

THE CONCEPTS OF NAUSEA AND ABSURDITY REVISITED DURING THE *CORONAVIRUS* PANDEMIC

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The year 2020 began with the world being controlled by a then-unknown force. This unknown force would later be called a coronavirus or Covid-19. Not a single country would be free from infection by this virus. We are petrified with astonishment when confronted with this disease. Initially, after admitting the reality, we started struggling with and revolting against this virus. Time has led us to the consideration of our existence. This pandemic inclines us to revisit the major themes in existential philosophy discussed by Sartre in the Nausea and the philosophy of the absurd by Camus in The Myth of Sisyphus, The Plague, and The Stranger. The study addresses the concepts of anxiety, suffering, freedom, self-deception, absurdity, and choices. When confronted with the reality of the disease, we are shocked by an odd sensation like what Roquentin felt in his experience of nausea. This bizarre feeling brought an initial rejection, a self-deception followed by suffering, and a reflection of one's freedom. The concept of freedom leads us to certain decisions we make and the choices we are offered. The absurdity brought about by the pandemic is a reality that we must accept as it is. How would Sisyphus feel if he were living in the present? The struggle by Sisyphus can be our struggle now against a coronavirus. We feel condemned to roll a rock to the top of a mountain, a punishment that seems like 'futile and hopeless labor.' However, we are stronger than our rock. The paper presents a parallelism between our suffering during the pandemic and the sufferings of Sisyphus and Roquentin.

Keywords: Coronavirus, The Absurd, Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, The Plague, The Stranger, Nausea, Sartre, Freedom, Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2020, the world was held captive by a then-unknown force – a lethal virus. This unknown force, later named *Covid-19*, caused an unprecedented global pandemic that drastically and radically affected our lives. The world has stopped – commerce and business, travel and tourism, religious and cultural activities, and even

our social and personal activities have to standstill (Aguas 2020, 285). In the early stage of the pandemic, we did not know the capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses of the virus. Science needed some time to find the answers to all our questions about the virus, and surely it has come out with solutions and remedies. The virus, like an enemy, attacked all people regardless of gender, age, or origin. Millions of people have been defeated by the enemy, while many are still fighting against it. The alarming spread and severity of cases challenged governments regarding their preparedness for a global health crisis. Since its outbreak, many lives have been lost around the globe (Gozum and Aguas 2022, 202). However, it could also be said that all countries - from the least developed to the most developed ones – have handled the situation in their own inspirational ways.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, humankind has been suffering from a kind of nausea. The reason for his nausea is this: one suddenly finds oneself in a situation without knowing the reason and without one's consent. Loneliness, exhaustion, and a sense of responsibility, as well as freedom, are experienced by the individual. Likewise, one suddenly finds oneself in a chaotic and irrational world. One's desire for order and reason is not fulfilled once again. The absurdity of the world again hits us like a ton of bricks. Our world affected by coronavirus displays Sartre's description of man's existence in nausea and Camus' absurd world.

Flynn suggests that despite the differing arguments among existentialist philosophers, the five themes are common. Firstly, the idea that 'existence precedes essence' means that essence is the result of existence. One constitutes one's essence during one's process of existence. Secondly, time is important as man is a time-bound being. Thirdly, humanism in existential thought emphasizes a focus on the individuality of man in a social world. The fourth theme is the responsibility of man in freedom. The final theme is related to the importance of ethical considerations in choosing and constituting one's essence (2006, 8).

Sartre is one of the philosophers who associated himself with existential thought, and Camus is a philosopher who is associated with existentialism by others. "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself," said Sartre, who describes the first principle of existentialism as being subjective. He adds that man first exists and then imagines himself as being in the future. According to Sartre, if we imagine ourselves in the future, each of us will make something of ourselves. He (2004, 341) writes:

Man is at the start is a plan which is aware of itself, rather than a patch of moss, a piece of garbage, or a cauliflower; nothing exists prior to this plan; there is nothing in heaven; man will be what he will have planned to be. Not what he will want to be. Because by the word "will," we generally mean a conscious decision, which is subsequent to what we have already made of ourselves.

