

The Hour of Consciousness: Sisyphus's Descent and the Normative Limits of Camus's Absurd Ethics

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Abstract: The Myth of Sisyphus is against physical suicide, against metaphysical evasions, and champions revolt, freedom, passion and life going on. In this article, the author will explore the transition from one to the other institution in the normative sense. Philosophical, rhetorical, narratological, and translation-sensitive close reading, it focuses on the downfall, the hour of consciousness, the formal turning point of absurd ethics, that of Sisyphus. The fall does not change the matter sentence, but its relationship to the sentence. The memory, the interpretation and the scorn are ways in which Sisyphus turns consciousness into a way of self-fidelity. A comparison of the words conscience, mepris, destin, bonheur, among others, with Justin O'Brien's translation of *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* also reveals that they represent different moments in this metamorphosis. The article contends that Camus thus sets up a minimal ethics of lucidity: sustain the contradiction that is the absurd, reject false reconciliation, and be faithful to finite life. This result, however, is still not the complete transformation. Lucidity can prescribe a subject to inevitable finitude, but it cannot create a duty to others nor make a difference between heroic endurance and settling for an inevitable domination. Then The Rebel reads and the Sisyphus myth does not seem to be a completed secular humanism but rather a negative anchor for an ethics that should emerge from the self-fidelity of the individual to the limits and solidarity of the others.

Keywords: Albert Camus; absurdity; consciousness; ethics; French translation; revolt; Sisyphus; solidarity

1. Introduction: The Normative Problem of the Absurd

Albert Camus opens *The Myth of Sisyphus* with what seems to be an open-ended question: Is life worth living? The question is not placed as one among other questions, but as the test of the seriousness of philosophy. If belief is the basis for action, then the fact that life we have no final explanation for appears to call for a response. But Camus' essay doesn't proceed by an immediate leap from meaninglessness to despair. It tries to do something more challenging: to refute transcendence while affirming life, and to refuse consolation in the metaphysical while maintaining life's value morally. This denial of reassurance and resignation is the power of the essay.

But this is not just a question of survival: it is a moral one. The absurd, according to Camus, is the "relation" between what the human soul wants to know and what the world does not want to tell. The human person or the world is not in itself absurd. The absurd is the face-off, the constant break-up, between them (Camus, *Myth* 28-31). After that, Camus claims that this connection should be saved. Physical suicide reduces the conscious subject, and religious or philosophical transcendence washes away the struggle by offering something that the original evidence does not justify. In both answers, one term of the relation is removed. Camus takes revolt, freedom, and passion from this methodological requirement for fidelity. However, the

derivation isn't obvious. Is it better to be faithful to an irrational condition than it is to break free? How would you explain that the obligation to continue comes from lucidity? And, how can consciousness be a source of dignity when it first sharpens the awareness of futility? (Camus, Myth 54-56)

These are questions that show the main opposition of Camus's early philosophy. The Myth of Sisyphus states that there is no universal moral or ethical code that can be argued in advance by considering human nature, but honesty, lucidity, courage, defiance, fidelity and perseverance are all held up to high regard, repeated throughout the book. Avoids externally provided values and uses a robust vocabulary for evaluating. The essay is not simply a description of an existential situation, therefore. It suggests that there is a hierarchy of responses, and that a lucid revolt is better than suicide, illusion, resignation, and reconciliation. The philosophical question is, what is the underlying reason and extent of this preference?

This is the closing myth and it is very important because it has the capacity to do a bit more than the abstract argument. Camus doesn't say that Sisyphus pushes a rock. He separates the punishment in different temporal and experiential phases. It's hard, physical, repetitive, and geared toward something that will be reversed in the moment. The descent, on the other hand, is a break in productivity, but not in practice. It is at this return that Sisyphus is interesting to Camus. As he lets down the rock's physical strain, he is also aware of the entire pattern. The birth, therefore, is not just a time of labor. It's the moment when action turns into interpretation and destiny becomes something the subject can identify as his own personal destiny.

This article suggests that the fall serves as the normative turning point of Camus's ethics of the absurd. No, the 'hour of consciousness' does not take away the stone, does not eradicate repetition and does not establish an objective purpose. It alters the relationship between the condition and the subject. Sisyphus does not = cannot control what is happening, but he can refuse to accept the gods' interpretation of what is happening. He can comprehend punishment without giving it spiritual power. In that act of appropriation Camus claims "lucidity" as "self fidelity," the refusal to "falsify" one's condition for consolation. It's an honest and a modest ethical accomplishment. It does not yet explain how an individual might find him or herself in an unavoidable circumstance that doesn't involve giving up consciousness, nor does it explain what to do when suffering is produced historically and is politically changeable.

