

ALBERT CAMUS MORAL PHILOSOPHY: THE IMPLICATION FOR THE SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

The issue of suicide and death is a controversial one which has raised so many dialogue and debate. Man in his existential struggle is awed with this major problem of suicide and death and strives to overcome it. The aim of this work is to philosophically delve below the apparent clarity of common sense to know whether in the face of the absurdities of life, is suicide the next resort? This work also dig deep to analyze and evaluate Albert Camus concept of death. The question that arises here is: is death a meaningless absurdity or meaningful part of man's life. Many have tried to find an explanation to the problem of human suicide and death penalty but to no avail. Consequent upon this, different people conceives death differently based on their various perceptions. However they are commonly held view about death, and that is death is inevitable. This work sets to point out suicide and death penalty as a dreadful phenomenon. It is the forceful taking of life. Suicide does not give room for confrontation. Death penalty does not give the individual the chance to correct himself while existing. This work set to clarify the absurdity and ambiguity that characterizes the human life and existence. This work adopts the philosophical method of analysis, descriptive and evaluations. It maintains that death is a meaningless absurdity that renders the human existence of man in the society meaningless. Therefore the work concludes that life should be lived for the present with the virtue of golden mean. The influence of his moral philosophy rest on living a lasting legacy irrespective of the fact that we build our hopes on tomorrow, yet tomorrow brings us closer to death. This work adopts the philosophical method of analysis, description and evaluation. This work will also employ exposition and argumentation. Its source of data and information will be from Camus books, his philosophical essay, article and internet.

INTRODUCTION

Albert Camus long length philosophical essays: "The Myth of Sisyphus and the Rebel" introduced and developed the twin philosophical ideas "The concept of absurdity" and

the notion of revolt". The myth of Sisyphus" was an attempt to solve the problem of suicide amidst the absurdity of life. "The Rebel" was an attempt to solve the problem of death, it was a reflection of freedom and revolt.

Suicide is an intentional killing of oneself, as a kind of action or social phenomenon. Suicide is known as self killing, self murder, self slaughter, self slaying. To kill one self intentionally means death. Suicide is one of major problem in moral philosophy. The absurdity of life has made man resort to suicide to end the absurdities that hovers around his existence. According to Albert Camus in his long length philosophical essay "the myth of Sisyphus" opines that:

His philosophy of absurdity is man's futile search for meaning, sense clarity and unity in the face of an unintelligible world devoid of God and eternal truths or value¹.

Camus went further to ask some important question. Does the realization of the absurd require suicide? Camus answers, "No". It requires revolt. From the above position of Camus one will understand that Camus perceives the human existence as that which is filled with absurdity. However he outlined that despite the absurdities and man trying to realize himself amidst all, suicide is not an option. He outlined an approach to it which is constant confrontations.

However to some persons, suicide is the last resort to end the absurdity. They fail to understand that suicide is self death which is an absurdity. Camus believes that the absurdities of life should not make one resort to suicide which is death because death is an absurdity of its own. This he made clear in his essay "The Rebel" which was an attempt to solve the problem of death. He condemns death (death penalty/capital punishment) because death on its own is an absurdity which man has come to face. Death is one of the perennial problems that has confronted man in his own existence, all effort put by man to conquer seems to be effort in futility. Life is full of mysteries these are things, event or happening that is unexplainable and unknown to man. Indeed death is one of those mysteries of life. Death

has been an age long issue. It is a mysterious event beyond man's comprehension due to his limitation. As a result of this, so many have superstitious belief concerning death.

According to Martin Heidegger in his book "Being and Time" he opines that:

Death is a way of life for man, for he is a being towards death, a being who lives every moment of his life his death. Man's whole life is a progressive journey, for he begins to die from the day he is born².

From the above position of Heidegger, one will understand that death forms part of the essence of man. The existentialist believes that man was thrown into the world without consultation and finding himself in this world. Man must be ready to face the facility of his existence.

According to Schopenhauer and other existentialists in the book "The great philosophers" they affirm that it is impossible to hope to achieve human well being or happiness in the meaningless and absurd world. For them, the human condition is tragic hence the individual should just accept and clear headedly acknowledge such evils as death.

The materialist and idealism conception of death have been the two domineering group which tries to proffer meaning to death. The materialists are of the view that everything ends at death. The idealists uphold that death is a means to another life.

Albert Camus rejected the materialistic and idealistic conception of death. Camus rejected capital punishment or death penalty. He started with a vocal opposition to death penalty. He described death penalty as an inhuman and irrational act. To some persons, during the execution by the guillotine, to some persons it was spectacle while to Camus it is inhumane and barbarous. For Camus, death has no rational meaning and as such the human existence is absurd. For him, death robs human existence of all its meaning. Death creates fear, unhappy moment and anxiety in human life. Therefore when suicide and death penalty is the order of the day in the society, the society tends to lose its essence, because it is the human existence that makes up this society. Camus outlined constant confrontation and

constant revolt as the two approaches to absurdity and death penalty Therefore life should be lived with the virtue golden mean (moderation) to ensure lasting legacy.

Camus vocal opposition to death penalty and suicide is not specifically philosophical that is to say it is not based on any particular moral theory or principle. Camus Opposition is humanitarian, conscientious and almost visceral. From time immemorial man is faced with this challenges and controversies of life. Man's whole life and existence is characterized with absurdities and mysteries which are beyond the comprehension of man.

