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PROMETHEUS OR CAIN? ALBERT CAMUS'S ACCOUNT OF THE WESTERN QUEST FOR JUSTICE

Bruce K. Ward

"O universal benefactor of mankind,
Ill-starred Prometheus, why are you thus crucified?"

—Aeschylus, "*Prometheus Bound*"

This article is concerned with Albert Camus's analysis of the religious-philosophical dimension of the crisis engendered in modern western civilization by the "deadly ideologies" of the twentieth century. Its chief purpose is to trace the process whereby Camus's attempt to address a contemporary question led him into the presence of an ancient problem in the philosophy of religion—the problem of theodicy.

The article focuses, first, on the analysis offered by Camus in his major philosophical work, *The Rebel*, of the contradiction apparent in the modern western project between the original demand for justice on earth and the later practice of injustice, a contradiction he thought was most acutely illustrated in Marxism. Through his examination of the atheist humanism of Marx, Camus concluded that the demand for justice ends in the nihilistic practice of injustice unless it is based on a notion of moral limit. He explored the possibility of discovering such a moral basis in the western religious tradition.

The negative assessment of the Jewish-Christian notion of justice offered by Camus was a reflection, above all, of his critique of the biblical theodicy. This critique is the second, and central, focus of the article. On the basis of this critique, he concluded that biblical religion, far from being an antidote to the modern crisis, might very well be at least indirectly responsible for it. This led him to assert that "if in order to go beyond nihilism, we have to go back to Christianity, then we may very well follow the movement and go beyond Christianity into Hellenism."

The article ends with some critical comments concerning the viability of Camus's attempt to find in the religious vision of Athens that counterweight to modern nihilism which he did not find in Jerusalem.

In our century of war, terror and tyranny, the sense of a crisis in western civilization has now become widespread. Yet this consensus concerning the existence of a fundamental crisis in modern life does not entail agreement



concerning its nature and origins. Among those interpretations of modernity which understand the problem as in essence moral, one of the most noteworthy is that of Albert Camus.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the fame which belonged to Camus throughout his career and immediately after his death, the full import of his thought has not been well understood. As a writer who was also a celebrity, he early found himself burdened with labels—such as “philosopher of the absurd” or “existentialist”—which tended to color most subsequent interpretation of his work. The assessment of his thought has been further prejudiced by the notion (propagated largely by those who sided with Jean-Paul Sartre in their well-known controversy) that Camus, while an accomplished artist, was merely an amateur as a philosopher. It is true that Camus did not claim to be a philosopher and, furthermore, expressed his distaste for philosophical “systems.” Yet this does not preclude philosophical seriousness as it was originally embodied in the West in Socrates, who understood philosophy as a questioning openness to the whole rather than adherence to a “system,” and whom Camus seems to have taken as a model for his own enterprise.¹ Camus’s thought, like that of Socrates, arose out of his encounter with the concrete moral questions which pressed immediately upon him and his contemporaries. Camus thought that the practice of “courage” and “lucidity,” which he admired as virtues, required him to face the moral crisis of our age without recourse to consolatory philosophical or religious “systems.” This lack of identification with any particular system of thought is responsible in part for the wide appeal of his work, but also for the frustration which can be engendered by its apparent ambiguity and inconclusiveness. Camus’s thought does not constitute a “finished” whole, and not only because of his untimely death; for his analysis of modernity brought him into the presence of those perennial questions which lie, unresolved, at the foundations of western civilization. Camus’s thought exhibits in an especially compelling way the manner in which the crisis of our particular time and place raises inevitably the ancient—or rather, ageless—questions. I intend in what follows to examine the movement in Camus’s thought toward these questions, and then to comment on his treatment of them.

I

In the introduction to his major philosophical work, *L'Homme révolté* (*The Rebel*), Camus stated that the book represented “an attempt to understand the times in which we live.”² For him, writing in the immediate aftermath of the second world war, the paramount fact of our epoch was that over a period of fifty years some seventy million human beings had been uprooted, enslaved, or killed. Yet simple condemnation of the atrocities of our age is insufficient, for this assault on humanity does not represent a “crime” in the sense familiar

to human history. It justifies itself by "philosophy," and thereby "dons the apparel of innocence."³ For Camus, the twentieth century was, above all, the age of deadly ideologies. In his effort not merely to condemn but to understand the "culpability" of our age, Camus undertook in *L'Homme révolté* a critical analysis of the ideologies of both the left and the right. Although his own nation had just emerged a few years earlier from the Nazi occupation and he himself had participated actively in the resistance movement (most notably as editor of the underground newspaper, *Combat*), the weight of Camus's analysis of the modern crisis fell most heavily on the progressivist humanism of the left, and especially on communism. Camus focussed greater attention on communism than on fascism because, in his view, the former was ultimately more significant for the future of modern civilization. Although he recognized that Hitler made use of Nietzsche, and Mussolini of Hegel, he regarded the terror of fascism as basically "irrational," less theoretically articulate and therefore less historically effective, "a primitive impulse whose ravages have been greater than its real ambition."⁴

The ambition inspiring communism rendered it ultimately more "serious" for Camus than its fascist rival, even if it had not won such a decisive military victory in the second world war. This ambition is universal in scope, for, however corrupted it has become in practice, it has its acknowledged theoretical source in the desire for the realization of justice on earth. Although the communist ideology has in the twentieth century come to dominance in the East, it is clearly the offspring of the quest for justice which has been so central to the modern western project. And it illustrates in a particularly acute manner the strange and deadly itinerary of that project, from the original demand for justice to the eventual practice of organized injustice on a massive scale. To understand the "culpability" of our age is to understand that itinerary. The need for such an understanding was particularly acute for Camus because the active struggle for justice which caught him up during the war seems to have shown him a way out of the Sisyphian impasse of his earlier "absurdist" reasoning. The discovery of the love of justice within himself and others signified for him a refutation, given in direct experience, of moral relativism or the ethics of "equivalence"—the only ethics which can arise from the absurd confrontation of the human demand for meaning with the indifferent silence of the universe. The experience of the categorical claim of justice perhaps breaks that silence: "it is the first piece of evidence." Camus's meditation on the problem of justice is therefore a critique of modern civilization which is, at the same time, an attempt to articulate with greater clarity the intimation accorded him of a permanent good which might render human life meaningful.⁵

Soviet communism claims to derive its notion of justice chiefly from the thought of Karl Marx. It is to Marx's thought, therefore, that Camus devotes

the greater part of his analysis in *L'Homme révolté* of the modern contradiction between the original demand for justice and the later practice of injustice. The term "betrayal" is often used to explain this contrast: for instance, the Stalinist betrayal of the purer Marxism of Lenin and Trotsky; or, on a broader scale, the betrayal of Marxism by the predisposition towards Oriental despotism inherent in the Russian tradition. There is much to be said for this notion of a betrayal, and Camus ranks Marx with Nietzsche as unique in the history of western thought in the degree to which he has suffered from those who call themselves his followers.⁶ But there is also such a thing as self-betrayal. It is this more significant possibility which leads Camus to address to Marx himself the question: how is it that the modern demand for justice ends in injustice?

