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**SHOULD A PRIEST CONSULT A DOCTOR
OR
DOES FAITH IN GOD HAVE TO RULE OUT FAITH IN MAN?**

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Should a priest consult a doctor?
Or
Does faith in God have to rule out faith in Man?¹

“*That it's illogical for a priest to call a doctor.*”

Tarrou, when told by Rieux what Paneloux had said, remarked that he'd known a priest who had lost his faith during the war, as a result of seeing a young man's face with both his eyes destroyed.

“Paneloux is right,” Tarrou continued. “When an innocent youth can have his eyes destroyed, a Christian should either lose his faith or consent to having his eyes destroyed. Paneloux declines to lose his faith and he will go through it to the end. That's what he meant to say.”²

This paper shall attempt to explicate Camus's use of plague as a metaphor for the human condition and what he feels are authentic and appropriate responses to it, in an effort to highlight Camus's attitudes concerning theodicy and religion (his reasons for his agnosticism). It shall demonstrate where Camus is mistaken in his beliefs and why a priest should in fact consult a doctor (on all medical matters).

For Camus the human situation is a predicament characterised by the absurd. This absurdity arises from the human capacity for self-consciousness, which leads us to our craving for *raison d'être* and hence for transcendental justifications. Our predicament is absurd because we seek that which cannot be found. We as human beings have the need to know the meaning of things, but the universe is silent. Since the universe is indifferent to our needs, we must create our own answers to satisfy this need. The absurdity arises from the contrast between the ultimate pointlessness of our labours on the one hand, and our serious passion for our own lives on the other.

The plague, like the human situation, is characterised by absurdity, suffering and death. For the people of Oran the plague means death without reason or warning; it is incomprehensible and mysterious. It inflicts pain on the innocent and forces men to live in a monotonous world where they must struggle to stay alive, and their desires (for love) are often thwarted. The plague is not an extraordinary phenomenon, though it is the condition in which we live. *‘What is natural is the microbe. All the rest, health, integrity, purity, if you like, is an effect of our will, and of a will that must never weaken.’³* Hence it can never be defeated. No activity can change the reality with which man is confronted. It is a hopeless struggle.

The plague can be said to demonstrate Camus's view of the human predicament in the following four ways: (1) man's uncertain situation in an indifferent world, i.e. the plague leaves as unexpectedly as it came taking victims regardless of status or age; (2) his futile existence in the routines of daily life, i.e. the people of Oran knowing of their imminent death still go to the cinema, wait in queues, etc.; (3) a sense of isolation in his uncertain and mechanical life, i.e. the Oranians are quarantined and so separated from loved ones; (4) a lack of communication in his isolation, i.e. all mail is stopped and people have difficulty communicating their suffering to others.

¹ I will understand by the term God, a being that is transcendent to the universe and the cause of it.

² Camus, 1948, 187.

³ Ibid., 207.

The people of Oran, when confronted by the plague, were overwhelmed by the notion that the world went mad beyond their reason. This raised serious questions about existing values and orders that had once sustained their rational understanding of the world. Finally, this caused them to think about creating their own set of values to cope with the irrational condition, however, they constantly avoided this creation and relapsed into routines of everyday life.

Nevertheless, Camus believes we must not enter into complicity with the plague. For the plague draws its power from human abstraction and indifference. The nature of the plague dehumanises and makes us indifferent to suffering. It separates us from who we love and renders us all exiles. It threatens our hope, faith in the future, and the value of human life. If the plague goes unchallenged it will kill our communion with others, our physical freedom, and our happiness. *'Unopposed, it organises all that is bad in human life into a coherent and independent system: pain, death, separation, fear and solitude. And it disorganises and destroys all that is good: freedom, hope, and most particularly love.'*⁴ The people of Oran, because of their lack of awareness, are easily conquered. There is a direct connection between the potency of the plague, a paralysis of will and human conscience.

To rebel against the plague, one must have a clear inner awareness of man's transitory and accidental nature. It is this awareness that is the source of all metaphysical torment. We must be keenly aware that nothing is certain, but that this recognition is a certainty. It is with this certainty that we should revolt against the absurd world. Deprived of a hopeful future man is granted infinite freedom of action. Camus rejects a jump into transcendental faiths, unlike his existentialist predecessors who have often taken to resigning themselves to an abstract idea or a higher being. He deems this 'philosophical suicide'. Camus has denied a transcendent source of value, in favour of a man-made source. This enhances man's place in the universe as the creator of values. Camus is keen to point out that any resignation to a 'higher will' infringes on man's freedom and should be avoided. Man's freedom has no meaning, except in a world where he lives and within a limited period of his life. Hence every moment of his life is thus precious. For Camus, man's fidelity to revolt, freedom and passion then becomes a principle of life by which he should cope with the absurd world.

In a very general way the plague is death and all that enters into complicity with death; ideologies and metaphysical abstractions. Camus uses the plague as a vehicle for his protestation against the unintelligibility of man's condition and the amount of suffering that goes with it. To counteract suffering, man must come together to forge solidarity. In the absurd experience the tragedy undergone is an individual one, but with the movement of revolt, it takes on a collective awareness. The tragedy becomes the adventure of everyone. The negativity which one man has experienced now becomes a collective plague. In Camus's eyes; *'the first step for a mind overwhelmed by strangeness of things is to realise that this feeling of strangeness is shared with all men...the unhappiness experienced by a single man becomes collective unhappiness. Rebellion is the common*

⁴ Brée, 1961, 118.

*ground on which every man bases his first values. I rebel – therefore we exist.*⁵ In struggling against the plague men have discovered their solidarity and learnt their compassion and sympathy for one another. If the rebel chooses death over oppression, he demonstrates a willingness to subordinate his own fate to a common good that transcends his personal existence. He acts on behalf of values that he feels are common to all men. Rebellion may be egotistically motivated but whatever the rebel's conscious motives, implicit in his act are values which transcend his own desires. For the individual rebel who dies amidst his revolt and can never experience those rights personally, his act demands respect for himself only insofar as he identifies with a community⁶.

The plague is an appropriate metaphor for the human condition as it deepens our awareness of man's mortality and makes the common relationship and responsibility to our fellow man clear. Only through lucid integrity (honest fidelity) to the human condition can we rebel against it. We must see plague for what it is, in other words, we must stare absurdity and death in the face. We must call it by its name and accept it, so that we can fight it, for we cannot fight what we refuse to see. That is to say, we must pay attention to *man*. Camus believes that man can only live when he acknowledges the reality of death and the finality it brings. To live life to the fullest is to rebel against the meaninglessness of the human condition and die resisting death to the end.

Camus suggests three possible responses to the absurd: suicide (Cottard), resignation/metaphysical hope (Paneloux), or living with it (Rieux). He rejects the first because it is an escape from, rather than a solution to, the problem. Since the absurd condition is taken as a fact, one who destroys himself denies this fact, which is effectively opposing the truth. Recognising the truth, one ought to preserve it, rather than deny it. We must live if we wish to maintain what we believe to be true. We simplify the problem by avoiding it. To take one's life would be, in the final analysis, an act of cowardice or bad faith. It follows that one ought not to commit suicide in the face of the meaningless universe. Camus rejects suicide, not on logical grounds, but because he feels that the individual *can* find meaning in life, even if its ultimate significance can never be discerned.

The alternative of metaphysical hope is also rejected because it is found in an alleged solution to the absurd that lies beyond knowledge⁷. Camus insists on the necessity of absolute personal integrity, of faithfulness to what one truly knows, feels and experiences. He clings to the absurdity that has been revealed to him through experience. Unwilling, like those existentialists before him, to take an unjustified leap to some transcendent principle which will give meaning to the world and to human life, defying the absurd that they cannot comprehend. In other words, a leap of faith. Camus's humanism differs from the Christian belief, in that it is firmly anchored in this life, but

⁵ Camus, 1953, 28.

⁶ Life-in-communion is the supreme value of the rebel. '*It is then possible to say that rebellion, when it develops into destruction, is illogical. Claiming the unity of the human condition, it is a force of life, not of death*' (Ibid., 285). Rebellion resolutely refuses to legitimise murder, for in principle revolt is directed against death.

⁷ For Camus all knowledge is empirical; the search for meaning must not be extended beyond what can be directly experienced as a certainty by man.

otherwise demands a 'leap of faith' almost as inexplicable. It is a faith in mankind, his worth, potential and misfortunes. The absurd being the only truth, the essence of the human condition, the proper alternative is to live with it and rebel. Rebellion can be summarised as, '*the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it*'⁸. Like the mythical hero, Sisyphus, man must accept the limitations of his condition. He must accept absurdity with lucidity, and conquer it through sincerity and loyalty. Rebellion cannot be seen as logically necessary since it would be just as logical a response to sink into weary resignation, instead of continuing to struggle against a condition that one knows to be absurd and inescapable. But unless one revolts against the absurd, its intensity, and its potential meaning for one's life will be lost.

Chapter One

The different characters in the novel each represent various possible reactions to the human predicament. Rambert seeks to savour life's richest joy, i.e., love. Grand is an eternal humanist, Cottard an opportunist, and Tarrou a revolutionary. But the issue of transcendental belief is best explored by contrasting the life of Rieux with that of Paneloux.

It may be the case that plague can be our teacher and can educate us to the fact that man is the only source of values. Nonetheless, even for its educational value, plague should never be welcomed. The absurd is just a starting point for Camus, thereafter bereft of transcendental meanings he charts a path to authentic human existence. Rieux's response to the outbreak of plague in Oran is both the most authentic and appropriate response in the chronicle in Camus's eyes. Let us see why.

Rieux is a medical doctor and the narrator of the story, who is described as being about thirty-five years of age and resembling a Sicilian peasant. He is a man of uncompromising principles. If he cannot get to the truth of a situation, he will have nothing to do with it. This is illustrated in Rieux's refusal to furnish Rambert with statements regarding the Arabian sanitary conditions in which '*something is kept back*'⁹. He is a fair man and goes by the book, thus he does not aid Rambert's escape by falsifying medical documents on his behalf. Rieux gives, by way of explanation for his behaviour, that he was '*sick of the world in which he lived in – though he had much liking for his fellow-men – and had resolved, for his part, to have no truck with injustice and compromises with the truth*'¹⁰. Nevertheless, Rieux does not lecture nor berate people whose principles conflict with his own. His love of man teaches him tolerance. In fact the only times in the novel that Rieux compromises the truth or bends the rules is when he assures M. Othon that his son did not suffer, fails to transfer Tarrou from his home to an isolation ward, and sends a clandestine letter to his wife. Thus, when he does break these rules it is for the benefit of others not himself, at least not directly anyway.

⁸ Camus in Willhoite, 1968.

⁹ Camus, 1948, 13.

¹⁰ Ibid, 13.

Rieux's integrity and uncompromising character lead others to trust him without question. Rambert, Grand and Tarrou see him as a confidant and open up to him in a way they do to no one else in the novel. Tarrou believes that the doctor is '*more human*' than most people and forms a deep friendship with him¹¹. As a person, he is an extremely hard worker, but he is also kind and generous to those around him, e.g. Grand is not able to pay his medical bills so Rieux treats him for free. Unfortunately, his devotion to his work causes him to sometimes neglect his wife, who is very ill. Before the outbreak of plague he sends her to a sanatorium to get well, even though the treatment is expensive and he cannot really afford it, but despite this he still feels extremely guilty that he could not care for her himself. This is the one dimension of his life he has allowed to slip through his fingers, i.e. the personal, the love that links two human beings. Rieux tells Tarrou that suffering has been his teacher. Because of his work he has slowly hardened his heart and distanced himself from his patients, perhaps out of necessity. It is through his relationship with Tarrou that this aspect is rekindled. He no longer feels by the end of the book that it is a '*stupid instinct*' to need human warmth¹².

In truth, he is tireless in his efforts to convince the authorities in the town about the seriousness of the plague. He is the one who first spots signs of an epidemic and convenes the Health Committee, convincing them that the important thing is to take precautions to prevent its spreading, rather than waste time debating on what to call it. Since a man can only be judged by his deeds, it is actions that matter more than words. He is also unrelenting in trying to help those who are suffering from the horrors of the disease, getting only four hours sleep a night at the height of the plague.

Rieux has devoted his life to fighting illness and death; the plague is really only an acute manifestation of his daily enemy, mortality. He recognises the hopelessness of his task, that it means a never-ending defeat, '*but it's no reason for giving up on the struggle*'¹³. To fight against the plague is to fight against death and all that enters into complicity with it. It matters little whether his actions are significant, as long as they testify to man's allegiance to men and not to mere abstractions. Rieux does not believe in heroes, but rather in the goodness of men. He feels that the sanitary squads were only doing what should logically and ethically be done to save people from dying. '*...there's no question of heroism in all this. It's a matter of common decency*'¹⁴. In other words, it is simply a matter of doing your job. Rieux is portrayed as the '*Socrates of authenticity*'¹⁵. He remains at his post although he could flee, out of a sheer natural humanism that does not follow from any higher principle. He just follows '*the dictates of his heart*'¹⁶. This is why Rieux as narrator is reluctant to name a hero, but if such an example is needed, he feels it should be Grand – the embodiment of the quiet courage that inspired the sanitary groups. Grand likewise feels that the extra plague duties he takes on are far from heroic:

¹¹ Ibid., 168.

¹² Ibid., 51.

¹³ Ibid., 108.

¹⁴ Ibid., 110.

¹⁵ Golomb, 1995, 194.

¹⁶ Camus, 1948, 272.

*'plague is here and we've got to make a stand, that's obvious!'*¹⁷. The plague is here, *ergo* it must be fought. It does not occur to him that one could not revolt. Moreover, in doing his job well, Grand is faithful to the idea of serving men without aspiring to the eternal or the absolute. Grand is used to embody the category of individuals who are impelled instinctively to do what is necessary in a time of misfortune.

Nonetheless, it should be remembered that heroism is second only to the pursuit of happiness in its nobility. This is the reason why Rieux wishes Rambert nothing but good luck with his escape attempts. Even so, Rambert recognises that happiness should not be indulged in alone or at the expense of others, if not to be thought shameful. He could not validly deny himself happiness – for which man is made – but he could not validly reject the existence of other men as if he were alone. Rambert's guiding value was his love for an individual human being, i.e. the woman he loves. *'Now I know that man is capable of great actions. But if he is not capable of great emotion, he does not interest me.'*¹⁸ Whereas Rieux realises that a decision to stay and fight the plague is not heroic, but rather a choice that implies love for all human beings. This sense of solidarity, based upon sacrifice and personal responsibility, is the price of happiness. Camus would agree with Rieux's choice, for *'when a man has learned to live alone with his suffering, how to overcome his longing to flee, [the illusions that others may share,] he has little left to learn'*¹⁹.

