

THE STOICS

10. Camus





AGENDA

1. Introducing Camus
2. The Absurd
3. Hope or Suicide
4. Camus as Stoic?
5. Rebel

1. INTRODUCING CAMUS

‘The realization that life is absurd
cannot be an end, but only a
beginning.’





Combat

Dans la guerre comme dans la
paix le dernier mot est à ceux qui
ne se rendent jamais. Clemenceau

Un seul chef : DE GAULLE — Un seul combat : pour NOS LIBERTÉS

ORGANE DU MOUVEMENT DE LA LIBÉRATION NATIONALE N° 57 MAI 1944

Le tirage total des journaux du
Mouvement de la Libération Nationale
COMBAT - DÉFENSE de la FRANCE
FRANC-TIREUR - LIBÉRATION
LORRAINE - RÉSISTANCE
atteint 1 million 150 000 exemplaires.

PENDANT TROIS HEURES ILS ONT FUSILLÉ DES FRANÇAIS

Il faut dire les choses comme elles
sont : nous sommes vaccinés contre l'hor-
reur. Tous ces visages défigurés par les
balles ou les talons, ces hommes broyés,
ces innocents assassinés, nous donnaient
au début la révolte et le dégoût qu'il fal-
lait pour entrer consciemment dans la
lutte. Maintenant la lutte de tous les
jours a tout recouvert et si nous n'en
n'oublions jamais les raisons, il peut
nous arriver de les perdre de vue. Mais
l'ennemi est là, et comme s'il voulait à
ne laisser personne se détourner, il aug-
mente ses efforts, il se dépasse lui-même,
il renchérit chaque fois un peu plus sur
la lâcheté et sur la crasse. Aujourd'hui, en
tout cas, il est allé plus loin qu'on ne
pouvait l'imaginer et la tragédie d'Ascoq
rappelle à tous les Français qu'ils sont
engagés dans une lutte générale et im-
placable contre un ennemi déshonoré.

Quels sont les faits ?

Le 1^{er} avril 1944, dans la nuit, deux ex-

Vers 23 heures, alors que M. Carré,
chef de gare à Ascoq, alerté à son loge-
ment par les agents du service de nuit,
prenait au téléphone les dispositions uti-
les, un officier allemand faisant partie du
transport pénètre et hurlant dans son bu-
reau suivi de plusieurs soldats qui, à
coups de crosse, abattent MM. Carré, chef
de gare, Pelouquin, commissaire de 1^{re} clas-
se, Derache, facteur-enregistreur qui s'y
trouvaient. S'étant ensuite retirés à la
porte du bureau, ils tirèrent une salve de
mitrailleuse sur les trois agents abattus.
MM. Carré et Pelouquin sont grièvement
blessés au ventre et aux cuisses. Puis
l'officier amène un important contingent
de troupes dans la localité, fouille les
maisons après en avoir défoncé les portes
et rassemble environ 60 hommes qui sont
amenés dans une pâture en face de la
gare. Là on les fusille. Vingt-six autres
hommes sont également fusillés dans leur
domicile ou à leurs abords. En plus de ces
86 fusillés, il y a un certain nombre de
blessés.

Le départ de GIRAUD

Les bons apôtres qui, à Vichy ou ail-
leurs, attendaient du général Giraud un
non ou reniement — la trahison en face
de l'Allemand n'est pas son fait — de-
moins l'étalage indiscret et fâcheux
d'une certaine amertume, auront été de-
cous.

Ce sont, en effet, des paroles de con-
fiance et d'union que le général Giraud
a adressées à l'armée française avant de
revenir dans le rang. Paroles toujours
utiles, toujours opportunes puisqu'au-
dessus des questions de personnes, de
situations fausses et des malentendus
inévitables elles rappellent à tous l'ob-
jectif commun, l'ennemi commun : le
huche.

Il faut donc savoir gré à l'ex-com-
mandant en chef d'avoir en parlant as-
sumé ses responsabilités et coupé court
aux propagandes empoisonnées qui, de
puis trop longtemps, se servaient de son
nom et se nourrissaient de ses faiblesses
comme de ses vertus.

..