As early as his doctoral dissertation of 1841, Marx invoked the name of Prometheus, the titan of ancient Greek myth who defied Zeus by bringing the gift of fire to humanity. This invocation of the archetypal rebel who defied the established order of things because of the strength of his desire to bring justice to humanity cannot be dismissed as a mere pose on Marx's part; his anguished indignation at the poverty and degradation he observed around him in the Europe of the Industrial Revolution is palpable even in a highly technical writing such as *Capital*. So far as Camus is concerned, Marx, more than any other modern thinker, gave a bad conscience to a civilization which deserved, and deserves, to have a bad conscience.⁷ Marx's socialism, then, had its starting-point in a profound sensitivity to evil and suffering which, however, rejected the traditional religious answer to the problem. According to Camus, Marx's passionate indictment of modern injustice was to become historically influential when it turned for support to two doctrines which already enjoyed enormous prestige in the bourgeois consciousness of the nineteenth century: the doctrines of scientism and of historical progress.

The prestige of science was so great in the nineteenth century that it was widely assumed that, if properly applied, the scientific method could lead to the solution of the whole range of human problems. Marx shared this reverence for science; his "scientific" socialism was the outcome of an attempt to apply the methods and assumptions of physics, mechanics, and biology to the study of society in an effort to discover the necessary laws which determine social relations.⁸ Camus's analysis focuses on one aspect in particular of Marxian social science—the theory of "mystification"—which Marx formulated concisely in the well-known statement of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*: "The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class."⁹

According to Marx's theory, the intellectual atmosphere of a particular society is constituted by a mixture of ideas which reflects the amount of power possessed by the various groups within the society. A society ruled by

a military, landed, commercial, or industrial class will be permeated by the world-view reflecting the needs and inclinations of that class, and this world-view will express itself in the politics, the laws, the morality, the religion, and even the art of a society. Moreover (and this is where the notion of "mystification" takes on force), the people who are bound by this world-view will for the most part not realize it. They will think that their ideas of justice, goodness, or beauty reflect the universal nature of things rather than the interests of a particular ruling class. Marx was unsparing in his exposure of the "mystification" at work in modern capitalist liberalism; in Camus's words, "his most fruitful undertaking has been to reveal the reality that is hidden behind the formal values of which the bourgeois of his time made a great show."¹⁰ The liberal ideology of "freedom," "equality," and "justice" merely camouflages the actual credo of capitalism: "He who has nothing is nothing." What was true for the modern western liberal democracies was, according to Marx, true for all societies. There has been much talk of justice throughout human history, but there has been no justice in actuality. In actuality there has been nothing but the more or less veiled exploitation of human beings by other human beings.

According to Camus, the "ethical demand which is at the source of the Marxist dream," wherein lies "the true greatness of Marx," would not permit him to resign himself to the absence of justice on earth.¹¹ He was therefore led to embrace a false hope. This hope was contained in the doctrine of "historical materialism," Marx's variant of the bourgeois liberal doctrine of historical progress. The doctrine of historical materialism attempted to salvage the socialist vision of justice on earth, without denying the scientific theory of mystification, by asserting that although justice has never existed in the past and does not exist in the present, it will inevitably be realized in the future.

Although Marx's historical materialism echoes the "bourgeois myth" of progress, it is more sophisticated philosophically. It owes what philosophical depth it possesses to its origins in Hegel, whose thought, according to Camus, has perhaps been most decisive in its bearing on the history of our time. Camus does not accept entirely the left-Hegelian interpretation of Hegel, but he does locate Hegel's chief significance in his "definitive destruction of all vertical transcendence, and especially the transcendence of principles."¹² Marx's attack on formal justice was the direct heir of Hegel's criticism in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* of the "good conscience"; while the attempt, in the doctrine of historical materialism, to assert nevertheless the future realization of the principles of justice had its basis in Hegel's philosophy of history. Appropriating Hegel's dialectical explanation of change, but in accord with his own materialist assumption of the economic *primum vivere*, Marx proposed that historical change is the product of the collision between

new productive forces and an outmoded social organization, which is actually a collision between classes, between an established class deriving its power from the former mode of production and a potentially dominant class deriving its power from the newly emergent mode of production. Each major historical change, according to Marx, has entailed the progressive enhancement of the productive forces at the disposal of humanity. Motivated by its insatiable passion for accumulation, capitalism in particular has developed such colossal productive forces that the elimination of scarcity, and hence the possibility of a society of abundance, is now within humanity's grasp. This possibility would be made actual thanks to another consequence of capitalism—the emergence of the “proletariat.” The proletariat, in Camus's word, a sort of “human Christ,” reduced by the relentless pressure of capitalist competition to the extreme limit of degradation and dehumanization, would represent not the particular interests of a particular class, but the interests of exploited humanity in general.¹³ Once it attained a position of dominance its concern would not be to take the place of its exploiters, but to put an end to exploitation itself. In Marx's doctrine of historical materialism, then, history becomes a kind of mechanism for the automatic production of justice on earth.