While trying to reveal the ways of being of the individual, existentialist philosophers tend toward the states of mind of the individual, such as the feeling and emotions of love, hate, absurdity, fear, anxiety, suffering, sadness, nuisance, and

anguish of the individual. All of these are individual and subjective and change from one to the other. These are the subjective expressions of the individual. Nausea in Sartre and the absurd and rebel in Camus are examples of extreme states of mind. According to Camus, one exists as one who rebels, a kind of life that brings consciousness contrary to death or suicide (Cucen 2021). For Sartre and Camus, individuality and subjectiveness are parts of our struggle in this world to create ourselves as individuals.

The global pandemic has affected our ways of "making of the self;" once again, we experienced the absurdity and nausea that life inflicted. During the pandemic, we have questioned our existence in this world, focusing on the concepts like freedom, individuality, anguish, and suffering. The pandemic provided us with an opportunity to explore how the strike of an unknown enemy has shaken the whole world; it made us revisit the consideration of the reality of man's existence in the world. Thus, in the ensuing discussion, we will focus on the initial experiences of the world facing the *coronavirus pandemic* and how they are relevant to Sartre's conception of nausea and Camus' absurdity. We will highlight the parallelism between our sufferings during the pandemic and the sufferings of Sisyphus, the sufferings of the people in the town of Oran, Meursault's detachment from the world around him, and Roquentin's nausea. Sartre's conception of nausea occurred as a result of the depression of man in the mid-19th century and as a tendency to investigate his being and his identity. The concept of nausea puts the problem of the existence of man and the apparent meaninglessness at the heart of the discussion. Falzon (2005, 105) describes the meaninglessness of existence in the following quotation.

First of all, Nausea appears to be inviting us to shake off our ordinary, taken-for-granted presuppositions about the world, or more precisely all the principles, categories and forms we might ordinarily appeal to in order to justify, organize, explain, give meaning, order, or point to the world and ourselves. They are the forms we try to impose on the world, the coverings or trappings that hide the world from our eyes. To abandon them is to discover the truth about the world, to confront things as they really are, to come face to face with brute existence — meaningless, contingent, superfluous, absurd, and nauseating.

Camus, for his part, deals with the existence in terms of the contradiction between man's expectations and man's experiences in this world. Foley (2008, 6) argues that human beings desire to find an intelligible world in which there are comprehensive explanations with respect to human values. The absurd arises when "the world is resistant to this kind of intelligibility." Copleston (1994, 393) stresses the manifestation of the absurd in different ways and exemplifies them like "... the perception of Nature's indifference to man's values and ideals, through recognition of the finality of death, or through the shock caused by the sudden perception of the pointlessness of life's routine." Man's confrontation with the absurd is best narrated in Camus' (1948,138) description of the feelings of the people in Oran.

Thus, week by week, the prisoners of the plague put up what fight they could. Some, like Rambert, even contrived to fancy they were still behaving as free men and had the power of choice. But actually, it would have been truer to say that by this time, mid-August, the plague had swallowed up everything and everyone. No longer were there individual destinies; only a collective destiny, made of plague and the emotions shared by all. The strongest of these emotions was the sense of exile and of deprivation, with all the crosscurrents of revolt and fear set up by these.

Camus describes that the plague made many people prisoners because they had to be isolated to prevent the spread of the virus. However, what has been experienced was not something individual but a collective destiny. This imprisonment brought feelings of fear, exile, and deprivation. Confrontation with the feeling of the absurd resulted in revolt. Similarly, the *Covid-19* pandemic threatened man's life and put him into despair and depression. Once again, we have been confronted with the absurdity of life.

NAUSEA OF ROQUENTIN AND NAUSEA IN THE ERA OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Sartre is usually associated with existentialism which he describes as a philosophical movement that voices the human existence that lost one's faith in history or past, alienated from one's society, and broke off one's ties to one's roots. Existentialism mainly focuses on the idea that the individual who is a part of a society has been threatened partly because the bond between today and the past has been broken and partly because man has become a being devoid of meaning. Sartre (2007, 33) expresses the feeling of Roquentin, "I have never before had such a strong feeling that I was devoid of secret dimensions, confined within the limits of my body, from which airy thoughts float up like bubbles. I build memories with my present self. I am cast out, forsaken in the present: I vainly try to rejoin the past: I cannot escape.

