CHAPTER III

ALBERT CAMUS: THE ULTIMATE REALITY OF ESTRANGEMENT AND METAPHYSICAL ALIENATION

Albert Camus was the son of an agricultural labourer and had a painful childhood. The mother of the noted French writer complained that her son came into the world crying. Camus came into the world crying or laughing we certainly do not know but this much is certain that his childhood makes painful reading. His misfortunes always followed him close on his heels – he lost his father just after his birth in the very beginning of the First World War, 1914, and his helpless and deaf mother could hardly afford to bring him up against the absurdities of the world. Pol Gaillard enumerates his early misfortunes:

His father grievously wounded in the battle of Marne, dies in the Hospital of Saint – Bieu. His mother, who suffers from the troubles of audition and speech, instals herself at Alger, Balcourt quatters. She works at last in a factory of car touch and later does the domestic work of a maid.¹

Raol Audibert, Henni Lemaitre and Vander Elst also agree with the fact that, “Having lost his father in the War of 1914, he will be brought up by his mother of Spanish origin in a poor apartment of a popular lodge of Alger.”² Camus himself refers to that ominous time to the blood – curdling drum beats of The First World War, which triggers off unprecedented injustice, violence and bloodshed that he has grown up with all the men of his age to the drums of The First World War. They have had twenty years in the grip of power by Hitler, thirteen years in the concentration camp. These words of Camus are not a sentimental outburst but gospel truth, “The First World War takes a toll of eight million lives. In 1917 two Russian Revolutions take place. In Feb. Zariat regime is overthrown. In Nov. the Bolsheviks grab all power.”³
Camus’s life, thus, was mapped against one of the most violent periods of history. He grew up in the aftermath of a World War in which eight million people died, including his own father; as a young man, his first cultural and political engagements were overshadowed and, to some extent, determined by a political climate of spreading fascism and the prospect of another war. His early works that established his reputation were published while he was cut off from his family in Algeria and lived alone in occupied France. Sixty million people were killed in the Second World War and Camus’s generation was the first to live through such an unprecedented scale of carnage, which left the legacies of the Holocaust, Hiroshima and a Europe divided by the Iron Curtain. For Camus is particular, the wave of decolonization around the world in the wake of the Second World War brought a more directly personal anguish with the impending loss of his own Algerian homeland and what he saw as the prospect of exile.

In all these respects, Camus was very much a man of that turbulent twentieth century and its ideological conflicts. Despite his rejection of what he called “ideology”, he inevitably inherited some of the ideological stances of that period.

Although born in extreme poverty, in 1923 Camus was accepted, as a scholarship student, at Lycee Bugeaud and University of Algiers, where he developed an abiding interest in sports and the theatre. He is a versatile genius as much at home in studies as in games sports. He succeeded in overcoming the gripes of poverty. To illustrate this point, it will not be out of place if we depend on Camus’s exact words, “There were sunshine and poverty but sports from which I have taken my sole and true moral lessons.” (Literary presence, Camus, p-8) However, his university career was cut short by a severe attack of tuberculosis exactly in 1930, an illness from which he suffered periodically throughout his life. This illness put an end to his football (soccer) activities (he had been a goalkeeper for the university team) and forced him to make his studies a part-time pursuit.
Luckily his disease–stricken days are cushioned against the comforting company of his uncle, Gustove Acault, who advises him to while away his consumptive days by reading voraciously, reflecting and speaking, “Choked by his state, and well drawn, he had no true passion except for studies and ideas.” Camus threw a flood of light on his miserable years and his vain attempts to find solace in Marx, “I have not known liberty in Marx. I have known it in misery. No person around me knew to read and write consider all that well.”

Although Camus was very firmly a man of his times, his writings have also transcended those times, as is demonstrated by their continuing popularity throughout the world. At the age of eighteen in 1932, Camus, a precocious writer, comes to write several valuable articles on as complicated a topic as music, on as difficult and outstanding writer as Bergson and on as pitiable a poet as Dehan Rictus, a poet of misery. Beside his interest in literature and sister subjects, he has also found interest in the political swim. He joins Rassemblement Amesterdam – an anti Fascist movement launched by the distinguished men of letters – Romain Rolland and Henni Bar Housee. Beside his study of Philosophy, he takes up a miscellany of insignificant odd jobs in commerce and administration only to drive away the wolf of poverty from his door.

In 1934, Camus got united in a wedlock with Simone Hie, a morphine addict. Pol Gaillard said in this point, “Camus marries Simone Hie. He earns his livelihood from divorce jobs all in continuing his study of philosophy.” But the marriage ended due to the infidelity by both of them.

In the spring of 1935, Camus joined the French Communist Party, apparently because of concerns about the political situation in Spain (which eventually resulted in the Spanish Civil War) rather than in support for Marxist – Leninist doctrine in 1936, the independence – minded Algerian Communist Party (PCA) was founded. Camus joined the activities of the Algerian People’s Party, which got him into trouble with his Communist Party Comrades. In 1935 when he attains the age of twenty – one, he has the honour to write the first
texts of *The Wrong Side and the Right Side*. He gives his own experiences, his own episodes, already lived, in terms of certain stories, slices of life – highlighting the brutal facts of human existence.

In 1935, Camus established and animated the “Worker’s Theatre” – as literary pursuits and activities-renamed “Team’s Theatre” in 1937. His dramatic adventure begins. He adopts to his liking and need, puts in a sequence of choice scenes acts “The Time of Detest” written by Malrau. Pol Gaillard describes his theatrical adventures of the years from 1935 to 1937 thus:

*He edits along with three comrades, Piagnant, Bourgeois, Deanne Sicard, another play; “Revolt among the Austuries” the representation of which is banned but which is published in Charlot editions.*

The year 1936, in some respects, is an auspicious year for Camus, the student. He is only twenty-one and improves his qualifications. Pol Gaillard puts in relief his achievements of the year:

*Camus achieves his diploma of higher studies of philosophy, Christian Metaphysics and Neo-Platonism. He studies there more particularly the doctrines of Plotin and Saint Augustine.*

Once again in 1937 when he is twenty-three, he falls seriously ill and departs to take care of himself in Savoie. However, he returns to Algeria through north Italy. People, ever aware of his intellectual attainments, offer him a teaching post at the college of Sidi-bel-obbes which he refuses for fear of forfeiting a natural life. M. Girard and J. P. Richard hazard an observation on these years of Camu’s life: “After not altogether a happy childhood, Camus took his degree in philosophy, then, for reasons of health, abandoned the teaching profession.”

The year 1938 is quite significant, it is because Camus, now 24 years old, writes one of his major works – *Caligula*. This is the first personal piece. *The Just Assassins* and *Caligula* contain valuable insights into the preservation of ethical principles during political violence and chaos of history. He then discussed in relation to the contemporary reality of modern terrorist acts and technological warfare. He also tries his hands at such a work as
entitled, *The Pessimist Revolution*, but unfortunately it got lost during the war. In this year the seeds of his out-standing work began. *Caligula* is considered to be the Bible of the absurd which is Camus’s trademark as a writer.

With all his firsthand experiences of annihilations, chaos and anguish and anxieties, readings and observations, Camus composed the dramas of human despair and dejection, fears and apprehension and alienation—both of social and spiritual alienation. It should also be specially mentioned here that in Camus’s writing existential anguish, failure of human communication, estrangement and metaphysical alienation are philosophically subsumed into, what runs like, a refrain in his creative consciousness, ‘absurd’ and ‘absurdity’.

Camus’s first significant contribution to philosophy was his idea of the absurd, the result of our desire for clarity and meaning within a world and condition that offers neither, which he explained in “*The Myth of Sisyphus*” and incorporated into many of his other works. Despite the split from his “Study partner”, Sartre, some still argue that Camus falls into the existentialist camp. However he rejected that label himself in his essay *Enigma* and also elsewhere. The current confusion may still arise as many recent applications of Existentialism have much in common with many of Camus’s practical ideas. However, the personal understanding he had of the world, and every vision he had for its progress undoubtedly sets him apart.

In 1957 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature officially not for his novel *The Fall*, published the previous year, but for his writings against capital punishment in the essay ‘*Reflexions Sur la Guillotine*’. When he spoke to students at the University of Stockholm, he defended his apparent inactivity in the Algerian question and stated that he was worried what could happen to his mother who still lived in Algeria. This led to further ostracism by French left-wing intellectuals.

Camus’s philosophy is the philosophy of the absurd, and for him the absurd springs from the relation of man to the world, of his legitimate aspira-
tions to the vanity and futility of human wishes. The conclusions which he draws from it are those of classical pessimism.\(^8\)

The experience of alienation in Camus’s case, comes to be born of irreconcilable discord between man and the world. With absurdity he finds the world \textit{“thick and strange.”} Nature appears to be foreign and inhuman. Camus interprets this to mean that the structures, forms, and meanings with which we had hitherto clothed nature have now fallen away and nature is transformed and it reincarnates itself before our eyes. The feeling of absurdity also reveals the foreign and inhuman aspects of other men, when their movements and actions are abruptly deprived of meaning:

\begin{quote}
\textit{In certain hours of lucidity the mechanical aspect of their movements, their meaningless pantomime, reveals the stupidity of all that surrounds them. A man speaks on the telephone behind a glass enclosure, one cannot hear him, but one sees his pointless mimicry: One wonders why he lives. This malaise before the inhumanity even of man … is also the absurd.}\(^9\)
\end{quote}

Alienation, physical, social and spiritual alienation, for Camus, is an absence of correspondence between the mind’s need for unity and the chaos of the world, the mind experiences and the obvious response is either disconcerting, or, moves in the opposite direction. Camus gives his interpretation of absurd in his books \textit{“The Myth of Sisyphus} and \textit{Caligula\textquotedblright} all the struggles that we put forth in a repeated daily cycle are in all actually completely meaningless and futile. A man is certain that he exists and that the world exists, but anything beyond this is construction. Not only man’s immediate personal experience is caught in the world’s lack of unity and meaning, but also man’s intelligence. Our minds desire to understand the world, to find unity in it, but the enumeration of events does not bring about fruitful results.

Camus views man as an isolated existence who is cast into an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value, or meaning, and represents human life, in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves from the nothingness whence it came toward the
nothingness where it must end – as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. He points out in “The Myth of Sisyphus”:

> In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile … This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.\(^{10}\)

To Camus, “The absurd is essentially a divorce”\(^{11}\) between man and the world, and that is why he depicts his characters in their relationship with life. So the feeling of alienation is closely linked to the feeling that life is meaningless. Camus associates the feeling of alienation with the feeling of exile, a theme that is important in much of his plays. As rational members of human society, we instinctively feel that life has some sort of meaning or purpose. When we act under this assumption, we feel at home. As a result, absurdists feel like strangers in a world divested of reason. The feeling of absurdity exiles us from the homelike comforts of a meaningful existence.

To clarify this concept, it is necessary to point out that absurdity itself is a characteristic of neither the human being nor the world solely, but of their interaction. Establishing the concept of absurdity as a first principle, Camus wrote:

> I said that the world is absurd, but I was too hasty. This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational (World) and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For the moment it is all that links them together. It binds them one to the other as only hatred can weld two creatures together. This is all I can discern clearly in this measureless universe where my adventures take place.\(^{12}\)

Obviously, Camus attributed great significance to the notion of absurdity. It is not merely one characteristic of the human interaction with the outside world, but the defining characteristic. Throughout his life, Albert Camus confronted the central dramas of our civilization: the existential anxiety over “the death of God” and the absurdity of human existence; the political struggles over social injustice, capital punishment, and national
liberation; and the international focus on nuclear annihilation, violations of human rights, and torture. Addressing the West at its metaphysical and mythic roots, Camus sought to diagnose the interior forces that seemed to propel humanity towards self-destruction. Previous literary and psychoanalytical studies have presented Camus’s life and works biographically, but philosophers have neither taken his thought seriously nor examined his work as a whole as David Sprintzen points out.¹³

Although Camus is often associated with Existentialism, he preferred to be known as a man and a thinker for he preferred persons over ideas. He deals with the problem of the meaning of life. He links the confession that life is not worth living to what he calls the “feeling of absurdity.”

The defenselessness before death gives rise to a reflection on hope. For hope contrary to what is believed, is equivalent to resignation. And to live is not to be resigned. If human life is a fraud when it is justified by hope, then the question arises whether one can live without appeal to God or hope, i.e. is suicide the logical response to the hopelessness of life? It is this question which constitutes the point of departure of The Myth of Sisyphus; the theme of refusal of the world (a term later replaced by the word “revolt”) rather than renouncement is Camus’s vindication of the heroism and dignity of man.

The early roots of the concept of revolt which later becomes the central moral principle of Camus’s thought, after having supplanted the experimental principle of the “absurd” developed in The Myth of Sisyphus; and in Caligula the concern with human purity and innocence figures prominently in all of Camus’s writings, especially in the literary works. Innocence is the expression of that sincerity with which we recognize ourselves as what we are. Innocence and honesty to one’s self and condition are the basis for the integrity of the characters of Camus’s plays and novels.

In ‘The Just Assassins’ Camus presents alienation as a predicament of man aware of his condition because for man recognizing the absurd, “the universe (is) suddenly divested of illusions and light, so man feels as alien, a
stranger." According to the traditions, Kaliayev was the wisest and most prudent of all mortals, who loved the earth and hated death and the gods. For some reasons, an indiscretion with the gods or a trick played on death, Kaliayev found himself condemned and in Hades. But through persuasion he was given one last stay on the earth. But once there, and having again tasted the “water and the sun, the warm stones and the sea,” he no longer intended to return to the infernal shade and thus stayed with the sea and the earth.

Although these moments of descent may at times be painful, there may as well be moments when Kaliayev returns to his task with joy. It is in the full realization that he has seen his destiny. In this subtle pivoting within him, by this revolt and scorn, Kaliayev has turned back to his world and, as master of his own life, stands facing a universe which no longer controls or deceives him.

It soon becomes obvious that Kaliayev is the spokesman for Albert Camus.

the language he used was that of a man who was sick and tired of the world he lived in … though he had much linking for his fellow men … and had resolved, for his part, to have no truck with injustice and compromises with the truth.15

Later, another person links herself with Kaliayev as another rebel. This is Dora, who also is a spokesman for revolt, but unlike Kaliayev, he is able to put this revolt into intellectual form as well as into action. Dora, whose diary is used as a means of describing the assassination before and during the assassination, organizes teams of revolutionaries in order to help Kaliayev to bomb the Grand Duke.