For Camus it is clear that the central tenets of Marxist doctrine, particularly the economic analysis and predictions, have already been “at least called into question by reality.”¹⁴ He is chiefly concerned, however, with the manner in which the very ethical demand that constitutes the “true greatness” of Marx has been called into question by Marxism itself. According to Camus, the theories of mystification and historical materialism, taken together, demonstrate that there is at present no true standard of justice or morality by which human actions can be judged. Since the only valid standard of justice exists in the future, there is only one practicable criterion by which a given regime, law, or action can be measured: does it hasten or delay the advent of the future? For Marx, it would seem that no present human action, personal or collective, can be judged as good or evil, but “only either premature or out of date.” This stance can easily lend itself to the justification of the most servile worship of historical success, and that implies the worship of sheer force. There is in Marx's thought no clear conception of a limit to what human beings can do—to themselves, to others, and to the world around them—in order to bring the future closer. Without this limit, in Camus's words, “crime also can one day become a duty.” While Marx himself maintained that an end which requires unjust means is not a just end, his twentieth-century followers were to prove less scrupulous.¹⁵ Camus's outline of the subsequent historical realization of Marx's doctrines culminates in the show trials and concentration camps of the Stalinist empire: “Here ends Prometheus's surprising itinerary...he is no longer Prometheus, he is Caesar. The true, the

eternal Prometheus has now assumed the aspect of one of his victims. The same cry, springing from the depths of the ages, reverberates still through the Scythian desert."¹⁶

The "true greatness" of Marx lies in his demand for justice; the tragedy of Marx begins when the very strength of this demand leads him to attempt to satisfy it, not merely in a dream but in actuality, by means of the doctrine of historical materialism. Must, then, Prometheus inevitably become Caesar when he strives to actualize his desire for justice? Camus certainly did not intend his analysis to call into question the desire for justice, for this would be tantamount to condoning an indifference to injustice in an era which cannot afford such indifference. Furthermore, it is precisely in the desire for justice that Camus himself discovers the intimation of a permanent meaning or "value" in human life. Though doubtless vague, this sense of the inviolable in human beings, aroused through the endurance or the contemplation of injustice, might be one of the rare touchstones of meaning available to people in an era when "eternal values...temporarily perhaps, are absent or distorted...."¹⁷ What Camus advocates is a demand for justice which seeks satisfaction without denying that permanent "value" in human beings revealed in the demand itself. The lesson Camus wishes to draw from his analysis of Marxism is that "the demand for justice ends in injustice if it is not primarily based on an ethical justification of justice."¹⁸

The need for an "ethical justification of justice" is equivalent, for Camus, to the need for a clear idea of an inviolable limit to what human beings can do to other human beings in the name of justice or any other principle. The absence of a clear idea of moral limit—or "nihilism," to use the term applied by Camus—characterizes not only Marxism, but modern technological civilization itself, "on which capitalism and socialism are equally dependent."¹⁹ Camus argues that a categorical limit to what human beings can do to other human beings presupposes that there is such a thing as a "human nature" which transcends the historical process, and cannot therefore be sacrificed to the requirements of history-making. Yet the affirmation of a permanent human nature runs counter to the central current of thought which has inspired and justified modern technological civilization:

We see that the affirmation implicit in every act of rebellion is extended to something that transcends the individual insofar as it withdraws him from his supposed solitude and provides him with a reason to act. But it is already worth noting that this value which pre-exists all action contradicts the purely historical philosophies, in which value is acquired (if it is acquired) after the action has been completed. Analysis of rebellion leads at least to the suspicion that there is a human nature, as the Greeks thought, and contrary to the postulates of contemporary thought.²⁰

Camus's analysis of Marxism is but one aspect of an attempt to expose the

nihilistic “secret” of the modern western project itself. Those who criticized *L'Homme révolté* for failing to offer a clearer political program, or for lending support to one side or the other in the battle of modern ideologies, did not appreciate just how fundamental Camus's analysis of the modern western crisis was.²¹ Much of the ambiguity and inconclusiveness that doubtless characterizes this analysis stems from the attempt to speak of permanent values in an intellectual atmosphere which has virtually banished such discourse. Yet this inconclusiveness has its source also in Camus's inability to resolve that fundamental question which he himself expressed in his rough notebooks: “But if there is a human nature, where does it come from?”²²

Camus might have been able to articulate his idea of moral limit with greater clarity if, while distancing himself from modern historicism, he had been able at the same time to place himself within an alternative tradition of thought. There has been some speculation as to whether his movement away from the “postulates of contemporary thought” would finally have brought him to embrace Christianity, were it not for his untimely death. It is true that he always denied he was an atheist, even on one occasion indicating his agreement with Benjamin Constant that there is “something vulgar and...yes, worn out about being against religion.”²³ It is also true that he was more conciliatory towards Christianity than towards the secular ideologies of the twentieth century, whether of the left or the right. Moreover, his writings—from the thesis he wrote as a student of philosophy at the University of Algiers (entitled “*Métaphysique chrétienne et Néoplatonisme*”), to his last published novel, *La Chute (The Fall)*—evinced a persistent preoccupation with Christianity. Nevertheless, the fact is that when he died Camus was professedly not a Christian.²⁴ Furthermore, it is not Christ whom he invokes at the end of his analysis of the modern western crisis in *L'Homme révolté*, but Nemesis, the ancient Greek goddess. This invocation has its basis in a sustained reasoning about the nature of the western religious tradition which needs to receive more attention from interpreters of Camus's thought.

II

Camus's invocation of “the faithful land,” the land of Greek myth, in the final paragraph of *L'Homme révolté* reflects his doubt about the suitability of the Christian tradition as the source of the idea of limit required by the modern West. In his view, Christianity occupies an ambiguous place in the modern crisis, an ambiguity evident, for instance, in its relation to Marxism. His understanding of this relation could be expressed aptly by the mythical figure of Janus: Christianity and Marxism look in opposite directions while one heart beats within them. The “striking” unity of the Christian and Marxist worlds, in contrast to the ancient Greek world, is most evident for Camus in their view of history. Marx's doctrine of historical materialism might have

its proximate source in that modern philosophy of history which attains its apotheosis in Hegel, but the very assumption of the possibility of a “philosophy of history” is rooted ultimately in biblical messianism, which interprets the events of human life as a meaningful history unfolding “from a beginning toward a definite end, in the course of which man wins his salvation or merits his punishment.”²⁵ The hope of the modern humanist for the future universal and homogeneous state represents a secularization of the Christian hope for the kingdom of God. Indeed, the quest for justice on earth at the heart of the modern western project is, for Camus, the secularized offspring of the Gospel affirmation of justice: “Happy are those who hunger and thirst for justice: they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6).

Yet the ambiguous relation between Christianity and modernity does not in itself demonstrate the inadequacy of Christianity as an antidote to the western crisis. It could be argued that the very “complicity” of Christianity in the modern project could render more palatable any limit it might offer to modern excess. Why, then, can Christianity not provide the “ethical justification” required by the modern quest for justice? Camus’s response to this question leads us to what is most significant in his account of the modern project as a secularization of the western religious tradition. According to him, this secularization is not to be finally understood as some sort of accidental derailment, but as an inevitable and justified human response to the biblical deity.