As Rieux explains to Rambert: *'a man can't cure and know at the same time. So let's cure as quickly as we can. That's the more urgent job'*²⁰. It is incumbent upon the man who seeks to be genuinely happy to seek to alleviate misery of others, even at the cost of his own happiness. For in curing there is revealed a meaning that no claim to 'know' can ever provide. Rieux in writing the novel attempts to formulate and confer the knowledge he has learnt from the outbreak of plague, but during the plague, fighting it is far more important. He thinks only in terms of the present. He has no time to speculate why he devotes his time to caring for the sick. He is not a philosopher, he merely does his job. Even so towards the end of the novel Rieux sends a clandestine letter to his wife because he realises that while one must fight for the victims of the plague, if one lives only for that, there remains no reason for fighting. All personal considerations must not be sacrificed to the cause of revolution. Happiness is still important, which is why he does not condemn Rambert, nor even Cottard, but just says that *'he had an ignorant, that is to say a lonely heart'*²¹.

Our specific reason for looking at Rieux is that he is an example of what Camus would call a metaphysical rebel, as shall later become apparent. He protests against the unintelligibility of a universe which permits the infliction of needless suffering on humans and has a total disrespect for man and his pursuit for meaning. It becomes apparent that Rieux cannot believe in the existence of an omnipotent and benevolent

¹⁷ Ibid., 115.

¹⁸ Ibid., 182.

¹⁹ Camus in Brée, 1974, 44.

²⁰ Camus, 1948, 171.

²¹ Ibid., 247.

deity because of the ubiquity of evil and suffering in the world. God as ordinarily represented in the Christian tradition cannot be accepted by one who has chosen to be true to man and his suffering. The ancient theodicy problem becomes a stumbling block to theistic belief for one who finds meaningful communion with men, who long for justice and happiness in the midst of oppression and misery.

No religion, no ideology, Rieux feels, can justify the spectacle of suffering inflicted on human bodies and feelings. He feels that if an all-powerful God was to be believed in, he would leave the business of healing the sick to Him. '*Since the order of the world is ruled by death, may it not perhaps be better for God if we do not believe in Him and fight with all our strength against death without lifting our eyes toward the sky where He sits in silence?*'²² There might just be a meaning to things, but it certainly is not one which is significant for man in his present state. To reiterate, therefore, the best man can do is to struggle against the death and meaninglessness, which comprise the structure of the human condition as he knows and lives it.

Metaphysical rebellion is not to be confused with historical rebellion: the '*political revolution engendered by resorting to totalitarian regimes and mass murder to justify its particular absolutes*'²³, i.e. 'collective suicide'. Metaphysical rebellion²⁴ is how man protests against the condition he finds himself in and declares that he is frustrated with the universe. It has to do with man's search for happiness in the face of a spiteful universe. It is the evil of human suffering that entitles man to revolt against whatever power organised the universe. What he cannot abide is the contradiction between his desire for fulfilment and justice, and the incompleteness and wastefulness that result from death and evil. If evil is vital to creation, then creation is unacceptable. '*When he refuses to recognize his mortality, the rebel simultaneously refuses to recognize the power that makes him live in this condition.*'²⁵ The rebel fights death not necessarily because he is afraid to die, but because it seems to deprive life of meaning; likewise, he protests against suffering for which he can see no justification. The metaphysical rebel 'finds in himself' the principle of justice and opposes it to the injustice common in the world.

The metaphysical rebel is not an atheist, but rather a blasphemer. Atheism is purely negative, as it affirms an absence. Since antitheism attacks a hypothesis that it pretends to admit, it supposes for an instant the existence of God, the better to affirm its rejection of Him²⁶. By protesting the rebel establishes the existence of God against whom he rebels, but at the same time questions the superiority of this God, finally denouncing him as the origin of death and as the supreme disillusionment. The rebel only admits the existence of such a power at the very moment he calls it into question. He does not deny God, but instead engages Him in a polemic as an equal, with a desire to conquer. Thus

²² Ibid., 147.

²³ Golomb, 1995, 189.

²⁴ It is metaphysical because it disputes the ends of man and creation.

²⁵ Camus, 1953, 30.

²⁶ Camus has 'belief that', but not 'belief in' God. Belief that God exists, describes a purely mental or cognitive attitude. Whereas belief in God involves the mind, the will and the emotions too. It means to put your trust or faith in it. If you believe in God you must believe that God exists, but belief that God exists does not necessarily mean that you believe in God.

doing, it is his responsibility to create the justice and order he found lacking in creation and so justify the fall of God. In order to be a man and share in the struggles and destiny of all men, refuse to be God. This metaphysical revolt has within it a very high humanist positive ideal. *'The rebel is a man who is on the point of accepting or rejecting the sacrosanct and determined on creating a human situation where all answers are human or, rather, formulated in terms of reason.'*²⁷

*'Rebellion, though apparently negative since it creates nothing, is profoundly positive in that it reveals the part of man which must always be defended.'*²⁸ A prototypical rebel is a slave who refuses his master, which is obviously negative, but his refusal is positive in that it simultaneously affirms the existence of a limit which the master has violated, i.e. he asserts his right not to be oppressed. In order for the slave to do this he must believe that there is something worthwhile in him, which it is unjust for the master to ignore. Camus rebuts Sartre's claim that 'existence precedes essence' by arguing that human nature does exist, for why rebel if there is nothing permanent in oneself worth preserving?

The universe as man finds it is imperfect, disordered, and unjust. Man must therefore reject his situation and proceed to restore order, justice and perfection. A man-made universe must be constructed to rival and compensate for God's. This is the kind of work that Rieux is engaged in. However, if he could accomplish all this, there would be no more reasons for rebellion. If rebellion exists, it is because injustice, disorder and imperfection are part of the rebel's condition. Man can rectify everything that can be rectified in creation, but even after he is done, children will still die unjustly in a perfect society. The best the rebel can hope for is to diminish, arithmetically, the sufferings of the world. *'In itself the revolt is of no value, but the impact of the rebellious attitude on the rebel generates authenticity, the free and courageous determination to go on living creatively despite everything.'*²⁹

The philosopher Maurice Friedman (1963) has pointed out that the problem of alienation has been a recurrent theme in nineteenth and twentieth century views of man. The initial form assumed by the revolt against the traditional deity is that of the 'Modern Promethean'. He who seeks to restore to man all the desirable human qualities from which man has long alienated himself by projecting them onto an imaginary divine being, i.e. to end man's alienation through the creation of a radically new order. The root problem is that the rejection of the traditional God has frequently been accompanied by a quest for a new deity, of the desire for which the rebel himself has often been unaware. This can result, as in the case of Ivan Karamazov, in deification of the total rejection of what exists; absolute assent can lead to the acceptance of terror and destruction. *'Hatred*

²⁷ Ibid., 26.

²⁸ Ibid., 25.

²⁹ Golomb, 1995, 177. Why grant any value to authenticity? It is an arbitrary choice without objective or, logically, validity, but the search for authenticity is a personal wager in a world where other outcomes are no more probable. Success though guarantees authentic selfhood.

*of the creator can turn to hatred of creation or to exclusive and defiant love of what exists. But in both cases it ends in murder and loses the right to be called rebellion.*³⁰

A second kind of reaction to alienation is also pointed to by Friedman:

*'If the Modern Promethean is marked by the either-or which holds that man must destroy the reality that faces him in order to recover his alienated freedom, the Modern Job is marked by the "both-and" which faithfully affirms and confronts him as the "given" of his own existence and at the same time does not submit to it but opposes and contends with it. The choice of the Modern Promethean is between submission and rebellion, and that of the Modern Job between this very either-or, in which submission and rebellion are the two sides of the same coin, and that other rebellion which holds the tension between affirmation of oneself and the faithful confronting of what faces one.'*³¹

The Modern Job, like his Old Testament namesake, begins by thoroughly questioning the meaninglessness of human existence. However, he lacks the grandiose confidence of the Modern Promethean, and so his revolt does not become an ideology. The rejection of an unjust God does not give man the warrant for assuming an omnipotence appropriate only to a deity. Rieux is the Modern Job. He neither accepts Paneloux's submission to reality as objectively meaningful, nor Tarrou's purely subjective rebellion that leads to a frantic quest for personal purity. Instead he abstains from the quest for individual perfection and seeks to fulfil his humanity through total involvement and commitment to the situation in which he finds himself. (Willhoite, 1968, 64).

Rieux is the only one of the characters who stares into the abyss, recognises it for what it is, and carries on regardless. He, unlike the others, does not try to escape the human predicament through faith, love, aesthetics nor sainthood. He comes to terms with the reality of man's condition and does not search for any ideology which would allow him to escape reality. Tarrou differs from Rieux is in his obstinate idealism; he truly believes that purity is possible. Tarrou realises that even our smallest actions may bring about the death of someone, and none can claim absolute innocence. Thus, all men are infected with plague. Understanding this, he wishes to transcend the human condition and purge himself of all evil in an attempt to attain sainthood. Purity, Tarrou believes, is the best way of helping, as only the untainted will not infect others. But he aims too high; he is struggling to maintain an impossible innocence. *'I only know that one must do what one can to rid oneself of the plague...even if they're not saved by it, at least it ensures that they're done as little harm as possible and even, sometimes, a little good.'*³² He recognises that one always risks ranging oneself on the side of the plague rather than of the victims, despite the best intentions. But he hopes only to refrain from being a 'reasonable murderer' (i.e. murdering for a reason or ideal), but not an 'innocent murderer' (i.e. murdering despite taking the victims side).

³⁰ Camus, 1953, 101-2.

³¹ Friedman, 1963, 175 in Willhoite, 1968.

³² Camus, 1948, 206-7.

Nevertheless, preoccupation with one's own inner peace and retreat from the world, form one more way of consenting to the evils which already exist. If men are to be saved there must be rebellions, but they must preserve *man* at their heart. Rebellion becomes inauthentic if the rebel shrinks from his felt obligation to oppose falsehood, injustice, and violence and seeks a purely personal sanctity, a 'sainthood without God'. The rebel cannot claim absolute immunity from participation in killing and lying, for these evils are inherent in the condition in which the rebel lives. These means of combat cannot definitely be avoided without giving up rebellion and simply acquiescing in the unbroken reign of falsehood, bloody-mindedness, and terror. If he remains faithful in his revolt, the rebel lives in near-unbearable but inescapable tension. Living authentically and appropriately '*...requires not only the constant vigilance in anticipating the full consequences of our acts but the highest possible consciousness and deepest sympathetic awareness of the full experience and potentialities of others and of ourselves. It involves our living to the fullest the possibilities of human solidarity without forgetting the final and bitter isolation of individual subjectivity*'³³. In other words, living the life of a true healer. Those who are content to treat the sick, not only because it is their profession, but because they are filled with both love and revolt at the endless suffering in the world. Those whose love of man is such that their personal happiness is only found in hopelessly struggling with others against death.

Rieux realises that in preferring man to God he must not make the mistake of trying to be God. '*Learn to live and to die, and in order to be man, refuse to be God.*'³⁴ Rieux says that being a saint does not appeal to him, what interests him is being a man³⁵. He is only concerned with man's physical well-being, not his spiritual well-being. To attend, but not to save. Health is relative and attainable, whereas salvation is absolute and uncertain. To achieve sainthood would mean the denial of reality in favour of universal solidarity and could only lead to the acceptance of the human situation and a betrayal of revolt. A life of revolt will always be contradictory to a life of sainthood. Rieux is being faithful to the injunction always to serve man in a limited and relative way. '*There lay certitude in the daily round. All the rest hung on mere threads and trivial contingencies; you couldn't waste your time on it.*'³⁶

Paneloux, on the other hand, tries to transcend the human condition through faith. Rieux is not quick to anger, as is demonstrated in his dealings with Cottard and Rambert, but he loses his cool with Paneloux. Paneloux is the only person that Rieux, in all his humanity, has no understanding for. As we shall soon see, his attitude towards the plague is diametrically opposed to that of Rieux. When Paneloux joins the sanitation squads it is because he feels it is his Christian duty to tend to those who suffer, but his mental attitude is entirely different to that of Rieux. In Paneloux's eyes the plague is divine in origin, punitive in nature, and justified by man's guilt. Even after watching M.Othon's son die, his second sermon demands that we put aside rational explanations and instead accept

³³ Camus, 1953, 245.

³⁴ Ibid., 377.

³⁵ Rieux tells Tarrou that, '*I feel more solidarity with the victims than with the saints. I seem to lack the taste for sainthood. What interests me is being a man.*' (Camus, 1948, 279-280).

³⁶ Ibid., 37.

God's will. Rieux, a doctor, refuses consolation from a priest for the suffering of the innocent. However, Paneloux, a priest, cannot accept help from a doctor, as a doctor is the enemy of a God who permits evil to reign in the world. They have come to the same crossroads, but chosen different paths. In the light of M. Othon's son's death, the suffering of an innocent child, the only option is to denounce God or to make a leap of faith. *'When an innocent youth can have his eyes destroyed, a Christian should either lose his faith or consent to having his eyes destroyed.'*³⁷ Nonetheless, Rieux puts aside his differences with Paneloux to work towards a common good. *'We're working side by side for something that unites us – beyond blasphemy and prayers. And it's the only thing that matters... God himself can't part us now.'*³⁸ These words of reconciliation are founded upon the universality of the struggle that the plague demands upon all men and the awareness that men have a common solidarity against their predicament. Rieux even offers to sit with the dying Paneloux till the end, as it is the man he loves, not the idea he represents. Rieux's concern is with people and their lives, not with ideas and abstractions. Rieux concludes about Tarrou and Paneloux's death that *'...those others, who aspired beyond and above the human individual towards something they could not even imagine, there had been no answer... [but] it was only right that those whose desires are limited to man and his humble yet formidable love, should enter, if only now and again, into their reward'*³⁹.

