



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Dr. Moulay Tahar University, Saida
Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts
Department of English Language and Literature



**The Extended Absurd Metaphor from Kafka to Camus: *The Metamorphosis* and
The Plague as case study**

Dissertation submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of *Master* in
Literature & Civilization.

Presented by:

Mouna KANDOUCI

Supervised by:

Dr. Djamel BENADLA

Board of Examiners

Dr. H. RABAHI	(MCA) Chair Person	Maghnia University Center
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Academic Year: 2020/2021



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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

Date: 04/06/21

Name: Mouna KANDOUCI

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mouna Kandouci', written in a cursive style. The signature is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Dedication

To my wonderful mother for her love, prayers and presence.

To my supportive father.

To my lovely sisters.

To the ones who never left me at the moments of need.

To anyone who might meet the absurd while reading this work.

This work is for you.

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Thank you all.

Abstract

The present research attempts to analyze the notion of the absurd in two works of the renowned absurdist writers Franz Kafka: *The Metamorphosis* and Albert Camus: *The Plague*. First, the researcher begins by introducing the absurd as an independent concept. Then, by discussing multiple critical views on this subject which are shadowed later in the works of Franz Kafka and Albert Camus, the researcher eventually arrives at the point that the absurd is a reaction to conditions of life. This conclusion brings forth a reopening of debates to nihilist's belief in nothingness and existentialists aim to create meaning out of nothing. The research ultimately reaches its practical phase when the concepts previously explored are applied to characters from the two works: Gregor Samsa and Doctor Bernard Rieux. Using the analytical and the descriptive methods, along with an absurdist analysis of the novels, the two protagonists are examined thoroughly and categorized through the theories mentioned in the first chapter, and according to the nature of the absurd that they have experienced. The characters and the events are essentially a consequence of the complex notion of the absurd constructed by life's conditions. The detailed interpretations finally result in the idea that both Kafka and Camus used the absurd metaphorically in Gregor's alienation and Rieux's fight for death. Kafka used literary absurdism and Camus portrays the absurd philosophically associated it with his existential beliefs. Besides, Kafka's views of the absurd as the unavoidable are completely different from the way Camus revolt against it.

Keywords: Absurd metaphor, doctor Bernard Rieux, Gregor Samsa, existentialism, nothingness, *The Metamorphosis*, *The Plague*

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General Introduction

“I cannot make you understand. I cannot make anyone understand what is happening inside me. I cannot even explain it to myself.”

(Kafka, 2007, n.p)

General Introduction

Humans are constantly looking for a purpose for their existence, and to do so, they invent metaphors for their everyday experiences. They are constantly on the journey of searching for a source of meaning that they can rely on. Believing in God, religion, life after life and religious books provide meaning for some people since already those people do not ask too many questions because they believe that some questions probably do not have answers. Others get meaning from a variety of sources, including science and art. However, this is not the case for everyone. Some people believe that life has no meaning and that no matter how hard they look for it, they will never find it. In short, those people are absurdists. Absurdists believe that all attempts to give existence a purpose are useless and that the absurd is unavoidable.

The term absurd itself was invented by theatre critics in the late 1940s, to describe what Michael Esslin called The Theatre of The Absurd. This was a term to describe non-realist contemporary theatre pieces by people like Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. However, it is poignantly clear that the term is also useful to describe the works of Kafka and before that, Alfred Jarry. Neither of these would have said that what they were doing was absurdist because the term had not been invented yet.

Moreover, absurdism is often described as a reaction to some quality in life or society. *The Metamorphosis* was written in 1915, in Prague, part of the Austrian Empire, at a time when all European societies were transforming themselves into huge monstrous death machines under the pressure of The First World War. And also, the Second World War is a big contributor to absurdity. Hundreds of millions of people were killed or injured. People lost hope witnessing this tragedy; as a result, their relationship with God was disturbed. The second reason is that after The Second World War and the start of the so-called Cold War,

new social and economic structures emerged. The tyrant regimes of Europe repressed people and played mind games with them, therefore this conflict harmed people not physically but rather mentally. The oppression and abuse of power of these regimes sparked absurdism. Hence, absurdism could be interpreted as an artistic reaction to this whole scenario.

On the other side, Albert Camus, a French Algerian writer, took part in the French fight for independence against Germany, and after the war ended, he returned to Algeria to see how the Algerian people were suffering under French colonization. His writings were profoundly impacted by the brutality and injustice he witnessed. In this context, *The Plague* belongs to a different historical context but equally a time of social and moral stress, written in 1947, absolutely an allegorical description of France, but in an Algerian society that almost doesn't exist anymore. It is a realist novel with no magic, but the whole point is how different characters search for meaning and purpose in their lives while trying to deal with a destructive force that they cannot defeat by normal means.

To this sense, this research focuses on the use of the metaphor of the absurd by Franz Kafka and Albert Camus with the use of existentialist and absurdist theories of judging and examining mankind's cognitive processes in the face of the nonsense and the face of nihilism. It aims to examine *The Metamorphosis* and *The Plague* in an absurd way to show how human conditions and life experiences contribute to the absurd, it aims to compare or contrast the use of absurd metaphor in the selected works. What is questionable in this research is what makes each novel an absurdist piece of literature, and at the same time, how the metaphor of the absurd is used by Franz Kafka and Albert Camus in both novels. The main research methods applied to conduct this research are the analytical and the descriptive method along with an absurdist analysis of the main characters in the novels and their relationships.

Using the aforementioned approaches and methods, this research work attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Does Absurdism prove to be the answer to human conditions?
2. What is the link between Kafka and Camus in what is called the absurd?
3. To what extent *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka and *The Plague* by Albert Camus are considered absurdist works?
4. Do both heroes in *The Metamorphosis* and *The plague* provide any real answers or solutions to the absurdity of life?

From the pre-listed research questions, the next research hypotheses foretell that:

1. Absurdism stemmed from the existentialists' ways to build their own subjective meaning in life and the nihilists' belief in nothingness. Absurdism, as well as Existentialism, has challenged the road of life that humans choose to walk, live, and establish.
2. Early in the 20th century, Kafka is surrounded by people who are not as affected as him, by a sense of absurdity. His task is to reveal the absurdity, not to solve it. For Camus, writing thirty years later, the absurdity of the world is not a surprise. But out of that absurdity, his task was to create his own meaning and purpose.
3. Surprisingly, both *The Metamorphosis* and *The plague* are about people struggling against a sudden and uncontrollable biological disaster that goes badly and could get worse. One is an individual turned into a giant insect, and the other is a city attacked by a plague.
4. Kafka and Camus' absurd protagonists give a solution to life's absurdity by accepting the suffering and thereby miserably and heroically respond to it.

This research, eventually, attempts to answer the previous questions by dividing this study into three main chapters. The first chapter entitled: *Absurd Theories and Existential philosophies*, would be an introductory part that provides a theoretical backbone of the research unraveling various theories and philosophies that scholars have offered as definitions and explanations of the absurd. It will be divided into five major parts. The first part deals with the metaphor of the absurd and then the two subsequent parts associate the absurd with existential nihilism and the birth of existentialism, the two parts explain how absurdism emerged from the nihilists' belief in nothingness and the existentialists' ability to create their own meaning rather than just accepting the absurd. However, the two last titles of this chapter are dedicated to absurdity in the major works of Franz Kafka and Albert Camus.

The second chapter, under the title: *Absurdist Analysis of The Metamorphosis* will engage in a literary analysis of *The Metamorphosis*, by putting the first theoretical chapter into practice. From the physical transformation of Gregor Samsa and the feelings of alienation in work and inside the family, to a struggle between mind and body, to a final mental transformation of him believing that he does not only look like an insect, in fact, he is an insect.

The third and last chapter similarly to the second chapter is an *Absurdist Analysis of The Plague*. This chapter will explore the plague as a natural evil and how the people of Oran react to it. This will be conducted in a specific manner by selecting characters who belong to different views of the absurd and discussing them in detail. This is going to be illustrated through the different actions and reactions of both Doctor Bernard Rieux, the main protagonist who stays rational during the pandemic crisis and Ramond Rambert who tries to escape death rushing for emotional desires. The closing part of the chapter, and of

dissertation, is devoted to victory, and how Albert Camus revolts against the absurd, similarly to how Doctor Rieux and the medical team defeat the plague.

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Absurd Theories and
Existential
Philosophies

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1.1 Introduction

This first chapter provides a theoretical background of the metaphor of the absurd from different philosophical views and its relation with nihilist and existentialist philosophies on one hand. It introduces the concept of the absurd and how it gives writers a “toolkit” to challenge the complacent acceptance of this world on the other hand. It also exposes the influence of the absurd on Franz Kafka and Albert Camus as absurdist writers by illustrating absurdity in their works: *The Trial*, *The Castle* and *The Metamorphosis* of Franz Kafka, and *The Stranger*, *The Fall* and *The Plague* of Albert Camus, including his famous essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The chapter focuses on understanding the concept of the absurd, it also aims to find a link between Franz Kafka and Albert Camus through their writings and the way they face the absurd.

1.2 The Absurd Metaphor

Absurdism is presented as a definition of all human struggles and how they react to the absurdity of life. For Albert Camus, it is “the conclusion arrived at those who had assumed the possibility of a total explanation of existence by the mind that discovers instead an unbridged gulf between rationality and experience” (Cruickshank, 1960, p. 49). Out of this tension between the ways one desires the world to appear, and the harsh truth of existence emerges the absurd metaphor, that is not only human’s existence having no philosophical justification, but also how humans react faced to the absurd. The metaphor of the absurd emerges out of the interplay of philosophy when “absurdity” is thought of as a background problem, while “the absurd” is a real problem. (Sleasman, 2007, p. 11).