Camus understands modernity as “rebellion.” In *L’Homme révolté* he analyzes western rebellion under two categories, “historical” and “metaphysical.” It is this account of the relation between “historical” and “metaphysical” rebellion that perhaps constitutes what is most noteworthy in Camus’s analysis of modernity, although his distinction between the two aspects of rebellion is largely responsible for the structural problems from which *L’Homme révolté* suffers.²⁶ Despite these problems, the basic argument is clear enough: the modern quest for justice, expressed chiefly through the great historical rebellions of 1789, 1848, and 1917, has its primal source in a metaphysical motivation. The prodigious modern effort to bring heaven down to earth signifies above all a metaphysical rebellion—“metaphysical” because it is ultimately directed against God. For Camus, the metaphysical rebel *par excellence* is Dostoevsky’s Ivan Karamazov, who denies God in the name of the higher principle of justice. This represents the “essential undertaking of rebellion”—and hence of modernity—“which is that of replacing the reign of grace by the reign of justice.”²⁷

According to Camus, the struggle for the “reign of justice” has its metaphysical impulse in a protest against the injustice of the human condition itself. Just as the historical slave affirms through his rebellion that there is something in him which will not tolerate the way his master treats him, so

the metaphysical rebel affirms that there is something in him which is frustrated by the universe itself. At the core of the human being is the desire for life and, at the same time, for meaning. Indeed, for Camus, the insistence on a final meaning to life appears to be the central distinguishing feature of human nature.²⁸ Yet this demand for life and for meaning encounters death, evil, and suffering. It is this disproportion in the human condition between the desperate appeal for order and the apparently indifferent disorder of the universe which constitutes the matrix of metaphysical rebellion.

Although this sense of being "frustrated by creation" can perhaps be coeval with human beings everywhere and always, in the West it has inspired metaphysical rebellion because of the biblical concept of God as a "personal God who has created, and is therefore responsible for, everything."²⁹ That the presence of affliction in the world poses a particular problem for the biblical God, to whom goodness and omnipotence are simultaneously attributed, is eloquently attested to by the theodicies within the biblical literary tradition itself, beginning with the story of the Fall in Genesis. Camus maintains that a pre-eminent concern of the Bible, and of the theological tradition based on it, is to reconcile the justice of God with human affliction. Yet the attempt to explain and justify affliction, whether as retribution or as purification, seems always to falter in the face of an "implacable" deity. Indeed, the God of the Old Testament is a God who appears almost to provoke rebellion, as the Bible itself indicates in such stories as those of Cain or Job. In Camus's view, the theodicy of the Old Testament is less convincing than its depiction of the situation which renders it necessary: the tension between the human demand for justice and an arbitrary divinity who, for instance, favors without any explanation Abel's sacrifice over Cain's, thereby setting the stage for the first murder. This situation must give rise either to an obedient consent which renounces the demand for a justification, or to a rebellion which subjects God himself to judgment and finds him wanting. In placing this "either-or" so eloquently before humanity the Old Testament defines the possibility of metaphysical rebellion, if it does not actually inspire it. The history of metaphysical rebellion is thus inseparable from the history of biblical religion. The modern western project might invoke the name of Prometheus, but, according to Camus, it is far more closely associated with the name of Cain.³⁰

While the Old Testament defined the alternatives of consent or rebellion, it was the New Testament which ensured that the impulse to rebellion was not to become historically effective for centuries. Although, in Camus's view, indignant rebellion is to be found at the historical origin of Christianity, this attitude is in the end transformed into an obedient consent to God and God's creation more convincing in its completeness than Job's final capitulation. Within the context of the "metaphysical" situation portrayed in the Old Testament, Christianity can be regarded as an immensely effective attempt to

answer in advance all the potential Cains and Jobs among human beings by lessening the distance between God in heaven and suffering humanity on earth. The meaning of Christ, for Camus, is most clearly understood only in relation to the problems of evil and death, to which he becomes the solution:

His solution consisted, first, in experiencing them. The god-man suffers too, with patience. Evil and death can no longer be entirely imputed to him since he suffers and dies. The night on Golgotha is so important in the history of man only because, in its shadows, the divinity, ostensibly abandoning its traditional privileges, lived through to the end, despair included, the agony of death. Thus is explained the *Lama sabachthani* and the frightful doubt of Christ in agony.³¹

Christianity at its height does not evade the problem of human suffering by claiming that it is as nothing in comparison with the bliss of eternity, nor does it offer a supernatural cure for suffering; instead, it sanctifies suffering by endowing it with a spiritual meaning. Camus's discussion of the meaning of Christ as a "solution" to the problem of evil and death thus focuses on the crucified Christ rather than the resurrected Christ. It is the crucifixion which constitutes the supreme expression of biblical theodicy: "Each time a solitary cry of rebellion was uttered, the answer was given in the image of the greatest pain.... Only the most abject suffering by God could assuage the agony of men."³²

The softening of the "implacable" visage of God signified in the movement from the Old Testament to the New Testament is given an effective artistic depiction by Camus in *La Peste* (*The Plague*), the novel associated with *L'Homme révolté* in the "rebellion" cycle of his work.³³ The problem of theodicy becomes most acute when human beings are faced with the suffering resulting from a natural disaster or with the suffering of the innocent. Camus combines these two testimonies against the justice of God in the figure of a small boy stricken with the plague. The town priest, Father Paneloux, must bear the responsibility for justifying the ways of God to the inhabitants of Oran, which has been afflicted by a wholly unexpected outbreak of the disease almost everyone had assumed to be "obsolete" in the modern world. The theodicy offered by Paneloux is expressed in two separate sermons, between which occurs the graphic account of the child's death. In the first sermon a confident Paneloux assures the townspeople that their suffering is not merely the consequence of chance and natural necessity, but a meaningful expression of divine justice, signifying both a fearful retribution and a message of hope. The plague is a deserved retribution for a world which has too long "connived at evil" and, at the same time, it is an opportunity for a repentant return to God, and hence for redemption. The calamity, then, should be understood as both punishment and salvation, "wrath and pity," in the face of which the innocent need have no fear. The perspective from which Paneloux interprets

human suffering in this sermon is reflected in his exclusive reference to the Old Testament—to Cain and his offspring, Pharaoh and the Exodus from Egypt, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Job.³⁴