Camus treats the theme of alienation very differently: in Caligula he presents Caligula’s alienation as an individual case, whereas in The Just Assassins it is presented as man’s predicament resulting from his recognition of this absurd condition in the universe. Besides this, in Caligula one observes the revolt of a solitary man against society’s arbitrary rules and values, while in The Just Assassins the recognition of their common condition gives rise to a collective struggle against their condition.
As stated previously, a sense of exile awaits man after the recognition of the absurd, because, “with the moment of awareness comes a sense of exile, a feeling of being a ‘Stranger’ in a world suddenly deprived of its familiar sense.” Moreover, it is “an exile in one’s own home”, causing an experience of the feeling of exile—that sensation of a void within which never left us, that irrational longing to hark back to the past or else to speed up the march of time, and those keen shafts of memory that stung life fire.

The revolutionaries are all victims of the same inhuman forces which may destroy them at any moment. So, the exile causes solidarity among them who realize that they must struggle as one body against their common predicament.

As rational members of human society, we instinctively feel that life has some sort of meaning or purpose. When we act under this assumption, we feel at home. As a result, absurdists feel like strangers in a world divested of reason. The feeling of absurdity exiles us from the homelike comforts of a meaningful existence. Camus often refers metaphorically to the feeling of absurdity as a place of exile.

Camus showed us his heroes in such a light that we could at the same time sympathize with them and maintain our usual attitude of mind. Hence the classical form of the plays, which was to make all the more obvious the character’s estrangement; things and behaviours were shown to us as they always are, they were described with a cautious realism.

Since the rational system in people’s life has collapsed, language, which is the basic pillar of this system, has also collapsed. Therefore, speech—a mark of man’s rational faculties—breaks down in an irrational world, and in the theatre that seeks to reflect this world language is used with no true desire to communicate. Esslin says in this point:
The Theatre of the Absurd is to a very considerable extent concerned with a critique of language, an attack above all on fossilized forms of language which have become devoid of meaning. The conversation at the party which at one moment seemed to be an exchange of information about the weather, or new books, or the respective health of the participants, is suddenly revealed as an exchange of mere meaningless banalities. The people talking about the weather had no intention whatever of really exchanging meaningful information on the subject; they were merely using language to fill the emptiness between them, to conceal the fact that they had no desire to feel each other any thing at all.\textsuperscript{19}

Therefore, to call this drama a drama of non-communication is still not very accurate, for this implies that people have something to say to each other, but fail to do so. While actually, the absurdists’ people have nothing to say at all.

In his plays, in particular and his literary works in general, you find in them injustice, cruelty, indifference, the absurdity of events, but always a profound reflection about the meaning of life and what is needed to redeem it. He took stands on the major issues of his day, such as nuclear weapons, colonization, the death penalty, and was also critical of revolutionary violence. In his play \textit{The Just Assassins}, he calls into doubt righteous and murderous terrorism.

Through his style of questioning, through his doubts, Camus sets himself out as a humanist, that’s to say he never loses sight of the essence of what it is to be human, even when the most monstrous and savage attitudes seem to be a denial of humanity. Eugene Ionesco wrote in \textit{Notes and Counter Notes}:

\begin{quote}
I think about Camus: I hardly know Camus. I spoke to him once, twice. And yet his death leaves an enormous hole in me. We needed this just man so much. He was like that naturally, in truth. He didn’t let himself be swayed by the flow; he wasn’t a weather vane; he was capable of being a reference point.
\end{quote}
Camus’s ideas about the ultimate human reality of estrangement and metaphysical alienation find consistent expressions in his plays and novels. These ideas are based on Camus’s perception of human existence against the tyrannies of history and an unbridgeable gap between man and man and between man and the universe.

Camus may begin with only a few ideas which are really his own, but the ideas of man’s divorce from the universe and the finality of death are “polished” and “developed” their implications to form a philosophy of life, a “modest” philosophy of life. These fundamental convictions give rise to four other themes which are characteristic of Camus. These are: the hopelessness of life, the need to refuse the world without renouncing it, purity of heart, and happiness – Caligual’s tyranny, Martha’s unrepentant bitterness and Meursault’s eventual revolt are fundamentally innocent; purity of heart comes to all of them through their acceptance of themselves for what they are and their consequent demand upon the world and mankind to accept and welcome them for what they are and need. It is not often that a man feels purity of heart. But at least at that moment his duty is to recognize as true that which has singularly purified him, even if this truth may seem a blasphemy to others. This is but a limited exploration into a larger conception of purity of heart, but it marks for us the direction of Camus’s thinking. Camus seeks at this early period to defend the innocence of man, for sin is one of the “Words that I have never quite understood.” Man may attain to an innocence which cuts broadside across the code of the church or the state; this, because guidance and justification for human creatures comes neither from the heavens nor from the ruling of the state, but from man himself.

The universe Camus described, is limited by death and man’s estrangement from the world, and Camus calls for a refusal of the world which is no a renouncement and which means having the “Conscious certainty of a death without hope.” It is seen that a man may live such a life and retain purity of heart, but Camus goes on to add that such a life can also reach happiness.
As we shall see, Sisyphus is a happy man despite his hopeless fate and Meursault is happy though death is about to cut short the absurdity of his own life. Iven Kaliayev is happy though death is in the door of his prison. Even in these early meditations Camus has hold of a conception of happiness which is neither sensual nor transcendent but which seems essentially religious, a happiness which is the affirmation of the dignity and unique value of human life in a world which does not call man its own.

The truly serious philosophical problem, the problem of suicide or meaning of life, is the most urgent of all problems that Camus deals with. The question is to know whether life is worth the trouble of being lived. He reveals that suicide is not a social but a personal phenomenon. It is avowal that life is not worth the trouble of being lived, that life is too much with us, that we don’t understand it. And suicide is motivated by a sudden vision of the world without its ordinary illusions and trappings. Man suddenly finds himself a stranger to this world, like an actor exiled from his décor. This, says Camus, is the feeling of absurdity. The task, he says, is to examine the relation between suicide and the feeling of absurdity and to determine the degree in which suicide is the solution to the problem of absurdity.

Albert Camus addresses himself only to those who are concerned to put their actions in accord with their understanding of life’s meaning. The passion, which was the dominant force in his works, is now linked with the existential practicality of the philosophical task. These are serious and ultimate decisions which must be made in regard to the most fundamental of all questions of philosophy. But Camus counters this exigency by asking if it one might find life to be meaningless and yet go on living as if it were not so. Also, there may be many persons who have committed suicide who don’t find life meaningful. Certainly the habit of the body to continue its life is just as important as any decision which the mind might take. So the question is again posed, i.e., can we find life absurd and go on living? Camus replies that is possible, because a third element can be interposed between absurdity and death. This element is hope, which with death and absurdity makes the third
theme of the inquiry. Hope can intervene and sustain life on the basis of future possibility. Hope is an elision i.e., that which eludes the movement from absurdity to death. With these three themes before him Camus proposes a method by which to analyze these themes.

The universe for Camus is irrational, defying logical explanation, and in such an irrational universe, man’s existence becomes meaningless and purposeless. Since the universe is irrational and resists rational systematization, any attempt at systematization is futile and doomed to failure. The desire for rationality is negated and irrationality is absolutized. The problem of the Absurd is not solved but evaded. In Camus’s thought, the absurd mind recognizes the limited and useful rationality which is in nature, but this useful rationality explains nothing to him. Similarly, the absurd mind recognizes the irrationality which is both in himself and the world. Thus, as Camus states in “The Myth of Sisyphus” : “The end of the mind is failure” because man has the desire to make everything clear but he cannot achieve this through his limited reason. “For the absurd mind, reason is vain and there is nothing beyond it.” To Camus, “The absurd is essentially a divorce between the mind and the world.” There are no absolutes and values are relative, so absurdists are against absolutism, which requires a unifying principle in the universe. For Camus the absurd can occur only when two elements are present – the desire of the human mind that the world should be explicable in human terms, and the fact that the world is not thus explicable. In the present age, when rationalism has so often been shown to be an inadequate principle of explanation, this experience of the world has been widely shared.

Man is irrevocably condemned to death, which is “the cruel mathematics that condemns our condition” as Camus says in ‘The Myth of Sisyphus’. Death is “the most obvious absurdity” because man is sentenced to death for reason unknown for him. Furthermore, it is “the obvious absurdity” because it is constant conflict with man’s craving for immortality, so the absurdity lies “in the anxiety created between my
recognition of the inevitability of ... (death) and my innate sense of a craving for immortality which gives the human condition its tragic sense. Moreover, since life ends in death, death makes all man’s efforts senseless, and it “makes nonsense any attempt to give ‘meaning’ to life.” However, this does not mean that man should give up life and sink to despair. On the contrary, for Camus the absurd man being aware of his mortality embraces life fully since he does not entertain such false hopes as the immortality of the soul. The absurd man knows that:

if we are to find happiness, which every man wants, then we must find it in this mortal life, and not look for it elsewhere, in which case we would be bound to be disappointed. In this way, we are being candid with ourselves, and loyal to our condition.

Albert Camus maintained in his own life a tension between an awareness of the futility of human existence and his own defiant, rebellious self-affirmation. His writings (philosophy and fiction) reflect and illustrate this paradox: although ultimate and lasting meaning is impossible, we can still create our own dignity as persons by challenging the absurd. To Camus, this is how man should rebel against death, which dignifies him. He believes that the absurd does not require suicide, but it requires revolt. On the other hand, he believes that the attempt to attach meaning to life is futile, and it is merely an illusion that man should avoid. For example, according to Camus, who always distanced himself from Existentialism, such an attempt is a make-believe, giving the illusion that man is free to mould his life as he likes, this makes him not free but “the slave of his liberty.” He says in this regard:

To the extent to which... (man) imagined a purpose to his life, he adapted himself to the demands of a purpose to be achieved and became the slave of his liberty. Thus, I could not act otherwise than as the father (or the engineer or the leader of nation, or the office sub-clerk) that I am preparing to be. I think I can choose to be that rather than something else... Thus the absurd man realizes that he was never free. To speak clearly, to the extent to which I hope, to which I worry about a truth that might be individual to me, about a
Thus, for Camus, meaning is an illusion that restricts man and prevents him from living life to the full. Unlike an existentialist, the absurd man does not need to look for meaning and significance in life because he knows that this is where the real freedom lies. Then, it can be said that freedom signifies different meanings for existentialists and absurdists. Whereas it is the only way to shape one’s self and one’s life and to choose one’s personal meaning for existentialists, it means liberation from the illusion that one can assign meaning to one’s life for absurdists. As Camus says, “Not to believe in the profound meaning of things belongs to the absurd man”. This is the way to reach the real freedom because his freedom from illusion commits man passionately to the life in the present, and he embraces life instead of looking for meaning in life. As Camus says:

> It was previously a question of finding out whether or not life had to have a meaning to be lived. It now becomes clear, on the contrary, that it will be lived all the better if it has no meaning.

Thus, while freedom of choice is one of the basic tenets of Existentialism, it is a make-believe that should be avoided in the absurd, for it prevents man from facing his true condition. As seen, while Existentialism also acknowledges the absurdity of the human condition, it differs from the Absurd in its attitude towards and response to this absurdity.

Camus’s chief concern is to depict the absurdity of the human condition and man lost and trying to find his way desperately in a world devoid of meaning, sense and purpose. According to the absurd writers and playwrights, man, who is ignorant of his true condition, is the one who is deprived of human dignity since “dignity … comes of awareness.” For them, modern society is mostly composed of such individuals who lead a mechanical life by means of illusions and habits, so they lack the sensitivity and lucidity essential for recognizing the absurdity:
At certain moments of lucidity, the mechanical aspect of their gestures, the meaningless pantomime makes silly everything that surrounds them. A man is talking on the telephone behind a glass partition; you can not hear him, but can see his incomprehension dumb show; you wonder why he is alive. This discomfort in the face of one’s own inhumanity, this incalculable tumble before the image of what we are, this ‘nausea’, as a writer of today calls it, is also the absurd.\textsuperscript{33}

Caligula, in his attempt to prove himself free, establishes his kinship with Sisyphus by making his rock roll back on people so as to kill them without rime or reason. Caligula in \textit{Caligula} is a living embodiment of this philosophy. For him, human existence is confined to corporal agitations. The authors of literature in France since 1945 make a very pertinent remark in this regard:

\begin{quote}
Undoubtedly Caligula would only be a fragment detached from the myth of Sisyphus. The insanity of that emperor rises from the logic of the absurd: he cannot stand the idea that men die and they are not happy. He wants to prove that he is free, and because he has the means he goes to prove it at the expense of other. He takes upon himself and goes to prove the beastly and incomprehensible face of Deities and Destiny as if he wanted to provoke men and goad them to a revolt. This brother of Sisyphus finishes by making his rock roll on them, and exalts himself for his destructive undertaking, passing from the absurd to Nihilism.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

They analyze the existence called absurd thus: \textit{“The sentiment of the Absurd can surge from the ‘nausea’ which the mechanical character of existence without any aim and objective comes to inspire.”}\textsuperscript{35} Thus, mechanical life is aggravated by the attendant feelings of boredom and disappointment. But in one respect all this proves redemptive in the long run. This boredom takes one to the extreme heights of a mechanical life but it inaugurates at the same time the movement of conscience. It rouses conscience and provokes the course. Camus has three different approaches to the absurd by means of boredom, horror and estrangement. He detects some metaphysical elements rooted in routine and mechanical life.
Three successive approaches to the absurd, through boredom, through horror, through estrangement. Metaphysics rooted in the banality of existence, or in the commonest experience.\textsuperscript{36}

Camus defines the absurd man as a particular man with awareness of the confrontation between the spirit and the world without hope. But at the same time the refusal of philosophical suicide is also characteristic of the Absurd man.

\ldots The absurd alone gives to the drama its logical solution which decides to live alone with what it knows that is to say with the awareness of the confrontation without hope between the spirit and the world.\textsuperscript{37}

Camus derives three things from the absurd; revolt, liberty and passion. He reveals that real living begins with revolt against this sort of life that one leads blind folded: “To live is to make the absurd live. To make it live all is to consider it. One of the coherent philosophical positions is the revolt.”\textsuperscript{38}

Camus makes a remarkable mark in this point:

\textit{Man’s solidarity founded upon rebellion, and rebellion in its turn, can only find its justification in this solidarity ... [A] ny rebellion which claims the right to deny or destroy this solidarity loses simultaneously its right to be called rebellion and becomes in reality an acquiescence in murder.}\textsuperscript{39}

In absurd existence, life itself is a form of rebellion. This rebellion is natural. Camus reveals that one’s life has been devoid of all sense and the decision that one must change one’s life style is the revolt against the absurd. Revolt imparts a meaning to one’s life, enables one to grasp a reality which is otherwise beyond his head. He is invited to exhaust all and also himself.

