposite direction and his disinterest in human affairs conforms to the absurd's code of "unreasonable silence," which is therefore in conflict with it's already alienating qualities. Such a static self-absorbed position such as Merseault's vis à vis the absurd in Camus understanding represents what he calls "la pensée humiliée."[152] In concrete terms Meursault's act of murder on the beach is an externalization of this degraded form of thinking. Camus portrays Meursault as a bystander (involuntary) to his own act, much like the unconscious-like act in his emptying the remainder of the revolver's bullets into what he now sees as a "motionless body." Remember, throughout the first half of the novel we have repeated instances where Meursault is either unwilling or incapable of a sustained effort of focused thinking. However, early into the second half of the novel, Camus has his character clarify what are the true roots of his low-level logic and it comes particularly when his life is hanging in the balance. Even here, in terms of his defending himself against the charges of murder, he is apathetic and he attributes all of this to "laziness."[153]

Meursault's apathy is by choice, though, and that is why he falls within Camus' notion of “la pensée humiliée”; his character represents a conscious resignation to what Camus deems as the unacceptable conditions of the absurd. But again, these notions have to be conceptualized within the wider frame of Camus' humanist efforts, which were spurred on by his dissatisfaction of not seeing viable atheist or agnostic ethical valuations. Certainly Meursault's character was no solution to this project. However, Camus was to later show in The Plague, with the character of the Priest Paneloux, that a monotheistic Christian response could appear just as stunted ('la pensée humiliée') in its turning away from the immediate consequences of turmoil and suffering in the world. Camus, in The Plague, attempted to convey that there was culpability at both ends of the spectrum and it is for this reason that my analysis of the Stranger veered away from taking the atheistic dimensions of the novel too seriously. Camus' own intent with the atheist dimension of novel was directed at what he saw as the smug bourgeois morality of his era.[154] Nevertheless, the second half of the Stranger begins with Meursault in prison, which is conveyed as a total lockdown on his hedonism. Subsequently, this forces him to the contemplate things he never considered, and as a result a recovery of his memory and imagination begin.[155] It is still however just the beginning point in the recovery of his conscience. His thought cannot go beyond the immediate particulars of his situation—which is the necessity of `killing time' in prison. However, when he realizes the real implications of his situation, he cuts right to the core of his idea of freedom and to the notions about freedom itself. His mind begins to race, recalling childhood memories and other bits and pieces of information that describe the horrible certainty with which the guillotine carries out the death sentence.[156]

In one fell swoop, Camus shifts us from the delirium of the killing on the beach to an overly conscious frenzied Kafka-like pace of informed paranoia. The form may be Kafka, but the substance is the rhythm of Dostoevsky's *condemned man*. Meursault's account of the guillotine is direct correlated to the discussion in the Idiot over capital punishment.[157] It is this "no exit"-style *certainty* of execution, which the French legal process sanctions as capital punishment, that is seen as repulsive and revolting in Dostoevsky. In Meursault's account, you feel the rhythm of the institutionalized terror of legal state-side murder, which is *the horror* derived from Dostoevsky's depiction. In real life terms, Dostoevsky's depiction had a tremendous effect on Camus. Capital punishment had been a preoccupation for Camus since childhood. In his later years, he had expressed his total disgust and opposition to it in the essay "Réflexion sur la guillotine."[158] It bears noting that the protestations against capital punishment in The Idiot are premised on Christian ethics. However, it is the larger picture that Dostoevsky paints of the guillotine—as an instrument symbolizing the absurd and as an oppressive extra-rational manifestation—that registers so heavily with Camus. What Dostoevsky and Camus both see metaphysically in the guillotine is a terminal point in a process that completely eliminates the factor of contingency (second-chance) from the wheel of human destiny. Capital punishment for both of them is equated with dehumanization, since as a legalized principle it fundamentally opposes the nature of rehabilitation in crime and punishment. In Crime and Punishment, of course, the path to Raskolnikov's reform is with the New Testament tucked under his pillow by that beautiful soul Sonya. With Meursault, however, we can speculate that Camus' idea of rehabilitation lies within Meursault's imaginings, where his new reasoned awareness produces in him a zeal for justice, all in the service of "the condemned man."[159]

Meursault's zeal for justice is short-lived, however, when the realization sets in that the process is rigged in such a way that it encourages a sick form of conformity upon the subject who is to be executed:

> So the thing that bothered me most was the condemned man had to hope the machine would work the first time... It was in his interest that everything go without a pitch.[160]

We are definitely back in the territory of Kafka's nightmares of bureaucratic killing time efficiency, which takes you out by degrees. In the larger sense, then, Camus puts the whole system of "human justice" on trial, by showing that Meursault's conversion, so to speak, to a rational way of being is totally futile under a regime of capital punishment.[161] Therefore, we go from a Meursault whose indifference was a product a self-absorbed aloofness to a Meursault who now has a reasoned justification for his former outright narrow self-satisfied behavior, despite the crime he had committed:

> Yes, that was all I had, but at least I had as much of a hold on it as it had on me. I had been right, I was still right, I was always right. I had lived my life one way and I could just as well lived it another. I had done this I hadn't done that. I hadn't done this thing but I had done another.[162]

In Merseault's mind, this is his rebuttal—think again of "The Wind at Dijemella." What does it all matter, regardless of the negative testimonial accounts of witnesses relating their acquaintance with him?[163] All is then alright for Meursault in the world. He feels vindicated for his quality of indifference and he affirms it by seeing it as a reflection and expression of the present order of things:

> ... for the first time, in that night alive with signs and stars. I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world.

> Finding it much like myself—so like a brother, really—I felt happy and that I was happy again.[164]

Meursault goes to his execution signaling a 'happy death.' How could this be? Camus ends the novel with Meursault remorseless and triumphant. This must have been an inside-killing joke on Camus's part. Perhaps that was what was behind Meursault being referred to at one point in the novel as *Monsieur Antichrist*? That killing joke later becomes the subject of Nietzsche's dread in The Rebel ("the step in the dark").[165] Meursault, the suntanned criminal, is like a sarcastic and cynical response to Nietzsche's observations on the flaws of 'the pale criminal' Raskolnikov.[166] The Meursaults of the world unite and takeover 'where chance is king.' What would Meursault's indifference look like in the guise of a young oligarch privileged with the right affiliations? I would say it would look like the last men have taken office, and we know how timelines in the conspiratorial world can be altered. We can imagine Meursault like this because of his own observations to the Priest about how, if better fortunes had gone his way, there would be a better fit of looks, money and prowess. A little more ambition, then, on Meursault's part was needed. Perhaps, he could have reconciled the move to Paris as ultimately servicing his egoism. Why then could we not, for contemporaneity's sake, see French version in him of the likes of Brent Ellis's character Patrick Bateman in American Psycho? Why not? Bateman is all about surface,[167] a homicidal narcissist whose only valuations revolve around superficiality, which is where he supposedly finds his recognition. There is also the real life kind of sadistic indifference of a torturer and murderer, such as Charles Ing. Nobody heard the screams of his victims, which went on for weeks and months in the underground torture cells that he and his friend had designed. Today, Ing is in prison and is a fervent student of the penal code of the state of California. How Camus would have reckoned with such criminal types is interesting to ponder.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FALL: INTELLECTUALISM AS OPPRESSIVE WILL, THE DRIVE TO SUBJECTIVE AUTHENTICITY

In the previous chapter, I alluded to the main character of La Chute (The Fall), Jean Baptiste Clamence, and his cynical critique of modernity as a reflection in part on the character of Merseault in L'étranger. On the condition of the modern soul, Clamence observes:

> I sometimes think of what future historians will say of us. A single sentence will suffice for modern man: he fornicated and read the papers. After that vigorous definition, the subject will be, if I may say, so exhausted.[168]
>
> Je rêve parfois de ce que diront de nous les historiens futurs. Une phrase leur suffira pour l'homme moderne: il forniquait et lisait les journaux. Après cette fort definition, le sujet sera si j'ose dire épuis.[169]

At the outset, therefore, Clamence trashes the inhabitants of modern culture as being shallow, crude and inane in the most complete sense, and he includes himself as part of the equation. In the last chapter, it was established through the biographical observations, on the part of Todd and of Styron respectively, that Camus' mindset and its relation to the creative process brought about the character Clamence and his cynical polemic in The Fall. Olivier Todd showed how Camus, in his early forties, remained plagued by doubt as to his own self-worth as an artist and thinker. Even his winning of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1957 could not dispel his anxiety and it actually gave him "more doubts than certainties."[170] It is noteworthy to recall William Styron's comments regarding Camus' bouts with depression and how the character Clamence was a case example of "clinical depression." As Olivier Todd pointed out, it was widely recognized among Camus' peers that there was very little separation between the main character of The Fall and its author. The Fall was work of pain:

> He was marked by sufferings and heartbreaks, as well as separations but without these, he might not have been able to write La Chute.[171]