Mais des amis nous ont dit avec beau-
coup de franchise : « Le cas Giraud est



DÉPARTEMENT de Seine et Oise
COMMUNE d'Épinay sur Orge

CARTE D'IDENTITÉ

Nom : MATHE
Prénoms : Albert
Fils de Jacques Mathé
et de Madeleine Pomettier
Profession : Rédacteur
Né le 7 Mai 1911
à Chorsy-le-Roi.
Département : Seine
Domicile : Rue du petit Vaux.

SIGNALEMENT

Taille : 1m 76
Cheveux : chatain
Moustache : néant
Yeux : Gris vifs
Signes particuliers :
Nez : Droit
Forme générale du visage : Allongée
Teint : Mat.

Empreinte digitale



Signature du Titulaire :

Albert Mathé

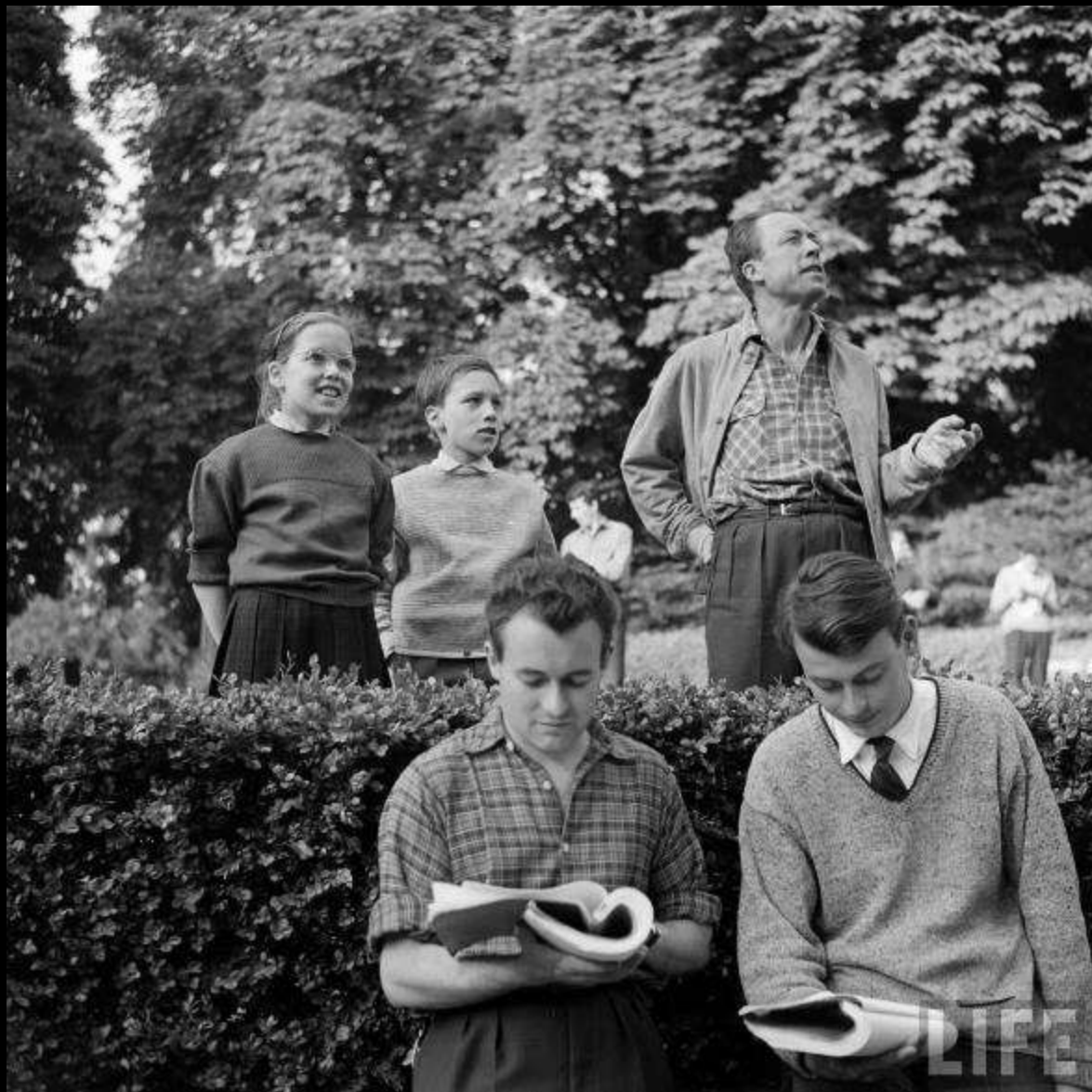
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Le 20 MAI 1943
486 Le Maire comp. h.