\textit{According to him (Camus) it is that revolt that confers on life its value and its grandeur, exhausts the intelligence and pride of man in the grip of a reality which surpasses him, and invites him to exhaust all and to exhaust himself because he knows that in that awareness and in that revolt he witnesses for the present its only truth which is challenge.}\textsuperscript{40}
Because man lives a routine life, a mechanical life, he is under the delusion that he is free and his life has a definite goal. But with the discovery on his part, of the absurd the sense of the real conditions of life dawns on him. Then alone he finds himself fully free from restraints and starts living without appeal.

*The discovery of the absurd allows him (the absurd man) to see all from a new angle, he has been profoundly free since the movement he comes lucidly to realize his condition to be without hope, without a morrow. He then feels liberated from common rules and learns to love 'without hope'.*\(^{41}\)

Then comes passion. In this respect, Camus comes to attach importance to the quantity of an experience. It is because, for Camus, the quantity of an experience flows from our presence in the world in full awareness. It would be highly profitable to quote the exact words of Camus in this regard for whom feeling life, revolt and liberty is living one’s life to the utmost:

*To feel one’s life, one’s revolt, one’s liberty, and the most possible, is to live the most possible. Where lucidity reigns the scale of values becomes useless ... The present and the succession of the presents before a soul ceaselessly conscious is the Ideal of the absurd man.*\(^{42}\)

In ‘Caligula’, Camus’s concern is to project Caligula as a hero of the absurd. His aim seems to portray the conflict between the absurd man and the society, whereas in ‘Just Assassins’, Camus attempts to voice his belief in the solidarity of man against the absurd. Therefore, he depicts a philanthropic character who tries to promote solidarity among men against despots and despotism symbolizing the absurdity of the human condition. This philanthropic personality is Ivan Kaliyev who shows, during the reign of Grand Duke Serge, his readiness to help and alleviate people’s pain and suffering. He becomes sad when he sees people suffering, and makes himself ready to sacrifice anything for helping them. He believes that he has to do anything to prolong other’s lives considering this as a way to rebel against man’s mortality, which renders the human condition irrational. In doing
this task, he doesn’t consider himself as a hero, but he thinks that it is man’s
duty to help or save others. He considers his task of fighting the despots as
common decency.

After killing the Grand Duke, the Grand Duchess tries to save Kaliayev,
but he refuses the grace in question, “If I don’t die, I shall be considered to be
a murder”. So he is one of a number of such “scrupulous assassins”. Kaliayev
may have been prepared to sacrifice his own life, but obviously his victim,
Grand Duke Serge, did not in any way “offer” his. Specially, this willingness to
die on the part of the perpetrator compromises the idea that there is a moral
equivalence between the two deaths. Being willing to die for what one
believes is perhaps admirable, but doesn’t itself justify killing for what one
believes. Clearly, then, there is something flawed in the idea that some kind of
moral equilibrium is restored with the self-immolation of the assassin.

In *The Just Assassins*, Camus insisted that the concept of rebellion
held the explanation for the destructive political movements of the Twentieth
Century. Every rebellion is a form of protest and, interestingly, reveals a
desire for order. Camus wrote in this regard:

> Rebellion is born of the spectacle of irrationality, confronted
> with an unjust and incomprehensible condition. But its blind
> impulse is to demand order in the midst of chaos and unity in
> the very heart of the Ephemeral. It protests, it demands, it
> insists that the outrage be brought to an end, and that what
> up to now has been built on shifting sands should henceforth
> be founded on rock.⁴³

Camus considered this protest to be evidence of the absurdity of existence,
but rebellion also serves as evidence for the existence of values. If one rebels
against the absurd, obviously there is something of value—presumably
something that is not absurd—for which to fight. “Not every value entails
rebellion, but every act of rebellion tacitly invokes a value.”⁴⁴ Reason appears
to be the faculty of human consciousness that compels one to affirm values
such as order and purpose. However, reason has limits, and the values that
correspond to the rational human being’s nostalgia for unity should not be
absolute.
The destructive form of rebellion, for which Camus designates the term “revolution”, does not result from an absence of values, but from an uncompromising adherence to absolute values.\textsuperscript{45} The rebel becomes aware of a value such as freedom or order, and demands that this value be respected at all cost. Camus referred to this outlook as “All or Nothing” mentality.

*The rebel himself wants to be ‘all’ – to identify himself completely with this good of which he has suddenly become aware and by which he wants to be personally recognized and acknowledged or ‘nothing’, in other words, to be completely destroyed by the force that dominates him.*\textsuperscript{46}

The value for which the rebel fights is something that transcends the individual, and in time, the abstract value at the root of the rebellion supersedes appreciation of the here and now. This is why Camus insisted that the instinct to rebel is metaphysical in origin. When one lives in a completely disordered world and still demands order, this will certainly amount to a protest against one’s very condition as a man. According to Camus ‘Metaphysical rebellion’ “is the movement by which man protests his condition and against the whole of creation. It is metaphysical because it contests the ends of man and of creation.”\textsuperscript{47} The metaphysical instinct to rebel is manifested in historical rebellions in which the destruction of human beings is sanctified, but this impulse to rebel can also be channeled into a healthy form of political action. Authentic rebellion, that which is consistent with its origins, is characterized by attentiveness and an intense focus on the immediate situation. Historical rebellion, on the other hand, tends to focus on absolute values to be attained in the distant future. Authentic rebels, such as Ivan Kaliayev and his girl friend Dora in *The Just Assassins*, exhibit a sense of existential immediacy in the act of rebellion that is consistent with an appreciation of present reality. In other words, the authentic rebel remains lucid enough to recognize that the metaphysical impulse to rebel is a product of the absurd, and the absurd cannot be settled. This lucidity prevents the authentic rebel from being consumed by his rebellious impulses.
Another metaphysical element of rebellion is provided to the rebel by the community of men with whom the rebel lives, and for whom the rebel eventually expands individually held values to the whole of mankind; thus, the rebellion is conducted in the name of mankind and human solidarity rather than the purpose of addressing an individual grievance.

(The rebel) is acting in the name of certain values which are still indeterminate but which he feels are common to himself and to all men. ... The affirmation implicit in every act of rebellion is extended to something that transcends the individual in so far as it withdraws him from his supposed solitude and provides him with a reason to act.\(^{48}\)

Camus, adds, “when he rebels, a man identifies himself with other men and so surpasses himself, and from this point of view human solidarity is metaphysical."\(^{49}\) The solidarity of mankind supplies the rebel with a cause that transcends the individual, the collective suffering of mankind. Such metaphysical rebellion, however, results in destructive revolution when the rebel is consumed by the “All or Nothing” mentality. The absence of God leaves the rebel with absolute freedom, but in the name of human solidarity freedom translates into “a prison of absolute duties."\(^{50}\)

From the moment that man believes neither in God nor immortal life, he becomes ‘responsible for everything alive, for everything that, born of suffering, is condemned to suffer from life."\(^{51}\)

The characters of the play “The Just Assassins” retain lucidity that is necessary to remain faithful to the true cause of the rebellion and lucidity, for Camus, should not lead to despair. Indeed, Ivan comments that he sees much beauty and joy in the world, and that he joined the revolution because he loves life.\(^{52}\) His attitude toward life is congruent with absurdist logic which informs one that life is precious. He intones “only, I’m still convinced that life is a glorious thing, I’m in love with beauty, happiness. That’s why I hate despotism”.\(^{53}\) When Ivan is poised to throw a bomb under the carriage of the Grand Duke, he hesitates and retreats after seeing the faces of two children in
the carriage. Remembering the origins of his rebellion, Ivan cannot bring himself to do violence to innocent children. Again, Camus used the symbol of innocent children to illustrate the often overlooked value of life.

In this state of exile the search for meaning begins, and the rebel’s responsibility is to remake the world itself so that it adheres to the values that are considered important. When the rebel attempts to remake the world, the rebellion goes beyond the realm of ethics into the realm of politics. Camus despaired at the historical outcomes of rebels who attempt to “annex all creation. Every time it experiences a setback, we have already seen that the political solution, the solution of conquest, is formulated.”

The logical outcome of revolutions is the political dominance that adheres to the “All or Nothing” mentality. Camus points out that the danger of rebellion is the danger of nihilism. Camus clarifies this concept as, “A nihilist is not one who believes in nothing, but one who does not believe in what exists.” He considers nihilism as a logical conclusion of “Superior values” that are built on the foundation of an illusion. These superior values are prized above life itself when the rebel has a lapse in lucidity and fails to recognize the value of human life.

Inspite of the danger of nihilism, Camus insisted that rebellion was natural to mankind and that it could even be fruitful. Although the rebellion is conceived as a pejorative term that usually connotes violence and destruction, Camus argues that the logic of rebellion dictates limits for human action and in turns, prevents absolute destruction. So rebellion is a protest against the absurdity of death and only a lapse in lucidity, a deviation from logic, will allow rebellion to embrace death.

In “The Just Assassins” Camus thought that the human being is compelled by the absurdity of existence to rebel against the manifestations of absurdity in the name of life, happiness, and dignity. In a world characterized as absurd, the struggle for love and happiness amounts to rebellion. Kaliayev’s reaction to the absurd is an individual rebellion in the name of happiness, and Camus suggested that this reaction is justified. Kaliayev and
Dora decide to fight for the collective happiness of their people. They choose to fight for the community rather than for their own happiness. Ivan and Dora serve as a perfect representation of authentic rebellion that is lucid and limited. They reflect the necessity of rebellion in the name of present life. For the sake of an ideal that they refer to as “justice”.

The essential thing was to save the greatest possible number of persons from dying through fighting the despots. They represent the absurdity of existence and the logical reaction to that absurdity. On the other hand, Stephen is the embodiment of nihilism in the play, because he considers justice to be an absolute value that is more important than human life. He admits to this with conviction, “I do not love life; I love something higher — and that is justice.” Stephen wants the revolution to succeed at all costs. When Dora argues that one must acknowledge limits, Stephen replies angrily, “There are no limits!” Stephen has been mistreated in prison; he is disgusted with the world itself, and he would gladly destroy it in the name of absolute justice. Stephen has fully succumbed to nihilism and his metaphysical revolt becomes fanatical and even hateful as a result of his “All or Nothing” mentality. As the Grand Duke is about to be assassinated, he comments to Dora. “There is so much still to do; we must smash this world we live in, blast it to smithereens.”

Caligula is conscious of his plight, and therein, lies the tragedy. For if, during the moments of descent, he nourished the hope that he would yet succeed, then his labour would lose its torment. But Caligula is clearly conscious of the extent of his own misery. It is this lucid recognition of his destiny that transforms his torment into his victory. Caligula feels his head empty and his heart heaving itself to his mouth. Every nerve aches, and strange beings come to rise within him. He makes breast of his problem before Caesonia:

*These people without name keep surging up within me. What shall I do against them? Oh Caesonia I knew that people could be desperate, but kept what this word signified. I believed as the world did that it was a disease of the soul. But*
no, it is the body which suffers. My skin gives me pain, even my chest, the organs of my body. I have an empty head, and the heart stirred. And still more frightening is the taste in my mouth. Neither blood, nor death, nor fever, but all these at a time. It suffers that I move the tongue so that all become black and that beings may hate me.

In *Caligula*, Caesonia tries to get Scipion to feel compassion for Caligula by taking him into the place of grief and rage and loathing that Caligula has felt since his sister’s death:

Caesonia: Try to call up a picture of your father’s death, of the agony on his face as they were tearing out his tongue. Think of the blood streaming from his mouth, and recall his screams, like a tortured animal’s.

Scipion: Yes.

Caesonia: And now think of Caligula.

Scipion: *(his voice rough with hated)*; yes.

Caesonia: Now listen. Try to understand him.

Try to understand him, Camus says through the voice of Caesonia, is “something that would bring about the one real revolution in this world, if people would only take it in” (*Caligula* 33). I have been quite struck by this line in the play, *Caligula*. Camus condemned all other revolutions as perpetuating the very injustice and domination they seek to eradicate. But he considered understanding to be the one real revolution – in other words, the one that would in fact bring real change to the world.

Caligula’s life and torment are transformed into a victory by concentrating on his freedom, his refusal to hope, and his knowledge of the absurdity of his situation. So the value is our freedom, our passion, and our revolt as Camus thinks. For this result: Caligula’s fate frees him to recognize the absurdity of his plight and to carry out his actions with contented acceptance, which Camus argues to be a form of happiness. In this regard, Camus illustrates that the feeling of the absurd is not the same as the idea of the absurd. The idea is grounded in the feeling, that is all. It does not exhaust
it. *Caligula* might be said to aim at giving us this idea and *The Just Assassins* at giving us the feeling.

The central importance of the absurd experience having been emphasized, Camus turns from the feeling of the Absurd to the notion of the Absurd, from an exterior description to a direct analysis of whatever clear notion there is of the Absurd. This is in order that we may be more precise about the meaning of the Absurd, and hence set up our consideration of its consequences.

The Absurd is a problem having three terms. There is no absurdity without the world, and there is no absurdity without the spirit of man. Hence, the immediate consequence is that none of the terms can be dropped. This triadic notion of the Absurd is obviously an essential truth for Camus, and, as such, it must be preserved intact. The solution to the problem cannot be solved by destroying the problem itself. It is this problem which forces us to make a decision, to decide whether suicide is the logical consequence and solution of the Absurd. Once awakened to the absurdity of the world, we are faced with an unabating struggle in which there is a total absence of hope and in which there is our conscious dissatisfaction with and refusal of the world. The Absurd is born of this confrontation between the human demand and the unreasonable silence of the world. It is this which must not be forgotten.

Camus’s literary works portray the universe as an irrational place, devoid of any ultimate meaning, values, or any unifying principles. On the contrary with the rationalists who regard the universe as a perfect mechanism in which everything can be rationally explained. In *Caligula* Camus argues that man lives in an irrational and chaotic universe though he longs for clarity and unity. He also argues that there is no meaning to life. He disapproves of the many philosophers who have played on words and pretended to believe that refusing to grant meaning to life necessarily leads to declaring that it is not worth living.