According to Carruth (1964), loneliness, anguish, and doubt were experiences shared by the existentialists, and they had a profound concern for the fate of the individual confronted with nothingness and absurdity. This concern has become a concern for all ages, including ours. The mid-19th century conditions have led philosophers to question the identity of a man who is suffering from depression resulting from historical circumstances. Pessimism, resulting from social chaos, lack of belonging, and alienation, is a critical issue to existentialist philosophers.

The existential idea deals with man as an individual being rather than man as a general being of an essence. Real knowledge will come from one's knowledge of oneself; likewise, real being is in one's own individuality. Thus, the starting point of exploration is man as an individual, which directs us to a subjective way of philosophizing. In the *Editor's Note to Nausea*, Sartre emphasizes that the accounts in the novel are Antoine Roquentin's personal papers, and they have not been altered. This implies that the novel is told through the eyes of one individual character. They are accurate reflections of his thoughts and experiences. The subjectivity stressed here

has been the core of existential thought, reacting against an objective understanding of human behavior. However, the protagonist initially intends to keep a diary of his experiences, keeping an objective record of everything by listing, categorizing, and defining. The objective observation of oneself, things, and people later prove to be impossible when he realizes that the essences of things no longer make any sense. Copleston emphasizes Sartre's insistence on the intentionality of the emotive or emotional consciousness. He focuses on the emotive way of apprehending the world, which is always intentional. "A man who is afraid is afraid of something or someone. Other people may think that there is no real objective ground for his fear. Moreover, the man himself may say in subsequent reflection, 'there was nothing to be afraid of after all.' But if he genuinely felt fear, his first order emotive or affective consciousness certainly intended something or someone, even if vaguely conceived" (Copleston 1994, 346).

The central idea of existentialism, that "existence precedes essence," displays the subjective interpretation of existence. Man has been given a responsibility to construct his essence. In order to do this, he was put into this world where he will struggle slowly by means of suffering, fighting, producing, enjoying, helping, and a great many more things. This open-ended process targets a definition that cannot be achieved until death. This is the reason why essence can only be complete after existence. One will become how one creates oneself.

The responsibility of this creation is a burden to shoulder. In creating the essence, one is free, and one's existence is dependent on this freedom. Only man is given the responsibility to constitute his essence in one way or the other after his existence. Man is the only being who can choose himself and shape himself according to his will and realize himself. This opportunity and freedom to choose one's own self generates a responsibility given to man. The responsibility of choosing to be good or bad, faithful or faithless, coward or bold, is given to man. Furthermore, Sartre generalizes this responsibility and claims that man is also responsible for all mankind. Man is not only responsible for himself but also for all men in his society, country, and the world, for all the happenings and developments. It is clear that one cannot decide on his nationality, gender, or age; however, we have the right to say yes or no to all the things happening around us or all the things imposed on us, and it is our responsibility to show an attitude.

This hard responsibility, as well as a continuous process of choosing, puts man into depression. This is the reason for man's nausea, according to Sartre. Man is put into this world without being asked for, and he was not informed about the reason for his existence in it. From then on, he will be experiencing continuous nausea and depression when handling his greatest responsibility, just as in Sartre's *Roquentin in Nausea*. It requires some time for Roquentin, the protagonist, to really understand what he is suffering from or what is happening to him. All the objects and people around him seem to be acting in strange or different ways. A pipe, a fork, or a doorknob that he tries holding in his hands makes no sense. Roquentin is unable to classify the objects around him, a queer feeling that gets hold of him. He describes his condition in these lines: "Something has happened to me; I can't doubt it anymore. It came as an illness does, not like an ordinary certainty, not like anything evident. It came cunningly, little by little; I felt a little strange, a little put out, that's all" (Sartre 2007, 4). At first, he

thinks that this is just a passing moment of oddness. However, later, he must admit that this feeling of uneasiness will remain. What really happens to him is a realization of the distinction between existence and essence. When one day he picks up a stone to throw it to the sea, he feels puzzled, a condition that was recognized by others. The various qualities of the stone-like being muddy, wet, flat, but dry and clean on the other side made him afraid. The odd feeling resulted from the confrontation with the distinction between existence and essence. The essence of the stone varies. In time, he will conclude that the essences are elusive.