ALBERT CAMUS EST MORT

[illegible]

A black and white portrait of a man with dark hair, wearing a suit jacket, white shirt, and dark tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows on the right side of his face.

Answer: **AC**

LE MEILLEUR DES NOTRES

[illegible][illegible]

Il s'agit d'un jeune homme de 18 ans, nommé Jean-Pierre, qui a écrit cette lettre à son père, le 10 mai 1944, pendant la guerre.

[illegible]

C'est le plaisir qui nous fait vivre, et non le travail.
 C'est le plaisir qui nous fait vivre, et non le travail.
 C'est le plaisir qui nous fait vivre, et non le travail.

Keywords: CLAVE

1990, que la OCHA, que la
misión médica del PNUD y
la Comisión de OCHA por
reservar a sus miembros.

[illegible]

La 100e Section était présente sur le parvis au moment où les sapeurs-pompiers ont été appelés pour venir combattre un incendie survenu dans la cuisine d'un appartement du 10e étage. Les pompiers ont pu éteindre le feu grâce à leur matériel et à l'aide des voisins. Les pompiers ont pu éteindre le feu grâce à leur matériel et à l'aide des voisins.

Combat

ROSE DE TRANSMON

Dr. James H. Thompson, president of the American Medical Association, said in a letter to the *Journal* that the association's members do not believe that tobacco is a health hazard.

[illegible]

LE MEI

Il s'agit d'un homme d'âge mûr, d'aspect sérieux, avec des cheveux grisonnants et une barbe courte. Il est vêtu d'une chemise à carreaux et d'une cravate. Le portrait est encadré par une bordure simple.



DES NOTRES

« Ah !... C'était un homme », se souvient-il. « Il était humble et
 si simple... Il était d'origine juive. Il avait 40 ans
 et avait de ses frères, avec la Perennée et puis le docteur
 et un second qui s'est battu avec plusieurs autres maquis-
 tats. Tout était éliminé pour ne lui, un résisteur, tout à
 fait humble.

[illegible][illegible]**ANSWER CLUES**

ALBERT CAMUS (1913-60)