The argument has 6 steps. It first sorts out the points of absurd interpretation from the problem of the possibility of a value foundation of the absurd. Second, it offers a philosophically, rhetorically, narratologically and translation sensitively defined method. Thirdly, it looks at fidelity to the absurd and the normative distance between consistency and continued living. Fourth, it reads it as a pause, a consciousness, a *mépris*, an appropriation, and an imagined happiness. Fifth, it renders solitary ethics the movement toward shared-limits a test. Lastly, it provides a distinction between reflective revolt and romanticising endurance in the modern era.

2. Critical Context: From the Meaning of the Absurd to the Problem of Value

Camus has been discussed extensively and has been classified. Chronicling the experience of finitude, freedom, anxiety and the fall of inherited foundations, his work is not a systematic philosophy, yet is not labeled as existentialism. Kaufmann kept Camus out of the boundaries of the existentialist tradition, but not beyond it, and Hughes's essays in turn show how the multifaceted contexts of Camus's work refuse a single disciplinary classification. This is not an insignificant obstacle, because The Myth of Sisyphus is a journey that unfolds through argument, image, confession, dramatic example, and myth, and literary form becomes a part of the philosophical process.

The first layer of interpretation is an understanding of the absurd as a relation. What Camus keeps stressing is that the absurd is not the nature of the world, nor is it a mood that is not connected with it. It arises where unity and final explanation meet with something that can be stated but not finally reconciled. In this later version, Nagel's account of absurdity is the distance from his commitment to reflect on its seriousness, while

in Gordon's account it remains the lived absurdity, but it's not the same absurdity. The difference is important because it is Camus's absurd we need to sustain desire and silence.

Robert Solomon similarly argues that Camus's should not be confused with nihilism, since it emerges from the tension between human longing and an indifferent universe (Solomon 67)

The transition from the absurd to the revolt is another line of scholarship. Foley explains how the absurd becomes rebellion, Sherman points to limits in the experience of embodied rules and to responsibilities, Sagi finds absurdity not a point of arrival but a point of departure, and Sharpe's virtue-reading of the text shifts from rules to cultivated dispositions like lucidity, courage, measure, and fidelity. While these strategies make clear that Camus's ethics are not just to be negative, they also focus the discussion of how the preferred dispositions gain normativeness.

The changeover is still up for grabs. Curtis sees a problem with the connection between rebellion and absurdity: when the absurd denies objective scales of value, the option for rebellion seems to be a reintroduction of an unearned scale of value. Aronson's updated version of the Stanford Encyclopedia entry also portrays Camus's thinking as paradoxical: The Myth of Sisyphus and The Rebel are both skeptical of ultimate meaning but are certain about the answer to practical questions of suicide and murder. Though more often than not Camus's reasoning is negative—suicide destroys the conscious subject; transcendental hope alters the nature of a question—the subduing power of his positive preference for lucid living is more often exercised through rhetoric and exemplary figures than through deduction.

The third debate is whether the early absurd already has a humanism. In later works, clearly there is a move toward solidarity, limits, a critique of ideological murder, as Hayden, Aronson, and Sherman have demonstrated. But when you read the mature attitude backward, the 1942 essay comes across as more socially mature than it is. Its outstanding characters - Don Juan, the actor, the conqueror, the creator, and Sisyphus - are almost all individual. They have a central question about the presence of individual consciousness in mortality and meaninglessness, not the presence of several fragile persons in the obligation they have to each other.

Existing studies thus have explained the relational absurd, the paradox of revolt, and the subsequent development of solidarity. Lacking is the textual process by which The Myth of Sisyphus transforms epistemic consistency into an ethical choice to persist in living. Consciousness is a constant theme in the literature, and it is usually treated as the cause of Sisyphus' revolt, but the fall is sometimes presented as a confirmation of an earlier decision. This article contends, however, that the descent does philosophical work that cannot be dispensed with: it is the time and mode through which actions are interpretive, punishments are judged, and fidelity is imaginable as a way of life.

The contribution is subsequently limited and can be measured. The article is not even about the fact that the significance of consciousness, revolt or Sisyphus in the ethical sense has never been neglected. It asserts that the descent is a normative turning point in a succession of moments that would generally be articulated separately: the epistemic call to not lie to the absurd, the existential call to go on, the rhetorical call to imagine happiness, and the subsequent political challenge to make self-fidelity into solidarity. This formulation preserves previous scholarship while pointing out the ultimate limit that cannot be exceeded by the final myth without the aid of another.