La Chute, then, was Camus' writing from the underground perspective—it falls within that description by Mann of a work that gives an account of *paralytic enlightenment.*[172] Paralytic enlightenment, for Camus, during the period which covered The Fall, can be summed up in his preoccupation with Dostoevsky's haunting question for the practitioners of underground intellectualism: "Can a conscious man ever respect himself, even a little?"[173] Dostoevsky's question, or riddle if you will, turns the whole notion of living the examined life into a torturous state of incessant neurotic introspection. In the words of the Underground Man:

> Now, I am living out my life in my corner, taunting myself with the spiteful and useless consolation that an intelligent man cannot become anything seriously... That is my conviction of forty years. I am forty years old now, and you know forty years is a whole lifetime... To live longer than forty years is bad manners, is vulgar, immoral. Who does live beyond forty? Answer that, sincerely and honestly, I will tell you: fools and worthless fellows, I tell all old men to their face, all these venerable old men, all these silvered-haired and reverend seniors! I tell the whole world that to its face.[174]

In the introduction, I discussed what could be considered as the ideological imperatives that went into Dostoevsky's creation of the Underground Man. Therefore, one must read between the lines when the Underground Man is slagging those "silvered-haired reverend seniors," he is not referring to well heeled pensioners, but rather he is attacking the foundations of Enlightenment philosophy, which he considers responsible for creating the terrain of the diseased modern intellect. The traditional cultural notions of contemplation within the dynamism of the Western construct of knowledge, which is equated with power, is debased and put on the reverse course. The "the man of character," the contemplative type, has concluded that his level of elevated consciousness is nullified in an organizational structure where lower rung intelligence attains better prospects.[175] The Underground Man is therefore representative of the fate reaped by those of a Godless secularist intelligentsia:

> I swear gentlemen to be conscious is an illness - a real thorough going illness. *For man's everyday needs, it would have been quite enough to have the ordinary human consciousness, that is half or quarter* of the amount which falls to the lot of a cultivated man of our unhappy nineteenth century, especially the one who had the fatal ill-luck to inhabit Petersburg, the most theoretical and intentional town on the whole terrestrial globe.[176] (Emphasis mine)

Dostoevsky, through his Underground Man, really wanted to undermine the intellectual currencies of the Enlightenment that swirled around the circles of his time. His depiction of intellectualism as fatal and nihilistic is reminiscent of St. Augustine's intellectual ploy in his Confessions.[177]

> The Academics. What wonderful men they are! Is it true that we can never know for certain how one ought to manage our lives...[178]

Augustine understood how an extreme form of scepticism could leave the impression of a self fractured and paralyzed by doubt. It is interesting how the philosopher Ortega characterizes Augustine as the first modern in the way that the notion of the self and doubt is coupled, which the Spaniard maintains is a prefiguring of the depth psychology of modern subjectivity with all its "melancholic" neurosis.[179] Augustine perhaps saw the intrinsic value in portraying a skepticism in tatters which is perhaps similar in character to the picture that Ortega draws up of a skeptic's loss of intellectual conviction:

> What is essential is that the skeptic is fully convinced of his skepticism... The *evil thing is for the skeptic is to doubt that he doubts*, because this means he fails to know not only what things are, but what his own genuine thought is. And this, this is the only thing to which man does not adapt himself, the thing that the basic reality which life does not tolerate.[180]

Ortega's description of the lapsed skeptic falls within his anthropologic/philosophical discourse and attempts to identify the emergence of crises point within cultural formations. Ortega looked at how belief systems in an epochal sense begin to dissipate as cultural forces began to express a waning conviction in them. In this sense, Ortega maintained that faith was no less indispensable to the intellectual cognoscenti within the cultural stratum of the sciences, in the same way that it was obviously to the religious.[181]

Reading Ortega on "the generations" makes one realize that he was the true originator in explaining the processes of scientific revolutions, which makes the analysis that you find in someone like Thomas Kuhn pale in comparison, despite the fact that Kuhn's work has been a mainstay of academia. Ortega understood that modernity's capacity to generate a huge quanta of information left the intellectual susceptible to losing himself in the labyrinth of their own knowledge. Ortega's description of intellectualism is therefore a state of malaise and accounts for the dynamics that foster the disenchanted perspectivism of underground intellectualism, which casts the simpleton better-off than the overloaded intellectual.[182] From this it follows that Ortega maintains that an aversion to things intellectual has taken hold within Western culture, and this becomes a form of an expression of authenticity.[183] The major question for Ortega, then, was whether this expression of authenticity was an entrenched disposition within the unfolding culture of modernity, "or was it no more than a notorious symptom of crisis of life lived falsely?"[184]

Ortega's query remains as valid as ever considering the plethora of postmodern theorizing that has viewed the cultural matrix in the West as in the throes of the 'dumbed down process.' It is difficult to see how the direction of this critique will ever subside, considering the global proliferation of American culture of ‘infotainment.’ However, the question as always remains whether the message of this critique filters down to those (the masses) who are the very subject of this leveling process. According to the observations of the Underground Man, the intellects of "the characterless," which are primarily focused on necessity makes them impervious to the demands of the theoretical, are by and large then immune or insulated from its critique.

Let us recall that in the mind-management strategy of the Grand Inquisitor, a similar logic is applied—the masses have only a comprehension for bread and butter issues. This is his argument to rebuff the messianic idealism of the returned Jesus. Hence, this is the standard fare that underground intellectualism holds to. And therein lies the irony: only those with sufficient intellect are burdened by the realism of their critique. This is symbolized in the Underground Man by his agitating painful "toothache" and that implacable "stonewall." Clamence subscribes to this basic belief system of underground intellectualism.

Clamence seeks out only the cultivated—only they possess the presence of mind to ascertain the subtleties and complexities that define the present state of the human condition. The scattered-brain masses of course are clueless as to what is going on.[185] But despite his flattery, Clamence characterizes the possession of such insight in terms of an affliction. Those with such insights live a type of modern day Dantesque middle-class hell.[186]

Clamence therefore retains the basic premise of underground intellectualism, which is defined by the burdensome recognition of the dichotomy between depth and superficiality. However, in The Fall, dichotomy and its resulting marginalization of intellectualism finds renewed meaning and expands its level of justification by announcing postmodern conditions. What is curious is how different intellectual camps view Camus' inspiration in The Fall. Postmodern theory has, for instance, characterized The Fall as Camus' "great Nietzschean book,"[187] while literary theory describes it as the most Dostoevskian of all his works.[188] The truth of matter is, as the cliché goes, somewhere in middle, yet I would stay more tilted towards the latter view. This is because literary theorist Ray Davison's analysis goes beyond just the clear linkage of The Fall's polemical style with that which is found in Dostoevsky's 'Notes'. Davison views The Fall's significance also as part of Camus' larger enthrallment with the repertoire of Dostoevsky thematics.[189] This brings us back to one of Davison's earlier crucial points regarding the realism that Camus saw in Dostoevsky's depiction of his metaphysical rebels. In conjunction with this aspect, I noted how this dovetailed with Camus' reading of the Nietzschean complex of superman subjectivity. Again, looking back to The Rebel, which incidentally dates back three years prior to The Fall, we find Camus' theoretical analysis of the Nietzschean doctrine of affirmation cross-checked against Dostoevsky's depiction of metaphysical rebellion. The Fall, can be read as a rejoinder to the interplay of the metaphysics presented in The Rebel. Yet Camus' recourse to an artistic literary form in The Fall freed him from the restraints of translating the purely theoretical. In The Fall, things are ambiguous and hard to pin down and stream of consciousness gets an airing as all manner of references fly from the character Clamence's mouth.

The ambiguity of The Fall is for Camus the perfect platform to vent out from his depressed and embattled state. The follow-up years, after his winning of the Nobel Prize for The Rebel, had been negative and stressful years for Camus. Highly contentious ideological rifts had developed between himself and his intellectual circle. His bad falling out with Sartre and the leftist crowd left him feeling persecuted and prosecuted:

> I felt vulnerable and publicly accused, and I felt my peers stopped listening respectfully, as I was accustomed to. I had been the center of circle, which broke apart and the people lined up in a single row, like a tribunal... I received every wound at once, and immediately lost all my strength.[190]

The Fall was therefore a vehicle for Camus' lashing back, a thrashing of himself and his contemporaries and as such revealed the sunken state of contemporary intellectual ideals. Felix Ryster observes that the intended aims of Clamence's confession was to "force the listener into self-recognition" during his cynical account of sneering self-contempt.[191] Camus described his character's tactic in the same vein:

> The narrator in La Chute makes a calculated confession... He has a modern heart, which is to say that he cannot bear being judged, and therefore he hastens to prosecute himself, but only in order to better judge other people. He looks at himself in mirror, but finally pushes it towards others. Where does he stop confessing and start accusing others? Is the narrator himself on trial, or his era? Does he represent a specific case, or is he the man of the hour? There is only one truth in this game of mirrors pain and all it promises.[192]

Clamence is therefore an aggregate representation of what Camus considers the pathology of modern morality and his "specific case" is based on the revelations of a cynically-led double life.[193]