This work will look into the concept of absurdity, suicide and death as outlined by Camus. This work will also be interested in raising questions and attempting to answer questions like; what is Absurdity? Does the realization of absurdity require suicide. What is death penalty? What is the ground base for capital punishment or death penalty, if yes, what are the moral implications? If No, then why? What is the basis that human life is absurd? To what extent can Albert Camus meaninglessness of human life be justified? Hence this research work will explore how Camus tussles with the problem of death penalty and absurdity of human existence. what are the implication of Camus philosophy for the society

This paper aims at the following purpose:

To ascertain the meaning of absurdity, causes of suicide and death. To be able to put an end to some of the puzzles surrounding suicide and death penalty. It will expose and examine critically the implication of death penalty, suicide and the futility of human existence in line with Camus views. This work will help in correcting the view that death penalty should be melted out upon a person as capital punishment. It will help in shaping peoples mind on the issue of suicide. Suicide is self murder self killing. It will actually rob him of his existence by his own self. It is better to live in the progressive journey to death which we don't know, how and when it going to happen. As a traveler there is need for one to

know where exactly he is going. This will give more meaning: This will help man to channel his life in the real direction and get ready for death. For Camus, we build our lives on the hope of tomorrow when tomorrow brings us closer to death. As a child one of the things Camus learned about his father was that he became violently ill after witnessing a public execution. This inspired him to oppose such act of Death penalty. This actually became his vocal point of opposition. Camus condemns capital punishment. His condemnation became explicit and implicit on his writings. In conclusion this work sets to point out the implications of Camus moral philosophy which revolves around his condemnation of death penalty and suicide for the society. This work will mainly center on Camus writings, which actually comprises his long length philosophical essay (the myth of Sisyphus and the rebel). The Stranger, the Plague and the Fall are also inclusive in his writings.

In a bid to have a clear perception of death penalty and suicide we are going to look into the work of other philosophers and scholars on death. Suicide and deaths falls within the realm of philosophical metaphysics. Having such scope included, we will actually lose focus of the study. This study will be very significant and beneficial in the following ways. It will create awareness on the issue of suicide which is caused by absurdity. It will enable us know that despite the absurdity of life, meaninglessness and nonsensical nature of life, suicide is not an option. Camus emphatically says “No” to suicide. Suicide is against the natural inclination to preserve life and also against over self will (interest).

This work will also create an awareness on the reality of death which gives meaning to our existence. According to Martin Heidegger in his book “Being and Time” He opines that man is a being towards death, death is a way of life, A being who lives every moment of his life toward death, Man’s whole life is a progressive journey to death, for he begins to die from the day he was born³.

Death forms part of the essence of man's life. It is embedded in his existence for Heidegger. From the above analogy, this work will examine the question whether or not it is a good thing, whether death can add more meaning to man's existence or non-existence. For Camus, we build our lives on the hope of tomorrow when tomorrow brings us closer to death, we live as if we don't know the certainty of death, for him, Death is a meaningless absurdity it strips man of his core essential element of dignity and value. On one hand he is right on the other he is encouraging man to live his life as if there tomorrow, thereby living it to its fullness. It is worthy of note to man that his whole life is a progressive journey to death this will help channel man's direction and get prepared for death. The only mystery he is faced with is question of how and when.

Realizing that life will definitely come to an end one day will help man plan and channel his life. It is also significant to know that suicide and death penalty is a dreadful phenomenon, it is the forceful taking of life. This is actually bad for the society. Suicide does not give room for one to confront the absurdity of life. Death penalty as capital punishment does not give the individual the chance to correct himself while existing. Inflicting death penalty does not solve it because one day the person will still die. It is better he lives to correct himself and also serve as a deterrent to others.

This work will also serve as a source of reference for students in philosophy who might consider it relevant in carrying out their research work. It will provide answers to question of suicide and death penalty.

Definition of Terms

Suicide: Can be defined as the intentional killing of oneself, as a kind of action or social phenomenon, suicide means to kill oneself intentionally, suicide is synonymous with self killing, self murder, self slaughter, self slaying.

Absurd: It means contrary to reason, inconsistent with the plain dictates of common sense; logically contradictory; nonsensical, ridiculous.

It means having no rational relationship to man's life. It means meaningless lacking order of value.

It is the opposition between the human search for meaning in life and the inability to find any. The state in which man exist in an irrational universe and his life has no meaning outside of his existence.

Inevitable: Means something that is impossible to avoid or prevent. It is synonymous with inescapable, unavoidable. It is something that is certain to happen.

Futile: It means something that is incapable of producing results useless, fruitless, pointless and having no purpose. It is in vain.

Escapism: An inclination to escape from routine or reality into fantasy. The word escapism is the term used by Camus to address all those that believe in life after death. He regard those who believe in life after death as escapists.

Death Penalty: It refers to the sanctioning of a wrong doer or an offender over a crime committed by means of death sentence.

Throughout the history of man, the issue of suicide and death penalty in the society has been a major problem. In the society today, we can experience this dread act of suicide is what some person have resorted to due to the difficulty and challenges of life. Suicide is on its increase in our society.