3. Method: Philosophical, Rhetorical, Narratological, and Translation-Sensitive Reading

It is not my aim to treat The Myth of Sisyphus as a systematic discourse, or as a purely literary performance, but rather to engage in philosophical close reading. It then outlines the explicit premises that Camus gives: the relationship definition of the absurd, the requirement that the terms of the absurd remain unaltered, the rejection of physical and philosophical suicide, and the three consequences of revolt: freedom, passion and

absurdity. It then asks, what kind of transitions (deductive, phenomenological, rhetorical or exemplary) are made between these claims?

The analysis is rhetorical and narratological, since Camus does not want to dissociate evidence from lyricism. Repetition, antithesis, paradox, metaphor, imperative syntax and conceptual exposition to bodily imagery are considered as philosophical operations. The last myth is read in terms of the way in which the movement and time are organised: ascent, collapse, pause, descent, recollection, and return. The difference between absorption in labour and reflective judgement of labour has been given special attention.

The study is translation sensitive. The page numbers are given in Justin O'Brien's English translation, as are the quotations from Anglophone critics, although the key formulations are verified against *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. The comparison is not exhaustive but rather is intended as an illustration and not as a comprehensive philological analysis. The focus is on conscience, lucidité, mépris, destin and bonheur because these semantic relations are directly related to the account of consciousness, ownership, resistance and happiness presented in the article.

Lastly, there is a controlled intertextual comparison that is done for the purpose of diagnosis. The latter essay is not a posteriori application of Sisyphus as an allegory of the meaninglessness of life. It illuminates that the ethical resources that are already within the absurd cycle are different from those that need to be developed in a later move towards the collective limit. The contrast is thus based on the question of whether the early ethic is in continuity with, correction of, or surpassing of Camus' philosophy of rebellion.

4. Absurdity Without Foundations: Fidelity, Refusal, and the Normative Gap

The absurd starts with interruption, in Camus's case. The routine is the one that usually leads the person on to work, to dinner, to transportation, home for bed, and the expectations of the next day. This sequence goes on until the question 'why' gets in the way. Weariness, then, is double: it is a weariness that comes from the repetition of mechanical work, and it is a beginning of consciousness. Camus regards this awakening as a perilous one; it could turn back to a habit or to a crisis where suicide becomes possible. However, he treats it as an essential as well. Consciousness cuts into the comfort of habitation; but if this wound were not, there would be no truthfulness about a condition.

The relational definition of the absurd avoids two prevalent misunderstandings. First, "absurd" does not mean "nonsense" or "there is nothing" or "all statements are nonsensical." Practical knowledge can be gained, regularities can be described, and actions can be performed within the world by human beings. In the end, it's the demand for a final unity that reconciles mortality, suffering, contingency, and desire that fails. Secondly, the funny is not just a simple negative outlook. A pessimist sees the world differently from the point of view of a value scale. Such a judgement is absurd before Camus could name the unclosed conflict between the necessity for intelligibility and the limits of explanation.

This is the structure that leads to a methodological rule. The absurd must be solved by confrontation; anything that extracts one of the terms from the solution or negates either term is a resolution to the original absurd. Physical suicide is the elimination of the consciousness that is in the throes of the conflict. Philosophical suicide is a saving of biological life but an evasion of the conflict by converting irrationality into a means of transcendence. The governing charge made by Camus against Kierkegaard, Chestov, Jaspers and Husserl is the same: "each one of them starts from limitations and ends up in a guarantee. (Camus 35-40) The leap could be psychologically justified but it does not adhere to the definition of the problem that Camus offers.

Hence, the first value is implicit in the essay, namely fidelity. It is not presented in the first place as a universal moral law. It comes from the internal discipline of inquiry, that is, if a thinker states that he starts from the absurd, then such a thinker does not solve the problem by eradicating the absurd condition that caused it. An epistemic norm before it becomes an existential norm. Requires consistency in evidence and response. The ridiculous person will not go beyond what experience allows him.

But the shift from epistemic fidelity to the rule of living brings in the normative gap. A consistent, reasoned story of the absurd, about how suicide and transcendence are no longer able to maintain the absurd, does not necessarily demonstrate that preservation is indeed required. One may take the absurdity of death, and still prefer death, one may take the uncertainty of faith, and still prefer faith. Camus does not give a non-combative answer. He is writing from an earlier attachment to life, the body, sensation, the earth and the imperative to not lie. The call for a disciplined commitment is thus a better way of understanding his philosophy than an undogmatic conclusion.

