

the Archbishop of St. Louis. Even the brother bishops of the St. Louis ordinary might disagree with the course he has taken. Yet they can authoritatively speak only for their own local Churches and not for Archbishop Ritter's. The conditions and customs of New England and the North differ from those of the Midwest and the South. These are over-riding factors in such a decision. When there is such a prudential ruling to be made, the bishop is usually well aware of the peculiar problems and best interests of his own people. He is, moreover, the sole judge of these circumstances and divinely delegated as such.

As for the cries of intellectual stagnation and "ostrich mentality," these are not quite to the point. The "ghetto movement," in or out, has no particular relevance. There is no patent attempt to stifle Catholic influence at every level of American life. There is only an obvious concern to safeguard the Catholicism of some students in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. All students and their parents are bound in conscience to look to the protection of their Faith. Only for a just and proportionate cause can it be jeopardized in any way. What Archbishop Ritter has added to this universal obligation is the reservation to himself of the right to judge in each case the seriousness of the causes.

—Justin M. Cunningham, O.P.

ALBERT CAMUS AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS we have become accustomed to hearing critics, both European and American, proclaim Albert Camus the representative voice of youthful France; they have found in his writings the moral salvation of the post-war generation. When this undeniably great French author received the 1957 Nobel Prize for Literature, the honor was given for "his important literary production, which with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times." Despite the fact, however, that these accolades are in part deserved, Camus' tragic death in an automobile accident last January has left us with a body of work that is at best an incomplete appraisal of contemporary problems, and at worst, an appraisal founded upon principles shackled by the chains of bias. Nevertheless, his writings deserve investiga-

tion; he was a man of extraordinary perception, who, without being entirely aware of it, clearly diagnosed the symptoms of a disease which infected his own works.

Albert Camus was an apostle of humanism, but he cannot be counted among this tradition's contemporary exponents; he was in a very real sense unique. Some have called him a Stoic, others classify him among the existentialists; the first label is not entirely accurate and he himself vehemently denied the second. At the risk of placing a tautology, one is forced to write that Camus was Camus; anyone who has read him will know what this means. Even his avowedly philosophical essays are so intensely charged with his own personality, that the reader has the feeling of being in contact, not so much with ideas, as with a man of the highest integrity; in the words of Charles Rolo, here is "the voice of a man of unshakable decency." For this reason the critic must be wary in making an assessment of Camus' literary contributions. Although his finest works are characterized by a consummate artistry, they nevertheless retain the aspect of personal conversations, and as such, they depend upon sympathy as much as upon logic. As R.W.B. Lewis has pointed out: "Camus was trained in philosophy . . . yet his meanings seem often to recede mockingly before us, shimmering but indistinct; and academic philosophers spend aimless hours exposing his baffling inconsistencies." The sheer force of his intense longing for human happiness persuades the reader long before the inconsistencies become obvious. And in a sense, the inconsistencies are not important, because Camus' profound insights into the modern malaise are so revealing; it is as if the inconsistencies are vital examples of the sickness.

However, before we can approach an understanding of the importance Albert Camus retains in the realm of modern thought, it will be necessary to examine his place in the humanistic tradition. Since the sixteenth century Western civilization has seen the gradual deification of man. The movement began in the great surge of enthusiasm for pagan accomplishments that characterized the Renaissance. With the discovery of long lost manuscripts from Grecian and Roman antiquity the men of the Renaissance felt that they had found the clue to a truly human existence, an existence freed from the superhuman knowledge and moral restraint that came from the Christian revelation. This new sense of "freedom" came to dominate Western thought to the point where man was placed on the divine throne. What this "freedom" really meant can be seen from a brief excerpt from Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in which God speaks to Adam:

The nature of all other beings is limited and contained within the bounds of laws prescribed by Us. Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will, in whose hand We have placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature. We have set thee at the world's center that thou mayest from thence more easily observe whatever is in the world. We have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer.

The language at times is very close to much of what we have heard in our own day. Sartre's "man determines what he shall be" comes immediately to mind. The difference, of course, is that in the Sartrean economy, God has been dispensed with as a useless myth in the human search for freedom and total realization. After Pico's time, moreover, the Protestant ethic of the individual, the arbitrarily accepted dichotomy between faith and reason which became Fideism and Rationalism, and finally the great revolutionary movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries fostered newer approaches to the glorification of man. Then came the global catastrophe of two wars, along with their wholesale slaughter; the shaky humanistic tower of Babel came down with a resounding crash. And men like Albert Camus, having survived the avalanche, began to pick up the pieces to see exactly how the crash occurred. They were not allowed much time, however, for a new threat rose up from the East and the steamroller of international Communism began its monolithic drive across the continent of Europe. It was at this point that Camus, fresh from the Resistance movement in France, began his investigations into the nature of revolt and revolution, contained in the book *L'Homme Révolté*, which is his most serious attempt to find the answer to human happiness.