Recently in Ebonyi State Nigeria, precisely at Ishieke, a man was found dead close to a bridge. The man was seen in a tied rope tied to a tree. This is a clear picture of suicide (self killing, self murder and self assassination). No matter the challenges faced by this man, he is not supposed to resort to suicide because it's a negative way of responding to absurdity. It

shows the incapacity of the man to face the absurd. It is a sign of weakness according to Camus. According to Camus there is no moral ground for such act.

The issue of suicide has been perceived in different ways by various scholars. A clear review of them gives an insight on suicide.

According to the Stoic, suicide is not only appropriate but necessary when require to fulfill an obligation to the state that is being willing to die because one is concerned to benefit one's country friends. It is also necessary when required to avoid vice when one is not free to act as one will that is when positive action is no longer in our power then it is reasonable to commit suicide.

Clement of Alexander, suicide is appropriate when one has lost all hope of action.

St. Augustine made a sharp break with the Greco – Roman tradition (particular Stoic moral philosophy of the Roman Imperial period) which recognized certain situations in which the decision to commit suicide would be appropriate, good and necessary⁴.

Augustine argued against suicide on the bases that we have a duty of self-care arising from natural inclination. Secondly, we have a debt of love that we owe each others, that is to say we belong to God and have certain duties toward others.

- (a) In this light must we understand the command, “thou shalt not kill” (the sixth commandment): “For it is unlawful to take the law into our own hands and slay even a guilty person, whose death no public sentence has warranted, then certainly he who kills himself is a homicide and so much guilt of his own death, as he was more innocent of that offence for which he doomed himself to die” (city of God)

(b) To take one's own life into one's hands and act precipitously by committing suicide is to look away from God. According to him the decision to commit suicide is based upon an unwillingness to endure suffering.

a. According to Hume, to take one's own life is to take a decision that belongs to God and to God alone.

Suicidal behavior is a leading cause of death and disability worldwide. Suicide is the fifteenth leading cause of death, according for 1.4% of all death (WHO 2014).”⁵

Death penalty on the other hand is a controversial topic for debate. To some persons it is an integral part of their culture stating that severe crimes be punished with death penalty. Debate on the death penalty is tethered to many ethical and religious tenets. There is so many that supports death penalty while many others oppose it staunchly. One's standard allows for the death penalty while the other does not. This is explainable in a scenario where a child is taught to average harm done to you or loved ones by taking the perpetrator's life, such child would do based on his own tenet while another who was not taught the same will not do.

Studies over decades reveal that the death penalty is no greater deterrent than life imprisonment. With respect to race, studies in the United States have repeatedly shown that a death sentence is far more likely where a white person is murdered. The death penalty is racially diverse because it appears to count white lives as more valuable than black lives⁶.

Interviews of victim's families confirms that the legal procedure leading up to the death penalty can be a traumatizing experience, often requiring them to relive the pain and suffering of the death of their loved one for many years.

Judge Manck in sentencing a murderer observed that death penalty trials and appeals can last many years with multiple painful rehashing of the crime. He said it is an outrageous

way to penalize victims⁷. Observation shows that victims parent sees it as been disrespectful, demoralizing and dehumanizing.

From the above views of scholars concerning their perception on suicide and death penalty, we can deduce that 80% advocates for the elimination of such dehumanizing and irrational act in the society. This work will continue in making explicit the view of Camus on suicide and death penalty and its moral implication which was outlined by camus.

EXPOSITION OF ALBERT CAMUS CONCEPT OF ABSURDITY AND DEATH

Albert Camus Background and Work

Albert Camus was a French Algerian Journalist, Play Wright, Novelist, philosophical essayist and noble laureate. Though he was neither by advanced training nor profession a philosopher, he nevertheless made important, forceful contributions to a wide range of issues in moral philosophy. He is often described as an existentialist writer.

Albert Camus was born on November 7, 1913 in Mondovi, a small village near the seaport city of Bone (present day Araaba) in the north east region of French Algeria.

He was the second child of Lucien Auguste Camus a military veteran and wine shipping clerk. Catherine Helene Camus was a house-keeper and a part-time factory worker.

Shortly after the outbreak of world war one (WWI), he father was recalled to military service and on October 11, 1914 died of shrapnel wounds suffered at the first battle of the Marne. As a child about the only thing Camus ever learned about his father was that he had one become violently ill after witnessing a public execution. Catherine Helen Camus was an

illiterate, partially deaf and afflicted with a speech pathology, She worked in an ammunition factory and cleaned homes to help support the family.

After the death of Lucien Auguste Camus, Albert Camus, his mother and his elder brother moved to Algiers where they lived with his maternal uncle and grand-mother in her cramped second floor apartment in the working-class district of Belcourt. Camus says: Merely by its silence, its reserve, its natural and restrained pride, these people who could not even read, gave me the highest teaching.

In his Post humorously Published autobiographical novel “The First Man”, Camus recalls this period of his life with a mixture of pain and affection as he describes conditions of harsh poverty (The three-room apartment had no bathroom, no electricity, no running water) relieved by hunting trips family outings, childhood games and scenic flashes of sun, seashore, mountain and desert.

By Mid-century, base on the strength of his three novels (The stranger, the plague, and the fall) and two book-lengths philosophical essays (The Myth of Sisyphus and The Rebel). It was in this works that he introduced and developed the twin philosophical ideas. “The concept of absurdity” and “ The notion of revolt”. This actually made him famous.

The Absurd can be defined as a metaphysical opposition that results from the presence of human consciousness with its ever-pressing demand for order and meaning of life.