This commitment is manifested when Camus talks about conscience and rebellion as the opposite of a renunciation. He claims that one must die unreconciled, not of their own choosing (Camus, *Myth* 54-56), and that in his opinion, a day-to-day revolt is not a struggle against an enemy but a way of keeping things in a state of tension (Camus, *Myth* 54-56). With revolt, the absurd is not destroyed. It does not consent to an interpretation which would make the condition divinely justified or finally, practically, meaningless. The subject still yearns for clarity, but realises there will never be full clarity. Revolt, then, is a movement of preservation, a movement of sustaining the conflict.

“As John Cruickshank observes, revolt in Camus is not a final solution to the absurd but an ongoing ethical posture through which human dignity is maintained despite the absence of transcendence (Cruickshank 84).

“As David Sherman argues, revolt in Camus is less a revolutionary act than a sustained commitment to lucidity, through which the individual resists both nihilism and metaphysical consolation (Sherman 62).

Freedom is also granted in a similar, but not identical, manner. Camus does not set up metaphysical free will. When the need for an ultimate plan is discarded, the person is no longer tied up with an anticipated future or eschatological goal. It is NOT freedom, but freedom from circumstances. It's solid, definite and fragile. Passion, the third consequence, enhances what is happening now, as no later salvation can do what is not done now. The ridiculous person does not ask for endless life but for a greater awareness of limited life.

Revolt, freedom, and passion are thus the ethics of attitude. They have to do with living in an indefensible circumstance. They get their power from coherence with the first refusal of illusion and from Camus's embodied love of life. This is sufficient to create a strong ethos but not a full-fledged moral theory. It can differentiate the clarity from self-deception, and from non-surrender to renunciation. It doesn't, on its own, decide what is just or how to treat the competing persons or when endurance lapses into complicity. This limitation is hidden and manifested in the final myth. It gives a body, a rhythm, a face to the stance and renders it convincing.

This way of interpreting it is in line with recent virtue-oriented interpretations inasmuch as lucidity and fidelity are cultivated dispositions rather than universal rules (Sharpe). It also keeps Aronson's critique of Camus's attitude in images when a systematic philosopher would give a deduction. It is not so much a question of whether the myth supplants argument, but what kind of normative work can an image perform?

5. The 'Hour of Consciousness': Reading Sisyphus's Descent

Camus's version of the Sisyphus myth begins with transgression and attachment to life. Sisyphus tricks the gods, defies mortality, and is reborn in the world of senses. The punishment is fueled to make effort appear pointless, reaching the summit only to fall back down to the base, beginning another cycle of effort to reach the top. The gods have selected an ideal punishment - maximum exercise, no accumulation. The only thing that is left from one climb to the next are exhaustion and repetition.

But the last paper isn't really about the moment when it fails. Camus's breakthrough is to make the return, philosophically central. As the rock's fall, Sisyphus is temporarily relieved from the tutelage of an object which disciplines the body. The rise turns focus on pressure, balance, muscle strength, and the instant resistance of material. As they descend the descent begins a reflective period. Sisyphus now sees the whole

design of the punishment: the completed up-and-down, the falling rock, the inevitability of repetition, the lack of an end. The break is not a break from the sentence, but a break from the enchanted focus on the task. Camus refers to this time interval as the 'hour of consciousness' and states that during this time Sisyphus is better off than his destiny, and stronger than his rock (Camus, *Myth* 121). The language is purposefully paradoxical. Sisyphus is not physically more powerful. He can neither avert the fall nor escape from the underworld nor alter the decree of the gods. His superiority is hermeneutic; his knowledge of the punishment is such as the punishment is not of him. Sisyphus is interpreting the force that is being exerted by the stone. The meaning he gives to recurrence is not under the control of the gods.

5.1 Translation, Descent, and the Grammar of Superiority

The French version lets the structure of this transformation be made more clear. Camus refers to the descent as *l'heure de la conscience*, and says that Sisyphus is *supérieur à son destin* and *plus fort que son rocher*. The sequence is a temporal interval to a comparative judgement. A pause in the repetition, and a form of superiority that is interpretive rather than physical, opens the first time consciousness opens. But, while these are external constraints, O'Brien's rendering is correct, and the French form of possessive constructions leave fate and rock close to the subject.

The word *mépris* also has great significance. In this context, the term 'scorn' may also refer to a lack of moral recognition, as does the term *mépris*. Sisyphus will not break the laws of the gods—he will not revere their power. This distinction aids the separation between facticity and consent in the article. A condition can be recognized as legitimate but not accepted as justified, significant or legitimate.