It has been necessary to outline, in an oversimplified form it is true, the course that humanism has run down to our own times, if we would see the work that Camus has produced in its proper perspective. Camus was one washed up from the tide of humanism on the desolate beach of an absurd world. He had to come to terms with the loneliness of the survivor, and having weathered the initial shock, he had then to find a pathway of meaning, personal though it was, in the universe. This involved nothing less than the pursuit of happiness. But it was the pursuit of a chastened man; no more the grand dreams of deified man, as this had only spawned on the world destructive omnipotence. Camus could not accept the reality of God; there was too much suffering in the world for him to believe in any subsistent Goodness. And for him it was just as ridiculous to believe

in Man glorified. Pico's God had told Adam: "Thou, constrained by no limits . . . shalt ordain for thyself the limits. . . ." Camus would take this literally; for him, the pursuit of happiness became the defining of limits. Beyond this thou shall not go, O man, for on the other side of the limit reside cruelty, injustice, war, unhappiness. Or in the magnificent rhetoric of Camus' *L'Homme Révolté*, too long have we stood "lost in loneliness, with weapons in our hands and a lump in our throats."

Yet, where do we begin to define the limits? The answer is to be found, according to Camus, in the very situation that has forced us to the actual pursuit. If the universe is unintelligible, if all things have at their core, along with the tears that Vergil wrote of, an element of the absurd, then man begins to set the boundaries by confronting the absurd and making a meaning for himself out of his own overwhelming desire for justice and compassion. In short, the confronting of the absurd will demand rebellion, for it is only in rebellion that true anguish is experienced, the anguish which comes from an awareness of the possibility that one may harm a fellow human being. In the absurd universe, one suffers alone; once suffering is recognized as something common to all men, then one rebels against the absurd. In doing so, one sets the limits, establishes the boundaries beyond which the true rebel never moves. This is what Albert Camus' means by his now famous dictum: "I rebel—therefore we exist." To live in the perpetual tension of rebellion, this is the pursuit of happiness, and happiness is the pursuit, the tension, true human existence.

Strange as this may seem to many as the foundation of moral behavior, it is nevertheless the only foundation for virtue that Camus was able to discover in a world weighed down by the oppressive waters of nihilism. It is an entirely personal view, one born in an age of concentration camps and the Resistance, one whose emotional appeal to a generation crushed by war cannot be underestimated. And it has its own poetry about it, a poetry that convinces long before logic and reason shatter its fragile structure.

Camus was intelligent enough, of course, to realize that his moral construct would have little meaning, if he could not give examples of men and women who, according to him, lived in accord with the rebel conscience. Morality is not a matter of the head alone; it finds its ultimate truth in practice. Therefore, he looked through the pages of modern history to find the saints of rebellion. He found them in the Russian students of the 1905 uprising. Now the ethic of rebellion was assured a hearing; there were those who had lived it, even unto death.

Among these students of *holy* rebellion (and the adjective must be used, since it gives an indication of their attitude towards the work they had set for themselves) Kaliayev seems most to have captured Camus' ideal. He was a young man of twenty-six, when he began his terrorist activity; he became a martyr to his cause just two years later. In an abortive assassination attempt on the Grand Duke Sergei, Kaliayev refused to throw the bomb because there were children riding in the Duke's carriage. As Camus describes him, he was one of the "fastidious assassins." Some of the statements made by this youthful rebel are characteristic of the whole 1905 movement: "I consider my death as a supreme protest against a world of blood and tears"; when offered the crucifix before execution, "I have already told you that I have finished with life and that I am prepared for death." With this, he refuses the consolations of religion, although the young man seems to have believed in God.

Camus finds in Kaliayev's story, and in that of his companions, the only valid *quid pro quo* in human existence; the willingness to sacrifice one's life for having taken another life. In this voluntary sacrifice there resides true human greatness, and by virtue of the fact that the rebellion is "against a world of blood and tears," the sacrifice is one that establishes Kaliayev as a brother to all mankind, even to his victims. We should fail to grasp the real horror that is contained in all this, if we forget that for Camus, there is no sense in hoping for a life after death. For him everything ceases with the grave. This is the reason he holds the rebels of 1905 in such veneration. They lived with the tension; for them rebellion had truly established a set of values in a world that had lost meaning; their deaths were graphic evidence of a "tireless friendship" with humanity.