It is worth bearing in mind that with The Fall there occurs less of a separation between the author and his main character. This was less of the situation with his earlier works, where in fact Camus remained evasive about being pinned down in his narrative. Clamence is therefore a reflection of what Camus sees in himself and the intellectual class—hypocritical pontificators of morality who conveniently play a "game of mirrors" that allows them to elude the dirt and excrement that swims around in their psyches. Hence, Clamence relates this all back to his life in France before he decided to move to Holland.[194] Being a part of the trend-setting "aristocracy" involved developing a strategy of contrived self-deception, with the ultimate goal being to always gain the upper-hand so as to dominate others:

> Aristocracy cannot imagine itself without a little distance surrounding itself and its own life.... To be sure I knew my failings. Yet I continued to forget them with a rather meritorious obstinacy. The prosecution of others, on the contrary, went on constantly in my heart.... Yes above all the question is how to elude judgement... Today we are always as ready to judge as we are to fornicate.[195]

This theme of domination cast its pall throughout The Fall, as the "Judge-Pentient" Clamence extrapolates on the metaphysics of his former persona and its relation to people and things. The revealing of his tyrannical controlling will is where the Nietzschean superiority complex is most evident:

> Let pause on those heights, now you understand what I meant when I spoke of aiming higher, I was talking, it so happens of those supreme summits... I was an eternal pacer of top deck... I was a man of the up-lands.[196]

From this superior vantage-point, Camus then goes on to weave in the contradictory Underground Man's pretensions within the Zarathrustran higher legislator asethetic:

> ... bathed in sunlight was on the other hand the place where I could breathe most freely, *especially if I were alone well above the human ants.* I could readily understand why sermons, decisive preachings and fire miracles took place on inaccessible heights. *In my opinion no one meditated in cellars or prison cells.*[197] (Emphasis Mine).

The Nietzscheanism reflected in Clamence's sketch of subjectivity is definitely a reflection of Camus' own relation to the Philosopher. The idea, then, of Clamence's demystification of his Nietzschean ethos correlates to Camus psychologism in The Rebel, particularly with regard to Nietzsche's valuations as an expression of the Philosopher's addiction to "integrity."[198] Nietzsche's description of Zarthrustra's ethos is an example of this:

> To remain master here to keep the elevation of one's task clean of the many lower and shortsighted drives which are active in the so-called selfless actions, that is the test, the final test perhaps, which Zarathrustra has to pass—the actual proof of his strength.[199]

Clamence in turn affirms that he had approached all facets of his life within that same Nietzschean ethos:

> I had to be master of my liberties.... Yes, I have never felt comfortable except in lofty surroundings. Even in details of daily life, I needed to feel *above*.[200]

Clamence goes on to breakdown the facade of his former lofty summit egoism. Gone are all of the small mercies of "luxurious inertia," which were the Underground Man's "consolation," that his knowledge base was quite unquantifiable within the superficial expansionary dynamics of objective culture.[201]

> But what is to be done if the direct and sole vocation of every intelligent man is babble, that is, the intentional pouring of water through a sieve.[202]

The point is that the "babble" of "luxurious inertia" does nevertheless metaphysically signify a degree of space and autonomy; the underground man's subjective integrity can explain away his marginalization and that of intellectualism as whole. With Camus' reformulation of underground intellectualism, subjective agency is completely obliterated—the naked self is stripped of its strategy of the ironical "game of mirrors."

> Yes, few creatures were more natural than I, I was altogether in harmony with life, fitting into it from top to bottom without any of its ironies its grandeur or its servitude.[203]

Clamence therefore proceeds to tear of the mask of his "charming Janus-faced" subjectivity,[204] all the self-ironizing comes home to roost; the man of "the summits" becomes a portrait of tortured and degraded subjectivity. Metaphorically, this is symbolized in Clamence's sardonic references to various forms of grotesque incarceration.

> I had to submit and admit my guilt I had to live in the litte-ease... in that so simple. Everyday through unchanging constraint that stiffened his body *the condemned man learned he was guilty and innocence consists of stretching joyously. Can you imagine a frequenter of summits and upper decks in that cell?* (Emphasis Mine).
>
> Have you at least heard of the spitting cell.... A walled-up box in which the prisoner can stand without out moving. The solid door that locks him in his cement shell stops at chin level. Hence only his face is visible, and every passing gaoler spits copiously on it. The prisoner, wedged in his cell, cannot wipe his face, though he is allowed, it is true, to close his eyes. Well, that *mon cher*, is human invention. They didn't need God for that little masterpiece.[205] (Emphasis Mine)

Clamence's debasement of his Nietzsche-like superior sensibilities, in all their wretchedness, indicates that his "little-ease" reconfiguration of the underground no longer justifies old-style modernity's play upon the gulf of separation between subjective and objective culture. Clamence in effect is giving a renewed justification for intellectualism's marginalization, and it builds upon and expands on Dostoevsky's original intent, as found in the 'Notes,' that casts Enlightenment as an aberration of immoralism. It is therefore significant for Clamence the Nietzschean with his French "Cartesian" roots, now living in to Holland, where he observes: "the Dutch they are much less modern! They have the time—just look at them."[206] Clamence then proceeds to take his interlocutor on a postmodern tour of Amsterdam, starting with the neighborhood he lives in, a place where Nietzschean ideals lay in ruins. Clamence's description of the events that had once occurred in proximity to his "little ease" dwelling is Camus' cynical reworking of the critique in The Rebel of Nietzschean idealism's dissolution into the methodical nihilism as practised the

Nazi "sub-men." This is Nietzsche's bad daydream, his premonition or intuition that somewhere, someday his valuations would become co-opted with "tremendous clockwork,"[207] and would be involved in the total making of man as tractable in the service of the diabolical. Clamence's description of his surroundings therefore contains a scenario that you can plausibly imagine—Hollerith's punchcard innovation bringing Orwellian efficiency to the administrative fascism of the Nazis death machine:

> I live in the Jewish quarter, or that's what it was called until our Hitlerean brethren spaced it out a bit. Seventy-thousand Jews deported or assassinated that's real vacuum-cleaning. I admire that diligence, that methodical patience! When one has no character one has to apply method.[208]

Clamence turned this all into a highly cynical pastiche, and in this we can gather the new conditions of intellectual paralysis to come within the postmodern mind. It stems from the dark trailing paradox of the Enlightenment and its apparent complicity within the infrastructure of Auschwitz. This wariness towards the Enlightenment is a defining point in the recognition of postmodern consciousness and a common-ground reflection surfacing even among the most opposing of intellectual camps, from a George Steiner[209] to that of Foucault.[210] This leery eye on the Enlightenment is expressed symbolically in The Fall through Clamence informing his audience on the fate of Decartes' former lodging in Holland:

> Do you know what has become of one of the houses in this city that lodged Decartes? A lunatic asylum. Yes, it's general delirium and persecution. *We too, naturally, are obliged to come to it.* (Emphasis Mine).[211]

The transformation of Descartes' space of contemplation into pure insanity is analogous to objective culture's perception of intellectualism in postmodern terms. The consensus between George Steiner and Michel Foucault on the Enlightenment's troubling past is part of the equation of this "no thanks" on the part of objective culture towards the legacy of the Enlightenment. It is that consensus that becomes fully articulated at the height of the Cold War. In Peter Sloteridijk's critique, postmodern cynicism's claiming of the straight-up conclusions on the knowledge/power games are the Enlightenment's legacy. The façade, then, behind the Enlightenment has finally been internalized. As Sloterdijk maintains, "the times of naiveté are gone."[212] Sloterdijk describes these times of naiveté as the time of "the twilight mood in West," where what is required intellectually is an approach that speaks in terms of a "radical nakedness" towards Enlightenment's idealism:

> ... bringing things out in the open can free us from the compulsion of mistrustful imputations.[213]

Clamence's metaphysics of "the little ease" issues is this polemical language of "radical nakedness"; it is, then, an expression of the cynicism that "we are obliged to come to" in anticipation of the Foucaultian-like reality check, where the tentacles of Cartesian madness have gone. In The Fall, this is likely to be seen in Clamence's favourite haunt—"the Mexico City bar." The interplay between Clamence and the bar owner, whom he refers to at times as a "Cro-mag" or as "the gorilla" anticipates the postmodern "mood" of cynicism that is expressed in Sloterdijk's critique. The bar owner therefore comes off as an example of the expression of wariness in objective culture, which is directed towards the discourses of intellectualism and objective culture's recognition that these ideas can be transformed to suit a tyrannical criminal order. The context, again, of Camus' choosing is Holland, as Holland has a legacy of nefarious deeds that are of major significance for the interpretation of the novel. This context should be taken alongside the various motifs Camus explores with the themes of crime, slavery, and domination and how they have in ways been romanticized and mythologized in modern culture. Camus also makes light of his own "tough guy" fantasy illusion in this context, which also has references to Simone de Beauvoir's cut-up of him in Les Mandarins. However, getting back to the general notions of the bar owner as a signifier of objective culture's wary eye, the bar owner also contains the fundamental premise expressed in Dostoevsky's 'Notes'—that being that those with a lesser quantum of knowledge, the non-contemplative types, are being better off for it and more suitably adjusted to the system. Therefore, what at the outset looks to be a characterization of disparagement by Clamence toward the bar-owner (Clamence characterizes him as a primitive) actually turns out to be, in the intellectual's mind, a noble and justified posturer that he, Clamence, can never be. The bar-owner's knowledge is sufficient; it is cut and dry enough to tell you he understands the pitfalls[214] of the rat-race without having to intellectualize it and complicate it more than it already is.[215] Hence, the bar-owner's knowing gaze toward Clamence signifies the recognition that Clamence has of himself and that his emotional make-up consists of a tyrannical will that harbours "sweet dreams of oppression."[216]