Grew up in French Algeria in poverty

Early football career ended by TB

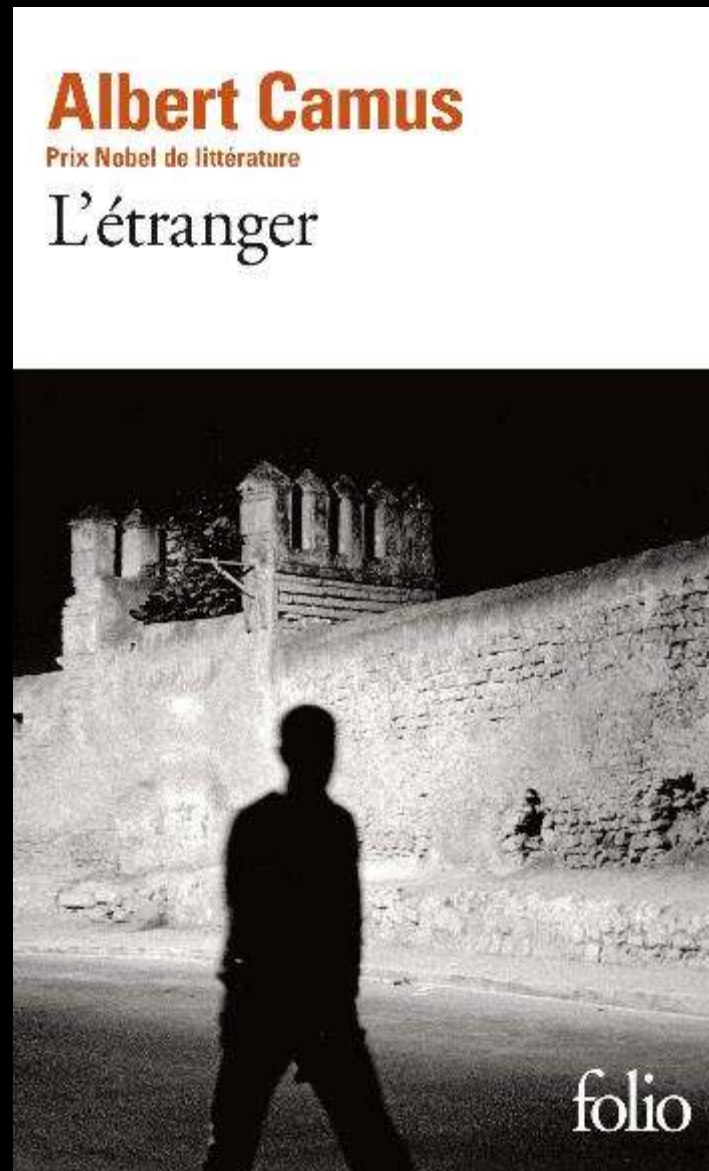
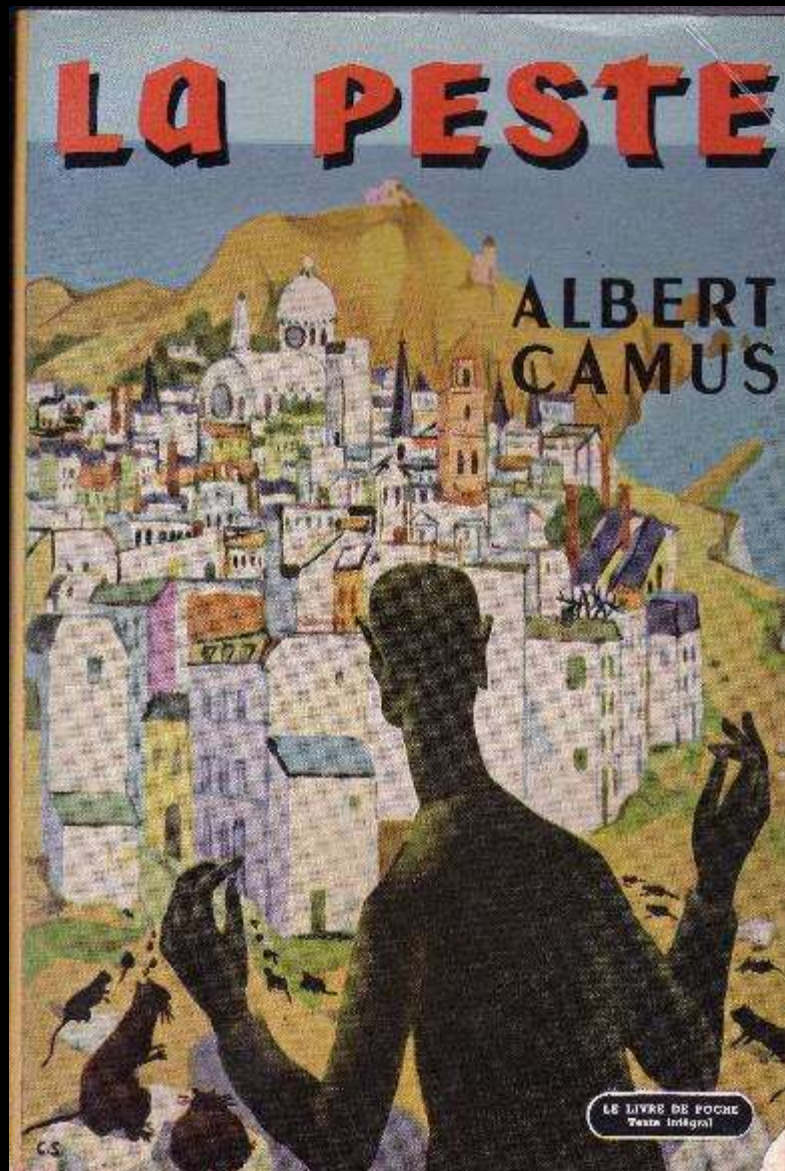
Member of French Resistance and political activist