The inescapable nature of death renders all things unimportant, and the emperor intends, since his power to do so is absolute, to undeceive a
world he now sees as full of “lies and self-deception”. His actions henceforth are intended to reveal to everyone the nature of Absurdity; and from the point of view of his motives; Caligula is neither evil nor tyrannical, but rather an idealist following his new idea or truth to its logical conclusion. Thus, his new reign is one of caprice and whim: executions, famine, extortion, and immortality – in which he uses the wives of patricians as prostitutes, exposes the patrician to ridiculous art contexts: everything is equal. Cherea, an ideal person in the play, fights Caligula not because he is afraid to lose his life, but because Caligula’s actions deny that life has any meaning. To illustrate, Cherea cannot live in a world where the absurd “transfix their lives, like a dagger in the heart”, Cherea believes that some actions are more praise-worthy than others; but Caligula believes that all actions are of equal importance and acts accordingly, and he has, therefore, to be destroyed.

Camus presents Caligula’s ceaseless and pointless wrong means as a metaphor for modern lives. Camus sees Caligula, who lives life to the fullest, hates death and is condemned to a meaningless task, as the absurd hero as much through his passions as through his torture. Caligula casts himself before death, fights his destiny, violates divine decisions by assuming the beastly, incomprehensible face of a god as an armour in vain. He looks all the more pitiable in his co-called absolute liberty. He falls a prey to his mad whims and hellish debauchery. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing.

In spite of the human’s irrational “nostaliga” for unity, for absolutes, for a definite order and meaning to the “not me” of the universe, no such meaning exists in the silent, indifferent universe. Between this yearning for meaning and eternal verities and the actual condition of the universe there is a gap that can never be filled. The contradiction of the irrational, longing human heart and the indifferent universe brings about the notion of the absurd. The absurd is not in man nor in the world, but in their presence together … it is the only bond uniting them. People must realize that the feeling of the absurd exists
and can happen to them at any time. The absurd person must demand to live
solely with what is known and to bring in nothing that is not certain. This
means that I know is that I exist, that the world exists and that I am mortal.

Camus deals with the question of God, religion and death in relation
with the irrationality of the universe in his work. As stated previously, the
awareness of man who lives in a universe where there are no certainties,
principles or absolutes stems from the decline of religious belief, on which
Camus elaborates in his work. As an absurdist, he does not believe in the
divine order governing the working of the universe, what governs the world as
he believes, are chance and coincidences, so man lives in a mad world where
nothing is improbable. Consequently, making any plans, any arrangements for
the future is futile, since man cannot control most of the things in his life which
leads to a sense of anxiety and fear.

In ‘Caligula’, the irrationality is presented in two seemingly different but
parallel dimensions: the irrationality of the universe as the macrocosm and
that of society as the microcosm. In the play there is a correspondence
between the irrationality of society, the microcosm, and that of the universe,
the macrocosm, with its arbitrary laws, rules and rituals; and Caligula
represents the absurd man or the absurd hero who is aware of the irrationality
of both: the universe and the society with whom he lives. Consequently, he
believes neither in God nor does he see any sense and meaning in life nor the
validity of society’s laws, rules and values. Camus considers him as one of his
typical heroes who does not “believe … in God, and after life, or any rationale
in the workings of the universe.”

Camus presented Czech, the protagonist in The Misunderstanding,
like a man among others, living everybody’s life, while illusions and bad faith
were on the side of so-called normal men, who are thus only because of this
very will to deceive themselves, to deny that the absurd is reality itself. But
under the seeming objectivity of the hero of The Misunderstanding, Czech,
an expectation was hidden. Camus showed us his hero, Czech in such a light
that we could at the same time sympathize with him and maintain our usual
attitude of mind. Hence the classical form of the tale, which was to make all
the more obvious the character’s strangeness; things and behaviors were
shown to us as they always are, they were described with a cautious realism,
only their meaning was lacking and it is this lack which was to generate the
feeling of the absurd. The trouble is that the method, once revealed, greatly
devolved this vision of the world, world which was offered us.

In his plays, particularly, The Misunderstanding, Camus explains that
death is one of the basic causes that renders life irrational and absurd
because it makes all human endeavour meaningless and equally insignificant.
It makes everything meaningless because it invalidates everything and stands
as the single truth and single certainty, so “no code of ethics and no effort are
justifiable a priori in the face of the cruel mathematics that command our
condition.” Kaliayev, in The Just Assassins, is also aware of this fact, and
that is why he believes that “you could never change your life” because it
always ends in the same way. So death equalizes all ways of living, and
makes human condition not only absurd but also unjust because man is
sentenced to death for an unknown crime.

The questions pertaining to truth are invariably linked with spiritual
strength or spiritual anguish. It is not merely an external phenomenon
influencing social alienation. The very idea of truth, in the contemporary
society has lost its stability or even validity, not to speak of its force or vitality.
Camus is reinforcing his basic thesis that there is no truth, only (relative)
truths – and, in particular, that truths in science (empiricism / rationality) and
religion are ultimately meaningless. Of course, Caligula himself is not directly
aware of any of this…. his awareness of the absurd is subconscious at best; it
‘colors’ his actions. But Camus’s basic point remains: the only real things are
these that we experience physically. Thus, Caligula kills more and more
because of his response to a terrible moral shock when he has seen Drusilla,
his sister and his adored one died. The true happiness will not exist any
longer in his eyes because it will always be a happiness that passed.
Caligula is clearly disillusioned of life in general. At the sight of the dead body of his sister, Drusilla, with whom the emperor has had an incestuous relationship – he is flushed with a pricking awareness that life is unbearable and man is not happy on earth. As everything is devoid of sense, he decides to do without any set rule, without any long-established tradition. Roul Audibert, Henry Lemaitre and Therese Van Der Elist come to remark:

Young Caligula was dreaming to be a prince, just and reasonable, but before the dead body of Drusilla, his sweet heart, he discovers all of a sudden that ‘this world as it is made, is not bearable’; and that ‘men die and are not happy.’ Because nothing has any sense, he decides to by-pass all rules and regulations. He will try in vain to give chances to the impossible in seeking to produce himself the moon, or, happiness or immortality. Something may perhaps be falsehood but which may not be this world.61

He goes to show all these men around him, complacent with the illusion of existence, that death, in reality, is always in them, he makes it hover over their heads at all hours, with its inevitable company, foolishness, humiliation, cruelty, the absurd.

Caligula is a mad emperor who uses the wrong means for the right end. He knows full well that he has no power, no control over the universal order but he has all his subjects under his thumb, he can make them do what he likes so as to open their eyes to the tragic reality of life. It is rightly pointed out:

Even if he has no action on the order of the world, he will have it at least on man whom he pretends to make live in verity. For that, he imagines himself equal to gods to take their beastly and incomprehensible face in showing himself as them. Unreasonable, insensible, cruel, unjust, and immoral, affirming thus his power and liberty, and exhausting all that can make him live, he hopes with the same stroke to reveal to his victims the absurdity of the world and to render them free is killing the prejudices which make them slaves of them.62

Only he who is aware of this sort of absurdity will win his liberty; all others are liars. Whosoever recognizes the absurd, has liberty, he professes
and all those who accord importance to beings and things are liars he will punish the falsehood because he hates it. Nothing has any sense; he can, therefore, ‘do anything, impose or let anything be done.’ Caligula, therefore, launches a gigantic scheme; he works up a long list of his victims going to be killed in the name of his absolute liberty.

You make these characters die in accordance with a list arbitrarily worked upon this occasion, we may modify this order always arbitrarily undisturable, the order of executions has no importance, what goes along has no importance … Today and for all times to come, my liberty has no frontiers. In the whole of the Roman Empire I alone am free. Make rejoicings; an emperor at last has come to you for teaching you liberty.

_The Misunderstanding_, is a striking example of the potentially disastrous consequences of acting on what one only assumes to be true. In this play a long-lost son returns to his mother’s home, but wanting to surprise her, pretends simply to be a traveler looking for lodging at her inn. In the many years of his absence, his mother and sister have turned to supplement their murder and theft of their patrons to supplement their meager income. Not recognizing their son and brother, and seeing only a wealthy lone traveler, they plot to make him their next, and supposedly final victim. In the middle of the night they kill him and steal his money. It is only when they find his passport the next morning that they realize their mistake, and the mother kills herself out of guilt and grief.

The message of the play is that failure to be clear and to disclose one’s authentic self can lead to misunderstanding with deadly and tragic consequences. Misunderstanding is the malady underlying violence, injustice, hate, and oppression. Camus argued repeatedly that dialogue was essential for the vital task of coming to understand one another.

Camus considers this play as “one of rebellion” against the idea of blind acceptance of fate. As one character states: “In the normal order of things, no one is ever recognized. Neither in life nor death is there any peace
or homeland.” In “The Misunderstanding” Camus is suggesting that if one wants to be recognized and account for himself, he must stand up and say who he is.

The play itself is something of a murder mystery. The hero, Czech, plans not to announce himself in the hope of having the women see the brother and son in the stranger. His plan fills his wife with foreboding. Rightly so since the women have been feathering their nest by killing guests for their money. Since he is a stranger who clearly has money, it looks as if he may well become their next victim.

Martha : (with emotion) oh, mother, mother! All we need is the money!

With money in our hands there’s an end to grey skies and damp, dripping roofs! … and we must give this man who’s coming here our closest attention. …

Mother : No. Not much.

Martha : He has to die, mother.

Mother : (quietly) yes. He has to die. Of course he does! 64

However, as this isolated inn is a far cry from the peaceful oasis one expects such places to be, neither is this an ordinary mystery. In the context of its origins and Camus’s standing as a humanist thinker. The Misunderstanding’s mystery is how a large segment of a civilized country could abandon their humanity? Martha’s unredeemed criminality and her mother’s weary collaboration are revealed in a large symbolic context.

The play gives out Camus’s concern for human estrangement and metaphysical alienation in terms of a strange situation. Camus himself gives a fine resume of the play throwing in every minute detail, showing that life has no sense, no significance, no moral or spiritual stature. Pol Gaillard says in this regard:

From a Czech village a man goes abroad to make a fortune. At the end of twenty-five years he was back with a woman and a child. His mother ran a hotel with her daughter in his native village – for giving them a surprise, he had left his wife
and child in another establishment and went alone to the hotel of his mother who did not recognize him. When he set his foot in the hotel. For the sake of a joke, for fun, he entertained the idea of hiring a room. He had already shown his money. In the night his mother and sister assassinated him with strokes of a hammer and threw his body into a river. Next morning the wife came and revealed the identity of the traveler without knowing all this. The mother comes to hang herself. The sister throws herself into a well. I have tried to read that history times without number. From one’s angle it was improbable – from another, it was natural in every aspect I found that the traveler rather deserved it and it is never necessary to cut a joke.

The wife of the victim of the absurd, insists on the fact that he should not put on a guise to deceive persons. For his foolishness he pays dearly. Camus wants that one must master this part of one’s personality pertaining to illusion and misunderstanding. Pol Gaillard throws a flood of light on Camus’s intentions:

In the piece, Jan, the Czech, emigrant, has no child and he is not concerned with any practical joke either, as much as one might comprehend by ‘duty’ because he desires to be recognized for himself, when he has given no news of himself to his family. His wife has in vain to repeat very long that it is never good to deceive and ‘to assume the air of someone that one is not’, that is necessary before the family to let speak his heart. He is adamant, he is assassinated. That proves, Camus says, that man has no reason, ‘to entertain dreams’ and that is necessary to kill, in him ‘his part of illusion and misapprehension’.

One need not repeat here that the demonstration appears to spectators, for the last, superfluous; they have understood all in advance of these characters that the play pushes heavily, before them a door which is already open. One can only detach some sombre outbursts in this regard, the lyrical blasphemes of disappointed Martha prior to his suicide.

Maria, the wife, weeps over the strange way one is forced to lead one’s life and destroy oneself. She is so much agitated that she calls God to be a block ever indifferent and deaf to the appeal of the sufferer.
We are robbed, I tell you, of what good this great appeal of the being, this alertness of the soul? Why to cry for the sea or for love? That derisive. Your husband knows now the response, this frightening house where at last we shall be pitted against one another. (With hatred) pray your God that He may make a stone of you. This is the sort of happiness that He puts in store for you, it is the only true happiness. Make yourself unto Him, render yourself deaf to all cries ... Join the stone when it is still time. You have to choose between the stupid happiness of pebbles and the sticky bed where we wait you. (Misunderstanding, pp.49-50)

Through her crime, the mother recognizes that the world they live in makes no sense at all, and that only by killing herself can she prove the existence of one certainty: mother's love. Martha, however, is stirred to revolt. It seems to her unfair that she should be robbed of dream, brother and mother:

I hate the narrow world in which we are reduced to grazing up at God. But I have not been given my rights and I am smarting from the injustice done me; I will not bend my knee. I have been cheated of my place on earth, cast away by my mother, left alone with my crimes, and I shall leave this world without being reconciled.

Martha can honestly say to Maria, the wife, that words like 'love', 'joy' and 'grief' are meaningless, and as she leaves to kill herself, Maria is left with only God to appeal to; without His help the world is a 'desert'. "Oh, my God! I can't live in this desert." But her cries attract only the old manservant, who replies to her appeal for help in a clear, firm tone: No.

Old Man : (in a firm, clear voice) were you calling for me?
Maria : (turning to him) oh, no. Perhaps. I don't know. But help me, please. Someone must help. Have pity one me! I need your help. Please help me!

Old Man : (In the same, cleared voice) No.65

'Caligula' is the story of a superior suicide. It is the story of the most human and most tragic of errors. Unfaithful to mankind through fidelity to himself, the protagonist, Caligula, accepts death because he has understood
that no one can save himself all alone and that one cannot be free at the expense of others.

_Caligula_, reflects Beckett’s critique of the ways in which those in power use reason to justify their domination. _Caligula_ represents the absurdity of rational logic taken to its extreme. Following to its logical extreme a subject’s offhand remark that the Treasury is more important than anything, Caligula sacrifices anyone and everyone to the Treasury. Ruling thus by a dogmatic logic, his reign becomes one of terror and tyranny.