This perspective proves inadequate, however, to sustain Paneloux when confronted by the prolonged death-throes of an innocent child. The interpretation of suffering as deserved punishment falters in the face of innocence. It is a different Paneloux who climbs into the pulpit for his second sermon; he speaks in a “gentler, more thoughtful tone” and now says “we” rather than “you.” Paneloux has undergone the major spiritual crisis of his life, for the child’s death brought him in an agonizingly acute way to the full recognition of what is at stake in the “all or nothing” of rebellion or consent. Paneloux now realizes that consent to divine justice cannot be rendered easier for human beings by rationalizing explanations. He refuses to resort to the doctrine of original sin in order to cast doubt on the child’s innocence, nor will he assure himself and his listeners that the child’s sufferings will be more than compensated by the eternal happiness awaiting him. Echoing Ivan Karamazov, he asks: “...who can positively affirm that an eternity of joy could compensate for an instant of human suffering?” The renunciation of consolatory explanations brings the priest to the very edge of rebellion (as we have noted, Camus claims that the attitude of indignant rebellion was familiar to Christianity in its beginning). Paneloux nevertheless remains within the stance of consent, though in the full awareness that he is consenting to love what he cannot understand. While this love is a “hard love,” it alone “can reconcile us to suffering and the deaths of children, it alone can justify them, since we cannot understand them, and we can only make God’s will ours.” What supports Paneloux in his loving consent is the image of the “tortured body on the Cross” (the only biblical allusion in his second sermon).³⁵

It is clear from his portrayal of Paneloux’s spiritual crisis that Camus did not regard the Christian “solution” to the problem of suffering as cheaply bought. The Christian theodicy, in its highest expression, is a hard one which demands a great price; yet this renders it that much more effective. Consent achieved with such difficulty will not easily be shaken. The Christian theodicy, however, depends on the conviction that God himself has consented to endure what human beings must endure. When, in the early modern era, the divinity of Christ was called into question for the “enlightened” by scientific reason, the intercessor between heaven and earth became merely one more human victim. The gulf opened again between afflicted humanity and a God apparently indifferent to the plea for justice. This set the stage for the rebellion which would see humanity undertake the prodigious task of overcoming injustice through its own efforts, thereby replacing the “kingdom of grace” by the “kingdom of justice.”³⁶

Yet at the heart of both kingdoms Camus finds the same anguished preoc-

cupation with evil and suffering. In regard to this chief point he feels himself in profound sympathy with both modern atheist humanism and Christianity, for he himself could never, even in the presence of beauty, forget the humiliated.³⁷ He does not, however, accept what he takes to be their solutions to the problem—solutions which betray the same contradiction of a yearning for justice that ends in injustice.

Camus commends the refusal of Christianity, at its best, to succumb to that " *paresse du coeur*" characterized by Pascal: "Being unable to cure death, wretchedness and ignorance, men have decided, in order to be happy, not to think about such things."³⁸ Christianity *does* face the wretchedness present in the human condition; but this obstinate lucidity which might have led to rebellion resolves itself instead into consent. Camus does recognize that this consent is not a "yes" to evil and suffering, but to the divine order in which they are enfolded. This *amor fati* nonetheless ultimately implies the love of a "creation in which children are tortured."³⁹ The Christian "yes" therefore entails for Camus a certain acquiescence in evil, albeit passive and indirect. Indeed this acquiescence appears to be a necessary aspect of a religion having its historical basis in an act of injustice—the judicial murder of an innocent man—and the subsequent acceptance of this act as the will of God. Such an acceptance would perhaps have demanded too much of human beings; that it has been possible for most Christians is chiefly because the story does not end with the final cry of despair on the cross. The crucifixion is followed by the resurrection. God not only endures human affliction, thereby justifying it; he also overcomes it, thereby offering to human beings the hope of its final abolition. The hope for the final overcoming of injustice in the kingdom of God reinforces the Christian tendency towards at least a passive acquiescence in injustice here and now. Because Christians possess hope in a perfection transcending the present, their struggle against present suffering cannot be as complete as that of people who lack such hope. Paneloux, for instance, puts himself in the forefront of the struggle against the plague, but he does so in the somewhat absent or detached manner of the person whose heart is elsewhere. He dies a "doubtful case."⁴⁰

As his treatment of Paneloux indicates, Camus refused to indulge in that "lay pharisaism" of the modern secular intellectual who "pretends to believe that Christianity is an easy thing and demands of the Christian, in the name of a Christianity seen from the outside, more than he demands of himself." Believing that a doctrine must be judged by its heights rather than its depths, Camus acknowledged that the Christian faith is entirely compatible with a profound awareness of the injustice present in the human condition and, furthermore, does not preclude struggle against this injustice.⁴¹ It does, however, undermine the completeness with which Christians can commit themselves to this struggle. To the degree that the commitment to justice here and

now is thus rendered “doubtful,” Christianity ends in the acceptance of injustice.

We have seen how, according to Camus’s analysis, Marx’s rebellious “no” to God and to the divine order also ends in the acceptance of injustice. Both the consent of Christianity and the rebellion of atheist humanism arrive at this contradiction of their original impulse because they place their hope in a perfection which is not here or is not yet. In Camus’s words, both bring about “by the promise of absolute justice, perpetual injustice.... In both cases one must wait, and meanwhile the innocent continue to die.”⁴²

It would seem that the presence of a permanent moral value in human life, barely disclosed for Camus in the modern struggle for justice, is buried again beneath the weight of his critique of the biblical religious tradition. According to this critique, the murderous excess of the twentieth century is part of a total civilizational crisis. Preoccupied with the problem of evil, suffering and death—that is, with the fundamental injustice of the universe—the West has for two millennia defined the human response to this problem as “all or nothing”: the “all” of consent to the divine order, to the point of accepting a creation in which “children are tortured”; or the “nothing” of rebellion against the divine order, to the point of rejecting any limit in the effort to actualize the earthly “kingdom of justice.” The West has been caught as between Scylla and Charybdis, moving first into unlimited consent, then unlimited rebellion, and thereby through both movements perpetuating evil and suffering. Camus’s meditation on the western crisis appears to lead him into a *cul-de-sac*. Does it constitute the prelude to a philosophy of despair, in spite of his disavowal of any such intention?