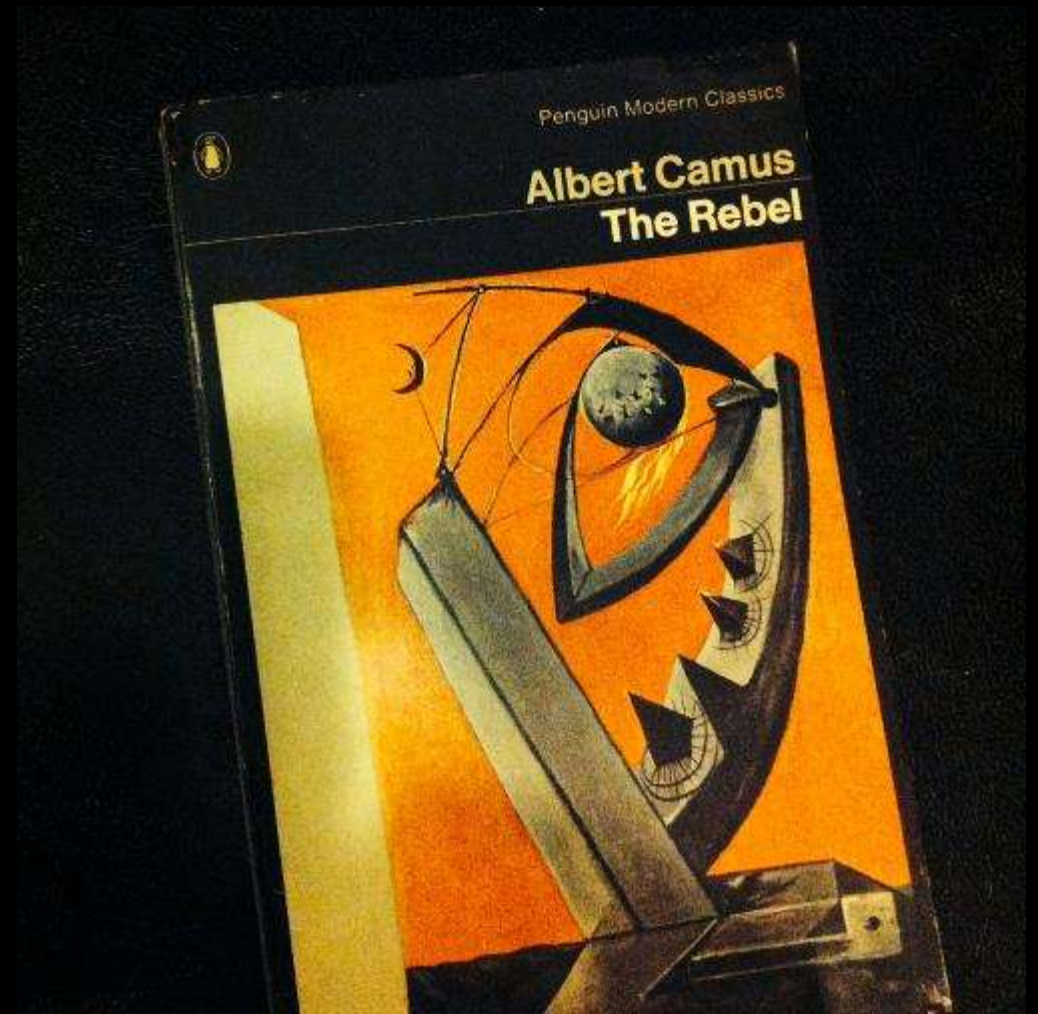
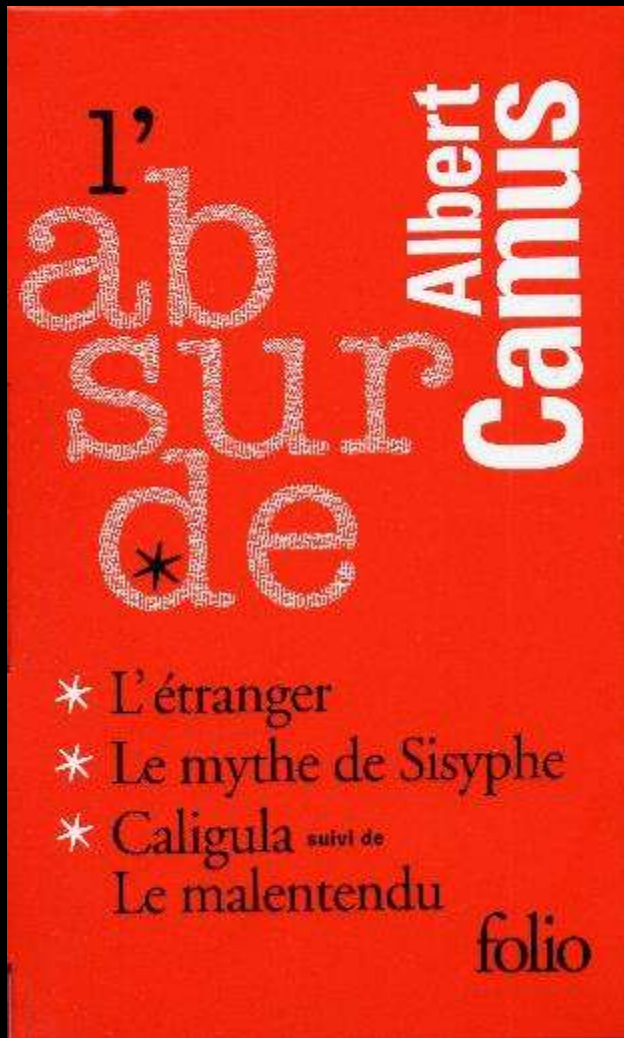
Noble Prize winner