Rieux's personal growth is subtle in comparison to the other characters in *The Plague*. In the beginning of the novel he is aloof with his fellow men. He vacillates between sympathy and ironic judgement. He refers to the suffering men of Oran as 'we', but he describes the foolish behaviour of the citizens of Oran as 'our fellow citizens'. However, to fight the plague each person had to divorce himself from his individuality and band with others to work together for something that united all men. Revolt represents moving beyond the experience of the absurd. For the absurd man, suffering is individual, but in rebelling he perceives suffering as a collective experience. Doing good is not enough to fulfil the vocation of being a man, but you must also stand with them in solidarity and kinship. Rebellion is the pathway to genuine humanity. It is fitting then that at the end of the book, *'beyond all grief, that Rieux could feel himself at one with them'*⁴⁰. Rieux's revolt against the plague has brought to his awareness that men have a common solidarity against the oppression of their condition. Moreover, Rieux learns to authentically love not only the people of Oran, but also a person (Tarrou). His authentic love for all humanity fails to be authentic and merely idealistic, if it cannot be transferable to a single person and vice versa. His journey has been to discover authentic love for man, both singular and plural.

Rieux's purpose in writing the book is a noble one, just like his character. Rieux wrote the chronicle of the plague to testify to the violence and injustice imposed upon his town, so that the lessons learnt by the plague are not forgotten, but can instead be used by others to fight the plague when it returns. Although he knows that man can never

³⁷ Ibid., 187.

³⁸ Ibid., 179.

³⁹ Ibid., 245.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 251.

conquer death, he wants to inspire others to fight against it in every way possible. True rebellion against injustice, after all, lies in the humble task which helps man in his fight against it. By writing the chronicle he is warning a greater number of people, and perhaps saving more lives than he did as a doctor. Camus does not give us a reason why this task is more authentic or appropriate, just that to bear witness is important in and of itself. To '*bear witness in favour of the plague-stricken, so that some memorial of the injustice and outrage done to them might endure*'⁴¹, to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. As such the writer performs an indispensable social function. Perhaps Rieux's chronicle is important even if it is just to testify that the only positive aspect of a plague is that which '*...we learn from a time of pestilence is that: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise.*'⁴² Camus may be pessimistic with regard to man's destiny, but he is optimistic with regard to man.

By closing the book upon the death of Tarrou and Rieux's wife, Camus is emphasising that man lives in a condition where suffering predominates. The plague teaches them the truth of the human condition, that reunion was an exception and happiness merely an accident. There is no victory against plague, only the awareness that man, against all odds, can resist if not transform, the absurdity of the world. The best man can do is to struggle against the death and meaninglessness of the human condition. '*So all a man could win in the conflict between the plague and life was knowledge and memories. But Tarrou would have called that winning the match.*'⁴³

Rieux is a picture of authenticity and appropriateness. Good will rather than heroism, health rather than salvation, and humanity rather than saintliness. He deals in the concrete realm of man and does not trouble himself with abstractions that lead him away from the only certainty, that of death and absurdity. For him man is not an idea. He rebels against the predicament he and others find themselves in, forging brotherhood and compassion with his fellow men. Rieux's actions are not heroic but what must logically and ethically be done, and are second only to the pursuit of happiness. Knowing that his battle is an uphill struggle with a rolling rock, he never quits. For dying is easy but living life to the fullest and authentically is hard. We, in the words of Dylan Thomas, must not go gently into the good night, but fight against the dying of the light. He manages to preserve the spirit of revolt without giving in to it (suicide) and neither getting lost on its account (transcendence). The value of the revolt being its ability to generate authenticity, i.e. the determination to carry on living despite everything. Rieux's actions are not accompanied by a prayer nor expectance of a reward. He is simply motivated by a respect for man, whose nobility is illustrated on a daily basis as he perseveres with a life that can never have absolute meaning. However, Rieux's work fighting the plague as a doctor is an authentic and appropriate response to the plague, but it is not the most authentic and appropriate response in the book – that credit is owed to Rieux, the narrator. For to bear witness and educate subsequent generations to the injustice of the plague is by far the most valuable response.

⁴¹ Ibid., 251.

⁴² Ibid, 251.

⁴³ Ibid., 237.

To illuminate Camus's views on faith, let us now contrast the character of Rieux the doctor (pragmatic, relativist, humanist, concerned with the immediate), with that of Paneloux the priest (dogmatic, absolutist, theist, concerned with the future). Paneloux is a stockily built man of medium height, who is eloquent with a *'passionate and fiery temperament'*⁴⁴. He is an erudite and militant Jesuit priest who is held in high esteem by both the religious and irreligious alike. His frequent contributions to the Oran Geographical Society on ancient inscriptions, of which he was an authority, and his lectures on present day individualism, in which he proved himself to be a steadfast supporter of the *'Christian doctrine at its most precise and purest'*⁴⁵, all contribute to make him quite a local celebrity. His faith is intelligent and expansive. Why then would he make the opening statement of this paper? To understand the logic of his belief, it is necessary to trace its growth from the sermon he delivers at the onset of the plague, to the one he delivers after witnessing the death of M.Othon's young son.

After the first month of the epidemic in Oran, the Church authorities organise a week of prayer and ask Paneloux to preach the Sunday sermon. What he says he delivers with uncompromising conviction. He begins by saying, *'Calamity has come on you, my brethren, and, my brethren, you deserved it'*⁴⁶. Then he goes on to say:

*'If to-day the plague is in your midst, that is because the hour has struck for taking thought. The just man need have no fear, but the evil-doer has good cause to tremble. For plague is the flail of God and the world His threshing floor, and implacably He will thresh out His harvest until the wheat is separated from the chaff. There will be more chaff than wheat, few chosen of the many called. Yet this calamity was not willed by God. Too long this world of ours has connived at evil, too long has it counted on the divine mercy, on God's forgiveness. Repentance was enough, men thought; nothing was forbidden...For a long while God gazed down on this town with eyes of compassion; but He grew weary of waiting, His eternal hope was too long deferred, and now He has turned His face from us. And so, God's light withdrawn, we walk in darkness, in the thick darkness of this plague'*⁴⁷.

Paneloux's first reaction to the plague is to accuse men. The belief articulated in the first sermon is a traditional justification for the existence of evil, i.e. suffering and death are deserved punishments. It is that of Job's friends: if God strikes you, it is because you are guilty. Some like M.Othon found it 'absolutely irrefutable'. Whilst *'To some the sermon simply brought home the fact that they had been sentenced, for an unknown crime, to an indeterminate period of punishment'*⁴⁸. He encourages the people of Oran to make 'self-examinations', which is easy as one can always admit guilt. On this notion then, there are no innocents and God is justified. This position is based on the concept of Original Sin, according to which we are all inherently guilty and even natural disasters have a punitive purpose.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 85.

His sermon can be seen as a theology of revenge, pure and simply. Paneloux saw no sense in beating around the bush with the people of Oran; God was striking and at the same time cleansing his harvest, as he had become weary of waiting for human beings to change themselves. *'For plague is the flail of God and the world His threshing floor, and implacably He will thresh out His harvest until the wheat is separated from the chaff.'*⁴⁹ This is not to say there is no hope; God will grant our happiness if we do our minimal part. In other words, the suffering caused by the plague should lead people to prayer and God will accomplish the rest. Seen in this light evil has a reason for existing; it is part of the divine scheme. Thus, suffering has been given a meaning and it no longer should elicit rebellion, but rather submission. This is another well-known argument for the existence of evil: suffering in the end is good, for it cleanses the soul and brings us nearer to God. *'This same pestilence which is slaying you works for your good and points to your path.'*⁵⁰ Moreover, it is suggested that human agony is not so much willed by God, but rather it is a result of his reluctance to protect his people. This in turn is supposed to cause people to lean toward God for help, and then God, without failure, will turn evil into good. Ultimately, we must put our trust in God.

At the onset of the plague such dramatic statements did not cause a stir, but as the death toll begins to rise, what meaning can we hope to be found in those heaps of corpses (including small children)? This paper shall now explicate the philosophical and theological premises involved in Paneloux's second sermon. In his second sermon Paneloux says that the suffering of our children is our essential bitter bread. The faith that he articulates in this sermon is a very different one; it is marked with mellowness and modesty. He speaks in a more gentle and thoughtful tone and he now uses the first person 'we' instead of hammering the congregation with the second person, 'you'. Paneloux comes to see the error of his 'failing God', the terrible Yahweh of Exodus and Leviticus, after his deathbed vigil for M. Othon's son.

When faced with the death of a child, Paneloux is not sure that it is enough to say that heavenly delights will be compensation to the child for his suffering here. After seeing the effects of plague with his own eyes, his abstract assurance and self-confident rhetoric has vanished. It is not simply Rieux's heated protestation that *'that child was innocent, and you know it as well as I do!'*⁵¹ that causes this newfound realisation, but it also dawns on him that there is simply no rational proportionality between sin and human suffering. The sheer extent of the suffering overshadows any possibility that human action, however evil, could ever be equal to and hence the cause of it. Such a claim is unacceptable to reason and experience. If God were found to govern in such a way, He would educe our revulsion not our reverence. Rieux believes that if suffering is given such a purpose, it simply becomes an idea, an abstraction, and in this way loses its only value. That is to teach us solidarity through rebellion and bring us closer to each other, not further apart by isolating us each in our own guilt. Moreover, that there is more to admire than despise in man, not vice versa.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 90.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 83.

⁵¹ Ibid., 177.

Paneloux's steadfast fidelity to the logic of his ideas prevents him from seeing the reality that they are concealing. *'Paneloux is a man of learning, a scholar. He hasn't been into contact with death; that's why he can speak with such assurance of the truth – with a capital T. But every country priest who visits his parishioners, and has heard a man gasping for breath on his deathbed, thinks as I do. He'd try to relieve human suffering before trying to point out its excellence.'*⁵² He would certainly not talk about retribution so glibly. The concept of evil can easily be fitted into a system, but not the reality itself. The implication by Rieux is clear, Paneloux would be more useful if he refrained from reciting sermons that excite fear and prey on the Oranian's guilt, and ultimately divert the efforts of his followers from trying to defeat the plague. Although Paneloux is sincere, he is a dangerous and disruptive influence. To recapitulate, the experience of suffering may have its benefits, but that is no justification for human suffering. As Rieux says, *'when you see the misery it brings, you would be a madman, or a coward, or stone blind, to give in tamely to the plague.'*⁵³

The essence of Paneloux's second sermon can be summed up as follows:

*'The love of God is a hard love. It demands total self-surrender, disdain of our human personality. And yet it alone can reconcile us to the suffering and deaths of children, it alone can justify them, since we cannot understand them, and we can make God's will ours. That is the hard lesson I would share with you today. That is faith, cruel in men's eyes, and crucial in God's, which we must ever strive to compose.'*⁵⁴

Paneloux now adopts the tone and gestures of Job. Where no rational response is possible, an *excess* of faith is needed. Either one takes up residence in the absurd, or one must believe in the miracle, which amounts to total submission. He preaches self-renunciation. It is not resignation, but self-humiliation out of love. That is to say it involves a humiliation, but a humiliation to which the person humiliated gives full assent (Onimus, 1970, 47). It can also be termed a Kierkegaardian Christianity. If God is unjust, a man must make a leap of faith in order to understand Him. He must will the absurd human condition precisely because God wills it. God, far from being interested in retribution, only cares for human happiness. It is, rather, God's love, that is so mysterious and beyond rational understanding, that is responsible for the plague. Given this incomprehensibility, a complete 'all or nothing' trust in God's plan for human happiness is necessary. In other words, the plague was no longer a cleansing process by a weary God tired of human intransigence, but rather a test of the believer's humility. A test demanding total belief or total denial.

Human reason is not in a position to understand the relationship between suffering and God's love. Attempts at an explanation inevitably self-destruct. Humans must refrain from such intellectual efforts, sacrifice the need to control by comprehension, and trust that what is ultimately happening in the world is benevolent. Only within such trust is

⁵² Ibid., 106.

⁵³ Ibid, 106.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 211.

there any possibility that the child's suffering will be redeemed. Either there is a God and human misery has some redemption beyond our possibility to understand, or we are left with an eternity of human screaming (Conlon, 1995, 344). Paneloux no longer believes that all evil is useful, but instead distinguishes between evil that is apparently necessary, and evil that is apparently useless (e.g. child's death). He will not accept that the child's agony will be compensated in the hereafter by an eternity of bliss. He simply states that he does not understand it. The suffering of the infant was God's will, thus we should will it too. Paneloux has lost his certainty but holds onto his faith, and in doing so retains his notion of a good God, coupled with the reality of human suffering.

Paneloux becomes one of Rieux's most avid volunteers in the sanitary squad. But when he falls ill, due more to sympathy with the victims than the disease itself, he faithfully rejects medical treatment. When Paneloux dies, his death is simply recorded as a 'doubtful case'. The implication is that he had willed himself to die, so as to exhibit his complete acceptance of God's will. In other words, since faith implies a metaphysical acceptance of suffering, it should imply a practical acceptance as well. For, if Christians truly believe it is God's will, this cannot but help influence the extent of their efforts to alleviate it. As Paneloux puts it, '*no earthly power, nay, not even – mark me well – the vaunted might of human science can avail you to avert that hand once it is stretched towards you.*'⁵⁵

Paneloux's death was not so much a rejection of science, as an absolute affirmation of God. He had given all to God and so could only ask for help from Him. He dies to prove his good faith. He puts his body where his mouth is, so to speak. Just as the 'scrupulous murderers' meant to follow their victims to the grave, he chooses martyrdom and dies clutching his crucifix. This may not be the most appropriate choice of how to respond to the human situation, but it is consistent and authentic. Paneloux starts out in bad faith, but progresses to good faith. To echo Tarrou's words, it is the only choice a committed Christian, who desires to be entirely consistent, can make with regard to the situation. For all Camus's generosity in his depiction of the Christian viewpoint, he clearly feels that it is not beyond reproach.

*'Camus will always reproach the Paneloux who was capable of preaching that first sermon justifying the scourge and holding it to sterile submission. The Paneloux of the second sermon, the one who, confronted with the death agony of a child, felt the collapse of his abstract concept of suffering, will always be reproached by Rieux for having abdicated his reason to preach a faith blindly consenting to evil, thus plunging into the hell of a completely Jansenist pessimism.'*⁵⁶ Nowhere is it suggested that Paneloux is an evil man; only that he was seduced by the fallacious logic of an erroneous doctrine.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 81.

⁵⁶ Maquet, 1958, 108.