Later, in his writing, Camus says that "*son destin lui appartient*. The possessive claim doesn't negate coercion; Sisyphus didn't choose his sentence. It is an appropriation of judgement: fate can no longer be appropriated by the gods. With the last commandment, *Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux*, the work also goes to the reader. Happiness is not described as a psychological fact, but is suggested as an interpretive practice that involves the transfer of value from successful completion to lucid fidelity.

The following sequence, conscience/superiority/*mépris*/possession/*bonheur* is in two languages, but that doesn't make it any less effective in reinforcing the theme that the descent is not a style adornment. It provides an experience of conversion that is marked by a first defeat, a second distancing from the defeat, and a third affirmation. In the case of a strictly deductive proof, the conversion is philosophically persuasive, because it is performed in language and narrative time.

This separation is the reason consciousness is anguish and triumph. If they were not conscious, repetition would be mechanical. When Sisyphus is conscious, he is aware of the difference between the effort and the result. Knowledge increases punishment because it takes away the possibility of non-thought completion. But this knowledge does not allow the gods to take too much ownership of the meaning. Sisyphus realizes that the purpose of his punishment is to make him look bad, but that doesn't mean he has to feel that way all the time. Lucidity doesn't kill the suffering; it does not grant it power. "Matthew Sharpe similarly notes that Camus's notion of scorn should be understood as an ethical disposition of measured resistance rather than emotional bitterness, preserving judgement without succumbing to despair (Sharpe, Camus, *Philosophe* 118). The language of scorn in which Camus speaks must be considered in this context. Scorn isn't sunny optimism, denial, or feeling unemotional. It's the lack of reconciling the God's reconciliation to them. It would be complete punishment if Sisyphus had taken this; if he had come to believe that his labor was proof of the superiority of the gods and of his inferiority. He distinguishes between the radical possibility of coercion and moral authority by determining that the gods are contingent rather than moral powers. He divorces the radical possibility of coercion from moral authority by defining the gods as contingent, not moral powers. They are able to command the body, but they are not able to command reverence. Scorn is thus a negative freedom: a freedom to keep evaluative distance when there is a lack of power.

Time is also reordered during the descent. The gods try to bind Sisyphus in a circle of time: whatever he does, is undone and no history can be built. Now in the circle there is a different temporality generated by consciousness. On the way back, Sisyphus recalls his past ascents and expects the next time. When brought together under the 'memory's eye' (Camus, Myth 123), the series of seemingly unrelated acts equals a life. This remembrance will not make the recurrence a step forward. It does a simpler thing; it creates continuity of self. Sisyphus will never own the fruit of his work; he can only own the history of his relation to the fruit of his work.

Camus's concept of Sisyphus's fate is grounded in his ideas of ownership. The statement cannot mean that he chose the punishment. It is to say that he does not let the circumstances he's been put in to limit the meaning of his life. No appropriation is consent! To make a fate one's own is to understand it without pretending that it is just, necessary or desirable. The distinction is important since otherwise Camus's revolt becomes a passive accommodation to the accepted. The stone is a given, Sisyphus takes that, but he refuses the moralistic narrative of the gods.

This appropriation is not purely mental because it is based upon the figure's body. Camus demonstrates cheek, shoulder, foot, arms, earth and stone. Consciousness is not above labor, it comes out of the rhythm of a body in contact with resistant matter. The dignity of Sisyphus is therefore not spiritual transcendence and it is not the victory of the mind over the flesh. It is the lack of division of them. The body that suffers is the same body that experiences the suffering consciousness. This is part of Camus's general distrust of philosophies which elevate the spirit at the expense of the earth.

The parallel with the contemporary worker is one of the most fraught and extreme passages in the essay. Sisyphus is 'proletarian of the gods' (Camus, Myth 121) and he is compared to the daily work of people in the twenty first century (Camus, Myth 121). The analogy helps to understand what it means to violate the sense of routine in mechanical routine by consciousness. It also reveals the bounds of the myth. The sentence of Sisyphus is fixed forever, whereas the modern labour is organized historically. The circumstances of a worker can be exploitative, reformable, or collectively contestable. It is easy to send a message of inward appropriation right from the myth to social life, in the process turning an avoidable form of domination into a private endurance test.

It is therefore important to read carefully Camus's concluding happiness. Happiness is not about being happy, successful, or at peace, nor is it about being convinced that the stone has a secret function. It is the lack of separation of Sisyphus's knowledge from his life. The gods can insist on it being repeated again and again, but they cannot make him hope wrongly, or make him think that its failure to repeat itself means that life is valueless. The moment when lucidity, action and self-possession converge is happiness, says Happiness. It is austere because it's not changing; it's real because it's not relying on an impossible future for permission to live.