L’Homme révolté concludes with an expression of hope for a “renaissance” of western civilization, though this expression is sober and tentative. In Camus’s view, it is possible still to hope because the “all or nothing” of consent or rebellion is not a fateful necessity for human beings. There is another possibility which signifies neither a “yes” nor a “no,” but a difficult tension between them. The rebel must acknowledge that there is an ultimate order, and therefore a limit to rebellion: “This order can be painful; but it is worse still not to recognize that it exists.”⁴³ Yet this acknowledgement must at the same time be balanced by an unhesitating recognition of the injustice of the evil and suffering present in the human condition. The “yes” and the “no” thus each find their limit in the other. According to Camus, if the concern with evil is not to lead to acquiescence in evil, it must be guided by this constantly maintained tension between rebellion and consent.⁴⁴

Is such a human stance viable, or is it merely a wishful thinking to which Camus is driven by the logic of his exposure of the “yes or no” at the heart of the western crisis? Camus’s response to this question is contained in his deliberate use of the word “renaissance.” He understands his “yes and no”

not as a new departure, but as the reaffirmation of a human attitude which was once actual in the West—in the civilization of ancient Greece. His invocation of Nemesis towards the end of *L'Homme révolté* is a call for the rediscovery of the idea of limit contained in the moderate wisdom of the Greeks. Indeed the West is today discovering the truth of Nemesis whether it wants to or not: "...the Greeks never said that the limit could not be crossed. They said it existed and that the person who dared ignore it was mercilessly struck down. Nothing in today's history can contradict them."⁴⁵

It is in ancient Greek tragedy particularly that Camus finds the model for his "yes *and* no." In Aeschylus's "Prometheus Bound" the protagonist, indignant at the suffering endured by weak and defenceless human beings, strives to alleviate their condition. Moved by his desire for justice, Prometheus enters into rebellion against Zeus, stealing fire from heaven to bring to suffering humanity on earth. But when his rebellion leads him to voice his hatred of the order of the cosmos itself, embodied in the gods, he is punished for overstepping the limit. The Prometheus invoked by Karl Marx in his doctoral dissertation of 1841 is the Prometheus who rejects the divine order itself: "Philosophy makes no secret of it. The proclamation of Prometheus— ...In a word, I detest all the gods—is her own profession...." Marx does not add that, in response to this unbalanced "no," Hermes declares that Prometheus has been stricken with "no small madness." Hermes evidently speaks here for Aeschylus; at the end of the play Prometheus is flung into the depths of Tartarus. The modern era has understood itself to be a Promethean era. Camus reminds us, however, that for the Greeks, although Prometheus was indeed right, Zeus also had right on his side.⁴⁶

According to Camus, if the modern West is to overcome the nihilism engendered by the absence of the idea of limit, it must attempt to revive the ancient Greek vision expressed, for instance, in Aeschylean tragedy. He is able to hope for a renaissance of the West because it is the child not only of Jerusalem, but also of Athens. As he wrote in his *Carnets (Notebooks)*: "If in order to go beyond nihilism, we have to go back to Christianity, then we may very well follow the movement and go beyond Christianity into Hellenism."⁴⁷

Concluding Comments

Camus, by his own admission, was not a "specialist" in philosophy, and still less in theology. His critiques of Marxism and of biblical religion doubtless contain errors of omission or emphasis. This may be particularly true of the latter critique which nowhere in his writings receives a systematic treatment. It could be argued, for instance, that the indignant rebellion he finds at the origin of Christianity was never entirely suppressed, and that its continuing presence was manifest in those rebellious movements of the Middle Ages or the Reformation era inspired by Christian teachings. It could be

pointed out, further, that the possibility of Christian rebellion has been attested to in our own century by the preaching of the "social gospel" or "liberation theology." Yet, whatever the problems of omission or emphasis which might be adduced, the central thrust of Camus's analysis of rebellion continues to pose a challenge to those in the modern world who place their hope for justice either in a progressivist secular humanism or in the biblical tradition. Above all, Camus's work demonstrates that a thoughtful concern with the times in which we live must bring us inevitably into the presence of the great religious questions at the source of western civilization. This, in my view, is the most significant feature of Camus's analysis of modernity. It is therefore on his treatment of these questions especially that attention needs to be focussed.

Camus's diagnosis of the modern western crisis, as well as his hope for a cure, is decisively informed by his distinction within the western religious tradition between what belongs to Athens and what belongs to Jerusalem. The transition from Hellenism to Christianity is, to quote from his *Carnets*, "the genuine and sole turning point in history."⁴⁸ This distinction between Hellenism and Christianity, so crucial for Camus's thought, entails at least two major problems which require some comment.

A

Although it had its origin in Hebrew soil, Christianity grew into a distinct religion in large part because it was willing and able to effect an accommodation between Greek thought and biblical revelation, an accommodation based on the assumption that what they have in common is more significant than what separates them. Camus attributed this achievement especially to that fellow North African, Augustine, whose theology was to shape so decisively the future course of theoretical Christianity in the West. Yet the attempt to reconcile Greek thought and biblical revelation has never been without its critics within the Christian tradition: the well-known protest of another North African, Tertullian—"What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"—anticipates Camus's own distinction between Prometheus and Cain. Though for a radically different purpose, Camus was in agreement with Tertullian's protest. Christianity represented for him an ultimately untenable compromise between two irreducibly opposed religious visions. Its history was to a large extent the story of its uneasy oscillation between these conflicting visions, with the prevailing movement being towards Jerusalem. While Camus employed various general terms to characterize this opposition, he most frequently referred to the antithesis between "nature" and "history," as, for instance, in the following passage in *L'Homme révolté*:

Christianity was obliged, in order to penetrate the Mediterranean world, to Hellenize itself, and its doctrine then became more flexible. But its originality

lay in introducing into the ancient world two ideas that had never before been associated: the idea of history and the idea of punishment. In its concept of mediation, Christianity is Greek. In its idea of historicity, Christianity is Judaic and will be found again in German ideology.... For Christians, as for Marxists, nature must be mastered. The Greeks are of the opinion that it is better to obey it. The love of the ancients for the cosmos was completely unknown to the first Christians, who, moreover, awaited with impatience an imminent end of the world.... The delicate equilibrium between humanity and nature, man's consent to the world, which elevates and makes resplendent all ancient thought, was first shattered for the benefit of history by Christianity.⁴⁹

To pose the primary question which arises from such a passage: was Camus correct in choosing to emphasize what separates the vision of Hellas from that of Israel, and in associating Christianity so closely with the latter?