Camus is concerned in his works with persons and their world, the relationships between them, and the relationships between persons and their history. In “_Caligula_” he opposes himself to the rationalism of classical philosophy which seeks universal and enduring truths or a hierarchy of values which is crowned by God; he believes that truth is found by a subjective intensity of passion; he maintains that the individual is always free and involved in choice; he recognizes that persons exist in the world and are naturally related with it; he is deeply concerned with the significance of death, its inevitability and its finality. The absurd is a revolt against tomorrow and as such comes to terms with the present moment. Suicide consents to the absurd as final limitless while revolt is an ongoing struggle with the absurd and brings with it man’s redemption.

Caligula is just like Sisyphus who is considered as the absurd hero and who is conscious of his plight: it was his scorn of the gods, hatred of death, and passion for life that won him the penalty of rolling a rock to the top of the mountain forever, and he does not appeal to hope or to any uncertain gods. His is the ultimate absurd, for there is not death at the end of his struggle. All is not chaos; the experience of the absurd is the proof of man’s uniqueness and the foundation of his dignity and freedom.

_All that remains is a fate whose outcome alone is fatal. Outside of that single fatality of death, everything, joy or happiness, is liberty. A world remains of which man is the sole master. What bound him was the illusion of another world. The outcome of his thought, ceasing to be denun-"
ciatory, flowers in image. It frolics-in myths, to be sure, but myths with no other depth than that of human suffering and like it inexhaustible. Not the divine fable that the muses and blinds, but the terrestrial face, gesture, and drama in which are summed up a difficult wisdom and an ephemeral passion.66

As the time passes, Caligula realizes he will die sooner or later, and there is, consequently, no significance of escaping from this reality. So he will have postponed, just like Meursault, his death for a period of time, but he will never be able to avoid “inevitable”. He thinks, “it doesn’t matter very much whether you die at thirty or at seventy”67 because “given that you’ve got to die, it obviously doesn’t matter exactly how or when”.68 Therefore, as Lazere argues in Meursault’s case:

inspite of his awareness that the court’s guilty verdict is absurdly arbitrary, he is eventually able to resign himself to it, because he recognizes that every death is an arbitrary guilty verdict.69

With this recognition, his love of life reaches its peak, because he is aware that he has a limited time and that each second of it is very precious. So, “his impending death … makes him passionately appreciate the life he must give up”.70 In this murderous attempt to realize the Truth of the Absurd, the Emperor Caligula embodies the fallacy of the poetic paradigm of political action implicit in, and exposed by, the bad (incomplete) logic of absolute nihilism, which culminates in logical or superior suicide. Caligula brings us to the core of the contemporary problem of the aestheticisation the political. Caligula’s philosophy “systematieses” the absurd commencement disclosed by the event – limit of death, experienced through the touch of the cold bloodless corpse of Drusilla, into an absolute affirmation of the valuelessness of existence (absurdism). In a world rendered down to its primitive meaninglessness and inhumanity, he pushes consistency (“logic”) into the existence of a boundless power and limitless freedom (omnipotence) to change a finite existence of suffering and death, through an active fabrication of the impossible.
Caligula illustrates one possibility of the “aestheticizing” creative force disclosed by the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. George Bataille suggests that Caligula falls, back on the bio-political quest for happiness, which coincides with the absurdist desire for *immortality*. Caligula’s madness is the immunitarian logic of political power pushed to its ultimate consequence. The limitless power of law (and as Emperor, Caligula is the law) coincides with the systematic exercise of *lemalheur*: Caligula becomes the plague of the declared purpose of eradicating death and suffering – the quest for the moon representing the absolute attempt to reverse, perverting it.

Caligula explores the super-human, the absolute logic of modern thinking exposed to the experience of the absurd (which we have designated as modern nihilism) which cannot be socialized because inevitably spells doom and destroys the world, it enters. Men are reduced to an abstract public of guilty victims in the inexorable face of their judge / executioner.\(^71\)

In *Caligula*, as stated previously, the irrationality of not only the universe but also the society is clarified through Caligula’s crimes. His crimes reveal that chance and coincidences govern the course of one’s life not logic or reason, so one can be exposed to anything at any time. Similarly, the society in *Caligula* is depicted as irrational as the universe through its treatment of Caligula’s case. It sends a man to death when he fails to conform to its laws and share its myths since he threatens the unity of society which is, in fact, based on arbitrary rules and values. As Lazere points out, “the irony of society’s judgement … is that underneath the superficial rationality of its working it is based on ridiculously arbitrary values.”\(^72\) However, society, as observed in *Caligula* and other plays regards its own laws and rules as absolutely right, and any behaviour that contradicts those laws and rules is judged wrong. Thus, any person who does not follow the fixed patterns of behaviour determined by the society would be considered an outsider whom the society should eliminate in one way or another, as one sees in Caligula’s situation. Hence the irrationality of the society is corresponding to that of the universe. However, there is a very important difference between the two,
which Lazere indicates: “Society, as Camus portrays it, is as duplicitous, and lethal as fate, with one vital difference: fate makes no claim to rationality, while society does make one.”

The society, Caligula lives in very closely, is examined by the reader from the beginning to the end, its most basic characteristic seems to be its absolute reliance on rationality and on the existence of the divine order in the universe which is regarded as a mechanism without imperfection by the society since God created it as a perfect one. So, rationality is the backbone of the system. However, Caligula’s case points to just the opposite of everything they consider unquestionable. Caligula’s situation shows unbridgeable gulf between Caligula and society because he is an absurd man, who, unlike society, is aware of the fact that “there need not be a reason for everything” about the absurdity of human condition he is lucid.

Caligula also threatens their belief in God which is the essential thing that gives meaning to their lives and they consider God as a divine power that governs the universe. They consider this power as the basis of the rationality they strictly adhere to. Undoubtedly, Camus described the society in Caligula as composed of individuals who choose to evade the absurd awakening, and delude themselves. So, Camus considered,

*the typical act of eluding, the fatal evasion ... is hope. Hope of another life one must ‘deserve’ or trickery of those who live not for life itself but for some great idea that will transcend it, give it a meaning, and betray it.*

Thus, belief in God is a shield that protects man from the truth of his condition. Moreover, belief in God gives way to a belief in an after life which solves the problem of irrationality that man’s mortality causes. Death is not the end of anything, and this life is just a preparation for another life, a better one. But, Masters points out, “Sin, for Camus, would be to denigrate the life that we have and invent a better one, to refuse the present and hope for a future.”

As we previously know that Caligula represents the absurd man who is “devoid of hope (of another life) and conscious of being so.” Consequently,
people decide to eliminate Caligula because he “threatens … the very basis of their unity”\textsuperscript{78} with “his character, his behavior, and his crime, all (of which) emphasize the part of irrationality in the human condition”.\textsuperscript{79}

The play opens with the patricians of Rome wondering what has become of Caligula who had done a runner after witnessing the death of his sister. When he does reappear, it’s not long before they wish that he hadn’t. He is much changed, dirty, disheveled and filled with existential anger, he rants on about wanting the moon. But the trouble really starts when he comes up with a novel way of increasing the size of his coffers namely: getting all patricians to make wills out in favour of himself and then having them summarily executed.

Everybody is having a thoroughly rotten time under Caligula’s rule (apart from his jewel clad mistress and the sort of men who enjoy wearing black leather and being cruel). Meanwhile, wives are being raped, children are being murdered, patricians are being forced to work as servants but worst of all everybody is being forced to laugh at Caligula’s jokes. Camus successfully gets inside the head of this infamous, salacious, bloodthirsty madman and offers an alternate worldview and morality. Poll Gaillard describes his bloody acts in a very interesting way, concluding the account with the remark that already assassinated he presumes that he survives:

\textit{Now Caligula indeed from this moment onwards, kills, defiles, disgraces, destroys – by chance, and all in knowing very well that he also destroys himself that he will give rise forcibly against himself, however cowardly these politicians may be, to a conspiracy which will kill him ‘obsessed with the impossible, impoisoned by detest and horror he refuses even the most elementary precautions, he burns the shelves of books which denounce the warded – of dangers, and he moves along the way in a sort of conscious intoxication towards a superior suicide, Camus tells us. Caligula dies at the hands of assassinator still crying as in the story of Suetone – Jesuis encore vivant. I’m still living.}\textsuperscript{80}
Caligula, in his meeting with young Scipion, admits that he is purely in the evil, while Scipion is purely in the good. Caligula’s enemies pity him as much as they hate him. We see that in the following dialogue:

**Caligula**: … I know very much the force of my passion for life, it will not be satisfied with Nature. You cannot understand that. You are of a different world. You are purely in the good as I am purely in the evil.

**Young Scipion**: I can understand.

**Caligula**: No. This something in me, this lake of silence, these rotten herbs. (Changing suddenly the tone). Your poem must be beautiful. But if you wish for my advice.

**Young Scipion**: Oh! Monster, the stinking monster. You have still played. You come to play, hein? And satisfied with yourself?

**Caligula**: Sweetly silence please.

**Young Scipion**: How I pity you and how I hate you.

(Caligula 11, 14, Labranrie Gallimard, editeur)

In his perspective analysis of *Caligula*, David Sprintzen identifies the character of Caesonia with the body, Scipion with nature, and Cherea with others – all of whom are rejected in one way or another by Caligula. Thus, Sprintzen concludes, in his murder of Caesonia, Caligula destroys his relation to the body; in his rejection of Scipion he cuts himself off from nature; and he alienates himself from others in his rejection of Cherea. Thus, what Camus is suggesting in *Caligula* is that the logic represented by Caligula neglects the competing logics generated by perspectives rooted in nature, the body, and others.

Scipion shares Caligula’s thirst for the absolute but he realizes in the heart of his heart that Caligula has taken a wrong path in his quest for the absolute. In this meeting he stands torn between the love of the lovely phenomenal world and an infinite hatred for mad Caligula.
Faithful to his terrible design, Caligula has made the father of young Scipion perish. In that moving scene we see Scipion torn between his recent hatred for the tyrant and his friendship for this young prince whose cruelty appears to rise to some mysterious wound. These two men appear to share the sentiment of the loveliness of Nature and its harmony with the human heart. But all at once, before his disabled friend, Caligula protests against that deceptive image of the world, the horror and absurdity of which he would like to make him feel. Scipion is indignant at that odious comedy from which we will learn a lesson and refuses to associate himself with the murder of the emperor whose despair and thirst for the absolute he shares. However, when Caligula will fall as a result of the blows of the conspirators who do not want to lose their cause for living, he will know that his liberty is not good, and that he has chosen the wrong path by acting against other men as if nothing was prohibited.81

Caligula, the play, shows how obsessed Camus appears to be with his idea of the self alienated from the world and even from his inner self eventually causing deep metaphysical anguish to himself and acute suffering to the people around him. Pol Gaillard in Literary Presence points out:

Frankly speaking, people might doubt it all. However attentive one may be at present to certain kinds of anguish of our civilization without absolute, to the fever of destruction or auto-destruction of a large number of people before the spectacle of a world and of a society wholly unjust, it is impossible to consider Caligula such as Camus wished it to be, a tragedy of intelligence; the history of the most human and the most tragic errors. On this plane, the piece is dead. It continues only to bear testimony to what degree of gravity has been in Camus against the misery of human condition the absurd haunted Camus, to what extent his temptation, by way of revolt against the miseries of human condition, to renounce the human. The entire succession of his works will be dedicated to the search for true morals.

It is obvious that the absurd strategies make us feel that we are not witnessing a tragedy but a satirical farce, and the play can be put on the stage in a strange, baroque manner.
Camus points out that the human condition is irrational not only that man lives in a world beyond his control and understanding, but also that he is sentenced to death by nature, and according to Camus, we’re unjustly and inexplicably punished for no crime. Camus considers death as the biggest evil because it is cruel and unjust, and through the tyranny and despots he displays its cruelty and injustice in its most extreme form. So the tyrannical condition “represents the face of death, in it its extreme capricious and arbitrary form.” In writing Caligula we are told that Camus “sought to convey the feeling of suffocation from which we all suffered and atmosphere of threat and exile in which we lived”.

The patricians and other people become just like prisoners condemned to death, with one important difference; they do not know what they are guilty of. It is also striking that no matter how significant man considers himself, the death levels out all the differences and reduces everybody to the same level of insignificance.

In his play of four acts, Caligula, the action takes place in Rome, under the reign of the young emperor Caligula. At the beginning of the play, Caligula can’t be found. Those close to him look for him everywhere, in the palace, in the town, in the countryside. He has disappeared, wild with pain over the death of his mistress, Drusilla. When he comes back, haggard, he’s been transformed into a bloody tyrant. He starts terrorizing the elders, unsettle his friends. Is he mad? Is he aware of the hypocritical attitude of those around him? Has he decided to push to the extreme the absurdity of life’s pageant, with its ineluctable death sentence? The question isn’t easy to resolve. He has good reason to hate the daily life that surrounds him. He oscillates between anger and irony.

There is the cowardly attitude of some. Throughout the play we have time to observe the elders, the rich courtiers.

Caligula (brutally) : You seem to be in a bad mood. Would it be because I had your son killed?

Lepidus (his throat choking): But no Caius, on the contrary.
Caligula (radiant) : On the contrary ! How I like a face that contradicts the heart’s woes. Your face is sad. But your heart ? On the contrary, isn’t that right, Lepidus ?

Lepidus (resolutely) : On the contrary, Caesar. There are the lines of the others. The truth is that nobody opposes his logic. The elders who pretend they want to give all they have so that Caligula’s health improves, are victims of their on hypocrisy.

Second elder : Oh ! Almighty God, I vow that if he gets better, I will give 200000 sestertia to the state treasury.

Third elder (exaggerating) : Jupiter, take my life in exchange for his. (Caligula has entered for a little while. He listens.)

Caligula (advancing towards the second elder) : I accept your offer, Lucius. I thank you. My treasurer will come round to your place tomorrow. (He goes towards the third elder and hugs him). You can’t imagine how moved I am. (silence then tenderly). You love me, then ?

Third elder (touched) : Ah ! Caesar, there’s nothing that I wouldn’t give to you right away.

Caligula (hugging him more) : Oh this is too much Cassius, and I didn’t deserve so much love. (Cassius makes a protesting gesture). No, no I tell you. I am not worthy. (He calls two guards). Take him away. (To Cassius, softly). Go friend, and remember that Caligula has given you his heart.

Third elder (vaguely worried) : But where are they taking me?
Caligula: To your death, you see. You gave your life for mine. I feel better now. I ... I (turning round, suddenly serious). My friend, if you'd loved life enough, you would not have played so recklessly with it.