> Perhaps that what helps me to understand the gorilla and his mistrustfulness.[217]

In 1959, Camus reflected on the state of his life during the period of La Chute, which is quite revealing for the understanding of this notion of intellectualism, as well as the idea of repression, within the novel:

> For years I've tried to live according to everyone's morality and I forced myself to live like everyone else. I said what was needed was to unite people, even when I myself was estranged from them, and *in the end the catastrophe came. Now I wander amid the debris an outlaw and drawn and quartered* (Emphasis Mine), alone and accepting to be so, resigned to my singularities and weaknesses and *I must reconstruct a truth after having lived a sort of lie all my life* (Emphasis Mine).[218]

Clamence was therefore that urge in Camus to vent out and tear down the façade of what he perceived to be the game of flattery and deception, which he and those among the intellectual scene indulged in:

> 'A man like you...' people would say quietly, and I would blush. I didn't want their esteem if it wasn't general, and how could it be general when I couldn't share in it? Hence it was better to cover everything with judgement and esteem with a cloak or ridicule. I had to liberate at all costs the feeling that was stifling me. In order to reveal to all eyes what he was made of, *I wanted to break open the handsome wax-figure I presented everywhere* (Emphasis Mine).[219]

In certain segments of The Fall, therefore, Camus quite openly dispatched Clamence's biting cynicism to shred himself and Sartre and their web of affiliations among "the free-thinking professional humanitarian" crowd. Clamence's insider account reveals what was really ticking behind those minds that made up "the café" intellectual scene, where high-minded moralism parades as justice in an almost sickeningly pious way. We come therefore to the realization that behind these pretences operate the most vengeful and repressive of mentalities.[220]

Clamence's nasty depiction was then reflective of the furthering of the rift between Camus and Sartre and the left-wing crowd over the legitimacy of the leftist politics, which had become polarized over Camus' work in The Rebel. The ideological rift between Camus and Sartre spilled over into the personal, with Sartre reducing Camus to a bourgeois colonialist-type in 'league with the masters.'[221] Sartre's negative connotations were representative of the left's perception of Camus as taking misguided positions on French foreign policy matters, which in 1954 saw failures across the board in Indochina, as well as taking a confrontational stance to the growing independence movement in Algeria.[222] Camus' fallout with Sartre and the left took on proportions of a psycho-sexual political soap opera, particularly with Simone de Beauvoir's novel Les Mandarins. Biographer Olivier Todd describes Beauvoir's effort as a really fine 'hatchet job' that was done on every facet of Camus' life, which that reduced him to looking like a bourgeois right-wing happy-hour-faced colonialist sympathizer.[223] Camus therefore saw himself being ripped into by Beauvoir and for her efforts he saw her winning the prestigious Paris Concourt Prize:

> Les Mandarins won this time, and it seems her novel's hero is really me... You can't imagine how far she goes in her cynicism.[224]

Aside from Camus' initial display of venom toward being reduced to Beauvoir's character, Henri Perron the colonialist dupe, Camus gave the impression that he had become resigned to the stifling atmosphere among intellectual cliques. It is not surprising, then, that during the La Chute writing cycle, Camus looked back to the theatre and its open creative atmosphere in order to remove himself from the sanction of "the titled heirs of the bourgeoisie"—as he referred to Sartre and Beauvoir.[225]

> Theatre helps me to escape abstractions which threaten any writer.... I love this trade which forces me to think not just about the psychology of various characters, but also about where to put a lamp or pot of geraniums.[226]

Nevertheless, in looking back to his 1959 after-reflections relating to the period when Camus most acutely felt a sense of persecution and crisis about life, , it is hard to imagine how his move to theatre really did, as he maintained, help him escape the trappings of "abstractions" and character psychology. This period of involvement with the theatre also coincided with his renewed enthusiasm for Dostoevsky's works, in particular The Possessed, which he desired to adapt as a play.[227] Here again he expressed reverence for Dostoevsky:

> I put The Possessed among the four or five supreme works, and in several ways it has nourished and educated me. I been imagining its characters on stage for nearly twenty years.... *They resemble us, in that we have the same hearts.... The Possessed is a prophetic book because it predicts our nihilism, but also it puts heartbroken characters on stage with dead souls.*[228] (Emphasis mine)

Camus' consistent linking of his creativity with the body of Dostoevsky's work takes us back to the crux of Davison's commentary on the realism that Camus saw in the Russian's work, which in turn ultimately impacted the internal workings of his own humanism. Camus' gravitation to The Possessed during the La Chute phase of his thinking, coupled with his thought on the 'Notes,' showed Camus headlong willingness to plunge his consciousness into the atmosphere of the metaphysically crushed. The Possessed is beholden to the inner workings of Dostoevsky's own Christian existentialism and insures as always that rationalism gets it drubbing. The casting of the rational is not so much as it is presented in the 'Notes,' where it is depicted as a humiliating state of paralysis, but is more a matter of the rational personified as cold malevolence. Nevertheless, as is so much the case with Dostoevsky's portrayal of the rational as degeneration, the picture always ends with an obsession with subjective authenticity, as is evident in its' hyper-sentamentalist barrage of cynical discharge.[229] These influences of Dostoevsky factor very much into what were the politics of subjective integrity within Camus' The Fall. Clamence's way of the Judge-Pentient consists in debunking his own display of humanism, revealing the true motivations behind the proverbial "heart" on his "sleeve," which gave the appearance that "justice slept with him every night."[230] The façade of his humanism[231] follows, then, the steps of the Dostoevskian depiction of the self-absorbed and intellectually-inclined nihilist:

> I have to admit humbly, *mon cher* compatriote, I was always bursting with vanity, I, I, I, the refrain of my whole life and it could be heard in everything, I said...[232]
>
> I lived consequently without any other continuity than the day to day of I, I, I... without thought for the morrow in virtue or vice, each day for itself just like dogs...[233]

There are no possibilities for the semblances of altruism to match up with legitimacy under this scrutinization of Clamence's metaphysics of "the little-ease." There are no possibilities, particularly for the reason that Camus' metaphysical regime in The Fall is so profoundly patterned by the metaphysics of Dostoevsky's underground. And there—in the underground—contemplation has taken on an obsessive and therefore intrusive form of introspection.[234] The consequences of this obsessive introspection ends in the delegitimization of individual volition:

> Well, stay awake then, you, too, *feel every minute that I have a toothache* (Emphasis Mine), I am not a hero to you now, as I tried to seem before, but simply a nasty person, an impostor. Well, so be it, then! I am very glad you see through me.[235]

In assessing the Underground Man's comments relating to his compromised character, it becomes evident that this is where Camus drew inspiration for his anti-hero, Clamence, taking apart his own public persona—the smashing of that "handsome wax-figure." More importantly, however, Camus' correspondence with underground metaphysics in The Fall brings out the strain of cynical consciousness in the work, which is bracketed by a drive for subjective authenticity. And, with The Fall again, the credence paid to Dostoevsky's metaphysical landscape produces in Camus' work a world view conditioned by a saturation of the expanses of the metaphysical over the political. This was also exhibited in his play Caligula, where the grandiose quest of metaphysical certainty ends in tyrannical patterns of domination, which are the directives of a politic of willful ignorance. In its own way, the themes of The Fall[236] revisit these aspects of Caligula in its own way, as well as the the theoretical equivalents rejoined in The Rebel[237] by way of Clamence's strategies to dominate his love interests. In essence, they amount to a nihilistic cheap grab at immortality:

> Her death would, on the one hand, have fixed our relationship once and for all and, on the other, removed its constraint. *But one cannot long for the death of everyone or, to go to extremes, depopulate the planet in order to enjoy freedom that is unthinkable otherwise* (Emphasis Mine).[238]

These further intimations by Clamence, relating to his tyrannical personality, fall again within the larger purpose of discrediting his humanism as well as his quality of intellect. Intriguingly, his admission about his degenerate humanism, which is also a critique of the French left, presages in mood and substance the theoretical temperament of postmodern deconstruction. The linkage is again feasible by considering the pervasiveness of the hyper-sentimentalist rhetoric in The Fall that turns on the issues of authenticity—the earmarks of Dostoevskian metaphysics. Consider, for instance, Jean Baudrillard's analysis of heroism within "the precession of simulacra, with its notions of diminished individual volition."[239] This is underground intellectualism in the postmodern by virtue of the phenomena of "mediatization." However, when we move from the particulars of Baudrillard's analysis, one comes away with a sense of the total collapse of idealism on the side of the left. And in this sense, The Fall was prophetic in its utterances from "the little ease" in announcing new state of paralytic enlightenment to come:

> When all is said and done, that's really what I am, having taken refuge in a desert of stones, fogs, and stagnant waters an empty prophet for shabby times... and it's a real mad house prophets and quacks multiply...[240]