Untimely death in a car crash

Famous works include *The Stranger* (1942), *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) and *The Rebel* (1951)







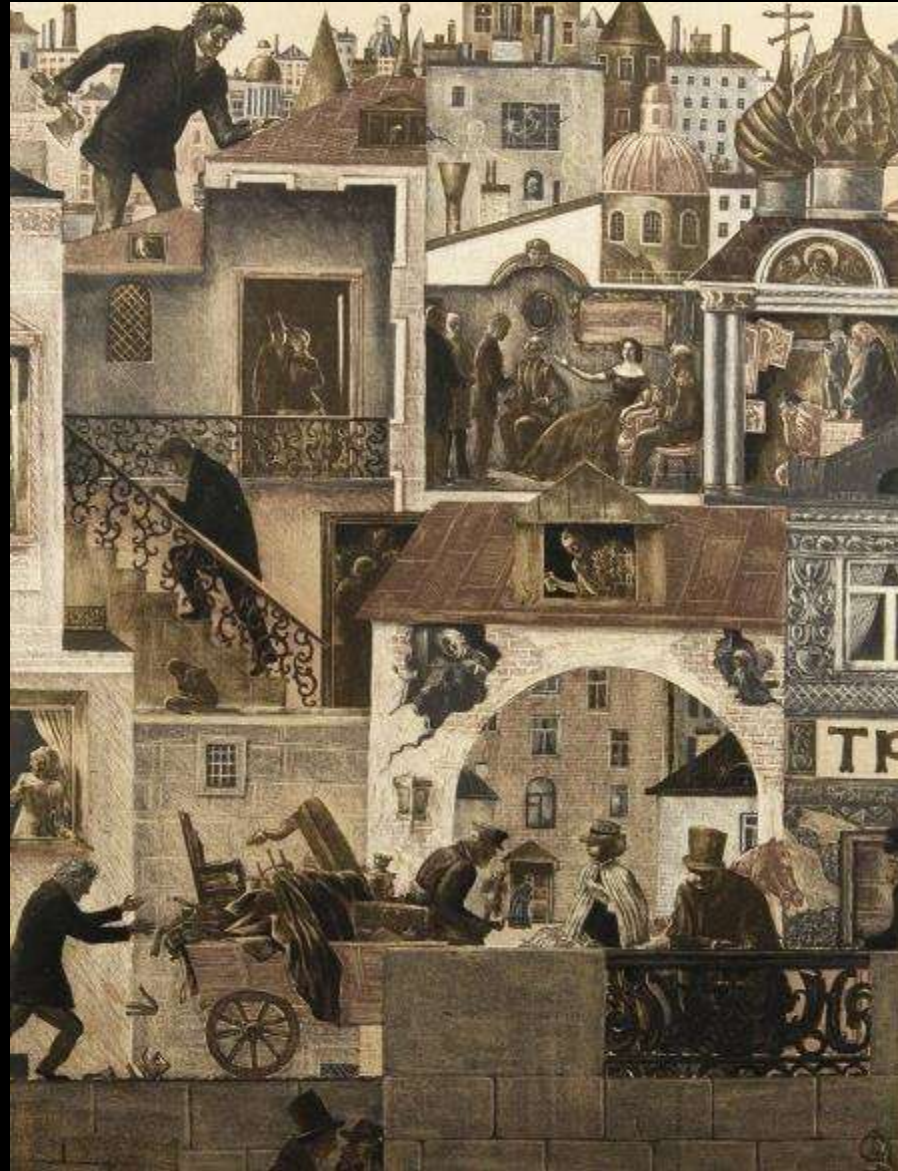


2. THE ABSURD