Chapter Two

These characters offer a brief insight into Camus's views regarding questions of faith and the existence of a transcendent being. Let us now turn to the crux of the matter of why Camus denounces God, i.e. the problem of evil. Camus's objections to God are based upon the following two contentions. Firstly, Camus cannot reconcile the fact of evil and suffering with the claim of God's purported goodness and omnipotence. Either God is 'all-powerful and malevolent' (because He allows suffering and cruelty in the world) or else 'benevolent and sterile' (because He has not made his benevolence effective). If omnipotent, then he must be criminally responsible for the injustice perpetrated against men. Whereas, if God is just and good, the amount of suffering in the world testifies to His inability to establish justice in His creation. Thus, He is either cruel or incompetent – He cannot logically be both. Either way both reasons demonstrate that God is not worthy of human affection.

Tarrou asks Rieux whether it is possible to '*be a saint without God?*'⁵⁷, as he is an atheist. For Camus there is no other path. There can be no sanctity *with God*. The existence of evil in the world is an outrage. Admittedly man cannot be considered wholly innocent as he is consistently adding to the total suffering of the world. Children die, and God does nothing. The climactic presentation of this view in *The Plague* involves Rieux's reaction to the death of a small child. Rieux and Paneloux watch in anguish as the young boy fails to respond to an injection of anti-plague serum and, after prolonged and unbearable agony, dies.

'Rieux swung round on him fiercely.

"Ah! That child, anyhow, was innocent – and you know it as well as I do!" ...

"I understand," Paneloux said in a low voice. That sort of thing is revolting because it passes our human understanding. But perhaps we should love what we cannot understand." ...

"No, Father, I've a very different idea of love. And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture.""⁵⁸

Paneloux's attitude is simply inadmissible. Hope 'in spite of everything' makes injustice an object of worship. The paradoxical greatness of his faith is that it poses the 'should' against the 'is' of this world, but cannot bring itself to despise the 'is'. For Camus one of the things most alien to him in Christian thought was its glorification of the gratuitous suffering inflicted on a human being by other human beings, exemplified in the tortured figure of a man hanging on a cross. In Camus's mind, Jesus of Nazareth, was an innocent man unjustly killed. Hence his death justified none of the horrors of man's condition. If there was a God, He was fully responsible for suffering and injustice, and had not shared with men the victim's status. When Christians view this event as a sacrifice, both right and necessary, they deny its injustice. '*Thus, seen by Camus, Christ incarnates not God*

⁵⁷ Camus, 1948, 208.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 178. The saint without God is also the true healer, i.e. Dr. Rieux. Actions based upon love are limited; to love a man is to seek to heal his present fleshy condition.

but “the perfect man” precisely because he attained the most absurd condition by dying for an illusion. His life and death illustrate in exemplary fashion the human condition, whose entire nobility consists in giving itself to an ideal that has no value except through the sacrifice that one consents to make for it... If the final pages of the gospel are ripped out ... it would confirm Sisyphus’ bitterness. What is amazing in the Christian faith is that it identified God with suffering and that it has made even of the Son of God’s despair an object of mysterious adoration.⁵⁹ Religion metamorphoses evil into an object of love.

Secondly, Camus is concerned that the existence of an eternal God would have the effect of diminishing the value of existence. ‘To believe in an eternal God, for Camus, is to commit oneself to a static, absolute value that men are expected to imitate. In the name of self-creation and temporal value Camus curses God.’⁶⁰ It deflects their attention from earthly existence and thereby weakens their resolve to live well. Whether or not God exists is debatable, but suffering and death are not. So, Camus wagers, we might as well live the life we have, and limit the potency of evil as best we can.

While Camus accepts the terms of Pascal’s wager, he argues against Pascal’s conclusion, i.e. that belief in God is the incontestably reasonable choice: ‘Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you win, you win all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that he is.’⁶¹ Since for Camus the finite world is a much better bet than a transcendent God. He wagers on immanence instead. For him the divine exists *in* the world; it is composed of an intense *joie de vivre*. Camus does not take Kierkegaard’s absurd leap of faith, but instead adopts a position of strict immanence rejecting transcendence. Camus was an agnostic positivist; immediate realities being a more important matter, with God exiled to the unreal. One must choose either the present or the future; one cannot choose both fully. If there is a sin against life it is not perhaps so much to despair of it, as to hope for another life, which is a distraction that dilutes the joys of the present. Christianity in Camus’s eyes devalues our present lives for an intangible future. There is no such word as immortality in his vocabulary. He sees death as nothing but annihilation. This absence of hope in an afterlife increases the amount of suffering and revolt he feels towards the goodness of this life being wrecked by evil beyond our control.

Camus’s argument is that, if we truly believe that the existence of suffering in the world is the result of God’s love, that transcends any human ability to comprehend it, the urgency to provide relief loses some of its edge. As Rieux argues, ‘if he believed in an all-powerful God he would cease curing the sick and leave that to Him’⁶². There may be such a God, but the contrary is equally possible – that suffering happens absurdly, without any divine purpose to justify it. This being the case it requires only our extinction. In other words, God may redeem all, but the reasonable person can’t take the risk, as that would mean that there would be one less person devoted to eliminating suffering in the world. If the believer is correct, all suffering is redeemed, whether one

⁵⁹ Onimus, 1970, 50.

⁶⁰ Goss, 1974, 115.

⁶¹ Pascal, 1941, 81 in Conlon, 1995, 337.

⁶² Camus, 1948, 106.

believes it or not. But, if the nonbeliever is incorrect nothing is lost. Pascal is obviously mistaken. It is by this reasoning that Camus reaches Rieux's paradoxical conclusion; that if there is a benevolent God who desires only our happiness, his purposes are more effectively served if our energies for alleviating human affliction are immanently focused, in such a way that only nonbelief can give. The ethical nonbeliever will alleviate more suffering than the believer, for they alone are aware that all responsibility for the world is on their shoulders. Even so, the nonbeliever's victory is a Pyrrhic one, for suffering itself will never be overcome. Thus nonbelief calls for Sisyphean courage for it alone guarantees that at least some battles will be won, even though the war will never be. Some real and positive values are forever lost to the believer, by the very nature of belief itself. It must be remembered that nonbelief is not nothing; nor belief everything.

He rejects a notion of 'salvation by faith alone' on the grounds that it eliminates human freedom. He tries to motivate us to shape our lives without seeking external meaning. *'God, like History, is only the "mirror" of man who, by his own act, defrauds himself of what is best in him, his happiness, by engulfing it in a vertical transcendence (God) or in a horizontal one (the future).'*⁶³ There exists a vice inherent in the Christian faith that makes a believer incapable of participating wholly in the life and struggle of other men. Paneloux becomes one of Rieux's most avid volunteers in the sanitary squads, but still remains a stranger in their midst. Since his hope in an afterlife makes him an accomplice of evil, his struggle can never be as complete and despairing as that of the atheist. For Camus always presents itself as a way of escaping the present, and therefore, of living less. Christians spread false hope in a future life. In their passion for transcendence they learn to hate nature and to detest men.

Camus feels that we need not view death as an inescapable adversary, but rather as something that can teach us the meaning of inner freedom and help enhance the value of our lives as we are presently living them. Life will be more fully lived if it has no ultimate meaning. In fact, the absence of hope frees the 'absurd man' from any illusions he may have about the future and life becomes an adventure. This is because it is lived in a state of 'optimism-without-hope'⁶⁴. This side of death, an ultimate freedom reigns. Even though human beings cannot escape death they, like Sisyphus, can act to delay it or hasten it. Camus was concerned with the use a man can make within the range of possibilities open to him. To Camus life was a gamble, and Sisyphus was the greatest gambler of them all. Each man, in Camus's eyes is his own Sisyphus. The gamble being to play life against death, and in so doing enhance its price.

The ultimate 'absurd hero' for Camus is the mythical figure of Sisyphus, who because of his hatred of death and scorn for the Gods, is condemned to roll a stone endlessly up to

⁶³ Onimus, 1970, 41.

⁶⁴ The absence of hope need not mean despair, it just means that our happiness depends on us alone, and if we have faith in our own capabilities, we can live life optimistically. Basically, it is hope in yourself, not in some outside force that Camus prescribes. To have hope in yourself is to know that it will be done, as everything lies in your own hands. Clearly, it is not hope at all but optimism or happiness in yourself and life. For your perspective on life determines how it will treat you.

the top of a hill, only to have it roll back down and to start all over again. Camus claims to be interested in the moment of 'pause' when Sisyphus has to go back down the hill, for that's when the consciousness of his fate and thus his acceptance begins. The author cannot imagine a greater torture for Sisyphus than the hope of succeeding. Knowing that his effort is pointless is precisely his strength. Sisyphus is without the merest hope, and yet he becomes the 'absurd man' the moment he accepts this and agrees to his task, when he himself chooses to continue the torture which has been imposed on him. He is the master of his own fate. The absence of any controlling factor in the universe thus becomes a positive factor. With this knowledge we must imagine him happy.

It has become clear, then, that for the Christian the ultimate character of the universe is good, and so he is able to transcend and accept, to an extent, the evil in the world. But, for Camus, the ultimate character of the universe is evil, and consequently the lives of men are always uncertain and threatened. He believes that whatever goodness exists, it is within men and they alone can guarantee it. Hence salvation lies within them too (Hanna, 1958, 58).

Rachel Bepaloff calls Camus's a 'de-Christianised-Christianity'. Camus has mythologised Christianity, so to speak, with everything that was previously conceived as a result of a divine being, now being referred to humanity. She argues that in *The Plague* the characters 'discover the three theological virtues. What is it that sustains Dr. Rieux in his fight against the plague, if not faith, that is to say, beyond reason and proofs, the certainty that the battle is worth fighting unto death. Where does Tarrou draw the strength to die "a good death" if not from hope⁶⁵, the ultimate unforeseen resource which springs from the death of human hopes. And how does he propose to attain sainthood if not through charity, which he calls "sympathy"? But the three virtues have changed their countenance and bearing; they no longer claim they are daughters of heaven and acknowledge no other origin for themselves than the passion for earthly life in revolt against death. If God does not answer, if he can no longer be made to answer, man is rich only in infinite patience toward himself. Henceforth, the three virtues will have to rely on patience alone.'⁶⁶

To sum up, Camus postulates that God's existence is debatable, but the existence of suffering is not. He gives God the benefit of the doubt, but cannot reconcile a just or omnipotent deity with the existence of evil. Thus he wagers that it is better to cure as much suffering as he can and live life to the full, than sit idly by debating what the divine purpose for suffering is and watch life pass him by. He has presented a convincing case for overthrowing God. But let us tackle each of these objections in turn to see if there is anything he might have missed. Primarily he argues that God's existence is incompatible with the co-existence of evil.

Fendt's (1995) reason for the existence of evil is as follows: '*God is love; therefore God's love requires that if you are to love him you do so freely and not because you are*

⁶⁵ Here she means optimism or optimism-without-hope.

⁶⁶ Bepaloff in Brée, 1962, 100.

*seduced by his power, glory, or ability to give good things (including happiness).*⁶⁷ For none of the above is love; they replace love, and in that respect make love impossible. The problem is that God is all of the above things and it is impossible for us not to love Him for having these attributes. Nevertheless, if God is omnipotent then he could create a universe in which all evidence of his power, love, ability to supply one's needs, and even his existence is ambiguous, in order for needy mortals to love Him freely in return. It is a scheme in which the creature may deny the omnipotent and turn away from the perfect good. This is the scheme of things that Rieux revolts against, according to Fendt, but love of God is not love of a scheme.

It is true that evil exists. If the universe were perfect, love as an autonomous choice (rather than in return for rewards accruing) would be lost to man. However, this makes it sound like the very existence of evil is proof for the existence of such a God, and his scheme has indeed backfired. Nonetheless, this argument has not offered any demonstrative or conclusive evidence that He exists, it just shows that God is love, therefore there is evil. One problem with an ambiguous universe is its ambiguity. We can say nothing definite about God, if everything in nature is ambiguous. What it comes down to is that we have to believe in something in the beginning in order for us to understand. For if you believe in nothing, you understand nothing.

Thus Fendt (1995) argues, evil is that which allows our love for God to be real love. Like the saying goes, 'love the giver, not the gift'. This theodicy is different from that made popular by Leibniz: we live in the best possible of worlds, since a believer does not have to say that God loves the scheme of things. The scheme of things is not the best of all possible worlds, but rather lets us become autonomous members of that best of all possible worlds, i.e. heaven. Creation can still be declared as unambiguously good, because it is good as a means, but just not inherently good⁶⁸. Job's belief that God is good, *'does not make his suffering and the deaths of all his children an absolutely good thing, but we see that Job is able to love God through all that; and to be able to love God, not just God's good gifts, is the greatest good thing of all'*.⁶⁹ Besides, if the good is only what is pleasant and useful, then we can only love God if He is pleasant and useful, and He can only love us for the same reasons. But humans are not very pleasant nor useful to God. Furthermore, if this is true we need not to be commanded to love God above all things, since we love (normally) without question what is pleasant and useful. This is a very childish view of God.

God has arranged the world in such a way that love (not pleasure) and freedom (not usefulness) are possible for them. *'Love cannot make the beloved a lover, in fact, it cannot wish to force that issue, but omnipotent love can make it possible for the beloved to be a lover.'*⁷⁰ This resolution avoids counter-intuitive claims like evil doesn't exist, or metaphysical ones like evil is merely the lack of perfection, or even aesthetic excuses like

⁶⁷ Fendt, 1995, 4.

⁶⁸ For the atheist Creation may well be an evil, but it is not a moral evil.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 11.

it shows off the light of grace better. Pascal is also wrong since, in loving, one does not win or lose, but rather one becomes a different person.

Fendt (1995) argues that to raise the problem of evil from the vantage point of the child is to create an optical illusion; as innocence does not know good and evil, it cannot raise the problem. It is to import knowledge of good and evil to a place where it is not, and so ceases to be innocent. *'As for what the child's suffering shows the doctor, who is less than innocent himself, might it not be that the suffering of this innocent shows not merely the finitude of creaturely existence, but the insufficiency of this creaturely existence for the happiness of the creature?'*⁷¹ Thus the suffering of innocents must be considered ambiguous.

Fendt equivocates on the term innocence. For if the child is supposed to be innocent of evil acts, that by no means implies that he does not have knowledge of the difference between good and evil acts, and has chosen the former. The child is an innocent in the same sense that Camus would say Christ is an innocent, yet he knew good and evil. Fendt's version of innocence would be free of knowledge, as Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, and would be a very young child or a mentally challenged child in reality.