At this point, Roquentin starts questioning the reason of this odd feeling and finds that the simplest solution would be to accept the changes in himself. According to him, all this unpleasantness signals an overthrow in his life that terrifies him. He convinces himself that his odd sensations are due to his solitude. To manage his loneliness, he visits cafes crowded with people and eavesdrops on their conversations. Then, he decides that writing a diary is of no use and starts writing "Nothing new" with a bad conscience. He realizes that he is not telling the truth to himself about what is happening to him. Here in *Nausea*, Sartre starts addressing the theme of freedom and self-deception in existential thought. Roquentin feels unable to cope with his freedom and deceives himself by rejecting what is happening to him.

In trying to hold a paper covered in mud, he realizes that he does not want to touch it. When touching a dirty object, he is disgusted by the existence of the object rather than the characteristics of the object. He stresses that normally we touch objects, and it is not the objects that touch us. However, now, he has the odd sensation that the objects touch him as if trying to establish a relation. Then he questions his freedom in the sense that he cannot fulfill his desire to pick up that muddy paper. Fear and anxiety are the things that lead him to reject his freedom and responsibility. In the case of this rejection, he lies to himself by saying that he is no longer free (Sartre 2007, 101). His social encounters, the town life, his travels, and his adventures do not matter anymore. He tries to do more research about the history and hopes the past might offer him some help. He attempts to delve deeply into the past aimed at establishing a relationship between existence and the past. He thought that past could offer reasons for his existence in the present. However, he concludes that the past is dead, already gone, and can offer nothing more than academic research. He focuses on the present and realizes that the present is also fleeting.

Roquentin's study about Rollebon serves as the introduction to the theme of duality. As he studies more, he establishes a link between himself and Rollebon. When he looks in the mirror, he sees his reflection as Rollebon. He argues that they have many parallel things. The dual self allows him to observe his consciousness. At a point, he cannot see and recognize his face anymore. He finds himself in nothingness. "In his suffering, Roquentin is reduced to nothing, to the nauseated consciousness of nothing. He is filled with meaningless, anarchic visions" (Carruth 1964, 6). Through the character of Roquentin, Sartre explains the concepts of anxiety, suffering, and freedom. Later in the novel, we detect that freedom becomes the central theme in Sartre's description of the protagonist. His relationship with Anny displays the concept of freedom. He admits that he feels alone for the first time and wishes that Anny were there to talk about what is happening to him. He struggles with the idea of seeing her and recalls the memories in the photographs. Sartre introduces his relationship with

Anny in order to propose the idea that we are faced with free choices that come with a hard responsibility. Roquentin lies to himself by saying that he has no choice and must see her. He faces the weight of responsibility in the form of self-deception. Sartre implies that no matter how much we try to deceive ourselves, we have choices and are free to choose one or the other and consequently shoulder the full responsibility for our choices. We did not ask for such freedom but were given it.

As Roquentin holds a knife and looks at the root of a chestnut tree, he understands the reason of the odd sensation. The cause of his nausea is his fear of existence. Whatever he touches has no essence but exists. He cannot find the right words to describe the handle of the knife or the root of the tree. However, they are there, and they exist. Any attributes that he uses to explain these objects seem to hide their existence. He concludes that the reason for these attributes is to provide a reason for their existence. However, no reason is needed for something to exist. This is where man finds himself in a meaningless existence.

Sartre's concept of nausea must be taken together with the themes of existentialism like freedom, self-deception, suffering, and anxiety. Today the whole world is suffering from nausea. We find ourselves amid a meaningless existence. People have struggled to find a way out to survive this disease. Some people worked hard because of their profession to find a remedy, ways to cure those who have already been infected, and ways to avoid the infection of those who have not yet. Politicians tried to govern their country to protect, comfort, and heal their people. Nations helped each other in different ways, like by sharing information about treatments and strategies and providing medical supplies for those lacking.