Philosophically, the absurd is structured upon the belief that human beings exist in a world of no reason, and this absence of reason is characterized by a mental alienation. Minds are trying to find a meaning for life in an absurd world and struggle with life’s

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challenges, only to be faced with the inevitable truth that there is no meaning nor morality. Yet, Humans have a will to find meaning in things and when they do not find it, they try to create it. However, as the universe is cold and indifferent to this quest for meaning, they are always faced with the absurd where all attempts to find meaning fail (Scotty, 2018).

The French writer Albert Camus defines the Absurd as the conflict between the human tendency to seek inherent value and meaning in life, and the human inability to find any meaning in a purposeless, meaningless, and irrational universe, with the unreasonable silence of the universe in response (Dotterweich, 2019). However, this world in itself is not absurd, what is absurd is our relationship with the universe, which is irrational. Camus used the term “absurd” to describe the futility of human existence, which he compared to the story of Sisyphus, the figure in Greek mythology condemned for eternity to push a rock to the top of a mountain only to have it roll back down again (Baldick, 1955; Camus, 2001)

Absurdly, Camus (1955) writes in *The Myth of Sisyphus*:

In a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (p.13)

Martin Esslin follows Camus by saying that it is the “divorce” between “the actor and his setting” that constitutes the absurd (Esslin, 2004, p.43). Esslin elaborates Camus’ view that neither the man nor the world is absurd; the absurd is their union. The absurd derives from the fact that the world cannot offer man what he wants. Camus says, “I know what man wants, I know what the world offers him and I now can say that I know what links them” (Camus, 1995, p.34).

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Camus explains more: “The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For the moment it is all that links them together. It binds them one to the other as only hatred can weld two creatures together” (Camus, 1955, p.26). Albert Camus’ views of the absurd are metaphorical. As an example, he takes religious terms, turns them into secular metaphor, and then, appears to reconvert them back into a usable reality. What he does is act as if they were real while using them metaphorically. He defends absurdism in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*. He thinks that the realization of life as absurd is only a beginning and not an end. He says that the absurd is everywhere and it can hit us at any time, just as a brilliant idea can hit a thinker’s mind, as a “ridiculous beginning” (Camus, 1955, p.18). If there is any contradiction between reality and the truth, the absurd will be created, Camus clarifies:

I am thus justified in saying that the feeling of absurdity does not spring from the mere scrutiny of a fact or an impression but that it bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and certain reality, between an action and the world that transcends it. The absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation. (Camus, 1955, p.33)

As a result, the absurd is created by the conflict that exists between men's pursuit of meaning and the complexity of the universe and its nonsense. Truth is twisted, humans are unable to attain any meaning, and the only reality they certainly know is death. According to Camus, Absurdism presents an existential threat to the human psyche by taking it to another world of incomplete thoughts.

The Myth of Sisyphus starts with a powerful and thought-provoking statement: “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide” (Camus, 1955, p. 11). Answering the fundamental question of philosophy is deciding if life is worth living or not. Apart from the

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physical act of suicide, Camus talks about “philosophical suicide”. This is the opposition to Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard’s leap of faith (Solomon, 2005).

Kierkegaard, according to Camus has found nothing in experience but the confession of his own impotence and no occasion to infer any satisfactory principle. Yet without justification...suddenly asserts all at once the transcendent, the essence of experience, and the superhuman significance of life. Camus criticized Kierkegaard, and anyone else awaiting some transcendent being to interfere with life. Camus stated, “I risk this shocking statement: the absurd is sin without God” (qtd in Sleasman, 2007, p. 48). The absurd was and continues to be, the destiny of all human kind; waiting for others outside of human existence to find meaning was the same as denying one’s absurdity (Sleasman, 2007).

1.3 The Existential Nihilism

Existential nihilism is the belief that life has no meaning or value. It is best represented by the German philosopher Fredrik Nietzsche. Nietzsche became famous after criticizing the traditional religious morals of Europe as well as the church’s thoughts. His criticisms are based on psychoanalysis; he questioned everything related to man’s consciousness and morality. He strongly opposed the overruling of the church and its standards. Nietzsche wrote about how the decline of Christianity had ushered in a state of nihilism in Europe that needed to be solved and overcome (Kaufmann, 1956). People used to get meaning and morality from the church, but now that “God is dead”, according to Nietzsche, people may fall into despair (Nietzsche, 2014, p. 26).

In other words, God is the all-knowing power and the existence of humans depends on God’s existence. Yet, if God does not exist then all those other ideas that depend on God also do not exist. It’s God who decides what is right and wrong conveys that to human beings and they have to live up to those standards. So, if God does not exist then that kind

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of objective morality does not exist, since there is no objective morality that is not grounded on God (Remhof, 2018).

Nihilism then is the idea that God does not exist and therefore objective morality and the ideas that depend on God also do not exist. When Nietzsche declared God dead what he meant is that people's belief in God is dead. With the absence of people's belief in God, they do not believe in objective meaning and morality, they were left with the void. Nihilism raises this belief in nothingness (Hassal, 2017).

As for Nietzsche, to kill God is to become god oneself, the current human values and everything valuable in human life is questionable and needs to be reconsidered and investigated, and put in another acceptable form. In his book *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche extensively talks about his new ideas of morals and the major changes that need to happen to the current human's morals (Nietzsche, 2006).

Furthermore, Nietzsche wrote in his work *The Will to Power*: "Nihilism appears at that point, not that the displeasure of existence has become greater than before but because one has come to mistrust any meaning in suffering, indeed in existence... it now seems as if there is no meaning at all in existence as if everything were in vain" (Nietzsche, 1968, p.35). He explains the end of Christianity as the end of morality because God is the truth and now that people's belief in God is dead, everything is false (Kaufmann, 1956).

Nietzsche did not believe that anyone should be cured of nihilism. What he called passive nihilism. It is a viewpoint that recognizes nihilism as the conclusion of the quest for meaning. Hence, passive nihilists lack the strength to create their own beliefs and meanings try to separate themselves from their wills and desires to reduce suffering as much as possible (Reason & Meaning, 2020). He called this "Godlessness" (Nietzsche, 1968, pp. 17-18). Whereas, as the opposite of passive nihilism, active nihilism is to try

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and choose the option, actively destroy false values like those in Christianity and, make new existential conditions, new subjective beliefs and interpretations of meaning (Burch, 2014).

1.4 The Birth of Existentialism

Back in the classic Greek philosophy, Plato and Aristotle introduced the term “essence”, “Since at the start we distinguished the various marks by which we determine substance, and one of these was thought to be the essence, we must investigate this” (Aristotle, 1925, p.2). Aristotle assumed that everything (humans, animals, and objects ...etc) has an essence. As everything has an essence a certain set of core properties that are important for a thing to be what it is, then, and if those properties were missing, that thing would not be the same.

Plato and Aristotle believed that essences exist in humans even before their birth. As a result, trying to conform to one's good essence is a part of what it means to be a good human, from this perspective. The main thing is that essence gives humans' lives a purpose that they are created to be certain types of humans (Asciak, 2016).

According to religious people, the essence of the human is created and determined by all-powerful God. Existentialists saw this belief as one of the too many other systems which attempted to give a readymade answer to human meaning and existence. But by the mid-20th century, the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre went back to the idea of essence and argued the opposite. Humans, he believed, must be distinguished from objects, which have an essence defining their creation and were designed to perform specific tasks. Humans, according to unreligious philosophers, were not formed by a higher power, so they lack a predetermined nature “there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it” (Sartre, 1947, p.3). Existentialists contradict any type of dogmatism, trying to

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suppress God at the least possible expense, and write their own essence the way they want to live and not following a determined fate that was designed for them (Kauffmann, 1956).

Dostoevsky once wrote, “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted” (qtd in Kauffmann, 1956, p. 294). The God based perspective has many problems when it comes to existentialists, one of those problems is that it does not take into account human mortality and it is a fundamental aspect of the human condition. However, all past and present religion-based systems believe in the afterlife which installed in humanity the concept of immortality. But existentialists insist on accepting that man’s death will end everything. Because if God as the source of meaning is absent, man cannot find anything to depend on. He has no reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no kind of determinism man is free, man is freedom. On the other hand, if God does not exist, man does not have any laws, beliefs, or orders to justify his actions (Kauffman, 1956).

Consequently, if there is no justification for anything, then there are no certainties to follow: no moral justice, honesty, equality, or rules. But Sartre claimed:

We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does. (qtd in Kauffman, 1956, p. 295)

Sartre faced the nonsense and explored new aspects of existentialism. Not the world’s lack of meaning. But its terrifying abundance of freedom, he took this to mean that people are “condemned to be free”. As Sartre pointed out, all of the authorities anyone might think of are false (Kauffmann, 1956). For instance, those authorities can be the church, the government, or other authorities that tell people what to do. Yet, those authorities, according to Sartre, are just ordinary people all alike, people who don't have

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any answers and have to find out how to live for themselves. As anyone should learn to do so.

As described by Folquie: “Existentialism is characterized with the tendency to lay emphasis on existence” (qtd in Şahin, 2014, p. 44). It does not place any focus on essences, possibilities, or abstract concepts. Existentialism describes itself as a return to absolute truth. It is an option, whatever it was, that was the only true option anyone could make in the face of the absurd, as long as one made it honestly, and as long as it was based on the ideals he wanted to follow. Many people believe that existentialism portrays the universe in a very grim light. Albert Camus said that the literal meaning of life is whatever you're doing that prevents you from killing yourself (Solomon, 2005).

1.5 Absurdity in the Works of Franz Kafka

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) German-Czech, once wrote that the task of literature is to reconnect us with feelings that might otherwise be unbearable to study but which desperately need our attention. "A book must", he wrote, "be the axe for the frozen sea within us". His books were among the most touching, frightening, and accurate axes ever written (Solomon, 2005).