So what does Caligula want? the moon! In other words, the impossible. Maybe the life and eternal love of Drusilla. Because all humans are mortal. So because Caligula doesn’t have the power to make things last, he uses what power he has to destroy them. Vengeance, despair, nihilistic madness? The young Scipion has an idea about the subject. He’s not frightened.

Scipion: I can’t deny something without feeling like I’ve had to denigrate it or remove other people’s right to believe in it.

The questioning of blind hatred is the only way to block Caligula if Caligula is the master of force, Scipion goes beyond him through magnanimity.

Caligula: What is a tyrant?

Scipion: A blind spirit. Hatred is no compensation for hatred. Power is not a solution.

And quite logically, what happens is that power blocks power. Little by little, fatal forces of opposition become established. First the courtiers hope for the natural death of the tyrant, but without many illusions.

Third elder: I’ve heard Caligula is ill.

First elder: He is.

Third elder: What’s he got then? (Eagerly). In the name of all the gods is he going to die?

First elder: I don’t think so. His illness is only fatal for other people.

Then they agree to participate in a plot to kill Caligula, who shows himself to aware he’s playing a role traced out for him by history. Fatal destiny.

According to the words of the author himself:

*Caligula is the story of a higher form of suicide. It’s the story of the most human and tragic of errors. Unfaithful to*
humanity, through fidelity to himself, Caligula agrees to die because he’s understood that no being can save himself alone and that one cannot win freedom by opposing other people.\(^84\)

Just like Sisyphus, Kaliayev is also conscious of the futility of his attempt to rebel against the Grand Duke Serge. However, “Like Sisyphus, he will not give up simply because he knows he cannot succeed. Each victim is a new rock to be pushed to the summit.”\(^85\) When Dora tells him that his “victories will never be lasting,”\(^86\) his reply shows his complete lucidity: “Yes, I know that. But it’s no reason for giving up the struggle”\(^87\) because he hates the suffering and death that his fellows are condemned to. Although he has seen many people suffer and die, he has never got used to their suffering and death. On the contrary, it has increased his anger and his determination to revolt against their predicaments.

Do you know that there are some who refuse to die? Have you ever heard a woman scream ‘Never’ with her last gasp: well, I have. And then I saw that I could never get hardened to it. I was very young then, and I was outraged by the whole scheme of things … I’ve never managed to get used to seeing people die.\(^88\)

Kaliayev is astonished by the death and suffering that all men are sentenced to, he thoroughly believes that men should "struggle with all… (their) might against death"\(^89\) even if their struggle does not change the result eventually because “when you see the misery it brings, you’d need to be a madman, or a coward, or stone blind, to give in tamely to the plague.”\(^90\) Although his first attempt is futile, his motive is noble, for it is “an attempt to forestall death and alleviate suffering.”\(^91\) Kaliayev is not alone in his struggle against despots because “some townspeople also have the consciousness that they must struggle against their predicament with all their energy and devotion even if it means risking their lives in this predicament.”\(^92\) They all have the same certitude that a fight must be put up, in this way or that, and there must be no bowing down. The essential thing was to save the greatest possible number of persons from dying
and being doomed to unending separation. And to do this there was only one resource: to fight the plague.\footnote{93}

The revolutionary Kaliayev considers the Grand Duke just like the plague. On the other hand, there are also those who adapted the attitude of resignation towards the plague, “but naturally enough, this prudence, this habit of feinting with their predicament and refusing to put up a fight was ill rewarded.”\footnote{94} Since “they drifted through life rather than lived,” they were “the prey of aimless days and sterile memories.”\footnote{95}

It seems that Kaliayev is just like Dr. Rieux’s in \textit{The Plague} and Meursault’s in \textit{The Stranger}, in his attitudes. While he is in the prison awaiting his death, he gradually becomes resigned to it after he starts thinking that he will eventually die, so there is no point in postponing the inevitable. Similar to Rieux, he knows that his attempt is futile, but he feels rebellious against his predicament. Thus, although Kaliayev embodies many characteristics of the absurd man described in \textit{The Myth of Sisyphus}, he displays the rebellious attitude that Dr. Rieux displays, and for Camus resignation means siding with the cruelty and injustice of man’s metaphysical condition, so as Lazere points out:

\begin{quote}
by failing to affirm any value in life that would make it worthwhile to continue living and... facing his own death impassively, he has acquiesced to the metaphysical judgement of natural death.\footnote{96}
\end{quote}

Camus is also against man’s escaping from facing his true condition squarely through religion. Lambert says in this regard:

\begin{quote}
humankind is plagued by suffering and death inflicted by nature ... [and] many adopt abstractions that help them avoid confrontation with the plague, a popular abstraction is the religious impulsion of suffering to human guilt.\footnote{97}
\end{quote}

In \textit{The Just Assassins}, Camus discusses a small part of himself in each of the primary characters. The main Character, Kaliayev represents Camus’s own rejection of needless suffering and his overwhelming compa-
ssion and respect for people searching for meaning in life. He silently accepts all that happens in the course of killing the Grand Duke Serge.

Camus focuses on the theme of estrangement, isolation and loneliness. According to him man was doomed to alienation since the illusion that there existed common values or rights and wrongs forming a consensus in society was irreparably broken. Man was doomed to isolation in such a universe, for there was not a common and firm ground which had seemed firm and safe was broken into pieces, and one had to stand on his own ground, alienated from one’s fellowmen.

The play, The Just Assassins, displays the condition of alienated men, who are good example of those who go with their lives in estrangement and isolation from others. They are not craving for human company and warmth. Their estrangement and alienation seem to be self-dictated because they tend themselves at a distance from others or to keep people at a distance from themselves. The revolutionaries claim to have descended from some other planet where only those people live who are absolutely just. Dora in this point said to her comrade:

… We are not from this world, we are the just ones. There is a degree of heat which does not agree with us. (Turning aside) oh I pity for the just ones.

These terrorists never give a second thought to the future of their organization after the aforesaid murder; they fail to realize that they themselves are being misused by others.

Camus has brought about the perfect absurd situation where Kaliayev (or anyone) is seen to have lived a life which proves that he is guilt. It is not the murder which proves his guilt. That is to say that any life, placed under the judgement of absolute moral standards is guilty and monstrous. The murder is not sure who he is. He has found an ‘ I ’ but it is not his true ‘ I ’. “His main business is to find his way back to himself.” The loss of what is essentially ‘I’, and in his work, he strives to make manifesto that alienation from one’s self, from the world and its object. Because of his alienation, he views his reality as
something strange and incomprehensible, and with a sense of indifference typical of Kaliayev, who seeks a mode of life that suitably reflects his view of reality. When we meet him, he appears as a disarrayed figure who hates every kind of restraint. “And all of my life, I’ve hated restraints. Even time; I hate time.”

He is a man who is sure who he is, but he feels trapped in an alien universe and is in some way not of this world.

What a strange feeling of insignificance, what a frightening feeling of loneliness. It’s a cup-final but I’m paralyzed in the legs, I can’t run and I’m forced to stand on the sidelines … I can’t see a thing. How … how did all happen? When did it happen? And where was I?

Before giving in, however, he struggles with all his failing power. He tries every thing, but neither science nor the framework of existing social systems nor religion or any other established value can save him from his anguish or satisfy his conscious desire to fashion a world uncorrupted by human vices. And therefore, his existential predicament extends beyond alienation and isolation to non-acceptance of the insulated reality of the ‘herds’ who live in a world without values:

You’re all slaves, nonentities. Creatures without talents or ambitions or dreams. Herds that want to live anyway they can, with bigger herds of children. In any faceless place that’s been by-passed by history.

His protagonist was an ordinary man who has suffered feelings of loss, alienation, and impotence at some moments of his life, and who spoke about his dreams and fears, success and failure, his everyday worries and, therefore, revealed the immediate problems of society. His play had depicted alienated characters whose lives are defined by roles and who lack a clear sense of self. A few rebels refuse their socially assigned roles, only to adopt others which are equally limiting. Through roles, characters uncover basic truths about society, about authoritarian relationships that try to crush the defiant individual.

Camus’s writings often confront urgent moral, social, and political questions, but it cannot be taken for granted that his literary texts serve as
mere illustrations for ideas and arguments expressed more clearly in his plays and literary work. The ethical and political implications of the literary texts are highly enigmatic and, despite their potential relevance for contemporary dilemmas, there is little doubt about the elusive status of these last writings.

In his writings, there is obvious difference between literature and philosophy. Camus will go on arguing about the language of “image” and a language of “reasoning”, to the precise degree that literature necessarily speaks by way of images. The choice of writing in images thus also signals the end of philosophical speech and the beginning of a new language, literary language that can be said to “illustrate” only to the extent that it manages to express that which most often remains unsaid or insufficiently formulated by the philosophical discourse.

Camus tries to make his literary works speak more directly to the resolution of those very social and political challenges. Literature can indeed be said to begin speaking precisely at the point where philosophical, religious, and political language reach their limits of articulation. Camus’s literary texts could thus be said to begin speaking at the very moment his own philosophical and political tongues have been silenced, or repudiated, in favour of another, more garbled though less confused mode of speech.

Camus asserts that the solidarity of humankind is based on rebellion, which, in its turn, can only find justification in this solidarity. Accordingly, these two mutually – generating values of rebellion and solidarity are presented to us as the basis for an ethical understanding of legitimate political action. The Socialist Revolutionaries never denied or ignored the paradoxical position in which they found themselves. Rather than seek repose in a theory which offered them resolution at the price of hypocrisy, they conceived the idea of offering their own lives as a justification for their acts. The principle of paying for a life with a life here appears to for the basis for a radically different theory of legitimate violence.

In fact, if we examine the acts of justified killing in the works of Camus, specially the assassination of Grand Duke Serge in *The Just Assassins*, and
that of Caligula in the eponymous play, we can identify a number of characteristics which appear to distinguish, in the author’s estimation an act of just killing. Leaving aside the exigencies of theatrical production, it seems that they also provide insight into Camus’s thoughts and legitimate political violence. A consideration of Caligula in this regard seems specially fecund, not least because there is no suggestion that the assassination of Caligula ought to be followed by the deaths of his assassins. The acts of assassination at the heart of *The Just Assassins* and *Caligula* suggest that for Camus the minimal following conditions must be met for an act of killing to be deemed legitimate:

Firstly, The victim is a tyrant. Caligula is synonymous with tyranny, while in *The Just Assassin*, Kaliayev repeatedly insists that the target of his bomb is the “despotism” and “tyranny” represented by, or manifested in, the Grand Duke.102

Secondly, The act must be discriminate. Otherwise similar, the details of Camus’s *Caligula* differ from his source, Suetonius, in two suggestive ways. Firstly, in Suetonius, Caligula’s assassins also kill his mistress, Caesonia, and his young daughter. In Camus’s version the daughter is written out of the play and, as if to underline his monstrous nature, Caligula himself kills Caesonia. Similarly, we remember that in *The Just Assassins* Kaliayev aborts his first assassination attempt on Grand Duke Serge because the carriage carrying the Grand Duke also carries nephew and niece. The innocence of civilians is central to Camus’s thinking on political violence, as is highlighted by one of his most important interventions in the Algerian war.

Thirdly, The assassination is committed by a rebel in close proximity to his victim, and the assassin must accept full responsibility for his individual action. This brings us to a second way in which Camus’s Caligula differs from Suetonius. While in Suetonius the facts of the assassination of Caligula are uncertain, in Camus’s play, it is stated clearly that the play’s here, Cherea, actually stabs Caligula in the face, a peculiarly brutal detail, meaningful only insofar as it is of symbolic value. In *The Just Assassins*, Kaliayev throws the
bomb into the Grand Duke’s carriag from a distance of a few feet; he makes no attempt to escape and immediately accepts responsibility for his action. (Kaliayev’s refusal to attempt escape is here intended to illustrate the extent to which he takes responsibility for his act, and is not itself intended as a characteristic of legitimate killing)

Fourthly, There is no democratic alternative to assassination. This is effectively implied in the first condition above, relating to the tyrannical nature of the victim, but it should be stated explicitly nevertheless.

Camus is clearly acutely aware of the ambiguities surrounding talk of permissible killing. His primary intention is to show not that in certain instances killing is morally unproblematic, but rather that the killing of a human being must remain the greatest exception to ordinary human experience; that while it might be sometimes morally justifiable, it can never be habitual. He writes approvingly of the moral dilemma on which the Socialist Revolutionaries continually reflected, a dilemma which, nevertheless, did not prevent them from acting. For this reason, perhaps, his discussion of permissible killing in *The Just Assassins* is so frequently ambiguous. An act of permissible killing must achieve the status in society not just of an exception, but as the greatest of all exceptions. While certain acts of killing may be morally justified, it is important for Camus that such acts are never represented as being morally transparent or unambiguous. If we assume that Camus was generally sympathetic to the “scrupulous” violence of the Socialist Revolutionaries, we still cannot be sure on what conditions he would insist in order to make Kaliayev’s actions justifiable.

According to some critics, Camus insists that the rebel must sacrifice his own life to atone for the life he has taken. This may take the form of suicide or, as in the case of Kaliayev, it may involve surrendering oneself to the police after the act has been committed, with the certainty that one faces execution. Philip Thody writes that to recommend that all conscientious rebels commit suicide after they have been obliged to kill in the service of the revolution is rather an impractical suggestion. No political organization fighting
against as tyranny could possibly succeed if its leaders follow Kaliayev’s example.  

Similarly, George Kateb asserts that Camus’s alleged claim that the assassin, in order to be just, must sacrifice his own life actually inaugurates and defends a peculiar new doctrine: “the stain of blood can be wiped clean by more blood.”

Kaliayev himself believed that his death would expiate his action, this does not seem to have been Camus’s own view. Secondly and crucially, despite its rejection of the so-called “life for a life” thesis, we can see that this carnet note is not an argument against all forms of political violence, a position one might call absolute pacifism by default. Kaliayev’s reasoning may be “Faux” in Camus’s estimation, but it is also “respectable” and, in my view, the character of his violence contrasts starkly with that of the contemporary era, from which Kaliayev’s scrupulousness is conspicuously absent. The point is not that Kaliayev must die in order to atone for his action, but rather that he is willing to die as a consequence of it: if the just assassin is prepared to kill in the name of justice or freedom, he must also be willing to die in the name of justice or freedom. To be willing to kill, but unwilling to die suggests a failure to appreciate what for Camus remains the exceptional nature of the act.