But the words 'one must imagine Sisyphus happy' also show the function of the reader. Camus does not claim that Sisyphus is 'empirically' happy. He has an imagination that commands him. The myth invites the reader to do his own philosophical conversion and to detect happiness in the scene that others consider to be a failure. This call to action is rhetorically effectual because it shifts the focus of value from its end product to its interpersonal connections. Concurrently, it recognizes that the conclusion is not observed. Happiness is a construction that is doing interpreting – it is a disciplined image of what lucid fidelity might look like.

The descent helps to resolve part of the normative problem without solving it completely. It demonstrates the benefits of fighting from the inside of Camus's requirement of clarity. When a subject cannot comprehend, memorize, reject, or alter the meaning, when he or she cannot revolt, suicide and metaphysical flight end and falsify those capacities. In the myth, a form of value is made visible which is immanent in consciousness. But it does not reveal that it is a duty for every conscious subject to choose this value, or that it makes self-

possession a duty to others. The 'hour of consciousness' establishes an ethics of self-relation, an ethics that is not yet an ethics of solidarity.

6. Revolt, Freedom, and Passion as an Ethics of Self-Relation

The ethical accomplishment of *The Myth of Sisyphus* is more narrowly described as fidelity to oneself. It refers to a relation where the subject does not contradict the evidence on which the subject rests his/her life. The absurd person of Camus does not try to explain that death can be overcome, that suffering has a providential purpose, or that reason can give a complete explanation of life. This denial is not an intellectual fast. It ensures that the content of lived experience is not abstracted.

Revolt is the living component of self-fidelity. It's continuous, as the temptation to run out is continuous. The subject must repeatedly reject hope when hope is refusal to accept something in the here-and-now and repeatedly reject despair when despair is judging against finite experiences as a lack of ultimate meaning. Revolt is in between those two extremes. It does not see an ultimate justification, nor does it say that a justification must precede living.

The freedom in this sense is not unlimited. No one can stop Sisyphus from not being able to leave, and no one can stop the absurd person from being mortal, contingent or resisting the world. The birth of freedom is in the act of denying the organisation of life around a transcendent tribunal. Without a cosmic story to swallow up their consequences, the subject is liable because he/she is responsible for choices. However, the responsibility is not fully explored in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. It is the most powerful when it is an appeal for freedom and least powerful when it is a statement of moral duty.

The sensuous and temporal is provided by Passion. No more does finite life seem a poor and inadequate part of something greater when eternity is not the standard of life. Camus's ideas of the present, the body, artistic creation, multiplicity and the earth resist the depreciation of this world. Passion isn't a "hustle and bustle" approach. At its best, it is attentiveness without possession: the readiness to encounter experience fully without having to get it to explain itself in the end.

A coherent style of existence is made up of these three terms. The conflict is maintained by Revolt, freedom rejects external purpose, finite experience is invested by attention of passion. We may rightly read Camus as saying that there is a minimal ethics even though he does not accept the a priori moral basis of such an ethics. "John Foley likewise contends that Camus's absurd philosophy develops into a practical ethic grounded in lived experience, where revolt functions as a mode of ethical engagement rather than a formal moral system" (Foley 94). The ethic is also minimal in that it doesn't lay out a full list of obligations. It defines circumstances in which a person doesn't act intellectually and existentially dishonest: don't ignore evidence, don't sacrifice the present for the unconfirmed future, don't make power good for the sake of morality.

It is also the strong side and weak side of this minimalism. If one does not include additional boundaries, then self-fidelity could refer to the integrity of a tyrant as well as that of a victim. Someone can be aware of death and be clear, and still find ways to take advantage of others. Passion can enhance experience, but not make it just. Responsibility may be fostered by freedom from transcendent commands but it may be fostered also by freedom from them. These dangers are not completely ignored in Camus's early essay; however, they do not have an intersubjective dimension to solve them. The one-and-only nature of Sisyphus makes the constraint apparent: no one else in the scene can interfere with Sisyphus's self-relation.

It is for this reason that the humanism of *The Myth of Sisyphus* is more a provisional or proto-humanistic humanism. The essay is a statement that embodied consciousness is valuable and that systems that make present life expendable are not worth having. It thus sets a condition for humanism: it is not permissible to negate in advance lived human existence by any idea. However, the text does not yet reveal how the discovery of value in one's own consciousness relates to the discovery of value in another consciousness. The idea of limit is central in *The Rebel*, and it's a concept that is introduced in that extension.