The notion of revolt refers to both a path of resolved action and a state of mind. It can take extreme forms such as terrorism or a reckless and unrestrained egoism (Both of which are rejected by Camus) but basically in simple term.

Camus has collections of four best dramatic works. They include “The Caligula”, “The Misunderstanding”, “The State of Siege”, “The Just Assassins”.

Camus considers himself to be first and foremost a writer. He was a writer than a philosopher. At various stage of his career, he accepted labels as journalist; humanist, novelist and even a moralist. He never felt comfortable identifying himself as a philosopher. He described A philosopher as a term to be associated with rigorous academic training, systematic thinking, logical consistency and coherence, carefully defined doctrine and body of ideas.

It is simple to point out that he was not a systematic or even a notable disciplined thinker unlike Satre and Heidegger, Camus showed very little interest in metaphysics and otology which seems to be one of the reasons he consistently and constantly denied that he was an existentialist. Camus says that his taught was not speculative or abstract in nature rather his taught is closely related to current events (Spanish war, revolt in Algeria).

One troublesome fact remains that throughout his career Camus repeatedly denied he was not an existentialist. The question that was raised against this his denial is: Is Camus statement an accurate and honest self assessment? Some critics have questioned this denial.

However there appear to be solid reason for challenging the claim that Camus is an existentialist. It is noteworthy that he never showed much interest in metaphysical and ontological questions like Heidegger and stare there is no rule that says an existentialist must be a metaphysician.

Camus regarded existentialism as a complete and systematic world view that is fully articulated doctrine. In his view to be a true existentialist one had to commit to the entire doctrine (and not merely to bits and pieces of it) and this was something he was unwilling to do.

A further point of separation and possibly a decisive one is that Camus actively challenged and set himself apart from existentialist motto that being precedes essence. He is

ultimately against Satre in particular and existentialist in general, he clings to his instinctive believe in a common human nature.

In Camus view, the human existence necessarily includes the essential core element of dignity and value. The value includes individualism, free choice, inner strength, authenticity, personal responsibility and self determination.

Camus attended elementary school at the local Ecole Community, during his elementary studies he came in contact with some teachers and mentors who believed in his intellectual capacity. Those teachers and mentors nurtured Camus's intelligence. During his studies, Camus distinguished himself as an excellent and hard working student and was eventually awarded a scholarship to attend high school at the Grand Lycee.

In his secondary school, Camus became an avid reader. He read the works of Gide, Proust, Verlaine and Bergson and others. Camus also learned how to read and write Latin and English as well as to speak them. It was during this period that he developed a lifelong interest in literature, art, theatre and film, He also enjoyed sports. (He recalled his early experience as a goal keeper): "I learned ... that a ball never arrives from the direction you expected it to. That helped him in later life especially in mainland France where nobody plays straight. It was also during this period that he suffered tuberculosis which afflicted him through his career.

He finished a Bacca laureate degree in 1932. In 1933 he enrolled at the University of Algiers to pursue his diploma d'etudes superieures, specializing in philosophy and gained certificate in sociology and psychology. From (1937-1940) he established himself as an emerging author, journalist and theatre professional.

However during the time he enrolled into the University of Algier, he engaged himself with menial jobs, it was also during this period that he married his first wife (Simon Hie) which he divorced and joined the communist party.

In 1940, he increased to the rank of world class literacy intellectual. After marrying his second wife Francine Faure in 1940, he departed upon where he has been working as a journalist and returned to Algeria to make ends meet.

After his expulsion from the Communist party, he returned to France in 1942 and a year later began working for the clandestine newspaper *Combat*, the journalist arm and voice of the French Resistance Movement. It was during this period he published "The Myth of Sisyphus" his philosophical anatomy of suicide and the absurd. He became an editor of the *Combat*. The myth of Sisyphus attempts to resolve the problem of suicide. The subject matter of "the myth of Sisyphus" is this. "It is legitimate and necessary to wonder if life has a meaning, therefore it is legitimate to meet the problem of suicide face to face". In this essay Camus introduces his philosophy of absurd, man's futile search for meaning, unity and clarity in the face of an unintelligible world devoid of God and eternal truth or values. For Camus, even if one does believe in God suicide is not legitimate. Camus says that life is meaningless, nonsensical and filled with absurdity, but human strives constantly for meaning and sense in it. In the face of these meaninglessness, nonsensical and absurdity of life does it require suicides? Camus emphatically says "No". It requires revolt.

This long-length philosophical essay expresses Camus' opposition to suicide as a strong moralist, humanitarian and a conscientious person. Camus considers suicide a fundamental issue for moral philosophy. He is not interested in assessing the traditional motives and justification of suicide. For him suicide is not an option.

Even religious explanation to give meaning and sense to the world by explaining the world to be ordained by God has been disproved by science. Science can only describe existence but cannot explain why there is existence or what is the meaning and purpose of existence.

We build our lives on the hope of tomorrow, yet tomorrow bring us closer to death. Life is characterized by these absurd paradoxes.

He then outlines several approaches to the absurd life which includes constant confrontation, constant revolt.

The Influences of Existentialism

The term existentialism is derived from the word “existence” and it is dated back to Soren Kierkegaard the father of existentialism. Existentialism is the belief that existence precedes essence.

