L'HOMME RÉVOLTÉ

Camus published works in cycles of 3; *The Rebel* was a philosophical essay that existed along with his novel, *The Plague,* and his play, *The Misunderstanding*. Together, they center around the idea of rebellion. *The Rebel* was written after the events of the purge and the regret that Camus felt for being a part of it. What follows is the morality of rebellion in response to held beliefs. I'm going to work somewhat out of order from what Camus presents to us in *The Rebel*, with the intent to slow it down and make it more clearly relatable. Just know that the/a “rebel” is an individual—an archetype for one to insert themselves into.

So far, we've established that because life has a meaning, one ought to embrace the absurdity of the world and seek out or create one’s own meaning. The affirmation that “yes, I am suffering,” in turn is the realization that so too does the rest of humanity. “Therefore the first step for a mind overwhelmed by the strangeness of things,” writes Camus, “is to realize that this feeling of strangeness is shared with all [of us] and that the entire human race suffers from the division between itself and the rest of the world.”8 From there on it becomes contradictory to the very nature of oneself to deny the suffering of any being, because in doing so, one severs their connection to solidarity, leading to a life of isolation. In the assertion of a superior people, an inferior out-group is born and subsequently creates the need for a rebellion against itself for the sake of those deemed inferior. For this reason, Camus argues that rebellion in the name of wicked principles is doomed to fail in one of two ways; either being “crushed by bloodshed, or the hideous prospect of atomic suicide.”9 There are *no* cases in which the established few come out on top of those they oppress. Because the instinct to rebel is human nature, oppression will always be opposed. The elite then will either be dethroned or, in their nihilistic attempt to consume everything, they wind up dethroning humanity as a whole.

Camus spends much of the essay laying out historical context to revolutions past and the examples that, in one way or another, failed because it either deserted the original values that it rebelled on, or because it was tyrannical from the onset. Tyranny, to Camus, will always end in bloodshed—humanity can be made a slave, but if pushed enough, a value will be realized in which enough is enough. In the realm of the past and in our own history, “the revolutionary is simultaneously a rebel or he is not a revolutionary, but a policeman, or a bureaucrat, who turns against the rebellion.”10 Revolution is a tricky thing—who’d’ve thought? One, if established or carried out in ways contradictory to the values it fights for (or in this case, on the basis of nihilism), will never reach the level of solidarity it so desires. To Camus, it is only the intersection of an acceptance of nihilism *and* the affirmation of a value common to *all* of humanity, that rebellion can succeed.

Action is easily enough achieved, but in the course of history, there has been so much bloodshed. For what? Which revolution succeeded in bringing about solidarity for their people? Lenin? I don’t think so. After gaining power, have any of them actually governed or led their people in the name of the values they professed? The moment they compromised their values for their cause, they lost any claim to virtue and through those they oppressed, initiated their own downfall.

Camus professes that action is historically messy. So when our time comes, when we rebel, in whatever fashion that may be, what are we to fight for? Rebellion need not be on the scales of nations—rebellion in ourselves can simply be the refusal to play by the rules. A refusal of a request gone too far; a “refusal to be treated as an object and to be reduced to simple historical terms” because we are more than just another fleeting life in the history of humanity; “It is the affirmation of a nature common to all men, which eludes the world of power.”11 There isn’t a meaning to overall life, but there is *personal meaning* in yours and in mine, and *that* is what we must fight for. We fight so that all of us have an opportunity to live a meaningful life—to flourish, together.