There may be some questions about the coronavirus, but one thing is sure, it is here, and it affected our lives, and we need to confront its existence as we struggle to contain it and make sense of our horrible experiences with it. Some people did not experience it and refused to recognize it. Some people insisted that they could go on living with their everyday routines without thinking about the virus. We can argue that this is self-deception. Some choose to deceive themselves as if their lives are just like they used to be. This is like Roquentin's initial rejection of the odd sensation when he felt it first. He had argued that it was a temporary sensation before he experienced the frequent forms of his nausea. He ignored it and attempted to do things that would please him in his everyday life. However, it did not work. The early response to the reality of the *coronavirus* is a rejection. The rejection of the possibility, strength, and permanence of *Covid-19*.

Time has passed since the appearance of the first infected man and the first death due to the virus. We have admitted that the virus was here and there; the possibility of confronting it anywhere or anytime has to be accepted. The world has seen how far and how fast it can travel. We have seen or talked about the worst cases and conditions of the infected people. We cannot deny its strength, and we are just hoping we can overcome its effects. However, we have not imagined the quick passage of the disease. Scientists' arguments differed in the estimated permanence of the disease, and we understood that we had to live with it for some time.

Once the reality of the present condition is acknowledged, the question arises: how to live with it? The feeling of anxiety has appeared in the lives of most people. We have been anxious about the present and the future. The idea that we might we are

confronted with the unknown and unseen enemy made us anxious. The existence of such a threat is the cause of the angst. The angst itself is the cause of our suffering. We felt overwhelmed with the idea that our lives were in danger. We suffered from the idea that the unknown and unseen enemy was hiding somewhere to attack and defeat us. We also feared the kind of suffering that we might be experiencing if infected by the *coronavirus*. The physical and mental suffering described by the people who suffered and who have seen and treated the ones who suffered frightened us. How to face the continuous feeling of anxiety and suffering?

Once the reason for anxiety and suffering is accepted, the level of rejection is eliminated. Then, we had to find our own ways to struggle and live on. Man had to recall the previous disasters, diseases, or wars and think about the people who revolted against the enemy. As Sartre has pointed out, nothing has changed. Furthermore, everything goes on existing in a different way. It seems like a nausea or like an adventure in which I question myself and my existence here. We start feeling nausea of the meaninglessness of our existence. However, as Sartre argued, this nausea will be the starting point of man's wriggle out of the meaninglessness of our existence. This is where the consciousness gets into use. The mind of man was given a target; our aim was to survive in this troublesome world. We found various ways like producing materials, reading books, writing what we feel or see, protecting ourselves and loved ones, helping others, or trying something new.

Another important theme in Sartre's *Nausea* is freedom. "Man is condemned to be free. Because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does." Sartre's words emphasize that freedom is the hardest responsibility that man has to shoulder. Inhibitions and bans during the *Covid-19* pandemic have changed our lives. In different countries, different precautions have been taken depending on the government's decisions due to the spread of the virus. Some countries banned the activities in which many people were engaged, ranging from sports matches to meetings of local organizations. The idea that interaction in physical circumstances might enhance the spread of the virus restrained our movements. The airlines have stopped their flights for an undetermined period. Some countries even declared a curfew. We had to stay away from our loved ones.

Living under these conditions, we felt imprisoned or captive. We questioned the things we used to do and the ones we were deprived of. This was when we started questioning our freedom. We are born to be free, aren't we? Was not freedom our hardest responsibility? Here, we needed to remember the concept of choices and decisions. Sartre's freedom lies in the choices that we make. We were still free even when our lives were threatened by the virus and even when we were deprived of many things we used to have. However, what made us free even then was that life provided us with choices. We could choose what to do and how to act even under these circumstances. What precautions to take or how to pass our time had to be decided. Some people struggled against the enemy by taking strict measures, while some used light weapons. People found different ways to spend their time eating, reading, writing, working, or helping. However, we were given choices, and we were the ones to decide for ourselves. This concept of freedom is the core of existential thought and the philosophy of the absurd.