CONCLUSION

> Men seem to feel that they have not enough faults, and so they still add more to the number by certain peculiar qualities with which they affect to adorn themselves, and these they cultivate so assiduously that in the end they become natural faults beyond their power to correct.
>
> La Rochefoucauld

This essay has dealt throughout with what constitutes the strains of cynical consciousness in the works of Albert Camus. In the last chapter, covering The Fall, Clamence's confession to his metaphysically-missed signals belies his fallen humanism, whichwas in part a reflection of the disintegration of Camus' own humanist ethic as well as those around him in the Paris intelligentsia. In terms of Camus' fiction, then, the dubious figure of Clamence represents a loss of conviction in the dictates of humanism. After everything, Clamence considers his intellectual super-sensibilities to be a façade, and when put to the test, his intellect serves nothing and no-one.[241] Clamence's image of failed conviction (which owes greatly to Dostoevsky's terms of "conscious inertia") is a rupture with the stoic resolve of Camus' earlier hero, Dr. Rieux of The Plague, who was Camus' embodiment of a viable humanism.[242] As was indicated elsewhere, however, the character Rieux was integral to the riposte in the author's internal dialogue over the notions of metaphysical rebellion. These illustrations serve to underscore that throughout his writings, Camus always kept a channel in his consciousness open to drafts of Dostoevsky's landscape of interiority, a large piece of Camus' intellectual propensity. In 1937, he was marvelling at playing Ivan Karamazov on stage, his ideal of "cold" intelligence.[243] Twenty-two years later, in front of the who's who of the Paris crowd in 1959 anda year from his death, he was staging an adaptation of Dostoevsky's The Possessed.

After The Fall, his move to the theatre was supposed to allow him to get away from what he considered an oppressive Paris intellectual scene; he wanted rejuvenation through the organizational dynamics of theatre. Where was he going in that "new direction" in the staging of The Possessed, when a reference could be picked up that the melancholic character of Professor Verkhovensky (who in the play is described as having "the role of an exiled thinker") was reflective of Camus own disrepute among leftists![244] For a moment, let us recall Camus' perspective regarding the characters of The Possessedas "dead souls." "We have the same hearts," he said. The point of conviction he reached with Dostoevsky was the point of cynical certainty, and therefore the impasse of his creative and political thought. The propensity in Dostoevsky's notion that pertains to the status of selfhood colours too thoroughly Camus' political vision and that of his entanglement with the left. The constant consideration to the notions that pertain to the status of selfhood is what shuts down Clamence's political horizon in The Fall. This focus on the status of selfhood, in mocking manner, turns out to be the politics of The Fall. They are analogous to putting one's personal flip-flops in a fish bowl for public consumption, and watching whether stances and conviction have a leg to stand on. The character Clamence maintains that no one can live up to these conditions and that everyone therefore has a guilty conscience, and should end up servile because of it: "When we are all guilty, that will be democracy."[245] Camus was parodying what had become the moral codification within the left-wing mindset.[246] It is no stretch to listen to Clamence's confession, as though it were in some violation of a politically correct Orwellian-type code of conduct. The crisis event that he relates as taking place on the *Pont Royal* bridge, which haunts his memory, is metaphor for left-wing consciousness's panic that it has failed the grade.[247] Another interesting way of looking at it would be to situate it within the bad vibes that Nietzsche described as going along with the "bite" of conscience.[248] An aspect of the bridge scene was spun from the churlishness of all that had transpired between Camus and "the titled heirs"--Sartre and Beauvoir, as he snidely referred to them. Between the three was a microcosm of the leftist psychology of disenchantment and mind-games of leftism awash in elitism, and that which masks from itself how low its moral politicking can go. Shortly after Camus' death, Sartre was rather a shabby false prophet himself in the he compartmentalized Camus' life, reducing him intellectually and politically as an ultimate fence-sitter:

> They look real fine the non-violent one's, neither victims nor executioners.[249]

It was a cheap shot, but was a richotet in that it was consistent with Beauvoir's earlier best efforts to dissect Camus' personal baggage with her fiction, making him out to be a left-wing sellout:

> ... wanted to enjoy himself which inexorably led him to the right, because on the left pretty faces found few admirers.[250]

Sad, but true. Beauvoir's demeaning depiction of Camus was and is typical of the leftist intelligentsia's falling into the trap of a purely- driven ideological rhetoric, which in turn caused the left to become its own worst enemy. That is what Camus' metaphysics of "the little-ease" in The Fall amount to—the beautiful souls on left with an ugly internal politic that leads to their own demise, as within the ranks there is revulsion at the movement's overbearing sense of morality.[251] To Camus' credit, in his earlier work in The Plague he did attempt to broach the matter of the left potentially becoming to enamoured with its sense of idealism and purpose, and thereby taking on the proportion of a pseudo-religious calling.[252] Camus' staging of that symbolic swim between Rieux and Tarrou was his hope that the left would resist the purist pull and stay grounded in its cause. The Fall, however, attested to those hopes in that Camus had become thoroughly crushed. But all things considered, his cynicism in The Fall turned out to be a quite an accurate mapping of what leftism has turned out to be in post-Cold War era. Michael Neumann's insider account of leftist political culture describes the movement very much in the way of Camus' experience. What is interesting in Neumann's critique, as it relates to a broader theme in this essay, is his identification of leftism's agenda of cultural politics as overly theoretical and too preoccupied with metaphysical implications, to the detriment of the importance of the political process. He describes the leftist persona as being animated by the notion that political action is about conveying representations attesting to an "ideal inner state." This is conveyed by the left's "hyper-sensitive conscience" that gives the impression that it is attuned to all manner of just causes.[253] In Neumann's view, and here that segment referred to in The Plague is relevant, leftism as he see it is under this metaphysical sway, i.e., it tracks an ideal "mode of being" and makes the movement's political striving resemble the practises of a "secular religion."[254] He characterizes this expression of leftism as such because its politics bases itself on a "morality of mere disposition," which is all about expounding on notions pertaining to selfhood, which he deems marginal in terms of influencing the political persuasions that govern the external world:

> The firmness and pervasiveness of the disposition not its usefulness, is the measure of its goodness.[255]

What I take to be relevant in Neumann's sketch of leftist political psyche is how, from a differing range of perspectives, he concludes that this form of leftism is steeped in a rhetoric of hyper-sentimentalism and thus that the movement is locked into political stagnation. I draw upon Neumann's inferences relating back to the notions of hyper-sentimentalist rhetoric within the sketches of metaphysical rebellion, and notably those of the politics of *inertia*, which represent the marginalized status of underground intellectualism. In its basics, Neumann's account of the dynamics of leftist politics as locked into a hyper-sentamentalistic rhetoric in effect achieves the same marginalized status as the position of underground intellectualism. In Neumann's perspective of the left, however, unlike the bitter acknowledgement that comes "from the underground," which is marginalized, Neumann contends that the left avoids having to face-up to its unsuccessful record of political success. He maintains that the reason why the left cannot recognize how marginal its political persuasion really is because the movement has become myopic through its wraps of cliqueishness and elitist pretensions.[256] Now, Neumann's background is that of a once-avid leftist and in that it is not surprising how he goes about taking apart the left. There is probably no harsher critique of the left other than a leftist who has turned. Nevertheless, that does not diminish his claims that the left has dwindled in credibility and therefore commands no real political clout. We simply have to consider how the right and the neo-conservatives have, since the Reagan and Thatcher-era, dominated the terrain of political discourse successfully. They still do and this gives legitimacy to Neumann's claims. With this in mind, I turn back to Camus' cynicism in The Fall regarding his view of the rotten state of both his humanism and those of his contemporaries who belong to the French left. Again, this realization of Camus' thought in disintegration requires us only to consider the contrast between La Peste and La Chute. In Camus' La Peste, where his ideal world of a pluralistic left-wing conscious is engaged in a struggle against the evils of fascism, is indicative of the consensus between Rieux and Tarrou (and, if you read between the lines, you can see that the relationship between Camus and Sartre is completely obliterated in La Chute).