But this is far from being the whole story in Camus' strange and tragic view of the situation. Notice that it is rebellion itself which is "a creator of values." If Camus were to admit a God, that god's name would be Rebellion. It is this which is the ultimate end, the supreme value, and men like Kaliayev and his companions are those who "incarnate" this value in human terms! Kaliayev is "the purest image of rebellion," and it is only in this incarnation that man can enter into the realm of "above the world." The language of theology becomes the vehicle for communicating Camus' vision of human happiness, and it is this transference of theological language to the level of rebellion that gives the tone of a moral construct to the French author's writings. In another work, closely allied to *L'Homme Révolté*, namely, *La Peste* or *The Plague*, one of the central characters asks the question: "Can one become a saint without God?" Camus' answer is

found in the death of Kaliayev; it is a doubtful "yes," but then, living with the tension requires the acceptance of the doubtful.

How are we able to make a just critique of Albert Camus' "philosophy of limits"? It would be easy to dismiss the whole business as another form of intellectual madness that characterizes so much thinking today. Or we may call his work a modern revival of Stoicism, a willingness to struggle for virtue, even in the face of utterly insuperable odds. But this would be to miss the whole point, just as it is a misapprehension to consider Camus as another existentialist caught up in the chilling fascination for death. The fact is that once we translate Camus' poetic language into common parlance, we come to grips with an attempt to re-establish the Christian law of love without the vivifying flame of Christian charity. What Camus sought was the brotherhood of all men, of men living in compassionate understanding, of men who truly worked for the reign of justice and peace. It is unfortunate that he lived in a world that had forsaken the Christian "logic of goodness," to quote the excellent phrase of Bishop John Wright. Even if we grant the undeniable fact that Camus' very obvious bias against Christianity prevented his approaching the great truths, both dogmatic and moral, which it preserves in the visible world, we must yet recognize the fact that a man so sensitive to the suffering of his fellow men could not have witnessed too much practice of these truths in the epoch in which he lived. He was a humanist, that is true, but we cannot blame philosophical humanism for all the vagaries of his thought. It is a difficult thing for a sensitive man to live in a generation of hypocrites, and once he has experienced the rule of the hypocrites, it is very easy for him to identify the part with the whole.

At the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle inquires into the nature of "what is the highest of all goods achievable by action." He continues:

Verbally there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and doing well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise (1095a, 14-21).

It is this concern with the nature of happiness that is the starting point for any real inquiry into the nature of morality, for the goal that any man sets for himself will of necessity influence all his actions, which lead towards its achievement. Fortunately for the human race, Jesus Christ, true God and true man, came to tell us what is the true destiny, the real "value," the

ultimate goal of all human striving. This goal is nothing less than the perfect possession of God Himself in the loving knowledge of the Beatific Vision. And Christ, the most practical of moralists because His practice is creative, also gave us both the means and the capability for achieving the Reality infinitely beyond our natures. His is the account of "the Wise" which so often is at odds with that of "the many" concerning the nature of true happiness. For when men leave God, they seek out other gods of their own idolatrous and blasphemous devisings: the struggle for power, for money, for the passing pleasure of the flesh. It is to Albert Camus' credit that he saw through the sham gods that his contemporaries had set up for worship. He did not know the true End of human endeavor; he was unable to settle within his heart the problem of an All-good God who permits human suffering; he was, as one critic called him, "a Pascal without Christ." But for all the difficulties in which he found himself, for all the hypocrisy he witnessed in his own generation, for all the pressures of intellectual charlatanism that hounded him in his lonely stand for value in human life, he had the honesty to proclaim to all men that the beginning of their happiness would come when each told "the other that he is not God." We cannot blame him too much for confusing the pursuit with happiness. For although he would not admit it, Albert Camus passionately desired the true means, honestly sought the true path that is pointed out by the Christian revelation. For all the errors in his work, he yet diagnosed the terrible disease of the times. Perhaps his courage and integrity will give those who follow him the initiative and strength to apply the remedy.

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THE LITURGICAL CYCLE

EVERY YEAR thousands of people gather in New York's Times Square to ring out the old and welcome in the new year. Excitement runs high as the last few minutes of the dying year ebb away from the shore of human events and then, as the neon sign flashes out its gaudy colors, a new year is born. For all people a new year has some special meaning. It may be a source of new found hope and joy; it may herald days of decision and conflict; for all it begins a time of challenge. A new