WHAT DOES THE ABSURD MAN TEACH US TODAY?

This *Covid-19* pandemic has also compelled us to revisit Camus' philosophy of the absurd in terms of what we have experienced since the beginning of 2020. At this point, we revisit *the Plague*, *the Myth of Sisyphus*, and *the Stranger* to explore Camus' conception of the absurd. In *The Plague*, when the plague was officially declared an epidemic, the people of Oran had already confronted the idea of the absurd. Camus compares it with war when he describes the first time the word plague was uttered. It seems like a declaration of war. "There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise" (Camus, 1948, 34). The plague becomes an official enemy against which people will fight collectively. The confrontation with the absurdity of life was the beginning of a war.

The concept of absurdity strikes us right at the beginning of *The Myth of Sisyphus* when the narrator questions if life is worth living. Camus begins *The Myth of Sisyphus* by questioning what "one truly philosophical problem" is. His answer is "suicide" (Camus, 1979, 11). Then he questions why a man commits suicide and is led to a few so-called reasons or experiences. When he thinks about the people who committed suicide after experiencing various events, he concludes with their confrontation with the absurdity of life. Copleston (1994, 392) explains:

The presupposition, however, is that man -seeks a meaning in the world and in human life and history, which would ground and support his ideals and values. Man wants to be assured that reality is an intelligible teleological process comprising an objective moral order. To put the matter in another way, man desires metaphysical assurance that his life is part of an intelligible process directed to an ideal goal and that in striving after his personal ideals, he has the backing and support, so to speak, of the universe or of reality as a whole.

According to Camus, what we expect from life is meaning, order, and reason. However, what life offers us is chaos. There is a real conflict between man's expectations and the condition of the world. Our experiences upset us in the sense that we find them unordered, unreasonable, and meaningless. We look for a cause-and-effect relationship in which we can make educated guesses about how certain things will end in certain ways. When our expectations are not fulfilled, we find life meaningless. This is when man confronts "the absurd." "I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world" (Camus, 1989, 122). In *The Stranger*, Meursault concludes that both he and the whole universe is indifferent to human life when he faces the absurdity of life. Life is absurd, and there is nothing more important than the individual's conscious existence. He is a stranger and an outsider. However, confronting and accepting the absurdity of life leads him to come to terms and make peace with himself.

Confrontation with the absurdity of life is hard to bear, and Camus argues that man copes with this situation in two ways. Man, either hopes to find a meaning in believing in God and faith or just admits that life is meaningless. According to Camus,

the latter might lead man to suicide. If there is no meaning in life, does it mean that it is not worth living? If this is the case, suicide appears as a logical solution. However, Camus proposes another possibility to cope with the confrontation with the absurd. He suggests accepting the existence of a world devoid of meaning and target and agreeing to live in it.

Absurdity is a contradiction that we can never agree upon. An agreement will only mean an escape from confronting the absurd world. Contrarily, confrontation with the absurd requires a revolt against it. According to Camus, living with the absurd means confronting the contradiction, having consciousness of the fact, and surviving through it. *The Myth of Sisyphus* ends with the myth about the character Sisyphus, who had been condemned forever. His everlasting duty is to roll over a rock to the top of a mountain and eventually leave it there to fall back. No matter how many times he tries, the rock will fall again. The gods thought that a punishment of "futile and hopeless labor" would be the most dreadful (Camus 1979, 107). The punishment of Sisyphus is a representation of the absurd man's life in this world. Sisyphus has to struggle forever in a hopeless endeavor. He will find happiness only if he admits that there is nothing in this world except for this absurd struggle.

Camus (1989,13) begins *The Stranger* with striking lines revealing the protagonist's emotional indifference at the beginning of the novel.

"Mama died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know. I got a telegram from the home: "Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours." That doesn't mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday."