All of those references to torturous contraptions in The Fall that Clamence refers to, as well as the incidents where he was humiliated (such as his case of road rage), were reflections of Camus' state mind during his quarrel with Sartre. Camus' perception of the whole affair was horrible indeed, and no-one could dissuade him to see it otherwise. In that period, Camus became extremely paranoid in seeing his "enemies" lined up on Sartre's side. He felt claustrophobic, and it got to point where he was trying to properly gauge his hatred according to the level of incident or situation. Ironically, Sartre gave the impression that he was out of the loop as to what was going on between himself and Camus.[257] Camus, on the other hand, felt so vexed by Sartre that he confided to close friends that he probably would have beaten Sartre up over the matter, if it weren't for Satre being such a small guy.[258] What a shame that Satre was not five-foot-eight or more, as Camus would have had no excuse and it would have given him the chance to act out on that tough guy Bogart-personna that he liked identifying with; one way or another that would have altered matters. To what degree, but why not speculate? Something to consider, then, is how different a novel The Fall might have been, or if it would even have been conceived at all. As was observed in Olivier Todd's comments, in which he ranked The Fall at the top of Camus' work alongside L'étranger, the novel would not have been possible if it not were for all of the pain in Camus' life. First, I do not agree with Todd that The Fall ranks up there as one of Camus' best novels. La Peste, I think, is a far more expansive and interesting work on many levels, including literary style, depth of narrative, character development, and finally, in terms philosophical and political thought. However, with La Chute, there is too much coinage taken from Dostoevsky's "Notes". The bad liver and the delirium of "the Notes" is obviously present in La Chute's symbolization of Clamence's decadent state, which Camus also caps off with his own personal morbid insight that referred to "tubercular lungs."[259]

The Fall therefore was the only creative expression Camus could manage at that time. Embattled and exhausted and neurotically burnt-out, the cynical polemic was the only choice of effort he could put together to get things out of his system. There appears to be too much in both form and substance that Camus owes to Dostoevsky for Camus himself to have considered it a great novel. I think that Camus' motivations are best found in the Russian's own "Notes" where the main character describes why he wrote his confession:

> Even now, so many years later, all this is somehow a very evil memory. I have many evil memories now, but... hadn't I better end my "notes" here? I believe *I made a mistake in beginning to write them*, anyway I have felt ashamed all the time I been writing this story; *so it's hardly literature so much as a corrective punishment.*[260]

Those lines run deep with his neurosis. As this essay has suggested throughout, however, the continued presence of Dostoevsky within Camus' intellectual and creative disposition kept

Camus in stagnant waters when he need not have been there at all! One wonders, in that inkling of an artistic spirit, why there was not a point during Camus' lengthy exhaustion—when Dostoevsky's literature made his bile turnover—he did not think that it was time to flush it. After The Fall, he should have given Dostoevsky a *coup de grâce*, but somehow he could not see it. Yes, it is unfortunate that Nietzsche, who was also such a influence upon Camus's thought, did not enable Camus to lift from those very insights where Nietzsche declares himself a "master" in matters pertaining to intellectual forms of decadence that in turn lead to physical and mental breakdown.[261] An artist or thinker can gather, from that flourish of the stream of conscious found in lived experience, what it looks like when one is living in the conditions of a rut. I mean this within the context of Camus after The Fall and his wanting to put distance between himself and the intellectual scene he loathed. He had the right idea in looking to the theatre to provide a needed change in optics and perhaps a new lease on creativity. Again, what kind of change in direction did he think he was making when he decided to put up on stage the metaphysical baggage of Dostoevsky's The Possessed? How, in that period after everything, he had so much zeal for that endeavour, when really it just seemed that he was flogging that dead horse of intellectual despair? But, of course, there was the influence of one the main characters of the play, Verkhovensky, the exiled and persecuted thinker who was likened to Camus' own circumstance.

Camus' move to the theatre, particularly during that period in Paris, could have been advantageous, as theatre was moving in more experimental directions. If Camus had wanted to, he could have gone ahead and done something out of the ordinary and totally unexpected and in the process throw everyone for a loop. Whether he would have been successful or not would not have been all that important, in my view. I think that had he taken the decision to go out on limb and to move elsewhere creatively, then that in itself would have at least given him some type of exit from his personal baggage, which was aligned with his far too long sojourn into Dostoevsky's landscape of doom and gloom. To put it another way, even had he remained the doom and gloom, any other slant or influence would have probably been cathartic for him. Just for a moment, consider Orson Welles' creativity from the forties to the late-fifties during the Cold War. Camus did not go in that direction but stayed instead within the same old laborious mold with Dostoevsky, and actually was not too thrilled with the idea of "experimental theatres," as he thought they had an elitist ring to them (even though that could equally said of his own approach to theatre.)[262] As for his staging of The Possessed, the response to it seemed all too predicable. In certain quarters, he received polite approbation for his efforts, while in others he was scorned, as was the case with the French Communists citing Camus' use of Dostoevsky in order to discredit Marx. What said it all was the manner in which Dostoevsky's material overshadowed Camus: "All the same those Russians really do exhaust you."[263] Those remarks probably reflect the fact that the novel is melancholic and forlorn and, once condensed in a play format, one can comprehend what it must of been like to sit through all seven scenes.

If you were an admirer of Camus during that period and were looking for him to breakout in a new direction, it must been quite frustrating. Even more so, because he had various avenues open to him and seemed to have always resisted those potential horizons of change when they presented themselves. Take, for instance, his meeting with French actor Louis Jourdan, who went on to have a considerably lengthy acting career and who was at the time based in America. Jourdan was in Paris to meet with Camus and asked him if he would consider directing the actor in an English-language version of Camus' play Caligula. Camus found a diplomatic way to turn down Jourdan's offer. Apparently, Camus didn't think much of movie actors transitioning back to the stage, but he cited his insufficient grasp of English as the reason, telling Jourdan that he would not be able to get the "total unity of direction" that he required, even though Camus acknowledged that Jourdan's knowledge of English could have maybe perhaps mitigated those circumstances.[264] What a stuffy and lame reason, and what regrettable move on Camus' part. Just in terms of the potential in the pool of acting talents circulating in the States in the late fifties, it is almost incomprehensible how Camus could make an issue of not being able to adequately gauge the "intonations" properly in English. Artistic integrity is good, but when it becomes a crutch that enables your self-doubt to constrict you—and doubt for Camus was much like that—then even the minute becomes a major obstacle to any spontaneous offerings that come with creative collaboration. Sometimes a creative collaboration in chartered waters is just what an artist in a creative rut needs to turn into a tide of new inspiration. The proposition by Jourdan would have been an interesting twist for Camus. In a way, he would have had to go into nostalgia in order to connect himself back to what passion in the theatre meant for him during his staging of Caligula in those resistance days.[265] How, then, would Camus have done a readaptation of Caligula, taking into consideration where he was with the whole Paris scene and his life? The change in possibilities of his accessing new production values by virtue of the English American fit and those prospects are tantalizing to ponder in terms of determining where that would have brought him creatively. But, also heading back to

Caligula in that fashion would have meant seizing on the reverse side of the coin in his book L'étranger, which was integral to the drafting of his second version of the play. It would not only be in terms of how those works were in opposition to each other (by the contrast in vantage point's of their respective main characters), but also what L'étranger offered in terms of that punchy American-style dialogue. Doing Caligula for his creative fortunes would have been by far better then doing what he did with The Possessed, especially with the ball of wax that came with it in the Paris crowd snubbing game that Camus liked to play.

There was certainly no jubilation in Camus in the aftermath of his production of The Possessed. As he sat in his new residences at Lourmarin on April 28th, 1959, claiming that he was "exhausted", all he reflected about was how he finally had the needed distance from the Paris crowd that he could no longer stand being around.[266] What can one say to that, except it takes two to tango? How could he think creative liberation would come to him with all that baggage? After all of this melancholic saturation, however, in the calm of his new residence, where does his new inspiration go but into even more forms of writing metaphysical baggage creatively?[267] This time, supposedly Dostoevsky had been moved aside, but for what? More of the same difference as in Tolstoy, except with the caveat that his book would have the humour that the epic War and Peace did not have.[268] However, as Olivier Todd remarked about Camus writing Le Premier Homme, which had autobiographical references to the author:

> In Le Premier Homme as it was began, there was no humour as if the writer could not get beyond pity and tenderness of his characters.[269]

Todd's perspective reflects how, although Camus claimed he had found new inspiration, it was nevertheless more of that same weather-beaten path of hyper-sentimentalist driven writing. In looking at Camus' own comments regarding the new writing cycle, he was dead serious about the whole enterprise and you can gather why the material in novel was going to head that way:

> I retreated here to work on Nov. 15, and in fact I have worked. *For me work conditions have always been those of the monastic life -- solitude and frugality. Except for frugality, they are contrary to my nature, so much that work is violence that I do to myself, but a necessary one. I will return to Paris at the beginning of January and that this alternation is the most efficient way to reconcile my virtues* ~~*and vice*, which finally is the definition of knowing how to~~ live.[270]

What was Camus saying, that he himself could not hear so as to get a hold of it? That he could only create under adversarial conditions of his own making, which he acknowledged were a detriment to the core of his being, and that there was no other way to go about it? It explains to a great degree why Camus was so at odds with himself always trying to gauge the merits his of talents.