Moreover, even if the child's suffering is not that of an innocent, the state of affairs is still worthy of rebellion, in Rieux's eyes. To reiterate, the metaphysical rebel rebels against man's search for happiness in the face of a spiteful universe, and the wastefulness and incompleteness that result from evil and death. Fendt believes he has stifled Rieux's revolt, but instead he has articulated the terms that fuelled his rebellion, i.e. why Rieux is frustrated with the universe. To think otherwise would be very mistaken; Camus is rebelling against the fact that God could have come up with a better scheme.

Furthermore, Fendt (1995) tries to argue that there is substantial emphasis on the idea that evil from which man suffers, i.e. physical evil, is far more significant than the evil that man does, i.e., moral evil. In fact, there is the general idea that all evil is external to man, is inevitable, and strikes at random. The analogy covers human wretchedness aptly, but ignores human wickedness. It is taken for granted that a vast range of suffering is suffering of innocents. There is an underestimation of the influence of genuine secondary agents, i.e. man and an overestimation of the influence of the primary agent, i.e. God. Nevertheless, even if one innocent suffers for every 500 guilty, it is enough to make Camus's point that God permits evil to reign in the world.

The only difference between Fendt and Paneloux, is that Paneloux wants us to love both the scheme and its Creator, whereas Fendt only wants us to love its Creator. Paneloux urges us to love what we cannot understand, but Fendt preaches that the reason we cannot understand, is so we can freely love. Fendt's is a version of the free will argument; because we must love autonomously for it to be love, hence there must be evil. Whilst Fendt goes a step further to explain why we should love God, he does not convince us that God is all loving, nor worthy of being loved, only that we should give our love freely

⁷¹ Ibid., 10.

to Him. For if we dislike the scheme, how can we love the Creator of that scheme and what knowledge do we have of Him to illustrate that he is worthy of our love. Furthermore, what do we have to corroborate the claim that heaven would necessarily be the best of all possible worlds. It is still a gamble. Camus would place his bet on immanence rather than a debatable future existence, since in that way suffering is diminished and life is lived to the full. For who is to say what this future existence is going to be like; what proof do we have to go on – only the suffering and torture of this world.

McCabe makes a compelling case for even Camus, why evil and God can be said to co-exist, that avoids the pitfalls of the former theodicy. To reiterate, Camus believes that the existence of evil proves that the ultimate source and meaning of the universe *cannot* be unconditional compassion and love. He denounces God as infantile, as unable to understand or have compassion on those who suffer, but Camus's view of God is in fact infantile. The following demonstrates this.

The world is full of suffering and sin, and God openly admits to creating this world. Thus, he cannot be defended on a charge of diminished responsibility on the grounds of incapacity. There is nobody else to take the blame from Him; God is omnipotent after all, i.e., he is capable of doing anything that you can mention.⁷² Thus, it is not hard to believe that God could have made a world with less suffering in it.

The charge then against God, is that he made a bad world when he could have made a better one. McCabe does not take it for granted that evil exists, but he first considers the evidence of evil in the world. What do we mean when we say something is evil? We mean more than it is just bad. For although a bad and an evil man are synonymous, a bad television and an evil television are not the same thing. Badness is the character of something that has been made. However, all bad things do not share a property in common, the property of being bad. For what it is like for one thing to be bad/good isn't the same as what it is like for another to be bad/good. '*A bad deckchair collapses when you sit down, but the fact that a grape collapses when you sit on it is not what would show it to be a bad grape.*'⁷³ What a bad grape and a bad deckchair have in common, are that they do not come up to our expectations, i.e. there is something negative about them⁷⁴. Thus, badness is a defect, or an absence⁷⁵. It is the lack of some positive quality in a thing, i.e. some positive quality that we think is to be expected of a thing. Badness is not just a lack, but it is a particular lack.

⁷² In other words he cannot make square circles, as the words cancel each other out so you haven't mentioned anything. But anything you describe a God can do.

⁷³ McCabe, 1987, 28.

⁷⁴ Something can be bad for an indefinite number of reasons, so long as the one negative thing is true: it does not match our expectations. Goodness is more specific: if someone has a good car, it is probably fast, efficient and so on. The same is true of a good or bad human being.

⁷⁵ Do not be mistaken, this is not to say that badness is unreal because it is an absence. '*Nothing in the wrong place can be just as real and just as important as something in the wrong place. If you inadvertently drive your car over a cliff you will have nothing to worry about; it is precisely the nothing that you have to worry about.*' (McCabe, 1987, 29)

Since badness is a defect, it is always parasitic on the good. You cannot have badness without goodness, but you can have goodness without badness. A bad deckchair must at best be a little good to even call it a deckchair in the first place rather than a washing machine, otherwise it is not a deckchair and cannot be a bad one. Whereas you could have a perfectly good deckchair with no defects at all.

Evil can, McCabe believes, be demarcated into the following two categories: (1) badness that happens to people and things, and (2) evil that people do. An example of the first class is the bacteria that spread the plague and caused the people of Oran to fall ill. This is because the agent that causes the suffering is separable from the one who suffers. The second kind of evil is sin. Someone who is said to have sinned is said to have inflicted rather than suffered evil. Evil does not come from outside in this instance, but it is self-inflicted.

One reason why the free will defence fails is that by no stretch of the imagination can all the evil suffered in the world be attributed to the viciousness of men and women. There was life on earth for millions upon millions of years before the human race appeared, killing each other and harmless plants, inflicting evil on them. Not all suffering on earth can be the result of human sin; it is simply a result of God's creation in time. Since death, decay, and violence all co-existed with the early history of the planet. Suffering is the result of the autonomous and open-ended dynamism of the evolutionary process. A plant that was chewed by dinosaurs is not as good as a plant that was not. The defect suffered by the plant is at the same time a fulfilment or achievement by the dinosaur. There can never be a defect suffered that did not perfect another. Thus when M. Othon's son suffers from the plague, it is precisely because the bacteria were behaving exactly as good bacteria should behave. If a bacterium was found not to be engaged in inflicting disease, we should judge that it was a defective or sick bacterium. The things that inflict evil on me then, are not evil, but rather it is by being good in their own way, that they made me bad in my way.

Good and bad are not just subjective but relative as well. What is good from the bacterium's point of view, is bad from mine etc. It is not just that it seems bad; it is bad. If God is to make good bacteria then he must allow for the defect in us. It is no reflection on God's omnipotence that he cannot make good bacteria without allowing for damaged humans. One cannot make material things that develop in time without allowing for the fact that, in perfecting themselves, they will damage other material things. Life evolves in the course of constant interaction of things, which necessarily means the damaging and destroying of things. Species become extinct so that life can evolve. God does not directly cause the defectiveness of human beings, but it is true that he makes bacteria, and that the damage caused to humans is the concomitant of this. He brings about evil suffered indirectly, for it is impossible to bring about good without allowing for concomitant defects.

It may be true that it would be better that bacteria did not exist, but it is a slippery slope to thinking that it would be better if the material world did not exist at all. (Moreover

there are many good bacteria that, by doing what comes naturally, keep the human body functioning.) This would be to argue, not that the world is bad, but that God should be denounced for making a material world (and the majority of people are glad that he did make the world).

When I go to my doctor with the flu, he does not say that '*there is no explanation in nature for this, it is an anti-miracle worked by a malignant God*'⁷⁶. He would say this, if he believed that there was more suffering in the world than there need be, but there is no more or less than is to be expected in a material world. To believe otherwise is to give up believing in God and the scientific intelligibility of the world.

Of course it could be argued that God could have made a material world without suffering in it through miraculous intervention. However, such a world would have no reason or order in it. A miracle occurs when only God is acting in the world, i.e. the non-presence of any natural causes and explanations. It would be a mistake to think that a miracle only happens when God intervenes in the world, for God is always acting in the world⁷⁷. A world where no defects are suffered would not be a natural world at all; an autonomous scientifically explicable world. No one objects to an occasional miracle, a withdrawal of natural causes, but not a world entirely consisting of miracles. Again most people like a world that operates according to its own natural laws.

You might rebut: Why does living in a natural world have to be painful? But pain is a good and necessary thing. It has evolutionary significance. If it were unnecessary for our survival it would have been discontinued long ago. For example, if we were not hurt by certain bacteria we would not know to be afraid of them. We would not be afraid to leave beef out of the fridge in the knowledge that E-coli would grow on it.

There still remains the question of why it has to hurt *so* much. The pain, for example, associated with cancer is not the same as the warning pain from a naked flame, but although the former pain is not useful to us, it is good for other things. Therefore God is not guilty of creating this world, but what of allowing the rampant wickedness in it?

Some may argue, and others have argued, that this wickedness is due to the actions of wicked human wills, that being free is not caused by God (freewill defence). God is indeed offended by such acts, but he could have prevented such evil by making us unfree. Hence just as in order to have a real material world with its own laws of action, it has to involve pain and suffering, so to have free creatures necessarily involves some wickedness.

Nevertheless, as I have said the world is held in being by God – the universe and God are incommensurable, so there is nothing in the world that he did not create and nothing that does not depend on Him. One important difference which must be noted between evil

⁷⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁷ God and the universe are incommensurable and each moment he holds the universe in being. The universe does not exist without God; if God ceased acting in the world, there would be no universe to speak of.

suffered and evil done, is that there could not be a material world subject to its own laws without evil suffered, but there could be such a world without evil done. That is to say evil suffered is the obverse of good achieved, but evil done is not an inevitable concomitant of good in the world, except accidentally.

God may in fact bring good out of my evil acts, even though they in themselves have no good aspects, e.g. my adultery may give birth to a child. This is because evil done is self-inflicted. The harm is done to the agent which causes it. Whereas in evil suffered there are two agents: the one inflicting the harm and the one suffering it. For the former the act is good, while for the latter it is evil.

In the case of the bacteria ravaging our body, what makes it bad for us is that we become less like what we expect of a human as a result of the disease. Nevertheless, in the case of Cottard being unjust, what makes it bad for him is that his humanity is diminished and he brings this about himself. In the former encounter at least the bacteria is benefiting, but in Cottard's act of injustice, it is precisely him, the perpetrator, who suffers.

Just to clarify, an action may indeed be morally wrong because it does harm to others, but what we mean by saying that it is morally wrong, is it damages the perpetrator. The perpetrator by committing a morally wrong act loses some of his personhood; he becomes less like what we expect of a person. Furthermore, it is the perpetrator who has diminished himself; that is what makes it not just a wrong, but a moral wrong. Both the evil done and the resultant defect are in him. For if I buy a video machine at 'Cash Crusaders' unbeknownst to me that it is stolen, I would not say that I did anything wrong (although the shop owner could be charged for receiving stolen goods). On the other hand, if I knew about the video being stolen and bought it anyway, then we could say that I was behaving in an unacceptable way for a human being, a way that is unjust, and so morally wrong. (The moral evil would consist in the injustice and the way that I had diminished myself in acting like that.) The evil suffered is by the person who now does not have a video machine, and it is inflicted by me. The evil done, however, is in me. Acting unjustly means a diminishment of my humanity. It is not just that it has a bad effect on me, it is a diminishment of me, just as not being able to change channels is a diminishment of my TV. It is a diminishment at my own hand. A dead loss with no good aspect.

McCabe's defence is that: since there is no good at all in a morally evil act (except accidentally), there is nothing created there, hence no action of God, only diminishment at my own hands. Evil done is a failure by me on my part to live as humanly, as intensely, as I might have done. There is no good done in a moral wrong and so God does not bring about such failure. I bring it about myself.

His argument can be summarised as follows:

1. Everything good in the world is brought about by God.
2. Some kinds of evil (suffering) are a necessary concomitant of certain kinds of good, in this sense they are then brought about by God.

3. Another kind of evil (sin) is not brought about by God at all. However, He could have prevented it.

Therefore, God brings about everything that is good and He only indirectly brings about evil.

When evil is done, there is always a choice between what will fulfil me as a human being and some lesser good that conflicts with this fulfilment. There is nothing wrong with choosing to be powerful as long as it does not conflict with being just. (For if I choose power unjustly, I have failed in being human, and that is morally evil.) It is true that I could not act unjustly, unless I was sustained in being by God, i.e. unless every positive action of mine were sustained in being by God. My desire for power is a positive thing, but it is a minor thing. However, my failure to seek true happiness and fulfilment, since it is a failure, is not brought about by God. God does not make absences, non-beings, failures, etc. There are no evil desires, just evil disproportion in our desires. *'Moral evil lies in sacrificing great things for the sake of trivial things, it lies in the failure to want happiness enough.'*⁷⁸

Likewise, it is true that although God did not bring about my failure he could have intervened to bring about my success. (To reiterate, this would not interfere with my freedom because freedom does not mean independence from God. It means independence from other creatures.) God does not have to let me sin in order for me to be free. Thus God could have made a world which was free of sin and in which everyone was free. Sin has no function in the world except by accident.

Nonetheless, God is not guilty of neglect; he is no more under an obligation to prevent me from sinning than he was under one to create the world in the first place. If He were said to be under a duty, there would have to be something greater than Him to constrain Him. To summarise the existence of suffering, that is evil suffered, is no more than is required by the existence of a material world subject to its own laws. In fact, thanks to healing, there is a lot less suffering than would be expected in the world. If we believe the material world is a good thing we cannot blame God for the necessary concomitant of some suffering. As for moral evil, the most we can say of God is that He does not prevent it. Without suffering there would be no real animals, but as for the existence of sin, it's a mystery – but *not* a contradiction.

For *'it is one thing to say that sin is not a manifestation of God's goodness and quite another to say that sin is a manifestation that God is not good. We do not know why the good God has made a world which does not at all times manifest his goodness, but the notion is not contradictory... We do not know how, but it is good to recognise this for it reminds us that we know nothing of God and his purposes except that he loves us and wishes us to share his life of love.'*⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibid., 36.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 38.

It is obvious from McCabe's account that God is good and wants the best for every creature in the universe. A heaven free from natural constraints would clearly be a nice place to be with this God, unlike Fendt's. Even Camus, who would denounce God, cannot admit that it is for making the material world, but rather it is for its lack of comprehensibility and justice.