Camus concluded in The Rebel that true rebellion always acknowledges its own origins and establishes limits that prevent it from contradicting these origins. Only absolute values and unlimited means lead to the contradictions. For this reason, Camus asserted, “If … rebellion could find a philosophy, it would be one of limits, of calculated ignorance, and of risk.” The rebel must realize that no value can be attained in an absolute sense and he must limit the means of achieving that value according. Camus wrote, “Rebellion itself only aspires to the relative and can only promise as assured dignity coupled with relative justice. It supposes the universe of relative values.” Again, lucidity is necessary to inform the rebel that the absurdity of existence cannot be settled. Rebellion is the natural reaction to the absurd, but in Camus’s doctrine of rebellion, values are meant to serve as guides for
action rather than future goals to be perused in totality. It is only when lucidity falters that the rebel forgets the reason for his protest and destroys life in pursuit of absolute values. This danger of total revolution was obviously a concern for Camus when he wrote his play, *The Just Assassins*.

In *The Just Assassins*, Camus portrayed the complexity involved in rebellion and the necessity of lucidity and limits. The most militant character, Stephen Fedorov, is recently released from prison. Humiliated during his time in prison, Stephen zealously advocates violence and destruction in the name of absolute justice. On the other hand, the poet Ivan Kaliayev and his girlfriend Dora pursue a form of rebellion that is enthusiastic yet limited. In the competing dialogue between these characters, Camus portrayed the ethical tension of rebellion with remarkable style.

Ivan and Dora whom Camus considered heroes, are willing to kill for the sake of an ideal that they refer to as “justice”. However, these characters retain the lucidity that is necessary to remain faithful to the true cause of the rebellion. Indeed, Ivan comments that he sees much beauty and joy in the world, and that he joined the revolution because he loves life. His attitude toward life is congruent with absurdist logic which informs that life is precious. He intones, “only, I’m still convinced that life is a glorious thing, I’m in love with beauty, happiness. That’s why I hate despotism.”

When Ivan is poised to throw a bomb under the carriage of the Grand Duke, he hesitates and retreats after seeing the faces of two children in the carriage. Remembering the origins of his rebellion, Ivan cannot bring himself to do violence to innocent children. Dora emphatically defends Ivan’s decision when the militant Stephen protests. “Open your eyes, Stephen, and try to realize that the group would lose all its driving force, were it to tolerate, even for a moment, the idea of children’s being blow to pieces by our bombs.”

Stephen is the embodiment of nihilism in the play because he considers justice to be an absolute value that is more important than human life. He admits to this with conviction, “I do not love life; I love something higher – and that is justice.” Stephen wants the revolution to succeed at all cost. When Dora argues that one must acknowledge limits, Stephen replies
Stephen has been mistreated in prison; he is disgusted with the world itself, he would gladly destroy it in the name of absolute justice. Stephen has fully succumbed to nihilism and his metaphysical revolt becomes fanatical and hateful as a result of his “All or Nothing” mentality. As the Grand Duke is about to be assassinated, he comments to Dora, “There is so much still to do; we must smash this world we line in, blast it to smithereens!”

Stephen’s destructive nihilistic attitude is meant to establish the fact that rebellion itself amounts to a rejection of absolution. The ringleader, Boris Annenkov, chastises Stephen, “I can’t allow you to say that everything permissible. Thousands of our brothers have died to make it known that everything is not allowed”.

The rebel joins the revolution because he feels that a limit has been breached; he will tolerate no more injustice. Therefore, it is illogical for the rebellion itself to abolish all limits in the pursuit of selling a limit on injustice. Camus commented upon the ethic of his play in the introduction, “I merely to show that action itself had limits. There is no good and just action but what recognizes those limits and, if it must go beyond them, at least accepts death.” Although Ivan eventually succeeds in killing the Grand Duke, he affirms that there are limits to action, and he is completely willing to pay for the act with his life. As the revolutionary, Stephen, says in *The Just Assassins*, such action that “indulge in charity and cure each pretty suffering that meets your eye” get in the way of the revolution, whose task is “to cure all suffering present and to come”(258). But Camus feared a systematic solution that is potentially as deadly as the disease itself.. Speaking through Kaliayev he responds to the Stephen’s concerns, “behind your words, I see the thread of another despotism which, if ever it comes into power, will make of me a murderer – and what I want to be is a doer of justice, not a man of blood” (259). The despotism comes in transgressing one’s limits, in acting as if one knows all the consequences of one’s actions. Camus argued that in order to sustain a life-affirming politics, the practice of rebellion must be limited to concrete problems.
The Spanish Civil War, for Camus marked a despicable failure of
Western Europe to defend the rights and dignity of human beings. Defending
the choice of Spain as the selling for his play, State of Siege, Camus wrote,

*you have forgotten that in 1936 a rebellious general, in the
name of Christ, raised up an army of Moors, hurled them
against the legally constituted government of the Spanish
Republic, won victory for an unjust cause after the massacres
that can never be expiated, and initiated a frightful repression
that has lasted ten years, and is not yet over.*

This stinging indictment of Franco’s regime reveals the overwhelming
importance of this symbol for Camus. Rambert, by fighting against Franco,
serves as the embodiment of resistance to tyranny, and can hardly be labeled
a coward. In *State of Siege,* the new totalitarian ruler, the Plague, under the
pretense of avoiding contagion, has ordered that all the townspeople be
gagged with pads soaked in vinegar. Words, blamed as the carriers of
infection, must be silenced. The scene that begin with a chorus of several
voices, ends with a single voice, and finally a pantomime, during which the
lips of all are firmly closed. Thus is the power of the people to protest the
injustice, cruelties, and indiscriminate death sentences of the Plague
eliminated.

The plague is seeping into the town of Cadiz and the gates are closing
the townspeople in, it is to the sea that the townspeople turn for salvation; as
Camus says through the Chorus: “The sea, the sea! The sea will save us.”
(State of Siege, pp. 167-168). But the gates all close, for the plague “hates the
sea and wants to cut us off from it.” (State of Siege, p.169), because it is the
source of our strength, our resilience, our meaning, our connection with the
universe – with love.

For Camus, immersion in the sea is a form of spiritual renewal. In the
connection of the body with the body of water, we connect with the soul of the
universe. We need this connection in order to keep rebellion faithful to its
origins in love for each other and for the earth. When the winter of the plague
is over, the men return to the women, “clamoring … for what they cannot do
without : the freedom of the great sea, spaces, empty skies of Summer, love’s undying fragrance.” (State of Siege, p.200). The sea, the sky, the sun – these were the riches that sustained Camus in his poverty and that sustained his soul in the poverty of his times. He said that in his youth he “lived on almost nothing, but also in a kind of rapture. … It was not poverty that got in my way; in Africa the sun and the sea cost nothing. … the lovely warmth that reigned over my childhood freed me from resentment.” (Lyrical 7).

As Diego lies dying, the chorus of women cries out:

Our curse on all who forsake our bodies! And pity on us … who are forsaken and must endure year after year this world in which men in their pride are ever aspiring to transform! … Men go whoring after ideas, a man runs away from his mother, forsakes his love, and starts rushing upon adventure … a hunter of shadows or a lonely singer who invokes some impossible reunion under a silent sky, and makes his way from solitude to solitude, toward the final isolation, a death, a death in the desert … (State of Siege, p.229).

The curse on those who forsake their bodies, who value ideas and action on the world above nature and communion with the world is terror and destruction. Rebellion that becomes forgetful of its origins in love of life becomes violent and destruction of its purposes. Camus found such forgetfulness all around him, in Nazi death camps, totalitarian ideologies, terror, militarism, and war. “The secret of Europe,” he argued, “is that it no longer loves life… they wanted to efface joy from the world.” (Rebel 305). They had committed the one thing that Camus regarded as a sin. They had, in his mind, denied the real grandeur of life – the earth, the sky, the sea, joy – and their destructiveness followed as a result.

The political inhumanity of our time, moreover, has demeaned and brutalized language beyond any precedent, distortions of history, and the bestialities of the totalitarian state. It is conceivable that something of the lies and the savagery has crept into their marrow. Words no longer give their full yield of meaning. And because they assail us in such vast, strident numbers,
we no longer give them careful hearing. Each day we sup our fill of horrors. In the newspaper, on the television screen, or the radio – and thus we grow insensible to fresh outrage. This numbness has a crucial bearing on the possibility of tragic style. Camus’s conception of style is closely linked to his concept of absurdity.

Disintegration of language is achieved through various methods in Absurd drama. The use of meaningless words uttered mechanically with no logical links or grammatical structure occurs in absurdists’ plays. Absurd drama makes little use of language as a means of influence. Without the presentational force of language, i.e. language which seeks to present a meaning, characterization is hardly achieved. Each sentence can be said by any of the characters without affecting the play; identical scenes are repeated, with different characters speaking the same lines. Furthermore, the absurdists usually show their disbelief in language as an instrument of communication in the employment of purely theatrical effects – a type of non-verbal theatre. Much of Absurd drama moves in the direction of an anti-literary attitude. Ionesco’s proliferation of objects, Genet’s ceremonies, and Beckett’s circus and music-hall devices are examples. Ionesco says:

As plots are never interesting, it is my dream to discover the rhythms of drama in their purest state, and to re-product them in the form of pure scenic movement. I should like to be able to create an abstract, a non-representational theatre. How is one to set about it?  

The fact that much of this theatre is mostly about tedium, and that it exploits all its elements to convey, this theme to its audiences, has misled many critics into believing that it is itself tedious. Joseph Chiari, for instance, comments:

A play is, as is well-known amongst other things, the result of communication between actors and audience, and a playwright does not convey an idea of frustration or boredom by frustrating and boring the audience. Nevertheless, there is a new school of dramatists flourishing in France and much acclaimed in this country, whose motto seems to be :twitches, whispers and silence, and who seem more and
more inclined to think that a frustrated and baffled audience will come out of the theatre illumined about the meaning of the frustration and the boredom of life. Yet the audience did not come to the theatre to be bored or frustrated, but to experience human emotions, including boredom and frustration, at one remove from life.\textsuperscript{116}

Repetition of set phrases is a major device, and one of the absurdists’ favourite verbal devices. “They use language to highlight the monotony inherent in the human condition and, on a less general level, reveal significant character qualities.”\textsuperscript{117}

Camus held that both philosophical and literary writings are forms of creation. He considered the dramatic writers to be better equipped to handle images. He wrote, “Feelings and images multiply a philosophy by ten.”\textsuperscript{118} Images are evocative of experiences, and they are more participatory than philosophical essays. Perhaps this is why Camus reinforced “The Myth of Sisyphus” with the tale of Sisyphus’s absurd punishment and ‘The Rebel’ with the myth of Prometheus-Gk. Myth. A Titan who stole fire from Olympus and gave it to humankind. Images themselves serve as a language that only the artist can properly translate to the reader. Camus understood from the very beginning of his career as this early entry in his Notebooks reveals: “people can think only in images. If you want to be a philosopher write novels.”\textsuperscript{119}

The ability of the dramatist to reach an audience with profound philosophical and political insights relies ultimately on his or her aesthetic method. John Krapp argues that Camus’s aesthetic approach in The Plague relies on his ability to present the dialogue and refrain from moralizing. He writes:

*The Plague illustrates less a thematic moral lesson than a paradigm for the way moral consciousness may be nourished aesthetically in the conflict between ethical voices.*\textsuperscript{120}

Camus’s aesthetic approach allowed him to develop a form of moral consciousness that is based on intersubjective human experience. Krapp
describes Camus’s approach as maintaining a careful balance between ethical and aesthetic concerns.

The work’s ethical and aesthetic dimensions must not exceed one another, rather, they must mask one another so that what appears to the reader is a series of tensions among characters from which the structural mechanism of moral education can be elucidated.\(^{121}\)

David Walsh, employing Camus as an example of a thinker who was troubled by the adverse effects of modernity, similarly praises the play as a vehicle to examine the “tensions” present in reality. His description is worth quoting at length:

When all doctrines and principles have become opaque, then it becomes a matter of necessity to return to the sources in experience on which all truth ultimately rests. This is why the thinkers who have worked through the crisis of modernity prefer to communicate their insights through novels. In contrast to discursive arguments, the medium of fictional literature allows a more immediate presentation of the experience. This is also the orientation that has guided their approach to the medium. All three novelists whom we have examined, Dostoevsky, Solzhenitsyn, and Camus regard the novel as a means of exploring the directional tension of reality, rather than as a vehicle for expounding the author’s own monological point of view.\(^{122}\)

Both Walsh and Krapp agree that the success of Camus as a philosophical dramatist rests upon his restrain. Indeed, this restrain is an aesthetic device that Camus employed to ground his plays in the experience of competing ethical claims.

Such a unified world is created by paying careful attention to style. Camus’s conception of style is linked to his concept of absurdity, and this linkage necessitates limits of artistic creation. Plays cannot offer meaning that eliminates the absurdity of existence.

The absurd work requires an artist conscious of these limitations and an art in which the concrete signifies more
than itself. It cannot be an end, the meaning, and the consolation of life.\textsuperscript{123}

In other words, art is meant to create a world that is reflective of the absurd, not to change the world in such a way, that is, ceases to be absurd. Eubanks and Petrakis argue that Camus’s style reflects the Greek notion of “Sophron” or “moderation.” Style requires a delicate balance.

\textit{In order to satisfy the desire for unity without misguiding readers into a belief that reality itself is or can be somehow changed, the novel must conform to the demands of style.}\textsuperscript{124}

Camus’s style of self restraint infused his plays with an evocative quality that “speaks to our deepest existential needs.”\textsuperscript{125}

Pol Gaillard appears to make things crystal clear by pointing out that the techniques and vocabulary peculiar to a detective are successful utilized by Camus in the report of Dr. Rieux in \textit{The Plague} to achieve his goal: “Camus by one of the means of detective writers, the style makes us already feel the character of Doctor Rieux.”\textsuperscript{126} The so-called collective style prevails over those passages in which sentiments and sentences of these individuals are literally brought to us. In this way the story attains the greatest degree of unanimity, the voices of these individuals little by little disappearing altogether and the final victory over the plague is celebrated in terms of the style of Dr. Rieux.