The existential reading of the lines signifies the meaninglessness of human existence. Death is a central and an inescapable fact of life. Absurd man's struggle in the meaningless world will be through a search for meaning and target in good and reasonable deeds. However, we usually perform everyday activities due to habit or temperament. Such habits make us feel like machines laboring in predetermined ways. This is when we feel that our acts are meaningless and absurd. In a world without meaning and reason, we feel like strangers thrown into a place of exile. However, we choose to live with the absurd and to be exiles. Camus (1979, 13) writes:

What then is that incalculable feeling that deprives the mind of the sleep necessary to life? A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels like 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.

The choice of living and feeling like an exile brings a life filled with choices. Camus makes a connection between choices and values. Man is a being of values, and once he finds something worth of value, he not only desires it but also claims that it is worth desiring. The desire for something signals the idea that the world should be in a

particular way. Once we have values, we think of ourselves as free thinkers and choosers who can pursue good goals. We believe that we are free to actualize our values. Without values, our deeds will be meaningless and aimless. Values are the things that motivate us to prefer one over the other.

According to Camus, neither the world nor the human mind is absurd on its own. The idea of the absurd arises in the confrontation of both. "It is that divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints, my nostalgia for unity, this fragmented universe and the contradiction that binds them together" (Camus 1979, 50). The feeling of absurdity is not one to be overcome. We must learn to live with it. In the confrontation between the world and our mind, we must not try to reconcile or ignore it. The idea of the absurd lies in the fact that while the world remains so silent, we expect it to tell us the meaning it hides. This is the basic relationship that man has with the world.

According to Camus, living with the idea of the absurd has three outcomes: revolt, freedom, and passion. He (1979, 62) writes: "Thus, I draw from the absurd three consequences which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness, I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death - and I refuse suicide." The absurd man does not accept any sort of agreement in his struggle against life. The absurd man is free to think and to act in the way we choose. The life of the absurd man is filled with passion for filling his life with experiences rich in variety. In order to live with the absurd, as rational beings, we must accept to live in an irrational world and experience it to its utmost. The acceptance of the contradiction between our desires and the way of the world requires a continuous life of absurdity. This is a revolt against the meaninglessness of life and the end of death waiting finally for us. There is no place for both hope and suicide in this revolt. Living with the absurd is like a revolt against the idea of death led by a man condemned to death. In *The Plague*, Camus (1948, 178) narrates the conversation between Paneloux and Rieux:

"I know. I'm sorry. But weariness is a kind of madness. And there are times when the only feeling I have is one of mad revolt."

"I understand," Paneloux said in a low voice. "That sort of thing is revolting because it passes our human understanding. But perhaps we should love what we cannot understand."

The revolt is noble. In Rieux's conversation with Paneloux, Camus stresses that we might sometimes get tired of the struggle. However, weariness is a part of a mad revolt. If revolt is above our understanding, we should better love what we cannot understand. Our efforts might sometimes seem inadequate, yet; we should always remember them as a meaningful struggle against the enemy. Revolt is a struggle no matter what the outcomes will be. It is a noble struggle that will ultimately end with our defeat. Yet, it is our struggle.

The absurd man lives with the idea of freedom. "Assured of his temporally limited freedom, of his revolt devoid of future and of his mortal consciousness, he - lives out his adventure within the span of his lifetime. That is his field, that is his action, which he shields from any judgment but his own" (Camus 1979, 64). The freedom lies in one's actions and choices. All the actions and decisions lead one's life in a certain

way. Meursault in *The Stranger* has a kind of freedom because he has no desires or ambitions in the dull and monotonous life to which he has committed himself.

Freedom for the absurd man is the freedom that he experiences and actualizes. Freedom is to think and act in the way he chooses. "The only one I know is freedom of thought and action. Now, if the absurd cancels all my chances of eternal freedom, it restores and magnifies, on the other hand, my freedom of action. That privation of hope and future means an increase in man's availability" (Camus 1979, 56). Such freedom is present in every moment he experiences. When the absurd man realizes this freedom, he decides to live in the present moment. McCarthy (2004, 75) explains:

Camus lists examples of the absurd that are generally reminiscent of *The Stranger*: the daily routine of work, which is rendered tolerable by habit, can trigger an onrush of futility (we remember Meursault's comments on work in Part 1, Chapter 1); man lives for the future but ahead of him lies nothing but death (Meursault talking to the boss about careers); a landscape may by its very beauty indicate its indifference to man (Meursault on the hills around Marengo); a man speaking in a phone booth seems to the observer a puppet making empty gestures (to Meursault, most people appear in this light).