Chapter 3

Having appeared to have dealt with Camus's primary objection to faith in God, there still remains an objection outstanding. Camus's objection is to the 'old God' that led to the devaluation of human creativity. However, there is nothing in his works that speaks against a conception of God that could ensure the freedom and value of human existence. One that may persuade them to work towards harmonious solidarity with others, but cannot coerce them to do so. It is because of his mistaken understanding of Christianity (i.e. the historical interaction between Jesus and his followers) that he is unable to see that Christianity is compatible with freedom, and in fact a true understanding of it enables our capacity for self-determination.

Shutte's (1993) relational view contains such a conception of God. The relational view of persons is not concerned with any purported human nature but rather with the particular set of causal relations that makes each individual who they are.

It is our intellectual capacities that define us as persons and demarcate us from the rest of the material world. The immateriality of the intellect consists in its self-reflexivity or *reditio in seipsum*, i.e. that it is aware and can act upon itself. Persons are self-aware and self-determining. Being conscious (aware) of your consciousness and doing something to this consciousness by your consciousness (awareness). '*...a finite system of individual, distinguishable elements cannot have the kind of relationship that man has to himself.*'⁸⁰ Our spirituality is deduced from our capacity for knowledge; in knowing we go beyond the reaches of our own mind, to grasp what is other than it. Moreover, our self-determining acts transcend causal laws; this is because knowledge is a necessary condition for deliberate decision and action. A person is made of two relations; a relation to the self and a relation to that which is other than us. The enactment of one relation is impossible without the other. A freedom-in-dependence sounds paradoxical, but it shall be revealed to be otherwise.

There is one quality that all persons possess: a capacity for self-realisation. To say that something has this capacity is to say unambiguously that it has the capacity for freedom. Two signs of self-realisation are our sense of responsibility and our ability to know the truth. Even a sceptic, who denies that such knowledge is possible, would have to use premises that he believes are true, to prove that there is no such thing as the truth. It is impossible to be totally sceptical about our ability to discern the truth, as it is ultimately self-refuting. To comprehend the world in any way, we must believe that something is true. Even Descartes could not doubt the fact that he thought and was a thinking thing.

⁸⁰ Rahner, 1978, 29.

Likewise, even though determinists do not believe we have the power to choose freely, they would still maintain that there is a sense in which we are to be held accountable for our actions, provided we have deliberately decided on them, so that the fabric of society does not become unravelled. Every act that we deliberately decide on, we cannot but help feel responsible for. I am self-determining, in that it is me who performs the act, and in doing so I act upon the object and myself. In both these acts I am free from the influence of external finite causes and am freely determining the kind of person I am becoming.

Any judgement we make expresses an idea about the way the world is that we believe to be true. In claiming that something is true, one is in fact claiming that one's ideas correspond to reality. In other words, you are comparing your own past experience with what you are experiencing now and looking for confirmation between the two – this would constitute a reason for making such a judgement. The content of the idea and the judgement are the same; all that is added is an affirmation. For example, I believe that the tooth fairy exists, and that she gives money for old teeth. I put my tooth under my pillow and wake up with five rand. I therefore judge that the tooth fairy has been and does in fact exist. All judgements have a reason behind them and are self-reflective. In making such a judgement I become present to myself, because it is my own ideas that I am judging the truth of, using the criterion of my own experience. I am taking on a belief outside my system of beliefs in order to critically assess the selfsame system of beliefs. (This is known as our ability to abstract.)

The same is true in making a deliberate decision; the only difference in a deliberate decision is that we are evaluating desires not beliefs. I am choosing between competing desires, on the basis of my beliefs about what state of affairs will best constitute my happiness – providing a reason why I consent to acting in the way I do. Consenting to a desire provides the logic for acting in a certain way in this context. As before, the content of the desire and the consent are the same. The latter is just more a part of me, than a desire which I have withheld my consent from. In acting in this way I am distinguishing a desire from a plethora of possible desires and affirming it. The consenting me, acts on the desiring me.

Our capacity for logic can be seen to be closely connected to this capacity for self-realisation. It is precisely because we do make deliberate choices and judgements for a reason, that they cannot be the result of external causes acting upon us. There is no reason discoverable by the sciences why certain past experiences should be used to corroborate our reaction to our present experiences, nor why some desires are consented over others, specifically because they are done for a reason and science deals with causal links not logical ones. This is the essential difference between holding beliefs for a reason, instead of them being the result of an association of ideas. The latter would render the subject's behaviour irrational and not free. For example, to cross the street to avoid a black man walking down the road because you fear him robbing you, is simply the result of an association of ideas. However, to cross the road because you see him

carrying a knife and wearing a balaclava is doing it for a reason, and completely rational and free.

Science cannot find a cause for the reasons behind judgements and deliberate decisions, because such acts can only be described properly in logical terms. Physical and psychological descriptions leave out the fact that I have grasped a logical connection between a belief and a belief, or a belief and a desire, i.e. the reason behind the judgement or decision. Moreover, since physical and psychological events cannot be described using logical terms, they cannot in turn be causes of events that can only be described in such a way. Psychological and physical explanations should be left for psychological and physical events.

We transcend any natural system discoverable by science; that is to say that our behaviour cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by the laws of science. This does not, however, mean that we wish to conclude that our behaviour is random, rather it is the product of a causal agent (persons) working according to logical laws. To say that we are free because we transcend the laws of science does not imply that we are free from gravitational laws, but is rather to claim that our behaviour cannot be fully accounted for by scientific laws. The only adequate explanation for our behaviour as a person is that it is carried out by a causal agent operating under logical laws. Materialism falls away then and so does dualism. Since we are the causes of events in the material world and so have a continuous causal interaction with the environment, but we function according to logical laws.

Freedom is great, but what good is it if you don't exercise it! What follows is a summary of the necessary conditions for a person to exercise their God-given freedom⁸¹. Now in order for a person to realise personhood, they must become self-realised and for this they need other people. An impersonal environment is not sufficient. A good illustration of this notion is cases of 'wild children' and hospitalism. The former occurs when children develop to physical maturity without human presence. It was found that all basic capacities for identifying someone as a person were absent in these children, e.g. self-awareness, self-determination, abstraction, etc. They were non-persons in persons' clothing, so to speak. The latter occurs when babies are separated from their parents and are looked after by institutions. The result is that these children develop personhood at a slower rate, because of the lack of personal contact. The staff of such institutions did not have the time to take care of more than the babies' physical needs and so did not have time to relate to them as persons. Thus, the children failed to develop self-control and self-awareness. All of which are necessary pit-stops on the continuum of personal development.

It will be illustrated forthwith that people need other people to become persons, i.e. they need to be recognised and valued by other people as *persons*. This may first seem at odds with what has gone before, for how can a person be free whilst at the same time being

⁸¹ Such descriptions are ideal and abstract since they are the result of reflections on our capacity for self-realisation.

dependent on his social environment for his development, but it will be shown that through this very dependence personal freedom is perfected.

Personal growth can be analysed in terms of roughly three stages, which can be understood as logical aspects of a phenomenology of personal growth. In the beginning our capacity for self-realisation takes the form of self-awareness and self-determination, i.e. consciousness of being the origin of free action in the world. This can be characterised by the dynamic that exists between a mother and her child⁸². A baby is indicative of the natural capacity that exists for personal growth, and the mother all that is needed to bring that capacity to maturity or fulfilment⁸³. In other words it consists of the development of self-consciousness and self-determination.

The baby is not self-conscious from the start; it needs the presence of someone in order for the child to be reflected back to itself, that it has a self. This presence must, however, be a self-conscious being who can treat the child as a person by directing their consciousness towards the child. *'It is only in the directed gaze of the mother that the child can discover itself as the object of the mother's attention.'*⁸⁴ What the cases of the wild children and hospitalism illustrate is that no other natural object can reflect back to the child its selfhood. What is needed is the presence of a self-conscious being, who sees the child as a person and consciously directs its consciousness towards the child⁸⁵. It is only in the directed gaze of the mother that the child experiences itself as an object of the mother's attention. Likewise, it is only through the mother's consent to the child's actions that it can recognise itself as a cause of action in the world. Furthermore, the child's happy responses to her expressions of love are what she most desires and so make her happy too. Only in this way can a child become conscious of itself as a self-determining being, as a source of power that can make changes in the world. It does not stop here, but is gradually confirmed for the child on a daily basis.

In poor orphanages there are too many babies to one nurse and so, although they have the eyes and hands needed to care for them, they do not have the actual presence of a nurse, due to time constraints, to develop as persons. The nurse does not put her heart into her actions; the baby is treated as a mere task, not as a person. The baby can only be thought of as a source of agency where it has the capacity to make a mother happy, through its

⁸² In practice though it is through an abundance of such relationships that we develop as persons, but this abstract model is used as it distils the otherwise obscured essential requirements for personal development. We are only concerned with the portrayal of the necessary conditions for the development of our capacity for self-realisation. Moreover that is why here like later examples we overlook possible impediments to personal growth and why the model may appear idealistic.

⁸³ That such a capacity is *natural* is illustrated by the case of Kellog and Kellog (1933 in Shutte, 1993, 78), who raise their own child and a chimp simultaneously. The chimp develops far quicker than the child in the beginning, but in the end does not have the capacity to develop similar capacities to the child, e.g. the child can use language for self-expression.

⁸⁴ Shutte, 1993, 79.

⁸⁵ The presence of another person is not a necessary condition for a child to develop into a person; it is only sufficient. The nurses at the hospital only give their hands to the babies to meet their basic needs, but do not really give of themselves. The nurse does not put her heart, consent or love into her actions regarding the baby. She withholds the person she is from the baby and as a result it will not have a proper conception of the person it is, because it was not properly affirmed.

appropriate responses to her love, e.g. smiling up at her, etc. Through this the baby becomes conscious of its power to make changes in the world, i.e. it is conscious of itself as a self-determining being. For example, if a mother stops brushing the teeth of her child, then the child should take up brushing them himself, as he would come to realise it is for his own benefit, and as a result become less reliant on the mother and so more self-determining. Such an act of standing back was extremely difficult for the mother and is liable to misinterpretation on the part of the child. He could have taken it for rejection. However, because it is done with the best possible intentions there can be no misinterpretation on the part of the child. It is done amid a background of other loving actions done for the benefit of the child. Thus the child loves and trusts that his mother knows best and to consent to her actions. In the past the mother has done what was best for the child, so he reasons why should the present differ?

This interpersonal transaction has additional support from what Heron (1970 in Shutte, 1993, 79) calls 'the gaze'. Looking at the eye of another is a completely different activity from gazing into the eyes of another. When you look at someone's eyes, like an optician does, i.e. examine the eyeballs, the colour of the irises, etc., you do not perceive a person looking back at you. Whereas if you now meet their gaze, there is a different effect. You now can observe someone looking back to you, the presence of a person like you and at the same time you are conscious of yourself as being looked at. Experiments have shown that in looking at a person's gaze, you are not looking at the person's eyes. Your attention is in fact oscillating rapidly between their eyes or looking at an indeterminate spot between them.

Heron concludes from the gaze that an interpersonal interaction occurs that defies physical explanation and can neither be the result of mental reaction. This type of reality is 'transphysical'. Although mediated by physical phenomenon the gaze-light is transphysical, an extra phenomenal dimension of a physical reality⁸⁶. Furthermore, the activity is also transphysical as this transphysical reality cannot be perceived using purely physical means. This transphysical reality causes a profound awareness of my mind-body unity and that of the other's, as well as the newly established unitive field of consciousness between the two.

This transphysical reality is not inferred from other facial and bodily cues and projected onto the gaze of the perceiver, since when the gaze is isolated from such cues, the gaze-phenomenon still persists. Neither is the gaze simply an emotional reaction of the perceiver projected onto the perceived eyes, since when the eyes are isolated, the response can only be a function of how we see one object in the world, i.e. the perceived eyes. The emotion can only be a direct result of the person's eyes and so cannot be projected or inferred from anything else.

The second stage signals the development of moral, spiritual or psychological growth. During this stage, self-realisation is developed firstly, through the growth of self-knowledge, the development of an even deeper insight into the unique person that one is and, secondly, through self-affirmation, a development of one's capacity for self-

⁸⁶ See Heron, 1970, 253.

determination, so that one can fully accept and affirm the person that one is becoming. In other words, as we grow, we come to understand ourselves better, why we do the things we do, what we want from life and how to get it. The more we can accept the darker sides of our personalities and are not controlled by our compulsions, the freer we become.

We have a minimal self-knowledge, in that we are aware (self-conscious) of ourselves as the originators of our acts, but there is room for growth. The same is true of our capacity for self-determination. Whatever the object of our decision, it is also a decision about oneself and so an affirmation about oneself. This affirmation is only partial though, since we lack an insight into what we really want, and as a result experience a conflict between our desires. Clearly then, there is still room for us to grow as persons.

Hence the self is a duality of active relationships. The first is whereby a self becomes aware of itself and comes to know itself. The second is where the known self accepts and affirms itself and so comes to possess itself more fully. The former is divisive, but the latter is unificatory. Added to these two relationships that constitute the self, is the element of desire, the desire to be a person, to grow in self-knowledge and become self-affirming. There are three aspects of the self, one characterised by knowledge, one by affirmation and one by desire⁸⁷. In order to know myself I need to discover then what I believe, what I value and what I desire. Ultimately though, what is most fundamental to my self, is what I deeply desire. Thus, real self-knowledge must be based on what I deeply desire and which of my deep desires are most important in my life. Whilst true self-affirmation, on the other hand, comes about through the consenting to these desires and attempting to realise them in my life. Therefore, personal growth consists in discovering what my most fundamental desires are, and satisfying them.

*'We do not simply exist; we exist as human beings.'*⁸⁸ What Shutte means is that our very existence entails self-knowledge, i.e. a pre-reflective cognitive grasp of our own humanity. It is an understanding of our own deep desires and what would fulfil them. Jesus' followers gained this knowledge through Him and how they could be fulfilled in relation to Him and with each other. Christians are those who have gained insight into the meaning of life through their relationship with Jesus. In this way, Jesus was just a man who happened to be more in touch with the Creator than we are, but it is possible for us to reach such an insight through self-knowledge and affirmation. Jesus is not, as is sometimes believed, the blurring of the distinction between Creator and humanity.

It must be remembered that our deep desires are not the result of our cultural upbringing or socio-economic status, but emanate from our human nature and so are common to everyone, e.g. the desire to be loved, to love, to understand, to play, etc. They may make themselves felt in different ways and even satisfy themselves in different ways, but they are essentially the same in everyone. In order to gain self-knowledge one must

⁸⁷ Shutte (1993, 81) calls these self-systems as each contains many different items. Nevertheless in spite of the number and variety of our beliefs, choices and desires, there is a push towards unity and order. For these two reasons then, he calls them self-systems.