In \textit{The Just Assassins}, through both its form and content, Kaliayev’s speech is, first of all, indicative of his reserved personality. To illustrate, he usually keeps silent and talks when people direct him questions. Moreover, he always uses short sentences and merely asks questions, which cut the dialogues quite short. His speech also reveals his sensual nature. “\textit{His speech is loaded with images and sensation, which bears witness to the pervasiveness of the present.}”\textsuperscript{127} This means that the reader does not get access to his feelings and emotions because Kaliayev himself is unable to “\textit{interpret his experience or give it a significance beyond what is immediately present to the senses… He resides in … [the] present rich with sensations.}”\textsuperscript{128}
Lazere argues that Caligula has a purely sensory consciousness, and it is a strain for Caligula’s purely sensory consciousness, absorbed in the distinct sensation of the moment to abstract sense impressions into word and syntactical order.129 which might be another reason for his failure to conform to social conventions. Social conventions involve abstract concepts such as respect, gratitude, love, loyalty, commitment that are completely beyond Caligula’s comprehension, for they have no physical reality. Hence, “no hierarchies of value is recognized.”130 He adds, “events happen and [Caligula] responds”131 without interpreting or attributing significance to them.

The Caligula, from the standpoint of style is a class by itself because it comes to explode the myth as generally believed that a writer employs a single style in a book. Camus naturally employs to achieve his lofty goal, not one but two techniques which remain inseparable for the reader as a result of the personality of Caligula, the central character. Pol Gaillard points out, “The author employs here not one, as people often observe, but two techniques, rendered inseparable by means of the personality of Caligula.”132 The first technique has been taken from the fictional output of 30’s and 40’s of America. Camus comes to have recourse to this behaviourist technique whenever he has to project Caligula as a man without an apparent conscience. Pol Gaillard says:

The first is what one calls ‘the American romantic technique’ that is to say, Camus straightens up the whole thing of the American hard novel of the years of the 30’s and 40’s and not of the American efflorescence of the 19th century. It consists in describing men the exterior (externally) in their most indifferent gestures, to reproduce without any commentaries, the (inner discourses even in their repetitions, at last to make as if these men were defining themselves entirely in terms of their routine automatisms. Camus employs this behaviourist technique each time when he wishes to describe in Caligula the man without an apparent conscience.133
In a personal style which would directly express his own private emotions. In the description of separation his tone is at its most ironic and most controlled, and the effect which it obtains is consequently greater. In *Caligula* the precise use of administrative terms and official language the deliberate banality of the words are essential elements in the final effect which the chronicle makes. They irony of Camus’s style is the most important factor in bringing out the full horror of the situation, and his use of understatement plays an essential role in establishing the relationship between reality and allegory.

Camus’s deliberate refusal to use any other but the most precise and simple words in most of the descriptive passages enables him to throw into high relief those scenes to which he wishes to attach a special significance. The death of Czech is one of the most important incidents in *The Misunderstanding* it is described in an intensely poetic passage:

> Let’s keep things in proportion. You’ve lost your husband, and I’ve lost my mother. So we stand even. But he only left you once. Think of all those years when you had him to yourself. And you were never rejected I was. By my own mother. And now she’s dead. So that makes twice.\(^{134}\)

He is writing most naturally and makes his most genuine appeal. It is, however, a measure of his achievement that he has in *Caligula* and in *The Just Assassins*, as well as in *The Misunderstanding* successfully adopted a completely different style because he felt that the subjects demanded a particular treatment. Camus uses language for passing time which he regards as time as enemy that ruins people and carries them to their ultimate end, that is, death. So, time and death are closely interrelated for Camus. He explains in *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

... He (man) himself in relation to time. He takes his place in it. He admits that he stands at a certain point on a curve that he acknowledges having to travel to its end. He belongs to time, and by the horror that seizes him, he recognizes his worst enemy. Tomorrow, he was longing for tomorrow, whereas everything in him ought to reject it.\(^{135}\)
In *Caligula* Camus presents his view of time through Caligula’s way of living. Caligula is a man who lives only in the present moment because of his premonition of death, and this also closely related to Camus’s view of time as an “enemy” of man for it carries man to death. Through Caligula’s experience of time, Camus presents time as a void that has no beginning or end. Caligula begins to view time, and realizes this when he is isolated from the outside world and confined to a narrow space; so time appears to him as an infinite emptiness that should be filled up in some ways. He is terribly bored since he has the whole twenty-four hours to spend, but there is nobody or nothing that can help him pass the time so the main problem once again was killing time. and he tries to find some methods to pass the time in while he is in the region. One of the ways he invents to kill time is the memory game in which he tries to make a mental note of everything. Thus, he uses his memory as an effective tool to kill time as he admits; he is always remembering his mistress.

Camus’s characters are individualized through their speeches revealing their characteristics. To illustrate, Kaliyev’s speech is indicative of his aloofness as his short sentences and his unwillingness to be involved in a dialogue suggest. His speech also reveals his sensual nature, for he frequently talks about his sensory experience whereas he remains silent about his emotions and feelings. His language also indicates his inability to make sense of abstract concepts since they have no physical reality, which explains his failure to comprehend and conform to social conventions involving such abstract concepts. Scipion’s and Cherea’s language also reveal their personal qualities and thus individualizes them. For example, their straight-forward and plain language points out to their dislike of abstractions and their belief that one should use a plain language to achieve communication with others, for this is how men attain solidarity. On the contrary, Caligula uses language not to achieve communication but to manipulate and ensnare others. Therefore, unlike Scipion, he uses a refined and sophisticated language, revealing his motives.
Camus uses language consciously, it is no surprise he manages to assign to the three protagonists of these three works – *Caligula, The Just Assassins* and *The Misunderstanding* who are quite different from one another in temperament and social status, sets of words and phrases which are in perfect accordance with their respective traits and tendencies. In other words, these three central characters of three different plays will utter these expressions and sentences under the circumstances and in the frames of mind they are, which will sound at a time, natural and logical in their respective cases. Style is the phraseology employed by all these three protagonists come to put in relief some characteristic trait or other of their respective personalities. Pol Gaillard says:

> The style of these three works is naturally adapted to the character of the three protagonists: The style of theatre and tribunal is quite voluntarily adapted for *Caligula*, certainly a grand style, rich, varies almost constantly ironical, full of fervour of a superb mastery, but equally a whorish style, as people say cruelly on Plateaux, a crimp style, enveloping, conniving, always slightly false except in nostalgia and despair... simply the style imposes here mimicry, enlargement, setting in value, all sorts of iron, all kinds of cleverness, all types of sarcasm.136

Camus’s endless, futile speech is the history of the human spirit that is recognizable as the absurd effort of Czech who, thinking, wants to transcend thought and remains the prisoner of fictions he himself tirelessly produces. He is Czech and at the same time a human being who does not know himself and who cannot tell who he is, where he is, and wherefore he is. He tries to talk about it and thus merely enlarges his own darkness in which he is incapable of finding himself. For to talk means to stand outside oneself, he who does not possess himself and remains concealed from himself is compelled to talk. Only he who has attained to his own identity, can be silent. That in the end – says the endlessly talking self – might perhaps be life. Life, truth, identity, the forgotten name, silence, they also stand for something lost to which the self
wants to return. It wants to return from banishment. It strives for a reunion that is forever frustrated.

It can be argued that for Camus the communication of his philosophical ideas that he explores in his theoretical writings seems to be his main concern. As Camus points out in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that fiction is the most effective means of exploring and communicating the philosophical views since they are put into practice through life-like situations, considering communication between men is attainable, but through a straightforward and plain language.

For many absurdist writers the world has lost its meaning, and life has no meaning or life is nothing. As a result, language is not considered as a tool of communication; it falls in conveying man’s thoughts and emotions. It becomes a meaningless buzzing. Man’s use of language probes the limitations of language both as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the expression of valid statements, or an instrument of thought. “*Language and the world are hopelessly divorced from one another.*”

Although the function of language is ideally to communicate truth, everyday language does just the opposite. Blackham notes in this regard:

> ... everyday language in constant use loses touch with the objects to which it ostensibly refers... Language then spreads untruth and establishes inauthentic existence.\(^{138}\)

Camus believes that man should always take his source from the reality of society, since he is a member of this society, and translate it into universal language so that it will be accessible to all men in the world eventually. In *Resistance, Rebellion and Death*, Camus says:

> the artist has only to translate the sufferings and happiness of all into the language of all and he will be universally understood ... he will achieve complete communication among men.\(^{139}\)

But instead of communication a divorce happens between man and man and the world, and, a result of this, human beings live in completely individualized entities.\(^{140}\)
Camus is against those who use language to manipulate, oppress or judge others. Man should use language to achieve communication with his fellow men since it is essential to attain solidarity through dialogue, but on the contrary, servitude, injustice, falsehood are the scourges that shatter communication and forbid the dialogue.\textsuperscript{141} He also voices the same idea saying, \textit{``I'd come to realize that all our troubles spring from our failure to use plain, clear-cut language.''}\textsuperscript{142} He believes in \textit{``the necessity of facing the facts by means of language which is clear, truthful and unequivocal.''}\textsuperscript{143} Camus calls a person to live in front of a mirror \textit{``the dandyish rebel''}, to be sure of his existence by finding it in the expression of others’ faces. Other people are his mirror.\textsuperscript{144}

Camus acts at a time as a psychologist and as a moralist. He attaches great importance to ideas, never shows any fascination for figures of speech; he accords the first place to ideas and refuses to sacrifice himself to the magic style. His dialogues are criticized as being so intellectualized to separate us from the feelings which inspired them in the characters. This exemplifies a central confusion and limit in his style—a curious tension between presenting reality or myth—which often leads him to positions of confusing the reader. He vacillates between passages of realism to effect or sensibility and to prevent from reaching its full literary potential. So language that gives meaning and purpose to life and to existence turned to be illusions.

Language has become a dead thing, limiting communication and emphasizing solitude, because man is seen trapped in fixed ideas about himself and the world which turn him into a thing rather than a being, which limits freedom, nauseating and recognizes that just as habit conceals his attitudes.

Camus preoccupied with the failure of language to communicate the menaces of life and its meaninglessness. He believes that the isolation and the failure to communicate stems less from the inability of language to do so and more from the unwillingness of people to expose themselves. His characters don’t use language to show that language doesn’t work; they use it as a cover for fear and loneliness.
Instead of figures of speech, Camus pays attention to style, to the ideas and consequently the reader encounters not only the ideas but images that symbolize the shared experience of mankind. For instance, Caligula, in *Caligula*, uses language to entrap his listener by making him recognize himself in the mirror Caligula holds. As Lazere observes, “an unremitting battery of words in the first weapon he uses to cow his victim. He is fluent, never at a loss for words” previously he used “his mastery of language for the salvation of others”, he now uses it “for their destruction.” Consequently he uses language as an atmosphere of entrapment. His speech is like a poison which runs through the victim’s blood once it is injected. As Bishop argues, it is “a complete rhetoric that, like all rhetorics, is implicitly geared to other ends than truth alone.”

Caligula also deliberately creates ambiguity by blurring the line between truth and fiction as his words reveal: “I know what you are thinking: it’s very hard to disentangle the truth from the false in what I’m saying. I admit you are right.” The narrator/reader doesn’t know whether Caligula’s stories are true or invented because “in the realm of mask, deception and seduction one can never be sure whether the pointing is straight, or, indeed, if it is directed to anything at all.” This also adds to the sense of suspense because of the ambiguity it creates. But to Caligula, it doesn’t matter at all whether his stories are true or invented:

> And my stories, true or false, do they not all tend towards the same end, do they not have the same meaning? well, then what does it matter whether they’re true or false, if, in both cases, they point to what I have been and what I am.

Camus denies the claim of literature (or more generally that of language and thought), to contain the truth. His endless, futile speech is the history of the human spirit all over again, now recognizable as the absurd effort of a Caligula, who, thinking, wants to transcend thought and remains the prisoner of fictions he himself tirelessly produces.
Camus pays attention to the details of existence which, while obscurity
his philosophical message, powerfully points up ambiguities and puzzles of
understand existence; confession of ambiguity, contradictions and ambiguity
of us all. Roger Quillot says:

*Nothing certainly pure, nothing and no one is innocent; but
neither is anyone completely guilt, innocent and guilty. That
is man; this conjunction re-establishes this balance and
reconciles us with ourselves.*

Consequently, Camus’s language reveals his ideas of the futility of human
existence.
CHAPTER III
NOTES

6. Ibid., pp.10-11.
10. Ibid., p.18.
11. Ibid., p.23.
12. Ibid., p.21.
15. Thomas B. Hanna, The Thought and Art of Albert Camus, p.149.
17. Ibid., p.67.
18. Ibid., p.65.
24. Ibid., p.12.
25. Ibid., p.71.
28. Ibid., p.17.
30. Ibid., p.44.
31. Ibid., p.40.
38. Ibid., p.618.
41. Ibid., p.618.
42. Ibid., p.618.
43. Albert Camus, The Rebel, New York: Vitage, 1956, p.10.78
44. Ibid., p.14.
45. Ibid., pp.246-252
46. Ibid., p.15.
47. Ibid., p.23.
48. Ibid., p.16.
49. Ibid., p.17.
50. Ibid., p.103.
51. Ibid., p.70.
53. Ibid., p.245.
55. Ibid., p. 69.
56. Ibid., p. 70.
57. Albert Camus, *The Just Assassins*, p.244.
58. Ibid., p. 258.
59. Ibid., p. 273.
60. Donald Lazere, “*The Unique Creation of Albert Camus*”, London: Yale University Press, 1973, p.29
62. Ibid., p. 624.
63. Ibid.
65. Ibid., p. 50.
68. Ibid., p.109.
70. Ibid., p. 162.
71. Ibid., p.35.
72. Ibid., p. 162.
73. Ibid., p. 161.
78. Brian Masters, *Camus: A Study*, p.27.
79. Ibid., p.30.
87. Ibid., p.118.
88. Ibid., p. 117.
89. Ibid., p.118.
90. Ibid., p.115.
93. Ibid., p.122.
94. Ibid., p.66.
95. Ibid., p.66.
96. Donald Lazere, *The Unique Creation of Albert Camus*, p.36.
100. Ibid., p.538.
101. Ibid., p.553.
106. Ibid., p.290.
108. Ibid., p.256.
109. Ibid., p.244.
110. Ibid., p.258.
111. Ibid., p.273.
112. Ibid., p.257.
113. Ibid., p.x.
119. Ibid., p.10.
121. Ibid., p.73.
131. Ibid., p.25.
133. Ibid.
145. Donald Lazere, “*The Unique Creation of Albert Camus*”, p.119.
146. Ibid., p.118.