Kafka represents the human emotional world which is known as the Kafkaesque. His world is made of bad dreams where so many people might find themselves. Those people relate to Kafka when they feel helpless in the face of the ruler and the rules, powerless compared to the rich, isolated in their families, badly treated by fathers, ashamed of who they are and what they desire, mentally and physically dehumanized, and when they believe that the best thing that might happen to them is to die.

Albert Camus in his famous long essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus* strangely added 14 pages in the appendix about the works of Franz Kafka. Camus was influenced by

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Kafka to the point that he explained his writings. He talked about Kafka's books as if they are his (Simon, 2019). Camus started by the fact that Kafka's writings especially the ending parts are hard to understand. And yet, can be understood differently, and how it's up to the reader to read and re-read Kafka's texts to understand what he means.

The whole art of Kafka consists of forcing the reader to re-read. His endings, or his absence of endings, suggest explanations which, however, are not revealed in clear language but, before they seem justified, require that the story be reread from another point of view. (Camus, 1955, p. 112)

Later, Camus explained how the characters in Kafka's stories are comfortable with the nonsensical situations they experience. "There are works in which the event seems natural to the reader. But there are others (rarer, to be sure) in which the character considers natural what happens to him. By an odd but obvious paradox". (p. 113). He clarifies that anyone might read books where the events feel natural, more "ordinary" to him but what's strange is that the characters within a story find the strange, natural.

The more extraordinary the character's adventures are, the more noticeable will be the naturalness of the story: it is in proportion to the divergence we feel between the strangeness of a man's life and the simplicity with which that man accepts it. (p.113)

The works of Kafka are disturbing adventures that carry off quaking and dogged characters into the pursuit of problems. In *The Trial*, for example, Joseph K is arrested without reason, and the protests of his "rights" never seem to make contact with the power of the mysterious court itself (Solomon, 2005). He is undeniably ready to defend himself, but he has no idea why. His situation is tough for the lawyers. Meanwhile, he continues to love, eat, and read his newspaper, as nothing happened. After that, he is judged. However, the courtroom is very dark and quiet and he is not able to understand anything.

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Joseph K, simply, knows that he is condemned, although he has no idea of what. He feels the same thing all the time, but he continues to live his life naturally. Time has passed, two well-dressed and courteous gentlemen approach him and invite him to join them. They took him into a desolate suburb, cut his throat, and put his head on a rock. The character considers what happens to him as natural. The more unusual the character's stories are, the clearer the story's naturalness would be: it is roughly equal to the contrast we understand between the strangeness of a man's existence and the simplicity in which that man accepts it (Camus, 1955).

Additionally, *The Castle* is an adventure of a soul looking for meaning and morality. It's a disturbance between the usual and the unusual, the personal and the universal, the tragic and the ordinary, the absurd and the rational, that can be found throughout the world of Kafka, giving it significance and purpose. These contradictions are put all together, to understand the absurd work. For instance, Camus (1955) described the paradox in the characters of Kafka's stories as a mystery. "In this fundamental ambiguity lies Kafka's secret" (p. 114).

On the other hand, Kafka's castle depicted the idea of God: The hero is far from God, while the people in the village are closer to God, and the issue is one of divine grace. One suggestion is that *The Castle* illustrates the famous quote of Nietzsche "God is dead", and the villagers are confronted with the absurd. The villagers are not close to God: in the words of Nietzsche's "madman" in *The Gay Science* "this tremendous event ... has not yet reached the ears of men" (pp. 181-182). They do not understand their situation. Thus, the emperor has died, and there are no kings and the couriers are shouting meaningless messages (Kaufmann, 1956).

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Moreover, Kafka in his short story *The Metamorphosis* tells a story of a traveling salesman, Gregor Samsa, who wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into an insect, his attempts to hold onto his self-identity become more horrifying than the metamorphosis itself. For Kafka, the absurdity of Gregor's metamorphosis lies, not in the change itself, but Gregor's unchanged self-consciousness (Solomon, 2005). Hence, Gregor, the hero of the *Metamorphosis*, has only one thing that disturbs him in the strange adventure that makes vermin of him is that his boss will be angry at his absence.

The human condition, for Kafka, is well beyond tragic or depressed. It is "absurd." He believed that the whole human race was the product of one of "God's bad days." There is no "meaning" to make sense of our lives (Sutherland, 2015). As described by Camus (1955), Kafka's world is so indescribable universe in which one's fishing in a bathtub "Kafka's world is in truth an indescribable universe in which man allows himself the tormenting luxury of fishing in a bathtub, knowing that nothing will come of it" (p. 116). It is the foolishness of fishing the bathtub for nothing, for the sake of fooling those around. It is giving up to the absurd, ignoring the reality of what is happening outside, and entering a little pretend.

1.6 Absurdity in the Works of Albert Camus

Pied noir Camus (1913-1960) is described by Sartre, as "Cartesian of the absurd," the "stubborn humanist." Camus's philosophy focuses on the "absurd," and what's between a "rational man and the indifferent universe." Against Camus' absurdity there is rebellion, the scorn of Sisyphus, the "revolt of the flesh," the "I rebel, therefore we exist." For Camus there is no Kierkegaardian leap, which he degrades as "philosophical suicide"; there is no commitment to nonsense and there is no useless hope (Solomon, 2005).

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Albert Camus believed that life has no inherent meaning and is, therefore, absurd. In a way, this might be a reason for despair, which can lead to suicide. But Camus stated that a meaningless universe is an opportunity to be free from the shackles of hope and experience existence more fully (Fieser, 2021).

Camus ideas are those of considering a world without meaning as an opportunity to let go of all illusions of meaning, so the harsh reality comes to the surface. When there's neither last judgment nor an afterlife, it means a complete focus on the actual life. When there are no transcendent morals and values, it means that they can be newly created (Scotty, 2018). Camus believed that the Absurd should not be accepted: it should be rebelled against.

Camus wrote in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955): "Suicide, like the leap, is acceptance at its extreme. Everything is over and man returns to his essential history. His future, his unique and dreadful future- he sees and rushes towards it. In its way, suicide settles the absurd" (p. 54). According to Camus, the Absurd cannot be negated. This means that people have to react to it in one of two ways: live it or escape from it. A more direct approach to escape the Absurd is the act of physical suicide, which, according to Camus, is the only serious philosophical problem. On the other hand, living the absurd is to live in the present in the face of the absurd with the full awareness of it "living without appeal", to expect nothing from the unknown future to revolt (Saarrthi, 2020). In the same context Camus continued, he said that "revolt gives life its value. Spread out over the whole length of a life, it restores its majesty to that life. To a man devoid of blinkers, there is no finer sight than that of the intelligence at grips with a reality that transcends it" (p. 54).

As an illustration of the idea of "living without appeal", Camus pointed to the Greek mythological figure Sisyphus, who was the founder and king of Ephyra, and also quite a

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deceitful person. He made the mistake to challenge the Gods and was punished for that and condemned to push a rock uphill, that rolled down every time it neared the top, and to repeat this process for eternity (Camus, 1955). Sisyphus existence is so meaningless and hopeless, that trying to give his repetitive action any meaning is absurd. Yet, living without appeal does not mean that what's happening now has to lead to something good in the future. The meaning lies in the act itself, which is sufficient to be content in a hopeless life, Camus explained: "The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (p. 111). One finds joy in despair and refuses to bow for the misery that life throws at us. Because is there anything more rebellious than to find joy in what's supposed to be our punishment.

Camus was afraid to take a side in the Algerian war, find himself in the middle, like Meursault in *The Stranger* and like Clamence in *The Fall* (Karklins,1999). In *The Stranger*, Camus portrays an innocent young man whom he describes as "totally honest," somehow in a stranger way. He never reflects and thus never sees the significance of his actions. After committing a bizarre murder, that was neither planned nor accidental, Meursault believes that he did nothing wrong. He believes that he simply was at the wrong time in the wrong place, and it was all a matter of absurdity (Solomon, 2005).

Society has come to know Meursault as a murderer, which, he did. But what society fails to understand about him is his lack of emotions toward killing a man. Meursault's failure of mourning over his dead mother's casket. Society does not understand his existentialistic beliefs. His existentialistic beliefs lead him to believe his life has no meaning (Maguire, 2015). Meursault believes that everyone dies, and their lives do not matter in the end. Camus confirms:

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Thus, I always began by assuming the worst; my appeal was dismissed. That meant, of course, I was to die. Sooner than others. “But,” I reminded myself, “it’s common knowledge that life isn’t worth living, anyhow.” And, on a wide view, I could see that it makes little difference whether one dies at the age of thirty or three-score and ten, since, in either case, other men and women will continue living, the world will go on as before. Also, whether I died now or forty years hence, this business of dying had to be got through, inevitably. (Camus, 1958, pp. 142-143)

Meursault is a “stranger”, an absurdity and the “other” to the society in which he does not show any emotions, he has no meaning for life and his only certainty and guarantee is death (Guelfman, 2018).

Otherwise, Camus did not see a distinction between the gap in the heart of *The stranger* and *The plague*'s efforts. The truth of the absurd powerlessness is not an excuse not to act. Camus’ deep sense of the absurd, is a call to take action. Likewise, *The Plague*’s absurdity is a source of values and action. The group of men gathered around the narrative represent all human response to natural evil. *The plague* represents the absurd as a collective experience. Meursault’s struggle with the plague is shared by all, his suffering in ~~in~~ the face of the absurd is shared by all the inhabitants of the quarantined town of Oran (Voegelin, 1957).

Another example of absurdity in the works of Camus is *The Fall*. *The Fall* can be an illustration of the absurd as a source of guilt, as Camus claims that all men are guilty of something. They are not only guilty for their actions, but also for their inactions, or the inability to act. In *The Fall*, Clamence portrays the absurd lucidity of his previous position as a successful defender of good causes and his “fall” into the position of Judge-Penitent. He is resentfully “happy” as Sisyphus is “happy,” in scorn and constant recognition of his avoidance of judgment (Solomon, 2005).