⁸⁸ Shutte, 2004, 10.

acknowledge and affirm them in oneself. It is not enough to intellectually understand our human nature and the desires that are rooted in it. True self-knowledge is only attained when we are aware of our own nature, of our own deep desires, as well as their relative importance. Knowing one's deep desires – what we really want – is important in order to get an idea of how one conceives of oneself. Such an insight embodies a judgement of value (what do you deem to be important in life?) and will determine one's actions. The system of deep desires will, in fact, provide a criterion of what one ought to do and how one ought to live.

Growth in self-knowledge and affirmation lead to a growth in self-realisation because the former are principles of integration in the self and hence they cause increasing personal freedom. The self has a tendency to disintegration. There is conflict within the self, between contradictory beliefs, values and desires. Furthermore, there is also conflict between the systems – between what I ought to do and what I do, between what I want to do and what I choose to do and between what I want and what I should do. In such a state of chaos, my behaviour is compulsive and not free. If my self-knowledge is not developed, I do not know what I really want, and so in turn will not know which desires to consent to. In as much as I consent to the superficial desires, the division in myself will increase, as my deep desires will not go away, but will persist in opposition to the others. Moreover, I will not be able to truly affirm myself, as the self that I am affirming is not my true self, and will make true self-knowledge impossible. For in order to remain in this state of bad faith, I must suppress all awareness of my contradictory, although real, desires and beliefs. So lack of self-knowledge makes genuine self-affirmation impossible, and in turn, the inability to affirm one's true self makes real self-knowledge impossible. It is a vicious circle.

Self-knowledge is the principle of integration within each self system, and self-affirmation is the principle of integration between them. True self-knowledge is knowledge of the relative importance of our desires. To the extent that we follow this ranking of our desires and use it as a blueprint for our choices and acts, conflict will be gradually overcome in the self. Moreover, as our beliefs, commitments and desires will gradually correspond to this *genuine* pattern (thus being sincerely affirmed), conflict between the systems of the self will also dissipate. Our beliefs about what is truly valuable will not conflict with each other, nor our commitments or our desires⁸⁹.

Now if I am lacking in self-knowledge and self-affirmation, how do I obtain them on my own? The answer is, I make friends with someone who both knows and affirms himself. In so far as I come to truly know him, I will learn of the relative importance of his desires and in getting to know his deep desires, I am gaining knowledge of the deep desires of our common nature and how they are manifested in him. I come to share his judgement and so get to know how these deep desires appear in me. To the extent that I affirm these desires in him, I also affirm them in myself.

⁸⁹ Of course conflict in the self is never completely overcome, nor self-affirmation and self-knowledge complete. But this is just a model based on an ideal account of personal growth and such claims in no way jeopardize its validity.

How is it that I, who is lacking in personal growth, come to know and affirm my friend in the first place? The answer is my friend enables me; he knows me better than I know myself. He has a third-person perspective, whereas I can't see the wood for the trees. He can see the true desires that underlie my sometimes irrational behaviour and so affirms them even though they are buried. He affirms me, when I cannot. This may take the form of criticism, but he has my best interests at heart (my personal growth), it is constructive. I, on the other hand, will consent to his affirmation of me, because despite outward appearances, I really want this too. His affirmation of me enables me to reveal myself to him, and so to affirm him. This is because the more I get to know him, the more I can affirm him. Likewise, the more I get to know myself the more I can affirm myself and him. It is a dynamic relationship that is in constant flux. Let us amend, persons depend on other persons for their personal development; to persons depend on other persons, who have already developed as persons, if they are to develop their capacity for realisation to the full.

The final stage is that of self-transcendence and self-donation⁹⁰. Growth in our capacity for self-realisation is manifested in the form of self-transcendence and self-donation. This stage will illustrate that persons need other persons to properly express their personal growth. This can be explained as a move towards other-centeredness. It is the ultimate goal of true personal growth. Again, commonsense would say that the more you have grown as a person, the less you need other people. This may be true when we are talking about the capacities for self-consciousness, determination, knowledge, affirmation and realisation. But in order for us to express these capacities other people must be present, i.e. in order for them to be actualised, they must be enacted. Now we are complete in self-knowledge and self-affirmation, at least in theory, we want to know and affirm other people so that they continue to develop as persons, as an end in itself (not so that we will continue to develop as persons). We want to remain in interpersonal-transactions with them because it is valuable knowing them and so in turn affirming them. Most of the people you consider being friends with in your life, you do because you enjoy knowing them as the person they are, not for material benefits etc. We want to sincerely know and affirm others because they are worthy of it, and in turn we want others to feel the same about us. We want to be wanted, not needed. *'...the ultimate goal of personal growth is the creation of a community of persons in full knowledge and genuine love of each other...characterized by a peculiar reciprocity and mutuality, even a unanimity, of heart, mind and feeling.'*⁹¹

Self-transcendence occurs when through the intimate knowledge of the other person; you overcome the barriers between the two of you and enter fully into the life of another, so to speak. Self-donation occurs at this level as well, because one is loved for the person they are, not because of something external to themselves or what they can do for you. You give of yourself, not so that you can be known and affirmed, but because you believe that the other person is worthwhile to know and affirm. It is self-sacrificing love, with

⁹⁰ To reiterate this is not really a stage as our personal growth is never complete; rather it is indicative of the type of activities that one would engage in to express personal growth. The more you engage in them, the more you have grown. It should be regarded as a goal state.

⁹¹ Shutte, 1993, 87.

yourself as the gift. A love that Sartre has never known, one that asks for nothing and expects nothing in return. It is truly altruistic⁹². One is not absorbed by the other, but both actors in an interpersonal relationship transcend one another and form an unrestricted communion. In this communion there is never a question of who is who, just as the mother does not absorb her child, yet it continues to grow inside her. We are all fundamentally the same, deep down, but it is the superficialities that still make me, me, and you, you⁹³. All this work is not done so that we can be controlled by another, it is done in the spirit of self-realisation and so its goal must be the fullest expression of it. Personal development can only occur with consent and never against a person's will. Rieux can be said to demonstrate self-donation and self-transcendence. It is the life of the true healer. He puts others peoples' needs before his own and does not flee Oran.

The relational view can be summed up by the phrase *Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which means effectively that persons are identified not by their natural abilities, but by their relations with others. Self and the world are united in a reciprocal web of relations, in contrast to European philosophy where the self manipulates and controls the world. “*I think therefore, I am*” is replaced by “*I participate, therefore I am*”.⁹⁴ Society is not merely a collection of individuals, but individuals develop in relation to society. African thought moves from the society to the individual rather than European thought which is from the individual to society. Freedom is paramount, but can only be exercised whilst one maintains reciprocal relations to the group, that which is other than oneself. It is a community society⁹⁵. Solidarity is not emphasised to the detriment of an individual's freedom.

It is clear then why in African thought the good of the community is emphasised over the individual, as it is what enables me to achieve true self-realisation. There is no opposition in this theory between the individual's good and the common good. Obviously when the community or an individual's needs are stressed in such a way to impede the development and actualisation of a person's freedom, such social practices should be abandoned, e.g. totalitarianism. Individual freedom is transcendence over total domination by external causes. In addition to the psychic integration of the systems of the self, in order that one can consent absolutely to what one really wants to do, and the positive freedom of self-realisation. Whilst, social freedom is synonymous with social

⁹² This account demonstrates why egoism is wrong and altruism preferable. Egoism is self-destructive, whereas altruism is constructive. Egoism being wrong for purely deontological reasons, i.e. the person's MO. I seek out the other for his own sake, not to try to build myself up, and if I did it would not work as it would not be genuine. I want to develop as a person only so that I can help others develop, thus the pleasure I get from helping others develop is purely a concomitant of my altruism. It is nonsensical to think that such pleasure is my primary motive, since it would not be the same pleasure that results from an altruistic act, if it were my primary motive.

⁹³ The deep desires are the same in all of us, but they are satisfied and make themselves known in different ways.

⁹⁴ Taylor, 1963, 41 in Shutte, 1993, 47.

⁹⁵ The best example of this model of community is the family. The family has no function outside itself, is simply a place for its members to grow and develop in relation to one another. Humanity can be conceived of as a family, one which one joins in birth but does not exit in death.

harmony, but genuine social freedom only exists when individual freedom is promoted as a result of it.

It may seem that this account is unrealistic and idealistic, but this is because often our inner selves do not concur with our outward acts. Most of these dynamisms are hidden and unconscious. This paradoxical other-dependence for my own self-realisation is just an expression in space and time of the duality of relations that exist in the self, our spirituality and our materiality. This interpersonal causality description can be accounted for by materialism or dualism and is best likened to the African notion of *seriti*. It is like the western notion of aura: that we exude a magnetic field. It is the energy that makes us ourselves and is what is shared in interpersonal relationships. This causality is unlike any physical causality, where, according to Newton's third law of gravity, every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Hence the more that is done by one, the less that is done by the other. Personal growth, on the other hand, cannot be added or subtracted. It is not additive; my personal growth is not the result of some co-operative enterprise, it is totally my own doing. My response, therefore, my work. Furthermore, this is why persons do not absorb each other, because they exhibit strictly personal influences that are incommensurable. Thus, demonstrating the reality of a form of energy which both resists scientific explanation and need not imply dualism, as we have demonstrated; only a duality of relationships.

Now you may be forgiven for wondering where all this is going and what it has to do with the existence of a transcendent being. All shall become clear now. Although we have the desire and the capacity for personal growth, we do not yet have the ability to develop this capacity alone. We need the power of another already developed person to initiate the interpersonal transaction. Nevertheless, a question arises – where did the other person get this power from? If we all start off in the same boat, how can this process ever get off the ground? What is required is a person who already possesses this capacity without the assistance of others. What is needed is a 'self-taught' person, but since the very definition of a human person requires that they develop their personhood through interpersonal transactions, it cannot be a human person. The entity required would have to transcend such a need, in other words an uncaused cause. It is not a question of an original cause in time, but rather of a different kind of cause, a transcendent cause. It would take an entity that is not only free from the constraints of human nature (dependence on interpersonal transactions), but also free from the influence of all finite causes (because it develops the capacity for self-realisation in us). If, for example, I was under the influence of alcohol (external force) I would no longer be self-determining, but when I am influenced by this transcendent entity I am self-determining by virtue of its influence. Therefore, it cannot be external to me in any way; it is inside me, as a cause of my acts and my growing self-determination.⁹⁶ It follows from this then that if such transcendent being is necessary to develop my capacity for self-determination, it is also necessary to bring it about in the first place. *'Just as no system of external causes such as the sciences discover can cause my free acts, so no such system can produce the sort of being that has the capacity for such acts...the source of the power that produces personal growth in me is thus transcendent in an absolute sense. It is*

⁹⁶ This is not to be taken in a spatial sense.

*unlimited.*⁹⁷ Even though it transcends anything I can conceive of, we still experience it as the cause of the whole process of personal growth and community. My friend is only able to empower my capacity for personal development because of the transcendent power at work in him. It is not additional to his power, but rather it brings his power into being. It operates within interpersonal relationships to create persons and community.

Since the qualities of personal growth are not additive, nothing less than a transcendent being will do. Even if it were found that they could be accumulated in a single person's character, the question would still arise as to how he got to that stage, if they were not slightly developed to begin with. Furthermore, the universal experience is that of desiring personal growth. It is so impervious and is so universal across time and culture, that it is hard to believe it does not express a fundamental capacity of our nature. Moreover, if such a desire is natural then it follows that conditions for its satisfaction must exist.⁹⁸ Thus, if being a person means having a desire that only a transcendent being can satisfy, then such a being must exist.

In wanting the love and understanding of others, one is in fact wishing to know and affirm oneself, and in wanting real personal communion with others, one is in fact, whether one is aware of it or not, desiring to grow as a person. Nevertheless, it is this desire to affirm ourselves that stands in the way of loving others for their sake. It is because we so wish to be loved for our own sake, that we affirm unsuitable values. This is why we need someone who is able to love without being loved. Our desire for personal community can be seen as our desire to be completely fulfilled, since that is the criterion for participation in such a community. We all experience at one time or another a desire for personal growth, affirmation from others and a communion with other persons, so we can be sure that these stages of personal growth do exist. It is only the occurrence of personal growth that provides the evidence for personal growth occurring. Each of us must confirm it for ourselves. This is not fully-fledged faith, since faith would be if you believed that such a community was even possible. Maybe it is all the proof one person can have, as knowledge starts with us believing in what we see with our own eyes. Even Camus would have to agree, being an empiricist.

Evolution too implies the existence of a transcendent being, since in every stage of the evolutionary process beings are produced whose nature and activity cannot be explained in terms of the forces that produced them. It is, simply, a growth in complexity, in which new levels of reality emerge from previous ones through a process of self-transcendence. It is apt to convey the process of continuous creation with humans at the forefront. Humanity is a microcosm of the universe, with all levels of reality realised in us⁹⁹. Huxley's famous expression '*humanity is evolution become conscious of itself.*'¹⁰⁰ It makes sense then to see the universe as, basically, an aggregate of persons. Therefore nothing is left out. An atom after all is simply a construct of the human mind. In this

⁹⁷ Shutte, 1987, 202.

⁹⁸ Note that is not to say that such a desire must be satisfied, but that conditions are out there for it to be satisfied.

⁹⁹ Physical, biological, psychological and personal.

¹⁰⁰ In Shutte, 2004, 16.

way materialism is forgotten, as the biological, psychological and physical are not more fundamental kinds of reality than the personal. Scientific descriptions become only abstract and partial. Dualism bites the dust too, as the universe gains unification in humanity. Transcendence can now be articulated in non-mystical terms, rather as a freedom from material constraints. Humanity transcends the universe in the sense that the forces of nature are not sufficient to either create us or overcome the predicament we find ourselves in. Nevertheless, we are totally dependent on God for our ability to harness this freedom and thus to control the forces of nature. The fallout is essentially that we like our God, but not our dependence on Him. We try at every turn to gain temporary satisfaction of our infinite desires, for it can only be temporary through finite measures, knowing that the satisfaction of something infinite is impossible through something finite.