The pose of the isolated artist does have a certain span of purpose, but when it becomes a focal point for a supposed determinant of what one's worth is through and through, then it seems like far too long a time down the wrong ally of pretentiousness. Camus' state of mind and his approach towards the creative process reflects back in the main to Todd's impression of Camus being unable to bring humour to his work in Le Premier Homme, for the reason that he was too intertwined with the pathos of his characters. The why of it is best understood in recalling the Kundera analogy of Dostoevsky's literature of interiority, where the transmission of knowledge or insight is primarily and exclusively determined by the experience of suffering. Or, closer in Kundera's words, writing from the "university of ego-centrism" is when the basis of the self is not found in thought but in suffering.[271] Camus histrionic intimations about the torturous state that he had to engage in order to get creative inspiration is picture perfect of the Kundera's perspective of literature as originating in the house of pain:

> I've worked almost all day, and it's true that solitude is hard, because I love life, laughing, and pleasures, and you, who are like that plus a little more, *and what with my nature and the ~~force I have in my blood, it's to chain myself up here and~~ cloister myself... I lose heart sometimes before the enormity of what I started ... it's impossible, I am only writing foolish things, and I for a tiny bit of genius that will allow me to work in joy instead of this endless illness, and finally I carry on.*[272]
>
> But it only here I can write, and this solitude is really unbearable, *so I'm croaking from it, but only when you croak from it do you really get work done. I have eight months* to finish this before getting back to the theatre...[273]
>
> ... and this afternoon *I had the fleeting impression that my characters* had taken on that density and for the first time in twenty years that *I've been searching and working, I've finally arrive at the truth of art. It was a delicious lightning bolt to the heart, but a fleeting one followed by blind work again and constant doubt.*[274]

That Camus could make these admissions knowingly, that his writing process was destructive to himself and yielding near little inspiration and more often left him in a morass of intellectual despair, points beyond the Kundera's perspective to that of William Styron's view, as stated in the introduction, relating to Camus' bouts of depression. Styron, as young writer, admired Camus' work, but in the years after Camus' death, he became interested in the author's purported circumstances of "recurring despair." Styson was trying to piece it in with his own state of depression and those of the other artists around him, some of whom came to tragic ends.[275] There is a definite correlation with Camus' pain-stricken writing process in his last cycle as part of his "endless illness" with the bleak and bleary head space that Styron describes.[276] With that view in mind, consider his main character in Le Premier Homme, Jacques Cormery, who was supposedly modeled from Camus' experiences during his twenties. Given the description that Camus gave regarding the tenuous emotional make-up of his character, it appears almost indistinguishable from his own turbulent state in drafting the character.[277] This further illustrates Todd's observations of Camus as seemingly being unable to get "beyond" his characters in Le Premier Homme. This bring us to a crucial distinction between Camus' earlier works such as Caligula, L'étranger, and La Peste, and those works in his last cycle. In the earlier works, he remained highly ambiguous in letting himself get pinned down in his narrative, and when he did it, he was as calculated as Alfred Hitchcock. Conversely, with La Chute as well as with The Possessed and Le Premier Homme, Camus' personal presence becomes overbearingly discernable, to the point that the strained writing process in his last work provides an ironic facsimile of his main character.

From time to time, Camus would return to this notion that going to a monastery for a period was a calling in his life that he felt somehow compelled to one day comply with. Coming into the new writing cycle of Le Premier Homme, it presented itself as one of those times, such as when he remarked that at the end of this creative stint: "I have an old project to go to the monastery."[278] In retrospect, one wishes that Camus had not procrastinated with the project (which he never got to) as it might have provided some nipping and clipping of the bud of his last creative output. It was a cycle that was overly laced with illustrations that reverberated with that of Dostoevsky "hypertrophy of the soul," to borrow again Kundera's words. In the introduction, I projected projecting many inferences delineating linkages between Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, suggesting the Russian's influence bearing on Nietzsche's last phase of writing prior to his collapse.

It is of course debatable whether some connections are considered to be that of affinities as opposed to that of direct influences. However, as that may be, the main force behind the assertion was to draw a link between the rise of Dostoevsky's star in Nietzsche's last phase of writing, which undoubtedly was his most melancholic, and where the use of cynical polemics had taken center stage. Nietzsche's very public acknowledgement of Dostoevsky in The Twilight of Idols, which is coupled with a seething indictment against German culture, is the clearest example. To see how far this acknowledgement extended back through this period, one would have to consider then the type of enthusiasm that Nietzsche held when he locked on to an author whom he held in esteem. We know that in 1887, when he came across a French translation of *Notes from Underground*, he expressed such "joy" when recalling how it made him connect back to the type of elation he felt when he discovered Stendhal's Le Rouge et le Noir. By the measure of R.J. Hollingdale, a scholar of Nietzsche's works, he acknowledges the connection to a degree, but the rest of the conclusions based on his findings are not really satisfactory, and therefore only more questions arise about the relationship between the two.[279] Admittedly, it was one of the reasons why so much energy at the outset was devoted to the subject. Simply because one does not openly acknowledge in their personal correspondences the influences that are directly swaying them at a given time, does not necessarily mean anything at all, particularly with someone like Nietzsche where there could be a whole host of reasons. The main thing, however, is the context of Hollingdale's perspective: "what suggests Dostoevsky in Nietzsche's writing before 1887 is not the product of influence or borrowing but similarity in psychological acumen." For the purposes of this essay, it is precisely the late 1880s that is the focus, where open recognition of Nietzsche comes through in his last writings. The ultimate purpose in highlighting these features is to contrast them with his early philosophical acumen as found in his in Daybreak.

The purpose of these long roundabout intentions were for drawing attention to the magnification that this linkage had become with Camus' descent into cynicism, which also dovetailed back to the Frenchman's intellectual calling with Nietzsche. Camus should have stuck closer to the pagan side of Nietzsche's early coinage, rather than drinking far too deeply from Dostoevsky's well of lamentations, because it turned his pursuit of inspiration to a pain-stricken confinement. His country setting turned into another variation of the little-ease. It is in the haunting refrain that chased Camus all the way down to the end: "Can a conscious man respect himself." As he is trying to come to grips with writing his last novel, Le Premier Homme:

> I hope I'll learn patience, as I'm working and prove to myself that this is the only way to deal with my filthy disorganization, but I kick and stamp and gnash my teeth until I take myself by the scruff of the neck and go back to e blank writing paper. Having lounged about idly for a good half-hour yesterday, I insulted myself that it's impossible, I am only writing foolish things.[280]

Camus, around the La Chute period, once jested: "I'm Saint Augustine but before the conversion." Not to make total light of it, but with all this expounding on his cloistered self, Camus sounded like some kind of a secular saint in agony over the pangs of authenticity. And for what? Camus had always thought there was so much "vanity" involved being a writer in French society and he felt that he needed to always keep a reality check about it, so as to not become distorted by all of the trappings.[281] But Camus seemed certainly off the track of that reasoning with his own melancholy trappings. When Camus, in The Rebel, had noted of Nietzsche that he had "confused freedom and solitude," which made him an "addict of integrity," those reflections were like a riddle come back to Camus and capturing his situation near end.

What was uncanny for Camus, in the way of that proverbial fork in the road, was that while he was pining and railing against himself in a commiseration with misery, his play Caligula was being set to appear on Broadway in New York City on December 6th, 1959. Camus had actually planned to attend the production, but decided to turn his back on it, telling an intimate acquaintance of his, Patricia Blake, that there was no way he could break away from his writing:

> ... with a book that requires months and months of work, so *Caligula* and *Broadway are very far away, as you can imagine. The only thing I will miss is you, because for thirteen years, New York has meant you,* but I will return there later, when the translation of the book I am writing appears.[282] (Emphasis mine).

Later that December, Camus wrote to another close intimate, again talking about that tortured state of "the blank page" and his depression:

> ... but trying anyway, and screaming for little genius that will cure *nothing* but at least stop this endless suffering... *To work, one must deprive oneself, and die brutally, so let's die, because I don't want to live without working...*[283] (Emphasis mine).

Camus threw away his play on Broadway essentially for a state of impassé in his creativity that he had turned into a melodrama. Camus was all too thoroughly convinced that, for himself as an artist, there was no other way. This is the stage where he should have laughed with Nietzsche while going back to the dramatics that Nietzsche stages in Ecce Homo, as well as describing his ecstasy as he is caught up with his Zarathrusta. He should have also turned to Nietzsche's definition of Hamlet's buffoonery as an *all too conscious* great intellect suffering because his knowledge paralyses him:

> Is Hamlet understood? It is not doubt, it is *certainty* which makes him mad...[284]

As one caught up in their own melancholic drama because they can not find genius in their mind, well after Nietzsche's exquisite ramblings, one thinks that one should laugh at it all, particularly at all of the parts of their dilemma that have been so creatively self-concocted. Camus after all was not writing from a prison camp in Siberia, surrounded by the who's who of crime. And what to make of all the flack that he felt he unjustly received for The Rebel, that nevertheless managed to obtain international acclaim? As his close friend, René Char, told him when Camus was purchasing his country getaway: "a Nobel Prize check is useful for that at least."[285]

Almost a month after writing that letter to Patricia Blake, telling her he would not be going to see Caligula with her, Camus died in car crash (on January 4th, 1960). Some have described Camus' death in that wreck as romantic, because he was still young and, on the seat beside where he lay dead, was a copy of Nietzsche's Gay Science.[286] The circumstances of his death, however, tell us that there was nothing at all romantic about it; it was the type of purely tragic that comes with the bad twist of fate. He had originally planned to take the train with his wife and daughters. But then he decided to forgo his ticket and ride with the Gallimards in Michel Gallimard's car, while his friend René Char declined the offer and decided to stick with the train, thinking the car would be too overcrowded if he went along.[287] Camus himself would have thought it a lousy way to die, as he looked at dying in car crash as one of the most absurd and meaningless ways to die.[288] One cannot help wondering whether, if had he dropped the miserable drafting of those 144 pages of Le Premier Homme, rather than the trip to New York to see Caligula performed on Broadway, he would have not been pointed toward Paris that day. Somehow the whole stifling process of writing that book seemed to have lined him up for that tragic end.[289]