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Camus concludes that the only honest observation that one's can make about the world is that it's meaningless. There are no universal values, there's no divine plan, and everything happens randomly. Hence, life is absurd. Yet, "the point is to live" carry on, try and overthrow an absurd world, and most of all, live life despite its absurdity (Camus, 1955, p. 63).

1.7 Conclusion

To sum up, absurdism arises between existentialism and nihilism, life is insane, humans will keep looking for its significance. Absurdism came out of nihilists' belief of nothingness and no objective meaning and the Existentialists' ability to create their own subjective meaning in life through free will, awareness, and personal responsibility, instead of just accepting nothingness. Existentialists believe that the world is absurd, and they have no choice, but to live in it. On the other part, both Franz Kafka and Albert Camus are considered icons of the absurd metaphor. They both use the absurd metaphorically in their writings. Yet, Camus rejects Kafka's view of the absurd as despair. And the main difference between them is that Camus tries to find a meaning in life. He never abandoned the notion that a realistic hope existed. Whereas, Kafka believes that humans can never escape the absurd. The next chapter illustrates Kafka's views toward the absurd in *The Metamorphosis* throughout the transformation of Gregor Samsa.

Chapter Two:
Absurdist Analysis of *The*
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Chapter Two: Absurdist Analysis of *The Metamorphosis*

2.1 Introduction

Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) is a physical and nonphysical transformation of Gregor Samsa, it portrays the understanding of his change, as his understanding of the absurd in his life. This being the case of this chapter, which provides an absurdist understanding of *The Metamorphosis*, it portrays Gregor's transformation and the changes of his relations to the world, starting from his physical change, moving to his reaction versus how his family reacted to his metamorphosis, and how they directly or indirectly contribute in that transformation. Moreover, this chapter focuses on existential themes like Gregor's physical and mental alienation within his own family and his own body. It metaphorically portrays Kafka's views toward the absurd as illustrated in the life of Gregor Samsa.

2.2 Gregor's Physical Transformation

The Metamorphosis starts off with one of the most memorable quotes: "As Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into horrible vermin" (Kafka, 2019, p.5). Gregor wakes up in his bed and discovers he is suddenly transformed into an insect. Wondering what happened to him, he looks around his small room, where everything seems normal and Gregor himself does not panic, and just notices his physical changes "his armour like back", "his brown belly slightly domed and divided by arches into stiff sections", and "his many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him" (p.5). Yet, he deals with that transformation as if nothing extraordinary happened, as if his metamorphosis can happen to anyone.

Moments after Gregor recognizes his transformation, he tries to go back to sleep and forget about it: "How about if I sleep a little bit longer and forget all this nonsense" (p.5). However, he was "used to sleeping on his right, and in the present state could not get into that position" (p.5), he is unable to sleep again because of his uncomfortable, unhuman,

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new body. What is so absurd is his normalization of the fact that he is a bug. Unable to understand this, Gregor tries to lie down and relax, believing that this way things might go back to normal again “he lay there quietly a while longer, breathing lightly as if he perhaps expected the total stillness to bring things back to their real and natural state” (p.10)

Gregor started thinking about how to catch the next train to work although he was very late and he could not make it anyways, because he is unable to get out of his bed. Despite his transformation, Gregor is hungry still wanted to dress, eat and most of all go to work, “the first thing he wanted to do was to get up in peace without being disturbed, to get dressed, and most of all to have his breakfast” (p. 8). His mother knocks on his door, and Gregor tries to speak. At first, he could initially retain a human-like articulation of sounds, but his family believes he is ill due to the strangeness of his voice which Gregor believed was only “first sign of a serious cold” (p. 8).

Gregor found that his office manager “Chief Clerk” has visited him, asking why he did not come to work. “He is not well, please believe me”, the mother told the manager “Why else would Gregor have missed a train!” (p. 12). later on, Gregor completely lost his ability to articulate sounds, to talk like a person, “as if deep inside him, there was a painful and uncontrollable squeaking mixed in with his voice, the words could be made out at first but then there was a sort of echo which made them unclear” (p. 7). Gregor wants to explain but all they could hear from behind the door was incomprehensible noises. Yet, he manages to drag himself across the floor, falling out of bed, rocks his body, and finally opens the door with his mouth after much effort, ends up hurting himself. However, his attempts to communicate with his family and his manager always failed as both the family and the manager are unable to come to terms with his metamorphic situation. The manager moves, he “had turned away as soon as Gregor has started to speak... moved steadily towards the door, without taking his eyes off Gregor” (p.18). Gregor run after Chief Clerk trying to

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explain, but he eventually fails as Chief Clerk is disgusted by Gregor's presence and cannot stand talking to him to understand what has happened to him.

Particularly, Gregor believes, still, that he is human after all that happened to him. He wants to work to pay the family debts although he used to hate his work. The absurd situation he is put in has no escape, Gregor always chooses his family over himself, he could not choose both, and unfortunately, he could never choose himself. Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is a sort of escape from the absurd life that Gregor used to live. Now, that he becomes an insect there is no way for him to work as a salesman. Still, he is not able to live freely.

Despite Gregor's transformation, he was trying to give an excuse for being late to his manager even though his body said enough about that. The extraordinary for Gregor was very ordinary since he did not give it any importance, however, he was just worried about being late for work which creates a sense of an irrational and absurd world where "magic becomes part of reality" (Adams, 2011, p.8), the metamorphosis was accepted as something very normal and ordinary.

2.3 Feelings of alienation

Gregor's feelings of alienation started a long time before his transformation. They started with his job as a salesman and how that was so stressful for him, how his daily traveling kept him away from making real friendships, he thought:

What a strenuous career it is that I've chosen! Travelling day and day out. Doing business like this takes much more effort than doing your own business at home, and on top of that, there's the curse of travelling, worries about making train connections, bad and irregular food, contact with different people all the time so that you can never get to know anyone or become friendly with them. It can all go to Hell! (Kafka, 2019, p. 6)

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Gregor's friendships as a travelling salesman are only casual and never intimate, since he must always be travelling, he never goes out in the evenings but stays at home, as his mother claims: "he stayed home every evening. He sits with us in the kitchen and reads the newspaper or studies train timetables" (p. 12). This explains how he already lived predominantly in isolation, before his transformation.

Gregor always wanted to quit his stressful job and his overpowering boss, but he had to work as hard as he could to pay off his family debts. He always wanted to tell his manager that he hated being a salesman, and that for him the position of a manager is just stupid since all his manager did was to sit behind his desk and look at his workers from up there, he thought: "If I did not have my parents to think about I'd have given in my notice a long time ago, I'd have gone up to the boss and told him just what I think, tell him everything I would, let him know just what I feel" (p. 6).

Apparently, Gregor's struggle can be compared to the Sisyphean struggle, as Albert Camus wrote in *The Myth of Sisyphus*:

"It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, tram, four hours in the office or factory, meals, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, according to the same rhythm this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the why arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement" (Camus, 1955, p. 19).

Gregor never complains about anything, yet his metamorphosis ignites something within him to become "the why" for the life he accepted to live before.

Apart from Gregor's feelings of alienation, due to the battle between what he had to do for his family, and what he had to do for himself, his family, whether intentionally or unintentionally, contributed to such feelings. The *Metamorphosis* emphasized this alienation where Gregor's transformation into an insect is a metaphor for his human life.

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For instance, Matthew Powell (2008) explains Kafka's animal stories as an "expression of an ontological reality that indicates a precarious relationship between the self-and the world" (p. 130). Before being a real insect, Gregor was treated like a worthless one by his own family, they forced him to support them by working as a salesman which he seems unhappy with. Besides, Gregor is always proud of the things can do for his family, the things that are supposed to make him more valuable for them, however:

Gregor had later earned so much that he was in a position to bear the costs of the whole family, and did bear them. They had even got used to it, both Gregor and the family, they took the money with gratitude and he was glad to provide it, although there was no longer much warm affection given in return. (Kafka, 2019, p.27)

Gregor's family seems satisfied with his support, yet they do not really appreciate him, they just accept him as long as he did his job. When Gregor turned to be an insect, and his family discovered that they have lost their main provider, Gregor transformed into a disgusting being in their eyes, which only contributes to his alienation further.

Consequently, Gregor's feelings of alienation continue to get deeper and deeper with Gregor's metamorphosis, his isolation, the way he behaves, the way that his family sees him, and mostly with time.

2.4 Samsa's Family Ties

In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa is the main character who loves and cares about his family. Gregor took full financial responsibility for the Samsa family. He becomes the breadwinner for his household after that his father lost his job, he never missed a day of work in his five years as a traveling salesman, he is only concerned about his inability to catch the train after his metamorphosis, and "he had not the slightest intention of abandoning his family" (p. 12). However, not all the family share the same

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feeling as Gregor, especially after recognizing Gregor's transformation and that he is not able to provide for the family anymore, he turns to be a burden for them.

Mr. Samsa, Gregor's father, was dependent on Gregor to pay his debts, he did nothing but sit in a chair all day. Yet, he and Gregor did not have a good father-son relationship. Mr. Samsa shows no sympathy for Gregor with his new physical, he is disgusted by the insect's appearance. For instance, he kicked his son out of rage and frustration, "stamping his foot at him as he went" (p. 20). He violently drove Gregor back to his room, and:

Nothing would stop Gregor's father as he drove him back, making hissing noises at him like a wild man. Gregor had never had any practice in moving backward and was only able to go very slowly. If Gregor had only been allowed to turn round he would have been back in his room straight away, but he was afraid that if he took the time to do that his father would become impatient, and there was the threat of a lethal blow to his back or head from the stick in his father's hand any moment. (p.20)

Gregor's family lacked communication, the family members did not give each other the chance to understand and be understood. Like Gregor who failed to make his father nor anyone understand him, his father contributed to such miscommunication with his son before and after transformation. In fact, Gregor's father does not hate his son nor his new appearance, but he may only hate the fact that his son lost his ability to work for the family, he hates how he is obliged to work by himself to make money.