7. The Limits of Lucidity: From Solitary Revolt to Collective Responsibility

The greatest weakness of Sisyphus's rebellion is that it is alone. He has a dignity that is dependent upon the way he sees himself, but no part of the myth asks him to acknowledge another's dignity. The gods are not allies in moral relations but enemies, and the stone may not claim. The scene is thus an autonomous performance in times of constraint and not of responsibility in a plural society. It is able to respond to the query of How can I go on without complaint? rather than What do I do for the other person who is vulnerable? This constraint makes it difficult to equate the absurd revolt with the secular humanism that is constantly propagated. To be a humanist is not only to affirm one's own limited experience, it is to provide an explanation on why the lives, suffering, and actions of others are significant. No transcendent guarantees are required for solidarity, egoism, cruelty or apathy. Thus, there must be another principle.

The Rebel brings in that principle by examining the nature of the denial of humiliation. Rebellion is a rejection of injury, an affirmation of a limit which cannot be broken. The transition occurs in Camus's short formula: *Je me révolte, donc nous sommes*: The value defended in the self is admitted as a value that can be claimed by others. "Robert Zaretsky interprets this movement from 'I' to 'We' as the decisive moment in Camus thought, where personal dignity becomes the basis for solidarity with others facing similar limits and vulnerabilities" (Zaretsky 173) Revolt is intersubjective when protester realizes the violated boundary is not only private.

There are three ways to read the relation between the two essays. A continuity reading sees rebellion as the social expansion of absurd revolt; a correction reading sees The Rebel as making available values which The Myth of Sisyphus could not justify; and a self-exceeding reading is one that holds the absurd to be ethically fruitful only if it finds its own limit within itself. Foley and Hayden prefer developmental continuity while Curtis's normative objection favors a more robust notion of correction. The present article is a qualified continuity: the discipline of lucidity continues, but so does its object, from fidelity to an unresolved confrontation to fidelity towards common human bounds.

This change of course shows a risk within the language of endurance. Sisyphus is good because his problem is an insurmountable myth. But in social life, some stones are put in place by institutions, economic systems, colonial institutions, or political violence. Talking about "strength of character" can make it harder to imagine getting rid of them. Awareness which filters out preventable suffering is accommodation. The moral principle of Sisyphus must thus be linked to a political one between an inevitable finitude and a changeable domination. One might reply to Camus that revolt is an act that doesn't even involve passive acceptance. Sisyphus is helpless, angry, and his *mépris* defies the moral justice of the gods. This is a good defense in the bounds of the myth. Preservation of symbolic resistance is crucial to the subject's survival from the internalization of domination, and this survival is sometimes a *sine qua non* in the face of external change. It should not, however, be equated with justice, or material change.

This is particularly relevant when it comes to the analogy of labour. I can see an analogy between the awakening of the modern worker and the consciousness of Sisyphus, both of which bring to light repetition and estrangement. However, workers are capable of organizing, bargaining, refusing, redesigning institutions and changing the distribution of power. The ridiculous point of view adds a message to the dangers of sacrificing the present for the future under the guise of abstraction; it isn't a substitute for economic and political analysis.

The second restriction is on happiness. The idea to imagine Sisyphus happy can seem to shift the burden of good health squarely onto his shoulders. In those circumstances, that reading would make unhappiness appear to be an issue of lack of consciousness. The narrower claim is the stronger: the happiness is possible without the final justification, but cannot be morally compellingly true under all circumstances. It should never be used as justification that inner non-surrender should be mirrored in the external production of misery.

The third restriction is to one's virtue. It is epistemically valuable to be lucid, but it does not follow that knowledge of a condition gives the authority to act in a benevolent manner. A person who was clear can feel compassion when he or she realizes he or she is not the only one vulnerable or, can be cynical when he or she decides that there is no objective value. The Rebel seeks to remedy this deficiency by measure: rebellion must be contained for the value defended in one is also found in others. Rebellion's source is violated by violence that destroys this common value.

It is not a failure that The Myth of Sisyphus is incomplete. The essay sets up a required first discipline in ethics following transcendence: keep conscious life alive from despair and false consolation. For Camus, Sisyphus provides the negative side of humanism: It is a refusal of self-annihilation, a philosophical result, as well as a refusal of the surrender of judgement to metaphysical authority. The positive element of mutual obligation is not provided by the myth itself.