According to Keynold Jack in his book “understanding existentialism” points that the term existentialism was coined by the French catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the Mid 1940s. In Existentialism, existence is restricted to human existence with all its characteristics features. Existentialism is therefore the philosophy of human existence, a philosophy preoccupied with what it means for human being to exist.⁸

The existentialist philosophers analyzed and explained the human existence in respect to their theme. Some of the existentialist themes include: Death and the absurdity, freedom, choice and responsibility facility, Anguish.

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that emphasizes on the uniqueness of human existence in freely making itself-defining choices. It is better to describe existentialism as a movement rather than a school. Existentialism is very much concerned with the existence of the individual and these themes of existentialist philosophers are derived from the human experience. This philosophical movement addresses the existential problems of human life suffering and death.

Soren Kierkegaard who is the father of existentialism responded to the question of the meaning of life in respect to the traditional view point. Soren Kierkegaard was very much interested in the search for individual truth. That is to say that the subjectivity (individual truth) influences his Christian life.

Kierkegaard raised an attack on the Christendom. He argued that it is only by faith that a man lives out the principle of Christianity and it is this faith in God that enables man reconstructs his life. This is because when man realizes that the meaning and purpose of existence is not known to him, likewise the answer to our existence is unknown to man. The feeling that the hope of tomorrow brings us closer to death is actually what gives rise to Anguish.

Jean-Paul Satre the best and most influential existential uphold that Anguish is caused by full realization of the radicality of our freedom and inescapable responsibility. The weight of this responsibility causes anguish in man who feel he was abandoned to himself and his freedom in this universe without help coming from any where.⁹ He actually distinguish between fear and anguish. Fear for him is something outside while anguish is something with me. According to Braise Pascal, the mystery of being, the basic problem of life, the immensity of the universe and its meaninglessness evoke anguish in a reflecting mind.¹⁰ that is to say that Pascal sees anguish as resulting from the limited nature of man. Another core theme of the existentialism which is derived from the human existence is facility. The facility of man consists in the fact of him being thrown into existence without his consent. According to Heidegger, he argues that man came into the world without his own consent and he is also confronted with his own nothingness. This creates anxiety in human existence and also provides an avenue to become aware of one's existence. The awareness of he's own existence makes the individual confronted with fear, dread, conscience guilt, nothingness and death. Paul Satre in his own view argues that man carries within himself an emptiness which he tries

in vain all through the course of his life to fill. The emptiness is at heart of man's being and it cannot be filled no matter what man does.¹¹

The issue of death and the absurd is another major theme which features prominently in existentialism and as well influenced Albert Camus. The existentialists have divergent view on the significance of death.

For Martin Heidegger, death is a meaningful part of man's life. Death is a way of life to man. Man lives his whole life towards death. Man's whole life is a progressive journey to death, for he begins to die the day he is born.¹² That is to say it is death that confers on the human existence its uniqueness and meaning.

Gabriel Marcel in his book "The philosophy of existence" argues that death terminate man's project on earth, death does not add any value to man's essence and existence.¹³ This implies that death takes everything from man.

Jean Paul Satre counters Heidegger saying "Death is a meaningless absurdity which removes all meaning from human existence". Death is never part of man's life; it has no place in man's life.

Camus who was influenced by the themes of existentialism which includes; Anguish, facility, death and absurdity of human existence states that all these render life opaque and pointless. Camus concurs with Jean Paul satre and Gabriel view on death as a meaningless absurdity that robs human existence of all its meaning. For him it creates fear, unhappy moment and anxiety in man's life.

The Concept of Absurdity and Death

The word absurd is derived from the Latin word "absurdus -a-um" meaning harsh sounding, silent, deaf marked by obvious lack of reason, common sense proportion.

Oxford English dictionary sixth edition defined “Absurd” as that which is completely illogical or ridiculous.

The new catholic encyclopedia defines absurd as:

A situation, a thing or an event that really is but which no explanation is possible because affair is inexplicable, it offends reason... Absurdity is a feeling that arises from the confrontation between man, who is looking for a unified explanation of all things and a world that has no basic meaning.¹⁴

However from the above definitions the word absurd means that which lacks human explanation.

In philosophy the absurd refers to the conflict between the human tendency to seek internal value and meaning in life. The concept absurd will be explained by some philosophers.

For Satre, the absurd is not something that exist in abstraction it exist in connection with human being. It implies that emptiness and nothingness emanates from the individual person.

For Camus, absurd arises out of the fundamental disharmony between the individual search for meaning and the meaningless of the universe.

The human life is absurd when the human cannot explain the rationale behind human labor and death. The world is not absurd rather what is absurd is man’s inability to give a coherent and object meaning to human existence.

Death is the cessation of life. Death as a natural phenomenon is inevitable that is to say death is inescapable, unavoidable and it is certain it must occur.

The existentialists have divergent view on the concept of death which I have pointed out in the influences of existentialism. Human beings is faced with the problem of not

knowing the meaning and purpose of existence, as well as not getting answer to the problems of existence is the real cause of absurd. The quest for the meaning of life and death is the cause of absurd.

The world or universe is not absurd. It is the human mind that is absurd due to inability to give explanation. Man's inability to find meaning to death makes death an absurdity.