The magnitude of this question is indicated by the fact that the tension between Tertullian's "*credo quia absurdum*" and Augustine's "*credo ut intelligam*" has never been definitively resolved even within Christianity itself. A final assessment of the "correctness" of Camus's stance would presuppose the settling of one of the most intractable issues in the history of western thought, an issue to which there is perhaps no final answer. This being admitted, however, it can fairly be asked of Camus whether his emphasis on what separates Athens and Jerusalem was based on a serious and knowledgeable consideration of the problem, or was merely a convenient assumption.

That Camus's interest in the problem of Athens and Jerusalem was both serious and sustained is easily established by a glance at his literary career. As a philosophy student of twenty-two at the University of Algiers, during a period of intensive reading of modern philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger, he nevertheless chose as the subject of his graduate thesis the relationship between Hellenism and Christianity, focussing on the role of neo-Platonism in the development of Christian theology; and, just a few years before his death, he confided to his notebook his intention to return to this beginning by devoting to the question of Hellenism and Christianity his next major philosophical essay, to be entitled *Némésis*.⁵⁰ This work, cut short by his early death, would actually have signified less a return to an earlier concern than a heightened focus on a question which had never ceased to preoccupy him, as the numerous allusions to both Hellenic civilization and Christianity throughout his entire body of work demonstrate. It is of course much easier to assess the depth of Camus's concern with the issue of Athens and Jerusalem than the quality of his knowledge in regard to the issue. The latter assessment would be a major undertaking in itself,⁵¹ so it must suffice here to state, in very general terms, that while Camus's knowledge of the appropriate sources was obviously not that of a classicist or an historian of religion, it was far from being scanty or superficial. Camus's knowledge was entirely adequate to his purpose, which was not to be a

diligent commentator on an ancient problem, but to find in this problem sustenance, support, and a context for his own effort to elucidate the crisis of modernity. It therefore seems most appropriate here to judge Camus's distinction between Athens and Jerusalem in the light of his own purposes.

B

This brings us to a second, closely related problem, which concerns the possibility of Camus's hoped-for renaissance of the West. This renaissance presupposes the discovery of an idea of limit; or rather, a recovery in modern circumstances of that ancient Greek vision expressed, for instance, in Aeschylean tragedy. How did Camus envisage this "recovery" of the truth of limit? His own avowed "sense of the sacred,"⁵² the vividness of which is especially palpable in his lyrical descriptions of Mediterranean landscapes, would seem to preclude satisfaction with a merely "ideal" or "mental" truth. Camus was seeking not just a theoretical imperative, but a truth capable of penetrating the whole being both of individuals and of society. He was acutely aware that an idea, however intrinsically true, is likely to remain ineffective or "dead" unless it can be embodied in the actual lives of individuals. It was questionable, even by Tertullian's time, whether the means for the living incarnation of the religious vision of ancient Greece still existed. The twentieth century is further removed from such a possibility, as even the memory of the ancient Greek mystery cults has been virtually extinguished. Even if the ancient vision were true, how could it be appropriated in a living manner by people here and now?

Camus's response to this question was, above all, to invoke the capacity of art for embodying higher truths. He clearly envisaged his own art as an endeavor to give modern form to that realm of Greek myth in which his heart felt so much at ease; and he saw especially in the resurgence among his contemporaries of a theater inspired by ancient tragedy some evidence that his aspiration was shared. This resurgence was, according to him, indicative of the potential of our age to give birth to great tragedy, for, like the Greece of Aeschylus and Sophocles, it is an age of transition in which an old system of meaning is coming to an end while a new one has yet to appear.⁵³ Yet Camus was aware that ancient tragedy came to life within an overtly religious framework and, furthermore, as we have seen, he defined tragedy as the conflict between human rebellion and a divine order. It remains unclear, then, how a genuine tragic form, comparable to that of the Greeks, could exist unless associated with an actual religious tradition. We are again faced with the question of how the ancient notion of limit can be appropriated concretely by modern people. In an interview given just after he had completed *L'Homme révolté*, Camus stated that he felt closer to the values of the ancient world than to those of Christianity, but he then conceded: "Unfortunately I cannot go to Delphi to have myself initiated!"⁵⁴ This appears to

be an admission that the Greek idea of limit, in isolation from Christianity, is not a living option for modern people. Camus's thought, then, becomes caught in this dilemma: can one reject Christianity without at the same time rejecting the one spiritual tradition of the West in which the Greek vision might still, to some extent, be incarnate?⁵⁵

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NOTES

1. See, for instance, Albert Camus, *Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 374-75 (*Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. by J. O'Brien [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974], 74). See also Camus's interview with "Servir," *Essais*, 1427. On the question of Camus's closeness to Socrates, see E. Barillier, "La création corrigée," *Albert Camus: oeuvre fermée, oeuvre ouverte?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 148-50. (Note: All translations from the original French are my own, or have been verified by me for accuracy; where references are available in English-language versions of Camus's work I cite them in parentheses immediately following the French citation.)

2. *Essais*, 413 (*The Rebel*, trans. by A. Bower [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956], 3).

3. *Essais*, 414 (*The Rebel*, 4).

4. *Essais*, 592 (*The Rebel*, 186).

5. *Essais*, 418-20, 424-26 (*The Rebel*, 9-11, 13-17).

6. *Essais*, 485 (*The Rebel*, 75).

7. *Essais*, 605 (*The Rebel*, 200-201).

8. *Essais*, 598, 612 (*The Rebel*, 193-94, 208).

9. D. McLellan (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 236.

10. *Essais*, 605 (*The Rebel*, 200).

11. *Essais*, 613 (*The Rebel*, 208).

12. *Essais*, 544, 550, 598 (*The Rebel*, 136, 142, 193-94).

13. *Essais*, 609-10 (*The Rebel*, 205-206).

14. See *Essais*, 616-24 (*The Rebel*, 212-20).

15. *Essais*, 613-14 (*The Rebel*, 209-10).

16. *Essais*, 647 (*The Rebel*, 244-45).

17. See Camus's preface to the English edition of *The Myth of Sisyphus* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955).

18. *Essais*, 614 (*The Rebel*, 209).