Camus's early ethics is therefore not void of content but unfinished. It features the substantive norms of fidelity, non-surrender, embodied attention, and resistance to false justification, but these norms are still grounded in a subject's connection to fate. The second recognition necessary for the transition from self-fidelity to solidarity is the recognition that the consciousness which is defended in one's own fidelity is not unique - that what is affirmed as a limit in one's own rebellion is also present in others.

8. Contemporary Implications: Labour, Acceleration, and the Misuse of Sisyphus

Camus's comparison of Sisyphus and the modern workman is still suggestive, but must be handled carefully. The subjects of accelerated and self-optimizing labor are those who feel time as a series of goals, deadlines, and unending requests. Han's tiredness and Gregg's critique of the culture of productivity gets us partway toward understanding why Sisyphus is reincarnated as a symbol of perseverance. These works are not evidence of Camus' intention, but rather they offer an environment in which the reception of the myth can be addressed in a critical manner.

The most common misuse is to take the descent out. Sisyphus is hereafter extolled just because he has never stopped working, and Camus's philosophy becomes a rallying cry for work. However, it is the descent that is interrupted by routine and evaluated. Camus's hero is not exemplary because he is efficient, but because he is aware of the structure of the task, he refuses the gods' interpretation, and maintains a distance from punishment. A culture where people are encouraged to work endlessly and can't think about it is the rewrite of the myth.

That is the distinction between finitude that cannot be avoided and pain that can be prevented which gives the needed limit. Uncertainty, irreversible loss, bodily vulnerability, and mortality are not things that can be eradicated by institutional reform, and exploitative schedules, coercive workplaces, and unequal distributions of risk can be altered. Collective transformation is faithful to revolt where it is possible to remove the stone; it is more faithful than private accommodation." Patrick Hayden similarly emphasizes that Camus's later political writings distinguish between inevitable human finitude and historically produced forms of oppression, the latter requiring collective resistance rather than mere endurance" (Hayden 146). The ethic of self-fidelity is an ethic that can be employed where it is really inescapable in order to reject false hope and nihilistic collapse.

The final chapter discusses the unfinished ethics of Sisyphus. The last chapter is "the unfinished ethics of Sisyphus.

The first half of the Myth of Sisyphus is about the danger of life without an ultimate meaning being false. If there is no hidden purpose to life, then there is no life. Camus's response is to reject the notion that life has to have a meaning to be lived. The Absurd calls the clash between the need for intelligibility and the world's muteness. Physical suicide nullifies consciousness, while philosophical suicide evokes an unnecessary

transcendence in place of uncertainty. Physical suicide eliminates consciousness, philosophical suicide the uncertainty. Camus progresses from this refusal to revolt, freedom, and passion as living without appeal.

In the descent of Sisyphus these abstract terms become ethically intelligible. Sisyphus is prevented from being absorbed by work by the pause after the stone has fallen; this pause lets him understand the whole cycle. His suffering is aggravated by his awareness, as there is no more possibility of completion, but also because his awareness keeps punishment from being the sole purpose of his life. He cannot vanquish the god's materially, but he can withhold the interpretative authority from the gods. He has no choice but to face his destiny; he doesn't select it, but he knows it and doesn't agree to its rationale.

This act of appropriation grounds a minimal ethics of self-fidelity. The ridiculous topic is not subject to the falsification of experience, to the abandonment of judgement, to the imperative of dying when there is no transcendence. Here, happiness is not about pleasure nor is it about success. It is the fleeting harmony of mind and body when the subject no longer requires an unattainable future as permission to live. For Camus, then, imagining Sisyphus happy is a call to "recognise value in finite and unredeemed existence.

But the myth demonstrates the boundaries of this ethic as well. Sisyphus is alone, and the values revealed by his consciousness are those that determine his relationship mainly with himself. Lucidity alone does not create obligations to others, nor does it clarify what is just and what is exploitation, nor does it determine when endurance must be replaced by collective transformation. Those issues are solved in the late movement of *The Rebel*, in which protest meets with a common human boundary and the individual 'I' becomes the 'we'. "Camus's achievement lies not in solving the problem of meaning but in demonstrating how consciousness itself becomes a source of value" (Zaretsky 201)

In conclusion, therefore, Sisyphus should not be interpreted only as a person who suffers for his lack of faith or as a total protagonist of secular humanism. The descent is the rhetorical and normative pivot on which conscience turns into *mépris*, fate into appropriation, and happiness into imagining. This sequence is the first discipline of an ethics without transcendence: preserve consciousness, refuse false resolution, remain faithful to finite life. It's deliverable only when the dignity that is upheld for one's self is extended to the dignity of others' lives, in the shared limit.

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