All religions have faith in a transcendent power with the ability to fulfil our deepest human needs and desires that we are incapable of fulfilling for ourselves. Thus religion on this view would also consist of gaining access to this power and co-operating with it in order to bring about fulfilment. In calling such a power God, it means no less than I trust or have faith in such a power, and tells us no more about its nature. We can only have negative knowledge of such an entity, because it is transcendent and unlimited¹⁰¹. Faith on this account then, is recognising our desire for personal development and communion with others, and not dismissing it as impossible and illusory. *'But it only becomes faith in the full sense of the term when we discover that the power not only exists but is actually at work in our relationships with others.'*¹⁰² Faith is a matter of commitment, not just a belief. It is an attitude that of self-donation – in giving ourselves to others and so empowering them to do the same. In the Christian faith this is exemplified through the influence of Jesus; he is identified with the power to overcome all obstacles that stands in the way of authentic fulfilment of our deepest needs and desires, to cure the human predicament as such. He does this through sharing what he has learnt with us and creating a community between Himself and us.

Nonetheless, if faith is a gift from God, what are we supposed to do? It is not a gift to be taken passively; it changes us. Praying for example, on this account of religion, has no pragmatic purpose, but like rituals in other religions serves a symbolic purpose. It is our way of affirming and connecting with what God is doing in our lives. *'Joining a religious community and living as a member of it...is a way of making one's whole life expressive, and so a medium, for the activity of God.'*¹⁰³ There is thus no difference between our attitude to God and our attitude to humanity in such a religion. Therefore, no inhumanities are committed and our personal freedom is instead maximised, contrary to what Camus believes. Shutte's faith brings him together with other people, whereas Paneloux's places him apart from others. It would be correct to say that Camus too has faith in personal growth and communion, because he feels they can be accomplished by human hands alone, but Shutte has adequately demonstrated that the process needs a

¹⁰¹ Genuine personal knowledge of God is possible in the experience of personal growth and community; it is the kind of knowledge we have of persons.

¹⁰² Shutte, 1987, 206.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 209.

transcendent being to get it off the ground. Thus, belief in God does not mean the end of solidarity as Paneloux and Camus would have us believe, but the beginning of it.

These ideals now can be used as a tool to evaluate all religions – are they adequate expressions of personal community and growth? The doctrines of the various religions are not important, as they are just different ways of expressing the same thing. We are concerned here with what religions say we ought to do. There are many signs of inhumanity in religion, e.g. war, the denial of human freedom, treating God as if he were finite (opposing his powers with our own, treating Him like a headmaster) and the denial of human community. Only a religion that acknowledges human freedom as both a fact and a value can survive. Camus is right to criticise religions if they do not live up to these ideals.

Thus, for Shutte (1993), the only time that we are not free is when we do not know what we really want and so do not know which desires to affirm or inhibit¹⁰⁴. We avoid this lack of freedom only through interpersonal relationships, where we come to know ourselves and others better. Shutte has shown that by loving someone fully you enable them to love themselves and other people, and enable them to make decisions for themselves. Basically, you empower them to be free and they reciprocate. In other words, other persons do depend on other people. The guru helps the novice, not so that he can become a self-enacting being, but because he wants the novice to grow in personhood and it just so happens that in order for the novice to do this, he will at the same time enable the guru to do the same. It is an ongoing interpersonal exchange. Selfhood is not handed to us on a plate. Furthermore, the other is not inaccessible, far from it. It is our own deep desires that we are not in a privileged position to understand. We see ourselves through a dark glass, but luckily there is such a thing as human nature. Through relationships with others we learn their nature, and in so doing our nature and more about ourselves in the process. Man is a social creature and needs an interpersonal environment if he is to develop to his full capacity. Just as bread is food for the stomach, people are food for the soul (strictly speaking interpersonal relationships).

Our belief in God is not a result of our attempt to escape freedom – God gives us all the answers and security in exchange for our freedom, as Camus would have us believe. *'Christ died perhaps for someone, but it was not for me. Man is guilty, but he is so for not having been able to derive everything from himself – this is a mistake that has grown since the beginning.'*¹⁰⁵ Humanity transcends the world of objects through personal causality. It is not a way to escape freedom, but rather the project is to develop it to our full capacity. Alienation does not result from our believing in God, as our freedom is a gift from God and he wants us to exercise it.

It is wrong to believe that if God exists then He must be the cause of our existence and our activity as well, thereby robbing us of all freedom. This is the result of thinking about Creation as purely the beginning of things instead of seeing it as a never-ending project. It stems from a failure to see the permanent relationship between God and the

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Camus's 'bad faith'.

¹⁰⁵ Camus, Notebooks, 1942-1951, 85 (entry Nov 1943).

universe, as the singer and the song. At each moment the song is dependent on the singer for everything it is. To say that God is incommensurable is to say that adding Him to the universe does not make two. If God and the universe are related as infinite to finite, then they are incommensurable; their effects not to be compared on the same scale. By virtue of his transcendence, he is not any part of the universe and by virtue of his immanence, he is its cause at each moment it exists. It is the incommensurability of God that allows us to say that his power in no way adds to nor subtracts from our power. It is right to say that to the extent that God influences man through natural forces I am not free, but the reason I am free is because I am not acted on by any other causes in the universe other than God. God influences me directly through my own mind and will, and this is what makes me free from all other causes of an external type. This ensuing freedom is possible only because God is not commensurable with me and the universe. For the more I am acted on by something external and finite, the less the act is my own. Thus, God is not external to me and not finite in any way. His power is additional to the acts done by human beings; it is *in* them. Everything that is done by human beings is done by God. God's power is not supernatural, but only in the sense that it cannot be discerned by scientific means. There are many things that were not or cannot be seen with the human eye, but because of their effects are postulated to logically exist, i.e. dark matter, black holes. We knew the earth went round the sun before we could see its orbit. God is like the mother in the mother-child example, only to a greater extent, as it is Him who causes our capacity for self-determination itself. Thus it is obvious that religion is by no means incompatible with human freedom.

The secular insight into the unreality of the supernatural and the essentiality of human freedom are no obstacle to the Christian faith. God is both our origin and the goal of our lives, for we are directed towards the fulfilment of our capacity for transcendence (self-determination over scientific causal networks) and the only one who has the power to bring this about in us. The mistake is thinking that we created this capacity for transcendence in ourselves, when really it is part of our existence as human beings; it is a given. To love ourselves, and so our fulfilment, is to love what will bring this about, i.e. God. God enables us to love Him for his own sake in this way. In this way, genuine self-love leads to genuine love of the Creator and his Creation.

Even if the idea of God reflects man's loneliness and wish to be understood by someone, it does not follow that God is unreal. *'No one realised at the time that to say that belief in God is wishful thinking is not to say that there is no God...Such a conclusion is a huge logical slip.'*¹⁰⁶ Moreover, Shutte illustrates that great theoretical proof is not needed to demonstrate the existence of God; rather we encounter Him on a daily basis in our intersubjective relationships. It is through certain experiences, mentioned previously, that we can be sure that He does exist. Our unquenchable desire for personal growth is a natural desire and so we have every reason to believe that the conditions for its fulfilment exist, even if they are not utilised. The key desire that Camus feels is unfulfilled *is* the proof. Rahner (1978) too agrees that there is a transcendental horizon of being implied in all cognitive activity. Camus exalts freedom to the position of Godlike importance in human life and fails to find anything transcendent in us. This is the effect of the religious

¹⁰⁶ Moore, 1982, 13.

practices at the time; they viewed God as a headmaster figure and believed that you could not perfect your own being, but had to go down on your knees and pray for salvation. Shutte's theory manages to retain the beauty of faith without the constricting rituals. God is to be found in everyday experiences and interactions, not in certain holy buildings or outdated religious practices. They are only valid to the extent that they empower human freedom, not when they take it away. The fire and brimstone of the past have been left behind.

Shutte does not preach salvation; we do not need to be saved. Camus was right to reinterpret the now outdated notion of salvation, but he was incorrect to leave God out of the picture. Salvation is everything humans do in order to realise the image of God in themselves, i.e. everything that is done in order to develop and fulfil our capacity for transcendence and creativity. He does not speak of heaven; there is no loving God so we can get into heaven, and no damnation and hell fire if we don't. Hell is simply where God is not, and heaven where God resides. There is no other place but here and now. We can only be at home with God here, but it is up to us how we transform this place. Hell is a symbol of the failure of the Creator's work, if He cannot be at home with His Creation. However, we are responsible for such success or failure.

God's love for us is constant; we must learn to love others and so ourselves. McCabe has illustrated that the world is good and so is God. God only wants us to fulfil our capacity as human beings and this is possible through Him only, but we experience it as other people. It is because Camus stresses God's transcendence, but ignores His immanence, that he too misses this fact. He fails to recognise that God can be both. He does not realise then that God does not impinge on our freedom, but instead enables it. To have faith in man is to have faith in God, because it is precisely through man (each other) that we experience God. It might be right that man does have a desire to become God, but this can be interpreted in a new light. Man wishes to become God because he wishes to be able to be fully grown, so to speak, and be able to love without being loved in return. Not to sit silent on His laurels, as Camus would have us think.

Since God works between other people, this is where we feel Him. Humanity then is of prime importance. Our relationships with other people, caring for them etc., matter more than praying or going to church etc. The most important thing in the destiny of mankind is to establish a community of personal growth. In other words, a coming together in solidarity, because we as humans share the same nature and need one another to become fulfilled. Camus would surely relate to our having a human nature, i.e. our desire to be loved etc., but he would argue that our desires are never completely fulfilled and our expectations are always thwarted. He does not have the hope or faith of the believer. But as Shutte shows us, it is not faith in God, for it would only be faith if no visible evidence existed for the achievement of personal growth, and we believed in such a community. Shutte feels that our desires are fulfilled and it is not hope that makes him say this. I think in Camus's case it is simply a case of the glass being half empty, for our perceptions determine what we make of our reality, and each person can only confirm God's existence and personal causality at work for themselves. Camus appears to make

the right connections, i.e. that personal relationships are of utmost importance in life, but fails to reach the correct conclusion.

*'Science prepared the way for agnosticism; secularisation led to atheism...'*¹⁰⁷ Camus's views have been reared amid the background of scientific development and secularisation, which can be seen in his philosophy as the rejection of authority in favour of the experience and autonomy of the individual. The influence of the supernatural has diminished, in response to an emphasis on our capacity for self-determination and our sense of control over our environment, resulting in the notion of God being gradually rendered impotent. Science made it impossible to conceive of life after death, and secularisation the reality of a transcendent God.

It is as a result of the inadequate conceptualisation of transcendence that Christianity has been seen as at odds with science and secularisation. The other main impediment to the Christian faith is the death of any human being. It is the secular aspect of our culture that leads to the misunderstood notion that a transcendent being is the enemy of human freedom, and its scientific aspect, that makes it difficult to retain anything valuable in death. The scientific method is what makes a materialistic view of human beings almost unavoidable. Both materialism and dualism contain truths and inaccuracies. The truth of materialism is that we are finite and so dependent on the environment, both naturally and socially. Whereas the truth of dualism is that we transcend the natural world, i.e. we are self-determining. The relationist account incorporates these truths and leaves behind the inaccuracies.

Since our notion of death is governed by our philosophical anthropology, the above constitute three different understandings of death. For the materialist, death is simply annihilation. It has a purely negative meaning. According to science consciousness depends solely on the brain, and so when brain damage is irreparable consciousness ceases. It may be possible in the future to transfer someone's mental life, i.e. their neuronal pattern, but the essential meaning of death would be unchanged. Those resurrected would be restored to the same old life, with death as an inevitability.

Whereas death for the dualist is the separation of the soul and the body. The body is material, but the soul immaterial. Hence, death is to be viewed as the liberation of the soul (real person) from the body. It is simply a change of state. Almost all religions are partial to this kind of view because it seems to offer a possibility, if not a certainty, for an afterlife. The soul does not depend on anything for its immortality, thus if the real person is such a soul, immortality is assured.

The relationist views death as a severing of the relations between oneself and other people, and so the whole material universe. Thus self-consciousness and self-determination also ceases. It is, however, not annihilation because our relationship to the Creator does not cease. Furthermore, the created capacity that has been actualised in a person's life remains in death, i.e. personal growth. The Creator holds it in being. *'Just as no system of finite causes is sufficient to bring such a capacity into being, so no finite*

¹⁰⁷ Shutte, 2004, 3.

*causes whatsoever are sufficient to destroy it.*¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, this view cannot proclaim with certainty that there is life beyond death. Unlike the previous views it does not place false faith in fact.

Death has a new and positive meaning, the opening or self-surrendering to a love that is stronger than death, the love of the Creator. Surrendering one's control, is the ultimate unselfish act and is destructive of any self-worship. This discovery is a universal truth, whether people believe it or not, not only available to Christians. '*Death can thus be seen as the ultimate example of the creation of order out of entropy through the transformation of physical energy into meaningful life.*'¹⁰⁹ Death is an entry into a more intimate and complete relationship with the universe by virtue of a more intimate and complete relationship with its Creator. It is a new stage in the personalisation of the universe.

The Christian hope for eternal life has often been seen as escapist. Nevertheless, the denial of this life does not necessarily encourage responsibility for this earth either; there is a tendency to become preoccupied with this life. In fact it may lead to a society that degenerates into consumerism and hedonism.

Death is not to be looked upon as negative, if we believe that it is not the end of our relationship with God, just the end of our relationship with the ecosystem. Mortality is simply the mark of human finitude. Thus there is a need to stress the immanence and transcendence of the Creator's relationship with his creation. A hope for eternal life need not be an escapist's way out if we believe that our future (after death) is any reflection on what we do in this one and how we treat our ecosystem, or if we believe that by treating the earth right we could sustain a long life on this one, we are living longer than our predecessors did. To do what is right for our ecosystem we do not need to believe in God or an eternal life; Camus is right in this respect. As salvation is no longer necessary, our life on earth is not something to be saved from, but rather treasured. God is not the punitive father, but a loving mother.

To conclude then, it is wrong to believe that God permits evil to reign in the world and that he impinges on our freedom and thwarts our desires. Camus's reasons for denouncing God are illegitimate. So a priest should seek help from a doctor. We need to be the best humans that we can be, even if that means that the bacteria that caused the plague have to suffer in the process. It just so happens that our fulfilment is a concomitant detriment to another. Thus Paneloux is mistaken in not fighting for his life. His very act devalues life and renders it meaningless, not God.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 16.

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