# Ch 8 - Bridge Over Troubled Water

In a romanticized view of an absurd world, the wholesome integration of compassion is marketed as an individual task for the liberation of self. Though in isolation, there can be no compassion. Compassion is a shared ideal—a recognition of one’s self in another. “The affirmation of a limit, a dignity, and a beauty common to all [~~men~~] only entails the necessity of extending this value to embrace everything and everyone and of advancing towards unity without denying the origins of rebellion,” Camus writes.1 In our absurd world, there are no affordances of structure or order. Chaos is untimely bound to everything that is beautiful and everything that is despicable. Compassion, then, in an absurd world is a stance against the despicable in case of all that is beautiful. Yet we find that to overcome wickedness, conflict seems an inevitability. How can we possibly contend with compassion on the eve of revolution?

When the vested interests of those with real power has everything to do with maintaining it, how does compassion fit into the world if we have no choice but to fight for our freedom? In our bloodied history, revolution has always been a violent affair, with perhaps the Red October revolution being among the most exemplary of the bunch… But if we truly think about it, is violence necessarily equated with cruelty? If not, what does a more humane violence look like? Where is the line?

*To me… in an authentic and desperate plea billowing from the collective effervescence of a humanity refused of dignity; in a recognition and acceptance of the shared tragedy of happiness; in admiration of the beauty that life and death offers to an absurd world; and despite of all that ever was and ever may be; the limit afforded to all beings depends upon a genuine and intimate need to quarantine and disengage the complacency for murder and cruelty within our society.*

Therefore the limit is murder and cruelty. All beings, no matter the circumstance, are owed at least that much consideration. Compassion shows us this much is true, for if we recognize the worth and potential for meaning within our own lives and in those we love, how can it be permissible to ignore the worth and potential in another? If our goal within compassion is truly to bring about the renaissance of human solidarity, we cannot afford contradictions so great that they violate our own purpose and condemn us to failure.

All my life I have had this innate belief that there is no greater betrayal to our existence than murder. Is it not bad enough to die let alone to kill? We spend our whole lives escaping death, yet we somehow believe it is within our rights to bring it upon others? On what grounds? How is that just? I’ve struggled with the rationalization of murder for just causes and, even in imagining our own conflict, I do not want to be a part of a resistance that justifies it as necessary for the purposes of achieving solidarity. Camus believed that violence for the sake of authentic rebellion is provisional,2 but I still struggle to agree. Surely we are intelligent enough—all of us, together—to disarm and overrun the system without the spilling of blood? Yes, we will likely be met with violence, but that does not justify retaliating as such. Perhaps zip ties and duct tape is sufficient enough, no?

Murder is barbaric; it is obsene; it is pointless; it is time we endeavor to eliminate it from our realm of permissibility. I’m sorry, but I will not take up arms if a time comes to fight. I cannot justify that within me. I am in no position to decide whether someone lives or dies by my hands. Even with the contradictory justification of murder for social progress, I cannot know who is on the other end of the barrel, and as such I will not pull the trigger. How are any of us to know who is an innocent victim, driven to extremes from within the system, and who has truly and rationally chosen tyranny? I will not make that decision. I will gladly help the effort in any way I can, but I cannot go that far. *That is my limit.* It may not be yours. Surely I cannot assert my own view over anyone else's, but I do believe that despite this, compassion is needed as the foundational concept of an (authentic) limit. It is the essential catalyst.

Camus’ rebel sees violence as a necessary element in revolution. He believes it is an extreme limit3 employed only in the case of rebellion, though after which, it has no justification. “Authentic acts of rebellion will only consent to take up arms for institutions which limit violence, not for those which codify it,” he writes; “A revolution is not worth dying for unless it assures the immediate suppression of the death penalty.”4 We see here his regret for the lives lost during the purge, but also maybe the limitations of his time. Perhaps in those days, violence was the only legitimate way to end their oppression. But today, with social systems controlling nations across the globe, I think such a task is impossible. Contemporary conflict is primarily waged through a router. Murder need not be a strategic tactic when simply outsmarting the enemy allows for such a tactical advantage.

The ultimate goal of this project is not to inspire you, the reader, that overthrowing the government is the supreme act of compassion—that's ridiculous. We are all participants in these systems and, like it or not, we all have a part to play in its continued existence. The more people experience *unwarranted* compassion in their communities, the more they begin to appreciate it. The more they appreciate it, the more likely they are to deliver it unto others.

This means standing up. Saying no. The consequence of inaction is far too great a tragedy against the beauty of life and the world. With rebellion driven by compassion and dignity owed to all beings, we must lead by example. When you consider the vastness of perspective and experience in the world, you come to better understand your own place within it. In the creation of meaning for ourselves, we simultaneously affirm a meaning for all lives.