As I mentioned a little ways back, shortly after Camus' death, Sartre was rather smug and pompous in assessing Camus' life and his role as thinker and writer. He did not think too much of Camus as philosopher, and as writer he credited Camus for writing only a couple of good books. In later years, in the 1970's, Satre put a gentler gloss on their relationships:

> Camus was probably the last who was a good friend... So we'd be there with his wife and the Beaver, who pretended to be scandalized when we'd tell a lot of smutty jokes. I had two or three years of very good relations with Camus, very good. He wasn't a boy who was made for all that he tried to do; he should have been a little crook from Algiers, a very funny one, who might have managed to write a few books, but mostly remain a crook. Instead of which you had the

> impression that civilization had been stuck on top of him and
> he did what he could with it, which is to say nothing.[290]

The observations that Sartre made are worth their weight in insight, particularly in his remark that Camus was not suited for all the thing he tried to be, that the guise of a sharp "little" hustler from the Algiers with a few books under his belt was more in keeping with Camus' personality and charm than the weight of the world-on-his-shoulders "impression" that he gave as an intellectual. There is a certain truth in those remarks, which go to the nature of Camus' artistic temperament with all the drives and appetites that were inseparable from his own sensualism and which ran counter to and conflicted with his intellectual demeanour. That is why in his last cycle of his creative output, he appears as a tortured soul in his solitude; being austere was contrary to his nature and that in turn was what seems to have fed his depressive nature. If you take a freeze-frame of Camus in 1946, he was always a depressive type and he loved swimming in morbidity.[291] At the same time, he could display that cocky roguish side, the side that Sartre identified as the strength of his personality: "Do you know what the Vogue girls call me? The young Humphrey Bogart!!! You know, I can get a film contract whenever I want."[292] That was the side of the myths he made of himself and he should have gone with it. His enthusiasm for film went beyond just his identifying with Bogart, as his admiration and appreciation extended to the likes of Orson Welles, Igmar Bergman, and Federico Fellini.[293] In tangible terms, Camus' name was out there in the medium of film. His books were being considered for adaptation and he was also being propositioned for an acting role, but like the scenario with Louis Jourdan, he found a way to put himself out of reach, and again the unfortunate alibi came in the draft of his Premier Homme.[294] The stunts of Camus' doubting himself to death comes to mind again[295] as you can see that Camus understood film away from the 'tinsel' and instead as a propagandistic power and a money-medium. After putting across these perspectives about it, he would then remark (and this at the time of his receiving the Nobel Prize): "I pay a lot of attention to the cinema, but the cinema doesn't pay attention to me."[296]

Sartre once called Camus "our Diderot", but if that were true Camus would have put that cheque he received for the Nobel Prize in another direction, once the realization set in that the tag of a "cold war troublemaker" would stick with him and different ways.[297] If only Camus had been more philosophically inclined towards the likes of Diderot rather Dostoevsky! If that had been the case, The Fall's cynicism would have been a different matter, it would rival and be in contention with the expression of cynicism in Dostoevsky's "Notes,"[298] not a party to it, which is what it turned out to be. What happened to Camus' philosophical instinct? He placed his convictions in the wrong idols. Camus, as we saw, admired the philosophical doctrines of the Greek antiquity but could not commit to them with any real fervor, citing contemporary society's dismissal of those philosophical notions. And yet, he chose Dostoevsky as an authoritative figure, a writer whose critique of the Enlightenment's absolutes came from a pre-industrial state barely a foot in modernity. However, Camus had that unfortunate appetite in his intellectual acumen to put himself in the mind-storm that involved agnostics versus the believers; it is also why he gravitated to other Christian existentialists like Kierkegaard, another saint of the absurd who was a reactionary towards modernity. Camus' choice to gravitate towards the cast of those Russian autumn hearts nevertheless in the end weakened the creative possibilities that he had sought in the theatre. The choice of Dostoevsky's material was counterintuitive to the dynamics that Camus wanted to tap into when he went back to the theatre, to thereby remove himself from his personal soap opera with "the titled heirs." Had Camus truly been a "Mediterranean thinker of the solar night," the way Arthur Kroker had described him,[299] then his last writing cycle would not have resembled what it is today and there would not have been all that invested energy in something such as Dostoevsky's The Possessed. Camus should have questioned his own artistic choices when he was claiming frustration over being misunderstood, as was the case with his efforts with adaptations of other people's text.[300] But here again, Camus had plenty of creative options. He was not Gogol; he could have chosen better works that were more stylistically suited to create a new dynamism on some of the mainstays of his former creative output. But he chose the stagnation that went along with The Possessed, rather than something like Kafka's The Castle, which was optioned to him from a stage director that had previously collaborated with him and wanted to do so again.[301]

There is the sense that one gets that there was a void of creative consul for Camus when he needed it most. Some creative insight would have told him that an adaptation of Kafka's The Castle, or perhaps The Penal Colony, would have been right up his alley stylistically, both with the character of Merseault and some of his other characters in his Exile and Kingdom short-story period. His style would have brought out the natural theatrical structures of those novels that are concise in their abstractions, as compared to laborious editing that The Possessed must have been.

By doing Kafka, it may have brought him back to the innovation in his style that he recognized had presented itself with La Peste, which also gelled with his notion of ethics stripped of layers of metaphysical guises: "I don't believe I have any taste for heroism or saintless; what interests me is being a man."[302] That pronouncement by Camus also defines the plight of Kafka's character of K. in The Trial, who lives an Orwellian nightmarish reality of deformed humanity reduced to a tragically absurd cipher.[303] In what is sadly ironic, a year or so after Camus' death, a film production of Kafka's trial got underway in France with Orson Welles directing and acting. The cast featured French actress Jeanne Moreau, who had had a hand in trying to persuade Camus to take the role in the Peter Brook's film, but which he had turned down with regret in order to finish his first draft of his book.[304] Too bad it was what it was, because in the aura of Welles' film The Trial, there is such a fit with Camus to the point that you can see Camus among the snitches and authorities.

In the end, Camus' last works are defined by absence more than anything else. His philosophical concepts fade away into unimportance because the melodramatic refrain of "what if," which maps out the creative misfires of his cynical consciousness, seems to be the only matter left to reckon with.

ENDNOTES

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[1] Thomas Mann, "Dostoevsky—In Moderation," Introduction in Short Novels of Dostoevsky, trans. Constance Garnett. (New York: Dial Press, 1951), p. xvi.

[2] Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

[3] Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv.

[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of The Idols, The Anti-Christ, trans. R.J. Hollingdale. See "Glossary of Names", (England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), p. 202.

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (London, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), p. 58.

[6] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* in The Short Novels of Dostoevsky, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Dial Press, 1951), p. 129.

[7] David Margarshack, "Translator's Introduction" in The Idiot, by Fyodor Dostoevsky. (Harmondworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), pp. 7-8.

[8] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (London, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), p. 60-62.

[10] Milan Kundera, Immortality, trans. Peter Kussi, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1991), p. 200.

[11] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* in Short Novels of Dostoevsky, trans. Constance Garnett, (New York: Dial Press, 1951) pp. 143-144.

[12] Ibid., pp. 145-146.

[13] Ibid., pp. 137-139.

[14] Ibid., pp. 137-138, 152-153.

[15] Ibid., p. 131.

[16] Ibid., p. 131.

[17] Ibid., p. 137.

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[18] Ibid., p. 137.

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (London, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979). p. 74.

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[21] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science. Book Four, section 283, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1974), p. 228.

[22] Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, Book Three, section 175, trans. R.J. Hollingdale with introduction by Michael Tanner. (Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 106.

[23] Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, trans. David Margarshack, (Harmondworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), p. 20.

[24] George Steiner, Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 154.

[25] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Idiot, trans. David Magarshuck with Introduction, (Harmondworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), pp. 273-274.

[26] Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, trans. David Magarshack (Harmondworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), pp. 84, 293-274.

[27] Ibid., pp. 99.

[28] Ibid., pp. 291.

[29] La correspondance de Dostoevski, trans. Dominique Arban, (Vol. I, Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1949), p. 157.

[30] Ibid., pp. 136-139.

[31] David Margarshack, "Translator's Introduction" in The Idiot, Fyodor Dostoevsky, (Harmondworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), p. 7.

[32] Ibid., pp. 243-244

[33] Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, trans. David Magarshack, (Harmondworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), p. 558.

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[34] Ibid., pp. 558-559.

[35] Ray Davison, Camus: The Challenge of Dostoevsky, (Great Britain: University of Exeter Press. 1997), pp. 48, 51-52.

[36] Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment, trans. David Magarshack, (Harmondworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), pp. 558-555.

[37] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Idiot, trans. David Magarshuck with Introduction, (Harmondworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), pp. 548-551.

[38] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. David Magarshack with Introduction, Vol. I. (Harmondworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1958), pp. 302-303.

[39] Ibid., pp. 296-927, 304.

[40] Ibid., pp. 285-287.

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