Grete Samsa, Gregor's sister, is closed to Gregor, and she is the one who becomes his caretaker. Grete and Gregor have mutual affection, and while the parents are only concerned with the fact that Gregor is not at work yet, Grete "began to cry" (p. 12), she is more concerned with what happened to Gregor so that he did not leave his room. Later, Grete is the only one who enters Gregor's room, brings him food, and cleans up after him. She cared to the point that Gregor did not drink the milk that she left for him, although it

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was normally his favourite drink “she immediately picked it up using a rag, not her bare hands” (p. 24). Grete thoughtfully provides different options of nourishment to find out what the new Gregor prefers to eat:

She brought him a whole selection of things, all spread out on an old newspaper. There were old, half-rotten vegetables; bones from the evening meal, covered in white sauce that had gone hard; a few raisins and almonds; some cheese that Gregor had declared inedible two days before; a dry roll and some bread spread with butter and salt. As well as all that she had poured some water into the dish, which had probably been permanently set aside for Gregor's use, and placed it beside them. (p.24)

Meanwhile, Gregor is thankful for his sister's attention, otherwise, the rest of his family might have left him to die. Gregor “only remained close to his sister now” (p. 27). As Gregor used to care for the entire family, now his sister is the only one who cares about him. However, Grete has less and less time for Gregor as the family becomes more preoccupied with taking care of themselves. Her attachment to Gregor's new body weakens and she loses the connection between the insect and her brother.

Mrs. Samsa, Gregor's mother, like the rest of the family was grateful for Gregor's financial help. At first, she shows some care for Gregor before being transformed, she gently reminds him not to be late leaving for work and defends him in the presence of his manager saying that she knows to which extent Gregor has sacrificed his personal life for his career. Mrs. Samsa's reaction to her son transformation was both horrific and loving in some ways. She is unable to come inside Gregor's room, yet she wants to see her son, though the father holds her back by force, she calls out: “Let me go and see Gregor, he is my unfortunate son! Can't you understand I have to see him?” (p.31). Her indirect love and care for Gregor are clear when she helps Grete move the furniture out of the room, she does not want to, in the hope that her son will come back one day. Hence, she claims:

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By taking the furniture away, won't it seem like we're showing that we've given up all hope of improvement and we're abandoning him to cope for himself? I think it'd be best to leave the room exactly the way it was before so that when Gregor comes back to us again, he'll find everything unchanged and he'll be able to forget the time in between all the easier. (p. 32)

As a mother, Mrs. Samsa is heartbroken over the loss of her son, absurdly hoping that he will come back one day, and they will forget about all this nonsense. But over time and like her daughter, she loses attachment to his new being and the stress of living under the same roof with a giant insect becomes a big deal for her.

Everyone in the Samsa family experiences a certain type of metamorphosis. Gregor changed physically to be an insect, the family's financial situation changed and Gregor's father, mother, and sister changed with it. Now, Gregor is no longer the provider for his family, and consequently, the family members take their correct places in the familial hierarchy, despite disregarding Gregor himself in the process.

2.5 Mind versus body

Gregor's metamorphosis comes out of the stressful nature of his job that created a huge gap between his mind and his body. His first connection with his metamorphosed body in the real world was to his mother calls. He wakes up to find himself changed into an insect, strangely still laying in his bed, only thinking about being late for his work, as the mother explains "The lad only ever thinks about business" (Kafka, 2019, p. 12). Gregor offers himself to his job, ironically is his job that he loses first. He only sacrifices himself for his family, but it seems that his family would not do the same for him. So, he is desperately left empty in between.

The struggle between Gregor's mind and body explains his inability to have full control over his new body. Since the mind is a source of reason which controls the body's thoughts

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and emotions which means that the body by its turn reflects the human mind. In *The Country*, Kafka (1971) explains:

I can't do it the way I always did as a child when dangerous matters were involved. I don't even have to go to the country myself, it isn't necessary. I'll send only my clothed body... As I lie in bed I assume the shape of a big beetle, a stag beetle, or a June beetle I think. The form of a big beetle, yes. Then I would pretend it were a matter of hibernating and I would press my little legs against my bulging body. (p. 44)

Kafka's views toward the duality of the mind and body are clearly expressed in Gregor's transformation into an insect. Gregor's inability to control the consequences of his transformation reflects how disconnected he is from his own body. However, Sartre argues: "the alienation of myself is the fact of being looked at" (Sartre, 1993, p. 263). Undoubtedly, the Samsa's family will certainly form a judgment of Gregor according to what they see. In fact, what is seen is merely a part of what a Gregor is, as it is only one of the self's options.

Unlike his body, Gregor's mind does not change much. He remains human on the inside; he tries to live with his new body, keeping the human mind inside the body of an insect. He accepts his metamorphosis without questioning what is happening to him. In fact, the only thing that bothers his mind the physical discomfort when he has to experience his body in a completely different way to perform tasks that were previously easy.

Metaphorically, Gregor's metamorphosis creates a psychological distance between his mind and his body, left him somewhere in between the human and non-human states. He looks and behaves exactly like an insect, and no one can understand him yet he can understand himself. In some strange ways, he is still able to maintain his humanly mind in

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his non-human body (Yi Lee, 2004). Gregor still remembers where he comes from though his transformation takes him far away from who he is, yet he still remembers his past, his family, his duties, his memories, his desires, and his emotions. As a result, he just seems to take sides with himself against the other Gregor.

The conflict between Gregor's mind and his body can be understood after his reaction to his mother and sister moving the furniture out of his room, which he seems not very happy with, especially when they were about to move the picture of the pretty lady with "a fur hat and a fur boa" (Kafka, 2019, p. 5). In a very protective way, he jumps out from underneath the couch to the wall. Gregor believes that nothing should be removed from his room; everything must remain as it was, he does not imagine living without the positive effect of the furniture on his mind even if the furniture disturbs his other Gregor in his senseless crawling around and around. Now, Gregor has to choose between his freedom as an insect and his human life. Gregor struggles to integrate his past human feelings and emotions with his current body's physical desires, that the gap between his mind and his body only becomes wider.

2.6 Gregor's mental transformation

Unconsciously, Gregor starts adapting his thoughts and emotions to the physical demands and urges of his new body. For instance, crawling on walls, hiding under sofas, and eating rotten foods becomes his daily routine, as if his physical life is shaping his mental life, and slowly he is mentally becoming an insect. But his human mind does not completely go away, as this time he is still mentally unhappy not because of his job, but because of his inability to support his family.

Throughout the story, Kafka dehumanizes Gregor and portrays a sense of rejection to his family which no longer sees the creature as Gregor and wastes no time to dehumanize

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him. To do this, Kafka mentions that with Gregor's family attempts to clean out his room, removing the furniture and leaving him with nothing but a bowl for eating and a couch for hiding, they enough alienate him from his humanity, as simple as removing the furniture is removing Gregor's own memories. Gregor jumped to the wall to keep his last connection with his past life, yet his mother fainted after not being able to look at her son's shocking appearance. Mr. Samsa, not trying to understand what happened there, automatically assumed that Gregor attacked her, Mr. Samsa attacked his son with the nearest thing to him, and unfortunately, it was apples that hurt Gregor both physically and emotionally. Here, Gregor just sees himself as everybody sees him. Painfully Gregor suffers from a lodged apple for several weeks and barely eats food, he is increasingly neglected by his family, and "no one dares to remove the apple lodged in Gregor's flesh, so it reminded there as an invisible reminder of his injury" (p. 38) while his family is focusing on earning money.

However, that is not all. Gregor's family starts to feel threatened by his existence, as he interrupts Grete's violin playing for the lodgers, who are more important than Gregor himself for the family. The lodgers immediately left after spotting Gregor, they cancelled the tenancy, without paying any money. Consequently, his sister Grete feels that he has become a burden to the family, tells her parents that they must get rid of "it", or they'll all be ruined. She no longer can consider him to be her brother claiming that:

You've got to get rid of the idea that that's Gregor. We've only harmed ourselves by believing it for so long. How can that be Gregor? If it were Gregor, he would have seen long ago that it's not possible for human beings to live with an animal like that and he would have gone of his own free will (p. 50).

She tries to convince her parents that if the insect were really Gregor, it would leave a long time ago because it knew it was unwanted. The father, Mr. Samsa, and for the first time in the novel shows a little sympathy toward his son with his statement: "if only he could

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understand us” (p. 50), as if there was a little hope left for his son to come back. However, Grete insisted that the insect “got to go” (p. 50). Everybody feels disgusted and annoyed by the presence of Gregor, including his sister who used to take care of him. Now, he has nobody left. Gregor listens to his sister complaining, thinks that he must die to relieve the family, and dies quietly. Gregor cannot help but seeing himself from his family’s point of view. Instead of fighting for himself, he is made to believe that he deserves to be alienated. It is clear that he was being selfless and dutiful in a way that causes the alienation that results in his submission to death (Minar & Sutandio, 2017). After Gregor's death, the family is slightly ashamed of their behavior, but only slightly.