The Futility of Human Labour

The word futility means the quality of being futile or useless. The futility of human labour becomes obvious when the person dies. For the fact that the human mind is not capable of giving objective and rational meaning to human existence makes Camus conclude that the human labour is futile. After man's labour to make ends meet, man is caught in an escapable mutuality of death. Despite the human struggle to give meaning to his existence, just for man to realize that life will come to an abrupt end one day. The question now is, what is the essence of human labour. Man will struggle from morning till night, he can even go a long way to enslaving his fellow man in an attempt to find meaning of life.

Secondly, the futility of human labour is experienced the moment the person dies and all the wealth of a deceased member family is shared between the family members. Death bequeath to the living all that the dead person poses. Such wealth may be squandered by the deceased family because it is an opportunity for them.

The fact remains that the reason for this futile search is for happiness. Camus concludes that it is in this quest for happiness that man enslaves himself in which this happiness will be gone.

IMPLICATIONS OF ALBERT CAMUS MORAL PHILOSOPHY FOR THE SOCIETY

The Influence of Camus Philosophy

The myth of Sisyphus and the Rebel developed the twin philosophical idea “The concept of absurdity and the notion of revolt.

Camus vocal point of opposition towards suicide and death penalty present Camus as a moralist, humanitarian, conscientious and almost visceral. Victor Hugo, a predecessor of Camus expressed his view on the issue of death penalty as an egregious barbarism. He describes it as an act of blood riot and vengeance covered over with a thin veneer of law and ability to make it acceptable to modern sensibility.

Camus concerns himself with the moral implication of death than life after death. Camus concurs with Gabriel Marcel and JeanPaul Satre concept of death. Death for them is a meaningless absurdity that removes all meaning from human existence. It is seen as that which terminates a man project on earth. It is on this note that Camus treats death as that which brings everything to its end.

Camus is a against the escapist’s concept of death. The escapists in Camusian view are those that believe in life after death or immortality of the soul. He believes that life should be lived to its fullness. He maintains that life is characterized by the absurd of man living his

life with the hope of tomorrow when tomorrow bring us closer to death. Camus condemns any intentional act (suicide and death penalty) that will lead to one's death or that of another. He says that death is a necessity that must be accepted with calmness. For him death is inevitable. That is to say that it is unavoidable, inescapable, it is such that must happen. How and when one dies does not matter.

Monsieur Meursault remarks in the stranger

“...well, then I'll will die sooner than the other people, obviously. But everybody knows that life isn't worth living. And when it came down to it, I wasn't aware of the fact that it doesn't matter very much whether you die at thirty or at seventy, since, in either case, other men and women will naturally go on living for thousands of years even”¹⁵.

This implies that the year one has to live does not matter because we must all die. Camus maintains that if death is inevitable there is no reason why death should be used as a punitive measure for criminals. One major thing Camus learned about his father was that his father became violently ill after witnessing a public execution. This actually inspired him to develop that strong opposition to capital punishment. Camus started with a lifelong opposition to death penalty. Camus opines that there is no moral justification for suicide and death penalty.

In one of his dramatic play “The Caligula and other plays”. The play Caligula explicating shows the tyranny of a power. Caligula wants a scenario where he can easily execute all his subjects, the only avenue of achieving it is to reduce all his subjects to crime. As a result of this he decided to reduce all his subjects to criminals so he can execute them at any slightest provocation. He terms all his subject provocation. He terms all his subjects as criminals. He says “I want all my criminals: Bring in the condemn men. I must have my public judges, witness, and accused all sentenced to death without a hearing”¹⁶.

This type of evil is what Camus says has to be curbed out from the society.

Section three of Caligula's monograph on execution reads thus:

“Execution relieves and liberates. It is universal tonic, just in precept and in practice. A man dies because he is guilty a man is guilty because he is one of Caligula's subjects. Now all men is Caligula's subject. Ergo all men are guilty and shall die, it is only a matter of time and patience”¹⁷.

The play depicts injustice in the stipulated law because these laws are made to please the leaders. It is made to suit them. This is what Camus describes as irrational and inhuman act. It has to be stopped and removed from our society. The death and crucifixion of Jesus Christ is a typical example of such an injustice.

Camus was always comfortable when described as a journalist, playwright, Novelist, philosophical essayist. Camus philosophy led to the philosophy known as Absurdism. Absurdism means that which lacks human explanation.

He maintains that the human existence as well as death is an absurdity. Just as expressed in previous paragraphs were Caligula's subjects are all termed criminal just to execute them. The reason or rationale behind this is what we can't explain. This makes it an absurdity. Monsieur's life was also used to explain what Camus means by absurdity. Monsieur Meursault did not weep at his mother's funeral or feel guilt for keeping her in the Age person home. He was more disturbed about his two days leave than his mother's death. He never showed remorse or any sign of grief about the death of his mother. He was convinced with his actions he never cared what the society says.

The society where we find ourselves develops a pattern of behaviors for any given moments in our level. The societal pattern of behavior for death is to mourn, cry and express that grief (people are expected to express this feelings). So anyone who refuses to conform to the societal norms and expectation will be condemned. It is on this ground that Monsieur

was condemned on the account of his refusal to conform to societal norms and expectations. However Monsieur could have lied about his feelings. This is the Absurdity that hovers around human existence. Even the death which he is condemned to is absurd. It has removed meaning from his existence. Monsieur's labour is in vain (futile).