When we think of the current condition of the world, it is true to say that once again, man has faced the absurdity of the world. With the coronavirus spread in our lives, we have been confronted with an absurd life. In trying to understand why and how it broke out, we felt desperate to find the right reasons. No exact information and truth could be achieved until today. Our desires regarding our work, relationships, plans, or health did not compromise with what the world presented to us. We have given a break for an unknown time in our lives.

The confrontation with the absurdity has not received the same reaction from all people. Some people preferred to escape from the absurdity by sheltering in the belief in God and faith. The certainty of a God giving meaning to all that is happening around the world. For those people, the reason lies in God, and the belief in faith will bring remedy. Confrontation with the absurd might also bring suicide. We have heard the news about people who committed suicide when being infected by coronavirus or because of the possibility of such a case.

Just like Sisyphus, we are condemned to roll a rock to the top of a mountain and leave it at the top to fall back. It is like a punishment for us where our struggle seems futile and hopeless. No matter how much we try, things will be left undone, unsolved, and unsatisfactory. Camus (1948, 73) emphasizes the experience of involvement in an absurd situation of imprisonment, which has to be accepted as it is. Just like the people of Oran, we have faced the lockdown and are imprisoned in our houses. We were warned to take precautions, but we also knew they were never enough. The unknown and unseen enemy might have defeated us at any time. The appearance of this enemy was our punishment, and we seemed like hopeless soldiers. So, we continue to ask the questions: What should we do? What does Camus suggest to us if we want to be absurd men? How can we cope with nausea caused by our confrontation with the absurd?

CONCLUSION

The current situation of the world is like being on the edge of enormous changes in many aspects. Like the Second World War, humankind's war against coronavirus has been fought worldwide. The death toll continues to rise. We have admitted that the world and our lives will never be the same. The economy, education, human relationships, and human psyche have been suffering gravely. With all the precautions and restrictions that have been taken, man felt isolated not only physically but also mentally. However, it is also a time for man to return to himself as an individual being.

In this paper, we discussed the concepts of individuality, nausea, and absurdity in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. As we have mentioned in the discussion of Sartre's nausea, the fate of the individual has once again become the concern for philosophers as man is confronted with the nothingness and absurdity of life. The experiences against an enemy presented a life devoid of meaning. The idea of a meaningless life awakened an odd feeling that we could regard as nausea. Recognizing nausea was a hard process that we have to pass, but living with it has been even harder.

Pessimism was everywhere together, hand in hand with social chaos. Loneliness, anguish, and doubt due to our confrontation with this disaster have been common feelings worldwide. What to do with this suffering of nausea has become the greatest problem to be solved. Experts in different professions dealt with the causes and effects of the virus in their own ways, either to stop or cure the disease. However, philosophers were questioning the life of human beings as individuals.

The feeling of nausea would be the initiator of our existence in a meaningless world. Anxiety, fear, and suffering would be with us in our struggle. However, we also knew that we were free to struggle in an anxious and fearful existence. Freedom is given to us; we cannot reject it. Man would choose his own ways from a number of choices to survive in this meaningless world of continuous nausea. Survival would be our target, and we would take full responsibility for our decisions to achieve that target. The pandemic condition of the world made us question the freedom that we have. However, we must not forget the presence of a number of opportunities and choices that we had, and we were free to choose from them.

Camus claims that suicide is "one truly philosophical problem" and asserts that when man is confronted with an absurd life, he might question if such a meaningless life is worth living. Camus replies as 'yes, it is worth living.' Sisyphus was punished with "futile and hopeless labor." However, in confronting the absurdity of life, he found happiness in his struggle and suffering. In our struggle with the coronavirus, we have been free to choose different ways to find happiness. It would be right to conclude that the absurd man would find happiness in his meaningless struggle. Camus (1948, 149) says, "the habit of despair is worse than despair itself." In the struggle against the pandemic, those who overcome the habit of despair will be better off.

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