2.7 Conclusion

Finally, and after an absurd reading analysis of *The Metamorphosis*, one can only conclude that Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* is a sort of escape from the absurd. Gregor Samsa has been metamorphosed ways before his metamorphosis with the pressure of his moral obligation, that of paying the family debts, which made him forgot about his dreams and desires, and since his parents always have seen him as a source of money, they forgot that he was their son. Gregor’s attempts to escape all this absurdity in his life turn him into a real insect. Metaphorically, he believed he has been treated like an insect and comes to believe he is one. In fact, his family, his obligations, and his transformation far alienated him from his human life. However, his metamorphosis was not bad after all, since it was the only way for him to find freedom. Kafka’s views of the absurd as the inescapable are reflected in Gregor’s attempts to escape it, and since there was no way for him to change the absurd which he believed is his fate, he ends up accepting it. His acceptance was by a full recognition of the absurd which was the only way for him to find freedom, and his death gave him the ultimate freedom from all of the pressures and alienation that had entrapped him for so long. Absurdly enough, one can never be free. As viewing the absurd

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differently, the last chapter portrays the metaphor of the absurd in *The Plague* from Albert Camus' perspective.

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Chapter three: Absurdist Analysis of *The Plague*

3.1 Introduction

Albert Camus' *The Plague* (1947) is a novel about a virus that spreads rapidly from animals to humans, killing off half of the population of a modern fictionalized town of Oran on the Algerian coast. The plague is introduced as the unwelcome and uninvited visitor, one who comes unexpectedly from the outside. Representing death itself, La Peste, *The Plague*, or evil as seen through the eyes of the novel's hero, a Doctor Rieux, a version of Camus himself is Camus inspiration by the 1849 Algerian cholera epidemic, a natural evil that claimed many lives, or by the moral evil of the Nazi invasion of France which inflicted millions of deaths and immeasurable suffering. It is the absurdity of life and death.

To this vein, the last chapter examines the main characters in this novel and how they deal with the plague to expose Albert Camus's perception of the universe. It aims to introduce larger philosophical existential questions on the absurd and the suffering under the plague epidemic as a personal and collective experience, and how the characters in the novel react to it, mainly the character of Bernard Rieux as the protagonist and the doctor.

3.2 The Plague as a Natural Evil

As the novel opens, Oran seems just an ordinary French-Algerian town where people are busy living their lives to the point that they barely notice that they are alive. Then, the horror begins with the mysterious deaths of thousands of rats, spreading panic in the streets of Oran city. Dr Rieux knows this is the plague since he read enough about the transmission of this disease from animals to humans, then its transmission from one human to another. Meanwhile, Dr. Rieux and his friends tried to find an explication for this disease. Yet, people of Oran associate plague with something backward that belongs to another age. However, they still believe that they are modern people, and they surely won't

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die as the 17th century Londoners, in this context Camus writes: 'It's unthinkable. Everyone knows it's ceased to appear in Western Europe.' Yes, everyone knew that, except the dead men. Come now, Rieux, you know as well as I do what it is" (Camus, 1991, p. 33).

When the plague is at its peak, and when five hundred people a week at least were dying, a Catholic priest called Paneloux shows up to explain the plague as God's punishment for human immorality. The Christian theology of suffering and Camus himself being an atheist is presented through the voice of father Paneloux in the novel, the Jesuit priest who gives two very different sermons to the people of Oran.

The two sermons together illustrate the Christian views toward the problem of suffering. In the priest's initial sermon, he announces an explanation for suffering as a divine punishment, he intones "calamity has come upon you my brethren and my brethren you deserved it" (p. 81). This is a kind of inescapable suffering as a way to understand the plague as an illusion of self-sufficiency and the ability to control one's fate. In other words, the priest is saying that if people ignore God, God will ignore them, he explains:

For a long while God gazed down on this town with eyes of compassion; but he grew weary of waiting, His eternal hope was too long deferred, and now He has turned His face away from us. And so, God's light withdrawn, we walk in darkness, in the thick darkness of this plague. (p. 82)

Evil and the suffering that comes from it are simply understood to be the absence of good and the absence of the providence of divine grace. Thus, father Paneloux explains the plague as a result of God's absence or withdrawal.

However, Camus exposes his existentialist beliefs later in Dr. Rieux and Jean Tarrou conversation when Tarrou asks Rieux what he thought of father Paneloux's Christian

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views on the plague as God's punishment, Dr. Rieux answers: "I've seen too much of hospitals to relish any idea of collective punishment. But, as you know, Christians sometimes say that sort of thing without really thinking it. They're better than they seem" (p. 106). Additionally, Camus' atheist perspectives are reflected in Dr. Rieux, "Tarrou squared his shoulders against the back of the chair, and then moved his head forward into the light. Do you believe in God, doctor?" Dr. Rieux comments: "No, but what does that really mean? I'm fumbling in the dark, struggling to make something out" (p. 107).

Later, in the priest second's sermon, father Paneloux shifted to an existentialist view of the suffering that opens the door for nihilism, after he witnesses the suffering of innocent children, and with the death of the young boy, Jacques Othon, a son of the city's magistrate. The death of this innocent child in such a prominent family shows that suffering is random; it crosses all boundaries and goes beyond any sociological or economical distinctions. Now, father Paneloux believes that there is no reason, no logic no theodicy that could explain or justify this innocent child's death. Hence the narrator speaks: "Father Paneloux, would keep faith with that great symbol of all suffering, the tortured body on the Cross; he would stand fast, his back to the wall, and face honestly the terrible problem of a child's agony" (p. 187). Consequently, there is no answer or explanation to this suffering, and the plague cannot be a form of God punishment, because it is simply absurd, and despite its painful absurdity one can only keep faith in God and believe that at the end of that suffering there might be something good.

Camus introduces the problem of evil as a philosophical problem designed to cast skepticism over the idea of God that can lead to nihilism. Evil exists in the novel as a form of unnecessary suffering. The plague as a natural evil brings the idea that when people believe in God they don't need to suffer since God is the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-

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good, the creator, and the judge. So, if God is all-knowing, he knows about the suffering in the world if God is all-powerful, he could stop the suffering in the world. In this case, some people blame God for their suffering, others believe that God gave them free will to stop their suffering.

3.3 The Freewill and the Moral Evil Defense

The freewill moral evil or natural evil defense is the idea that if really God is the power behind the curtains that pull the strings of nature, so why he let such unnecessary suffering happen, Paneloux the priest believes that the plague might not be God's punishment but for sure it's God's plan. In other words, if God has a plan that something is going to happen, then it will surely happen. However, how does the free will stand up against God's plan when there are two options left, either to accept this absurd natural evil or escape it.

At some point, the tension between Dr. Rieux and father Paneloux divided the people of Oran into two groups. The first group is for people that follow father Paneloux's views, and accept the plague as their fate; they remain silent in the face of the absurdity of life, and believe that: "Perhaps we should love what we do not understand" (p. 183). And the other group of Dr. Rieux and his friends who were trying to find a vaccine for the plague and who believe that although the plague is their fate, they still have some free will against it, to which Rieux's claims: "No, Father. I've a very different idea of love. And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture", Camus explains more: "there are times when the only feeling I have is one of mad revolt" (pp.182-183). Camus' existentialist beliefs are a call for action; they are rebellious beliefs that urge anyone to choose between accepting the absurd and rebelling against it in order to find freedom, any form of freedom. As the writings of Paul Ricoeur a contemporary of Camus explain:

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Ricoeur argues that the voluntary and involuntary dimensions of human existence are complementary. This can be seen through a phenomenological description of the three structures that constitute the voluntary: deciding, choosing and moving to action, and our necessary consent to the involuntary as that which is acted upon through our embodiment, the organ of our action. There is no seamless harmony between these dimensions of what is finally only a finite freedom. (Pellauer & Dauenhauer, 2020, para. 6)

Such freedom is mainly about deciding to choose, and any decision leads to action since even the option of not to act is a decision. For Camus, being alive has always been and will always remain an emergency, as one would put it, really an inescapable underlying condition (De Botton, 2020). He believes that the plague is just one thing that can make human life meaningless at some point, while everyone is trying to escape their fate by looking for reasons in order to make themselves believe bad things won't happen to them.

Paneloux's second sermon creates a paradox that either God is all-powerful and he is responsible for evil, or humans are free and responsible but God is not all-powerful. Rieux's answer to this was in his "blind human faith in the near future" (Camus, 1991, p. 59). Eventually, father Paneloux, the false representation of God, caught the plague and died, at some point people believe in God is dead with the death of the priest. Now they are left with a freewill in the face of the suffering, a freewill against God's powerful natural evil, as Rieux believes:

Paneloux is a man of learning, a scholar. He hasn't come in contact with death; that's why he can speak with such assurance of the truth with a capital T. But every country priest who visits his parishioners and has heard a man gasping for breath on his deathbed thinks as I do. He'd try to relieve human suffering before trying to point out its excellence. (p. 107)

Although Rieux is aware that he is fighting the absurd and that he will never be able to stop people's suffering, it is his obligation to take the responsibility he was given and do his

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best. Rieux cannot understand Paneloux's position because it does not imply any personal participation or responsibility, but instead, it is a hope for God's intervention. Absurdly, when father Paneloux was sick he did nothing except keeping faith in God. Death is certainly a fact yet people always try to stay alive. If there are no efforts, the human condition cannot change. Albert Camus concludes that father Paneloux does not revolt against absurdity and that's why he died.

3.4 Acting from Reason According to one's Duty

Bernard Rieux as the major character is the doctor who has the objectivity and rationality of a good western doctor. He is a person who is attempting to help the town out of a sense of duty, "Anyhow, in this respect, Rieux believed himself to be on the right road in fighting against creation as he found it" (p. 108). Rieux believes that as a doctor, it is his intellectual, moral, and medical obligation to remain in Oran and do what he can to help with the disease even if it means risking his life, he thought:

The essential thing was to save the greatest possible number of persons from dying and being doomed to separation. And to do this there was only one resource: to fight the plague. There was nothing admirable about this attitude; it was merely logical. (p. 113)

Camus discussed how genuinely Dr. Rieux does not see any other way to help, but in his position, the most responsible thing is his job and he must do it. He represents a person who acts from their objective duty according to their reason to do the right thing simply because it is the right thing; he is "The good man, the man who infects hardly anyone, is the man who has the fewest lapses of attention" (p. 211). In fact, doing the right thing might not make him happy and might even get him killed but he still has an obligation to do it because the moral law tells him to.