Camus says that the realization of the absurd does not require suicide. He outlines several approaches to the absurd life which includes constant confrontation and constant revolt. Camus says we should confront them without fear. According to him, the human existence is absurd since all human labour (efforts) ends in death. He went further to say that human existence, life and death is meaningless that is the origin of absurd because we can't explain it.

From all the analogy of the dramatic Caligula, Monsieur Meursault and Sisyphus, Camus concludes that death is a meaningless absurdity as well human existence.

The influence of his moral philosophy to me is that we should ensure we leave a long lasting legacy which the living will use to remember us after our death.

A significant influence of Camus philosophy to the society is that it opened our minds to facing life challenges. It tells us that challenges and controversies is a must. We must confront it without fear. The realization of this life challenges, shortcoming, vicissitude and problems is the origin of absurd in our existence. Camus says constant confrontation will help rather than suicide.

A cursory look at how people die in our immediate environment is clear indication of what Camus describes as a meaningless absurdity. It terminates a man's project on earth.

Another area of influence of Albert Camus' philosophy is on the issue of capital punishment, suicide, human right and justice. Camus frowns at capital punishment, suicide

and injustice in the society. Camus says that there are other means of making a criminal pay for his crime other than death penalty. Even this death penalty does not prevent people from committing crime. Since death is inevitable, there is no need for death to be used as a punitive measure for criminals.

The Moral Implication of Suicide and Absurdity

Suicide is an act of cowardice. I strongly believe that there is no moral ground for suicide. There is no reason to justify it. Suicide means self killing, self murder and self assassination. Suicide does not solve the problem of absurdity. Suicide is the suppression of the problem of absurdity. That is to say that when the difficulties and problems of life surpass the human minds such minds resort to suicide.

Despite the problems, difficulties and challenges of life which is the origin of absurdity. Man should confront them constantly without fear.

Suicide is an admission of our inability to face the absurd. To subscribe to suicide is to go against the core essential element of dignity and value which Camus says are necessarily included in the human existence. The issue of suicide is a delicate one that people should focus on knowing why it is been committed. To solve the problem of why, we have to dig deep down the heart. People should learn how to observe one another, so as to know the challenges or difficulties facing the person. This will help in retracing their thought. For Camus, there is no sufficient reason for suicide. He holds that: "Dying, voluntarily implies that you have recognized even instinctively, the ridiculous character of the habits, the absence of any profound reason for living the insane character of that daily agitation and the uselessness of suffering"¹⁸. Suicide is a negative way of responding to the absurdities of the (difficulties, challenges and problems) Sisyphus was condemn to a futile task of pushing a builder up the mountain top. He accepted it. He faced the task with joy. Despite the

difficulties and problems, incurable sickness, social and economic problem, suicide is not an alternative. Suicide is a sign of weakness.

In the play “Misunderstanding” Martha and the mother opted for suicide when they saw no reason to live after killing their only brother and son respectively. From this analysis, we deduce that it is frustration that necessitates suicide.

In the case of man that committed suicide in the Myth of Sisyphus, Camus says that the said man lost his daughter five years ago. Since then he begins to nurture the ideas. This is a clear indication of suicide.

In the play Caligula, the misunderstanding, Camus described suicide as a act of frustrated murderers. Caligula, Martha and her mother choose suicide as the only option. Choosing suicide as the only option means denying oneself the freedom to choose again. Camus frowns at suicide whether voluntary or compulsive. It is voluntary when one chooses to commit it. It is compulsive when the society forces one to commit it as a result of one's crime.

Moral Implication of Capital Punishment

Camus is said to have watched his father become violently ill after witnessing the public execution. The implication of that experience was that Camus developed a long age opposition because to him it is irrational and inhuman. Initially Lucien Camus (Camus father) supported it, but after watching it, he was eventually left with shock for the rest of his life. That same implication is applicable to anybody. To some persons, it was presented as a ceremonial ritual while to him it is absurd. At the mentioning of it, Camus became opposed to death penalty. Camus believes that the human existence necessarily includes the core essential value of dignity and value. The value includes: individual right, free choice,

authenticity, personal responsibility and self determination. This capital punishment of death penalty does not give the person an opportunity for amending his or her ways. It is not effective as claimed.

Victor Hugo, Camus predecessor on the issue view death penalty as vengeance covered over with a thin veneer of law.

Camus believed that capital punishment will be completely abolished at some point in time to come. In Europe death penalty was abolished. Camus did not live to see that day, but there is no doubt he would be grateful and gratified to know that the abolition of capital punishment is now an essential pre-requisite for membership in the European union. The parents of victims confirm the legal procedure leading to death penalty as traumatizing. They also conclude that such act can be disrespectful, demoralizing and dehumanizing. Camus lamenting about the ills of guillotine, Camus says! "I could see that what was wrong with guillotine was that you had no chance at all absolutely, none. It had been decided once and for all that the patient would die".¹⁹

Socrates was condemned to death for atheism and instilling in the minds of the youth the spirit of criticism. Socrates was brought to trial and accused of atheism and corrupting the youth. Socrates did not change his mind even when his friend tried to make a way for him to escape. He refused.

Monsieur when condemned to death for not conforming to societal norm and expectation. He consoled himself when he said: "others too would be condemned one day. He too would be condemned. What did, it matter if he was accused of murder and then executed for not crying at his mother's funeral"²⁰

From Socrates and Monsieur experience, you can see that death will help people who are looking for a means of committing suicide. They believe that both the condemned and those that condemned him share the same fate.