19. *Essais*, 621 (*The Rebel*, 216).

20. *Essais*, 425 (*The Rebel*, 16). See also Camus's "Remarque sur la révolte," *Essais*, 1682-97; this article, published in 1945, contains the substance of the first chapter of *L'Homme révolté*, but with more pronounced emphasis on the notions of "transcendence" and "value."

21. Camus's tentative movement towards the pre-modern philosophical tradition of the West, signalled by the concept of a "human nature" in *L'Homme révolté*, was assailed by much French criticism (especially of the Left) as an "essentialism" which was "inopportune" and "outmoded." It has only been some twenty-five years after the book's publication that its fundamental moral themes have begun to receive a more careful and dispassionate assessment. See, for examples of this more recent assessment, the articles by R. Gay-Crosier and E. Barilier in *Albert Camus: oeuvre fermée, oeuvre ouverte?*

22. Albert Camus, *Carnets II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 184 (*Notebooks II*, trans. by J. O'Brien [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965], 94).

23. Albert Camus, "Extraits d'interviews," *Théâtre, Récits, Nouvelles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 1881. Cited hereafter as *TRN*. (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*, ed. by P. Thody and trans. by E. C. Kennedy [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969], 320).

24. See H. R. Lottman, *Albert Camus* (New York: George Braziller, 1980), 615.

25. *Essais*, 594 (*The Rebel*, 189).

26. Camus has been criticized for failing to clarify sufficiently the boundaries of each aspect of rebellion and the relationship between them. Certainly the tendency of "*L'Homme révolté*" to belabor the argument, and even to be repetitive in places, stems principally from this structural problem of a distinction which could have been more carefully defined (one wonders, for instance, why Hegel's thought is treated under "historical" rather than "metaphysical" rebellion). It is worth noting that although Camus himself appears not to have been satisfied with the execution of his idea in *L'Homme révolté*, he was to maintain, nevertheless, that it was his "most important book" (*Essais*, 1629).

27. *Essais*, 465 (*The Rebel*, 56).

28. See *Essais*, 241 (*Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, 28).

29. *Essais*, 435, 440 (*The Rebel*, 23, 28).

30. *Essais*, 443, 445 (*The Rebel*, 32-33).

31. *Essais*, 444 (*The Rebel*, 32). The original French text reads "god-man," not "man-god" as A. Bower mistranslates it in his English-language version. The distinction is significant for Camus's meaning in this passage.

32. *Essais*, 445 (*The Rebel*, 34).

33. Camus envisaged his work as a series of "cycles," each associated with a Greek myth: "I. The Myth of Sisyphus (absurd).—II. The Myth of Prometheus (rebellion).—III. The myth of Nemesis." Albert Camus, *Carnets II*, 328 (*Notebooks II*, 168).

34. For Paneloux's first sermon, see *TRN*, 1294-1300 (*The Plague*, trans. by S. Gilbert [Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1960], Part 2, Chapter 3).

35. For Paneloux's second sermon, see *TRN*, 1399-1406 (*The Plague*, Part 2, Chapter 4). Camus was aware that, from the Christian perspective, the "either-or" of rebellion or consent is not simply a matter of an unconditioned human choice, a "leap" rooted in the human will alone. For his reference to the notion of "grace," see *TRN*, 1397 (*The Plague*, 178). An interesting commentary on the two sermons, which emphasizes the "thematic echoes" of Augustinian theology in the first, is found in P. Archambault, *Camus' Hellenic Sources* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 155-63.

36. *Essais*, 445 (*The Rebel*, 34).

37. *Essais*, 875 (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 169-70).
38. *Essais*, 1309. See Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. by A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1966), 66.
39. *TRN*, 1397 (*The Plague*, 178).
40. *TRN*, 1410 (*The Plague*, 191).
41. *Essais*, 371, 1597 (*Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, 69).
42. *Essais*, 693, 706 (*The Rebel*, 290, 303).
43. *TRN*, 1708 (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 305).
44. The tension between rebellion (the "no") and consent (the "yes") in regard to the human condition is a pervasive theme in Camus's writing. It is expressed, for instance, in the title of his first published collection of literary essays, *L'Envers et l'endroit* ("The Wrong Side and the Right Side," in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*). For his most explicit discussion of the theme, see *Essais*, 465-89, 705-709 (*The Rebel*, 55-61, 302-306); *TRN*, 1705-1709 (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 295-310).
45. *Essais*, 855-56 (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 152).
46. See "Sur l'avenir de la tragédie," *TRN*, 1705 (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 301); D. McLellan (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 12-13; Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 1021-58. Cf. E. Voegelin, *Science, Politics and Gnosticism* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1968), 34-37.
47. *Carnets* II, 233 (*Notebooks* II, 120).
48. *Carnets* II, 342 (*Notebooks* II, 176).
49. *Essais*, 594-95 (*The Rebel*, 190). See also *Essais*, 444-45, 701-703 (*The Rebel*, 32-33, 298-300); and the graduate thesis in philosophy Camus wrote at the University of Algiers, entitled "Métaphysique chrétienne et Néoplatonisme," *Essais*, 1224-1313. This early study, which has not yet been published in English translation, has received very little attention from interpreters of Camus, though it is perhaps the most important source for his views concerning the western religious tradition. The only two, English-language accounts of the thesis of which I am aware are P. Archambault, *Camus Hellenic Sources*, 66-75, 138-151; and J. Hardré, "Camus' Thoughts on Christian Metaphysics and Neo-Platonism," *Studies in Philology*, LXIV, no. 1, Jan., 1967, 97-108.
50. The thesis, "Métaphysique chrétienne et Néoplatonisme," can be found in the *Essais*, 1224-1313 (see n. 50 above). See also *Carnets* II, 328, 342 (*Notebooks* II, 168, 176); H. R. Lottman, *Albert Camus*, 657.
51. A comprehensive critical interpretation of Camus's account of the relationship between Hellenism and Christianity will be the subject of a future article. For a detailed inventory of the actual classical texts, as well as secondary sources, used (and sometimes "misused") by Camus, see P. Archambault, *Camus' Hellenic Sources*.
52. See *Essais*, 1923 (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 364).
53. See *TRN*, 1701-11 (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*), 295-310).
54. "Rencontre avec Albert Camus," *Essais*, 1343 (*Lyrical and Critical Essays*, 357).
55. Research for this essay was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.