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Dr. Rieux's actual position of acting out of reason for his professional duties urged him to treat everyone equally. He somewhere left his sick wife to die believing that death is death. Her death was no surprise for him, he “knew that this suffering was nothing new for many months and the last two days it was the self-same suffering going on and on and on” (p. 241), and even without the plague there would have been plague even without bubonic and pneumonic plague there would have been whatever it was that killed his wife there is no cure for death. In other words, there is a fact that people are going to die; with or without plague nobody can escape death. To this sense, Rieux has some sort of relief thinking that no matter what happens, what is meant to happen will always, surely, and truly happen. At some point, he puts his work before his personal relationships, and this full objectivity defines him to be a good doctor who only cares about doing his job. One can call Rieux selfish to think about his life as a doctor and forget about his family, however, the plague gives him enough justifications not to be called so.

Eventually, Dr. Rieux works hard to stop the suffering of people around him. Yet, he believes that his acts are acts of morality and humanity, and he is only contributing to making people feel better by doing his job and no more than that. He believes that what he is doing for the people of Oran is not an act of heroism, to which he never called himself a hero, he insists:

no question of heroism in all this. It's a matter of common decency. That's an idea which may make some people smile, but the only means of righting a plague is common decency... I don't know what it means for other people. But in my case, I know that it consists in doing my job. (p. 142)

Dr. Rieux was a man of responsibility with a motive to act and help sick people, his only motivation was to do his job, and his professional responsibilities always come first. Camus added: “heroism and sanctity don't really appeal to me, I imagine. What interests

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me is being a man” (p. 213). Again, Rieux rejects any belief or morality that dictates his acts: “since the order of the world is shaped by death, mightn't it be better for God if we refuse to believe in Him and struggle with all our might against death, without raising our eyes toward the heaven where He sits in silence” (p.109).

Somehow, Rieux has the same reaction to the idea that God is responsible for evil as Ivan Karamazov in Dostoyevsky *The Karamazov Brothers*, through the complexity of remaining responsible in an absurd situation by accepting the absurd and rebelling against it; it is the urge to find answers to the most answerable questions. Dostoyevsky states:

There is only one means of salvation, then take yourself and make yourself responsible for all men's sins, that is the truth, you know, friends, for as soon as you sincerely make yourself responsible for everything and for all men, you will see at once that it is really so, and that you are to blame for everyone and for all things. But throwing your own indolence and impotence on others you will end by sharing the pride of Satan and murmuring against God. (Dostoyevsky, 2008, p. 533)

Both characters (as well as Camus himself) show some ambivalence in their religious beliefs, they are not sure that God does not exist, but they refuse to believe in him anyways. Rieux is unquestionably the ideal rebel, struggling against the inexplicable madness of existence.

Previously, when the Jesuit, Father Paneloux tells Rieux that they are both fighting for humanity's salvation, Rieux corrects him: “Salvation's much too big a word for me. I don't aim so high. I'm concerned with man's health, and for me, his health comes first” (p.183), salvation is a distant future value, whereas health is a present value. Rieux's vision keeps him focused on the gravity of the situation, and somewhat his responsibilities highlight the necessity of resistance in the name of survival.

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In the end, it's Rieux's reaction to the absurd that gave him a real purpose in life. He found a meaning for life through his fighting, he never stopped looking for a solution, a cure to the plague, even though he was fighting a natural force and trying to defeat the undefeatable. Camus exposes how mankind can build a moral compass in response to death. Dr. Rieux could not stop the plague from infecting humans, yet he found a way to protect the uninfected. He tried to isolate victims to prevent disease spreads throughout the city. Unfortunately, his friend Dr. Richard could not do that without any permission from the prefectural authorities. Dr. Rieux's acts and decisions indicate that he is revolting against the plague, committing to continue treating the sick although he has no idea when or how this nightmare is over.

3.5 Acting out of Emotion According to one's Love

Raymond Rambert is a journalist who visited Oran from France to learn about the living conditions in the Arab district and the city's sanitary system, "his newspaper, one of the leading Paris dailies, had commissioned him to make a report on the living conditions prevailing among the Arab population, and especially on the sanitary conditions" (p. 12). However, Rambert is trapped in the city of Oran during the epidemic. He misses his wife in Paris and he tried his best to leave the city, he used every means possible to escape, but because of the plague no one is allowed to leave since the government did not want the disease to be spread any further position. Whereas Rambert wants to leave to get back to his wife, so he is acting out of a sense of love, he is not acting much from his head but rather from his heart and not so much from reason but more from emotion. He argues:

Man is an idea, and a precious small idea, once he turns his back on love. And that's my point; we mankind— have lost the capacity for love. We must face that fact, doctor. Let's wait to acquire that capacity or, if really it's beyond us, wait for the

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deliverance that will come to each of us anyway, without his playing the hero. Personally, I look no farther. (pp. 140-141)

Rambert's selfish behavior is a picture of a man's struggle for his particular happiness in the context of collective unhappiness against which he can do nothing.

All in all, Rambert uses normative grounds to justify his actions, claiming that it makes sense to prioritize your children because you have a history with them and a relationship with them and that he should not necessarily treat people objectively and equally, but rather make certain decisions based on the types of relationships he has with them which introduces the concept of ethics of care as the idea that morality emerges from inherent human feelings of love, and it is founded on human relationships and needs in a moral principle that defines good as serving the needs of others and maintaining and enhancing connections. From this perspective, Rambert believes that what he feels right is right, and what he feels wrong is definitely wrong. The ethics of care would promote empathy and treating others in a way that does not hurt them. The ethics of care approach identifies the needs of all individuals in an ethical situation and attempts to maximize them it is different from utilitarianism however in that one person cannot be sacrificed for others also there is an attempt to resolve situations through human relationships and a sense that decisions should come from compassion rather than attention to rights or duties (Savulescu, 2020).

By the time, and after Rambert's several attempts to escape all failed, he decides to stay in Oran and fight against the plague alongside with doctor Rieux and Tarrou, he admits that if "he went away, he would feel ashamed of himself" (p. 174), responsibly he knows better that it's a shame for him to be happy to be happy all alone, to be happy when others are suffering.

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3.6 Defeating the Plague in the Name of Life

Doctor Rieux believes that human beings cannot rely on God alone. They must also do something or revolt to change their condition in order to correct and order the random misery of existence by submitting it to the orderings of human reason. The rational objective doctor is supposed to be emotionless and that's something Dr. Rieux and his friends experience every day with all those people dying around them, they had to confront the spouse and the children of a dying person saying that they are dying, or it is hopeless, or not only do they have it but you have it too. No one wanted to be put in such a very difficult situation to have to be the bearer of that kind of news and to be surrounded by that kind of suffering and death. However, it is the kind of situation that ignited a sense of morality and responsibility inside Dr. Rieux and his friends, and it is the same reason that made Raymond Rambert stay. Even though things are really meaningless and hopeless the question is where is the hope and the meaning to be found.

Likewise, the suffering made people like Rieux and Tarrou find joy in despair. In this context, Camus describes the plague as something within him, either by thinking about the plague as a disease or as a metaphor for something else; he believes that everyone has the plague within him, Rieux reflects it as:

No more than the experience of having known plague and remembering it, of having known friendship and remembering it, of knowing affection and being destined one day to remember it. So, all a man could win in the conflict between plague and life was knowledge and memories. But Tarrou, perhaps, would have called that winning the match. (p.240)

Consequently, the same thing as imagining that Sisyphus was happily rolling that rock (Camus, 1995). Rieux found meaning through his duty and Rambert Decided to stay. People end up having a sense of responsibility, as Rambert changed his vision, he now

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knows the true nature of love, which is about courage and giving and not about obsession, he knows that his wife is where his happens is and yet he cannot be with her since the conditions are different. So, he accepted his fate and stayed for the people of Oran. Eventually, the plague is over and Rambert returns to his wife as a sort of a happy ending and may be a reward for doing his duty.

Absurdity is described in the conditions of the inhabitants. They desperately do not have any hope in the face of the epidemic. But some people are not desperate. They decide to take action, for example, Doctor Rieux as the main character, rebelled against the epidemic conditions and the plague itself, and According to Camus, building an authentic version of life is strongly bound to rebellion, the moral reaction to the absurd. "I have no idea what's awaiting me, or what will happen when all this ends. For the moment I know this; there are sick people and they need curing" (p.108). He does not believe that God exists, and he doesn't hope so too, but he tries to find a solution by himself, he believes that bad conditions will not change if people do nothing. From an existentialist position, Dr. Rieux's moral acts define what responsibilities are and what should be done in the face of a godless universe and so he really thinks that meaning is to be found in a person fulfilling their moral duty. Camus represents the absurdity of existence and the logical reaction to that absurdity in a way that:

It could be only the record of what had had to be done, and what assuredly would have to be done again in the never ending fight against terror and its relentless onslaughts, despite their personal afflictions, by all who, while unable to be saints but refusing to bow down to pestilences, strive their utmost to be healers. (p. 254)

So far, his position as a doctor during a time of plague, explains how the meaning for his existence is to be found in struggling despite the suffering that stopping him from reaching his goals to find some meaning in the most meaningless and horrible situations.

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The plague eventually fades away after more than a year. The people of the town rejoice as it appears to be the end of their suffering. Normal life can be restored. Camus, on the other hand, views things differently. He believes that the plague is absurd as wars are:

Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world; yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise. (p.34)

When war breaks out people would say it is stupid, it won't last as the people of Oran believed that the plague is absurd. Equally, wars and plagues are unquestionably absurd, but that does not prevent them from lasting. Doctor Rieux may have contributed to the eradication of this particular outbreak of the plague, but he is well aware that there will always be others. "the same thing over and over and over again." (p. 140).