Death as an Inevitable Phenomenon

Death is the cessation of life. It is inevitable in the sense that all men must face it. It is unavoidable and inescapable. It is a must, that it is certain.

In Camus book “The stranger” Monsieur Meursault is convinced that both those that condemned him and himself will share the same fate. The priest affirms it when he told him “If you don’t die now, you will die later”.²¹

This explains its inevitability. The inevitability of death poses a great threat to human life. Death cannot be separated from life. It is part and part of human existence that awaits every person. The fact that death is inevitable, people should endeavor to live their lives without fear rather they should live their life knowing that one day it must happen. Death has no respect for age, color or one’s race.

Escapism

Camus frowned at escapism. Escapism is the believe of life after death. Camus is against the notion of life after death. Camus sees death as the finality of life. So he believes that life should be lived to its fullness. He says: “Oh my soul, seek not after immortal life, but exhaust the fullness of the present”.²² Death should not be a threat to our happiness nor should life after death be our hope.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

This work begins with an introduction. After the introduction, Albert Camus works was reviewed so as to see how Camus explicitly and implicitly treated suicide, Absurdity and death. The essay revolves around Albert Camus moral philosophy which contributed to the rise of the philosophy of absurdism. Absurdism means the lack of human explanation that is the inability of the human mind (rational) being unable to understand the unintelligible world.

The vocal opposition of Camus started after his father became violently ill after he experienced the execution by the guillotine. This marked the beginning of his strong opposition towards death penalty.

Camus frowns at death penalty. In His book “The stranger” Monsieur was condemned to death for not conforming to public/societal norms. Camus believes that death penalty is irrational. He outlines revolt to death penalty. It is clear that Camus in a way is nursing a revolt to the societal norms. Revolting to social norms will attract penalty as it happened to Monsieur. In the Myth of Sisyphus, a man is said to have committed suicide looking at it, we get to understand that the man lost his daughter five years ago. Since then he has been nurturing the idea. From this we see frustration as that which necessitated the suicide (self-murder). Camus frowns at suicide. Suicide for him is a negative way of responding to the absurdity. It shows our inability and incapacity to face absurdities (difficulties challenges, problems). Such is not good for a healthy society.

Camus advocates that we accept the absurdities with calmness just like the Sisyphus who was condemn to a futile task of pushing a builder up to a mountain top. Sisyphus accepted it with all serenity. That makes him authentic being.

It is obvious that death is a meaningless absurdity as Camus conceived it. It renders the human existence meaningless. Knowing to well it is an inevitable phenomena that await all mankind, why do we subscribe to suicide (self-killing, self-murder and self assassination)

and death penalty. Death is inevitable, so why use death as a punitive measure for criminals when both the offender and execution share the same fate. Death is no respecter of any social status. The implication of Camus moral philosophy to the society is that absurdity makes up the human existence but we should not resort to suicide rather we should constantly confront the absurdity.

On the issue of death penalty, the society should shun such irrational act. It does not solve the problem, it is ineffective in correcting a criminal or an offender, rather the person should be allowed to live and face his punishments.

When suicide is erased from the heart of many men by letting them know that they have to confront every absurd that life present before us, it will help us increase that self interest to live long, the natural inclination to preserve life and the will of God.

Conclusion

We have to conclude that death is inevitable. We can't escape it. It is certain to happen. We are all caught in an inescapable mutuality of death. Death is no respecter of any status. Death is a natural phenomenon that man must subscribe. Given this fact, we should not inflict death either voluntarily or compulsively. We should live life to its fullness and leave a lasting legacy that the living will have of us we are no more. From the foregoing of our discussion, we can deduce that Albert Camus as an excellent moralist in his philosophies abhors suicide whether voluntary or compulsive and also detest death penalty. He preaches against it in the society. In my own standpoint on the issue of suicide (voluntarily or compulsive) I will strongly and boldly say that suicide is a bad act in our society, however some inevitable conditions permit it.

Having known that suicide is self killing or self murder, it is important to note that in a case where a person sees taken his or her own life as a prerequisite to protect and prevent harm to another is what I see as a justifiable reason for such act of suicide. A typical example is seen in a case where a soldier who is out on a mission to ensure peace, and orderliness is abducted knowing fully well that if he is brought before the camera in a torture room to disclose a fact against his country which he has sworn by oath of allegiance to protect and defend his country would be forced to talk by an irresistible fortune. Such a soldier would not want to disclose the confidential information about his country. On that ground he will strictly adhere to the rules and regulation guiding him which is against a soldier disclosing confidential information or data. So he has to take his life so as to keep the top secret of his country; stand by the oath of allegiance he took with his life. Perhaps the objection one may raise against my humbly position would be; why would he take his life, when he can make effort to escape? My position here is, judging the fact that he was abducted in line of duty amidst his colleagues, he has made effort to, however he was kept safely because they know as a soldier he would make all necessary effort to escape. After all his efforts he has no other choice at this point than to keep to the oath of allegiance with his life to protect his country.

In conclusion we would say the act (suicide) is permissible when there is no other freedom of choice within our own individual right. I strongly believe when the intent of the act is seen from the above inevitable condition, suicide will be seen as that which should be done when we have no freedom to make any other choice rather than to save a whole lot of people.

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