Obviously, the plague is a bacterium in a lab and under a microscope only, but in the real world for Camus, the plague is the citizens who are plagued each of whom becomes a stranger to the other, as each becomes a personification of death to their neighbors. Metaphorically, even doctor Rieux, the good doctor becomes a symbol of plague, as he comes to capture the sick from their houses, knocking their doors down and breaking the barriers that keep them from the outside, and dragging them off to their deaths. The plague is not much the cause that brings death, but death itself; it is the ultimate uninvited visitor. Absurdly, it is "the same thing over and over and over again" (p. 140). Camus defines the plague as: "All those folks are saying: It was the plague. We've had the plague here. You'd almost think they expected to be given medals for it. But what does that mean plague? Just life, no more than that" (p. 253). The plague is Rieux's belief that he can save the sick from dying it is father Paneloux's faith in a God that justify this suffering it is the citizen's refusal to believe in the plague, and their senseless habits of making plans for the future

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even when the world burns around them. However, the plague is not simply about the suffering, rather the plague is also the tendency, the urge, and perhaps the unavoidable hope to put an end to it. In other words, human attempts to arrange the madness of the world, it is the absurdity that consists in the tension of standing between meaningless suffering and humanity's attempts to stop it.

3.7 Conclusion

In a conclusion, Albert Camus' *The plague* can be absurdly divided into two parts: there is the plague as the absurd, and there is the revolt made by its characters against the absurd. Camus used the plague as a metaphor of death and meaningless, explaining that there is a kind of death and meaningless inside everyone including himself. However, when the actual death occurs people only realize how meaningless is the world that they are living in, and otherwise that creates a kind of inner hopelessness. Some people like father Paneloux kept their faith in God hoping that he is going to make meaning for them, other people like Raymond Rambert tried to escape the absurd by escaping death, and there are other people like Doctor Rieux and Jean Tarrou who never left and never lost hope facing the absurd. Differently, every character resisted the absurd in the name of life, and it's Camus's idea that the point of all of that, and the point of everything in life was and still to stay alive. Camus believes that humans have to struggle in order to find happiness just like Sisyphus and just like Rieux, and the meaning of existence is really to be found in the struggle particularly the struggle against suffering.

General Conclusion

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The purpose of this study was to find a link between Franz Kafka and Albert Camus in what is called the absurd. The research that has been carried out to convey a detailed theoretical framework for the study of the metaphor of the absurd, on the one hand, in a general manner, as many theorists and philosophers have defined it, and on the other hand by linking it to other wider concepts as nihilism and existentialism.

In this vein, absurdism was born between nihilists' belief that life has no centric meaning or value. By its turn, nihilism is based on the views of life to be purposeless and meaningless, along the lines of Frederick Nietzsche's concept of God is dead. In other words, the decline of Christianity made people reject any objective meaning, in fact, God as everyone believes cannot die, and what is really dead is people's belief in God. At this point, the absurd can be seen as the actual human position in the face of nihilism, as it can be the reason behind it. Now that God is dead, twentieth-century philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre came up with a new existential philosophy of creating their own purpose and value of life. Existentialists believe that they can create their own subjective meaning in life through free will, awareness, and personal responsibility, rather than simply accepting nothingness. They believe that life is absurd and that they have no choice but to live it.

Otherwise, the absurd gave writers a toolkit that can be used to challenge the complacent acceptance of this world, as it is also a reaction to life conditions since all around, the society acts as if its present state is entirely reasonable, and yet the results are clearly mad. So, if this is what reason produces, one would be better off being absurd.

On the one hand, the task of the artist was to create free-floating metaphors, which are then attached to real experience after the metaphor has been created, sometimes centuries

after, one can assume that people have experienced something in life and then they have used the expression “it's like”, and create a metaphor for what they have experienced. Hence, Kafka and Camus generate a stream of free-floating metaphors that can then be used to help construct models to describe life experiences. The creation and application sequence is the other way around.

Franz Kafka and Albert Camus, on the other hand, are considered symbols of the absurd metaphor. In their literature, they both employ the absurd as a metaphor for something else. However, Camus' interpretation of the absurd on the other hand, opposes Kafka's concept of the absurd as a source of despair. And the major difference between them is that Camus seeks purpose in life. He never lost faith in the possibility of creating a realistic hope in the most hopeless situation. However, Kafka believes that people will never be able to escape the absurd.

The discussion reverts to the original question posed in this study. What is the link between Franz Kafka and Albert Camus in the absurd? The answer to this question can be understood directly and indirectly in between the lines of this work. Each writer has seen the absurd in his own way from a different perspective, thereafter, they categorized it differently. The first category of the absurd is a literary concept, and the second is more a philosophical concept. So, *The Metamorphosis* can be a clear example of literary absurdism, and *The Plague* is an example of philosophical absurdism. Under literary absurdism, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is about the society, the historical period, and the family that altogether make no sense. The only valid reaction for Kafka was to make non-sensical stories. Eventually, all that was said before is reflected in the life of Gregor Sama.

Meanwhile, philosophical absurdism is bigger and different. It is based on the sudden sense among European intellectuals in the middle of the 19th century, that religion made no sense. Now here's the strangest thing. The Danish philosopher Kierkegaard himself assembled all the elements to demonstrate that belief in God was irrational and nonsensical and then decided to carry on believing. He called this the leap of faith. However, most of the philosophers who followed Kierkegaard agreed with the first half of his philosophy but then refused to leap alongside him: they became convinced atheists. This group includes Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus. The next stage for those philosophers who had grown up in a religious world, where Nietzsche is being the best example, questioning that people cannot leave God out of the universe and then just carry on living as before. Because who is in charge? Who is going to set the rules? And what is the point of everything? It's this panic about living in a universe without God that worries all of them. This world without rules, or authority, or evident purpose, they called "the absurd". This is a bigger thing than society makes no sense or the family makes no sense. And then a giant circle to demonstrate the area covered by philosophical absurdism that the universe has no purpose, there are no rules for morality, there is no end-goal to life or purpose, no reason for living. In the end, the existentialists conclude that it's time to stop worrying about who will set the rules and make up their own rules.

Consequently, Camus believed that human existence was intrinsically absurd and that one might be an authentic rebel without losing connection with reality. Dr. Rieux, from *The Plague*, denies the existence of God, his authentic rebel was more a sign of the absurd, as he was constantly aware of the absurd reality around him. Camus' ideas that the absurd can appear out of nowhere, and what is oddly noticed in *The Plague* is the joy, humanity and collaboration felt through the struggle that is probably even more startling than the plague itself.

All in all, Camus did not only talk about the absurd through plague, yet he was trying to understand it from the reaction of people against it. He mainly believed that the absurd is not only a powerful mortal disease, it is Doctor Rieux' doing his best to stop the pain around him though he was aware of the nature of that pain, it is Raymond Rambert love and cares about his wife when all people around him were dying in vain, it is father's Paneloux belief in God to intervene, in other words, it is life.

A model of the universe as expressed in philosophical Absurdism. The Plague itself is the universe. It is indifferent to suffering, it punishes the innocent randomly alongside the guilty ones, it has no purpose. Camus shows a series of people reacting to it (Doctor Bernard Rieux, Jean Tarrou, Raymond Rambert, Father Paneloux, and others), many of them become better people as a result, but there is no standard good reaction. This too is an existentialist conclusion that everyone has to find his plan and hope that it works because the universe will not give people a single answer.

Albert Camus' existentialist viewpoint in *The Plague* is understood from an absurdist perspective. Camus used the plague as a metaphor for death and meaninglessness. That reflects how the fear of death and meaningless is inside everyone, including Camus. However, only after people experience death, the death of their beloved ones, neighbors, or patients as is the case for Doctor Rieux, at that point they understand how useless and meaningless the world that they are living in is. Camus believes that happiness can be found through pain, it is found in the fight for life. As he always imagined Sisyphus happy at some points with his fate. For with or without the absurd, life will always stay worth living.

Surprisingly, there is a parallel between *The Plague* and *The Metamorphosis*, both revolve around individuals attempting to survive a sudden and uncontrollable natural

disaster that is going badly and may worsen. One is about a person who has been transformed into a big insect, while the other is a city that has been plagued. The only difference between the novels is how their main characters react to the absurd. Hence, *The Metamorphosis* is about Gregor's attempts to escape the absurd. He was metamorphosed a long time before his metamorphosis with his commitment that of paying the family debts, his responsibilities, and ironically the way his family thanks him by treating him like an insect who worked continuously to provide money and comfort his family. Gregor's physical transformation was only a metaphor for his alienation in his society and inside his family. Thus, he was looking for freedom, and since he could not fight the absurd as Dr. Rieux did, he could not find it anywhere, so he escaped the absurd by escaping life. He detached himself from his sad meaningless reality because that was the only way for him to find happiness. His death was only a metaphor for freedom.

What the reader should take away from this thesis is the idea that the absurd is the product of personal or collective experience in life; it dreads its existence and fears its rebellion. Everyone inescapably meets the absurd as something within their minds, or as feeling unloved and uncared about, just like Gregor's alienation within his own family. However, sometimes the absurd can go beyond the human ordinary condition to be a natural destructive evil force just like the plague. The moral conclusion of this research through the eyes of Kafka and Camus is that the absurd is a sense that the world is cruel and indifferent and this cruelty and indifference is more than just a static state of affairs: the world can eventually lash out with sudden, new, unexpected cruelty. Both Kafka and Camus could not control life's conditions, they could not ask for help or justice in the face of the absurd, they could not stop it nor avoid it. The only thing they could do was to control the way they react to it.

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