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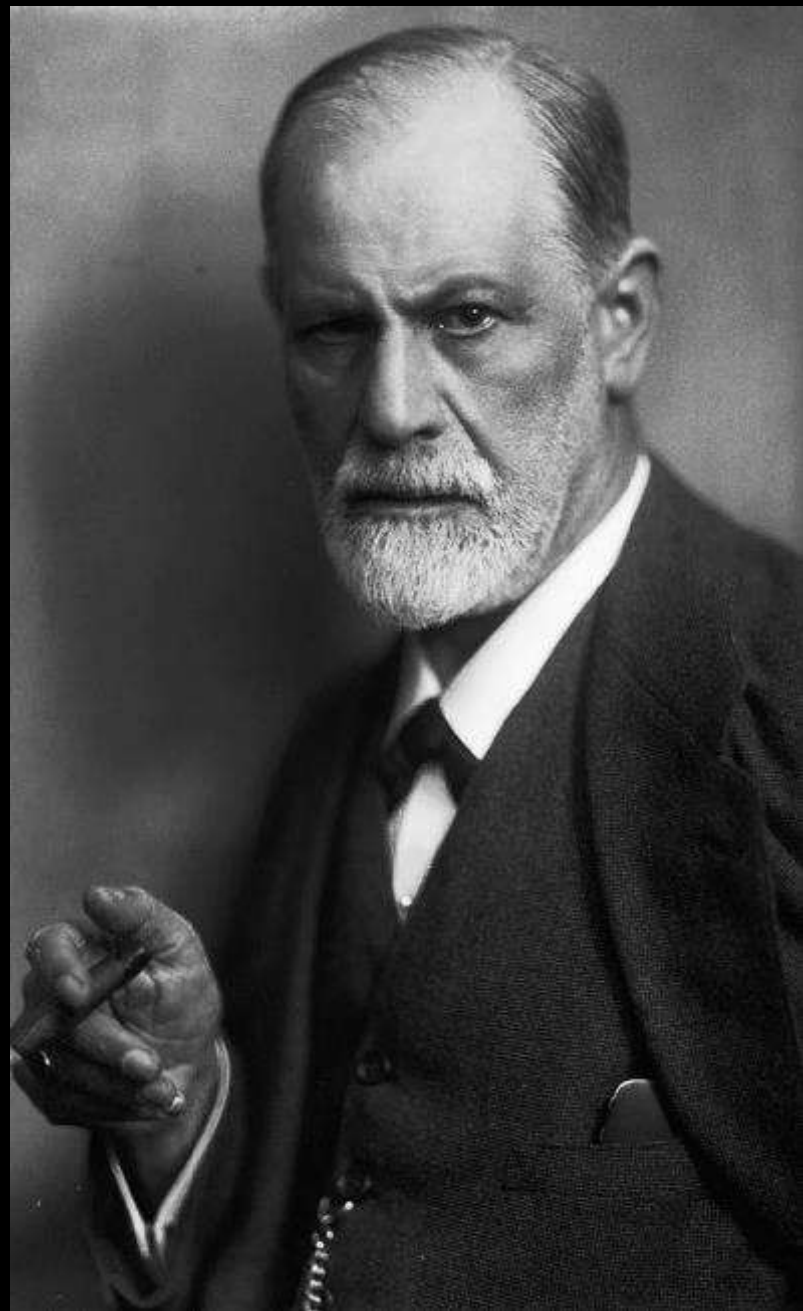
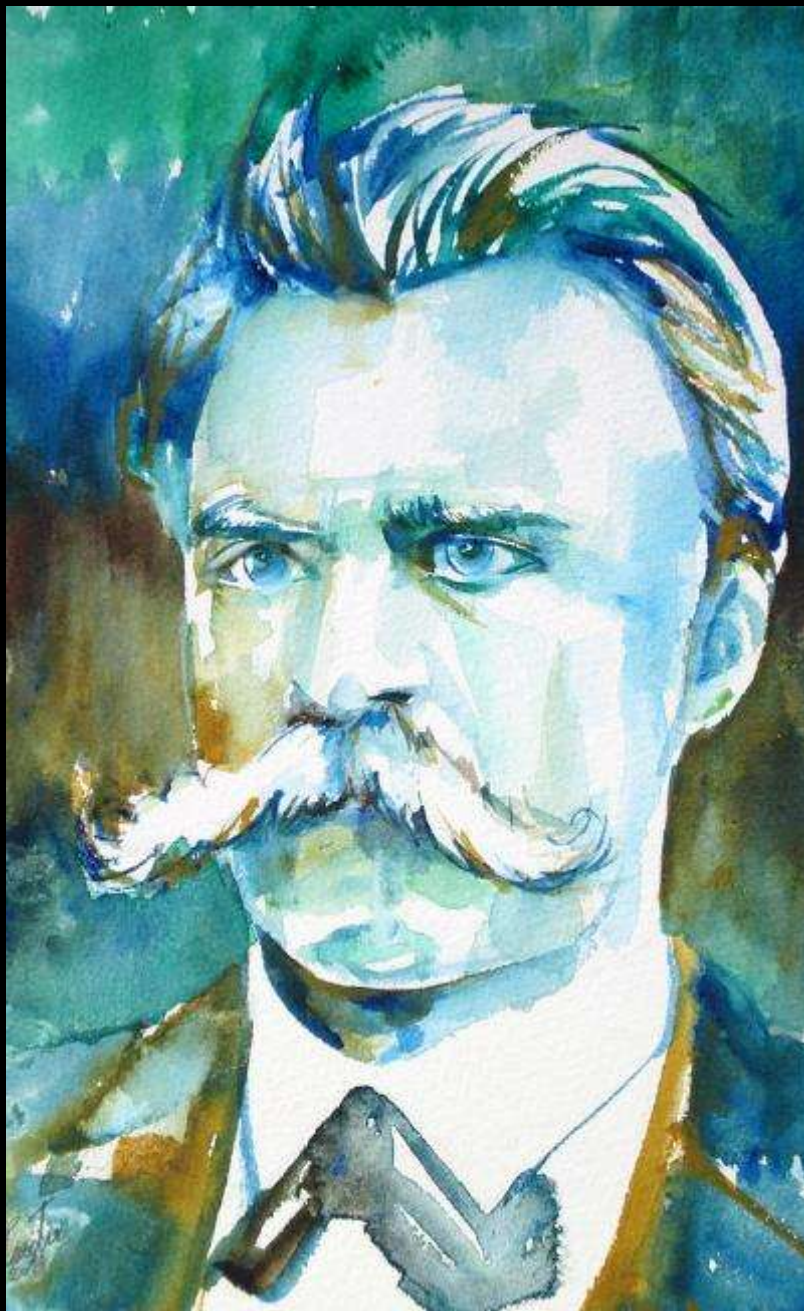


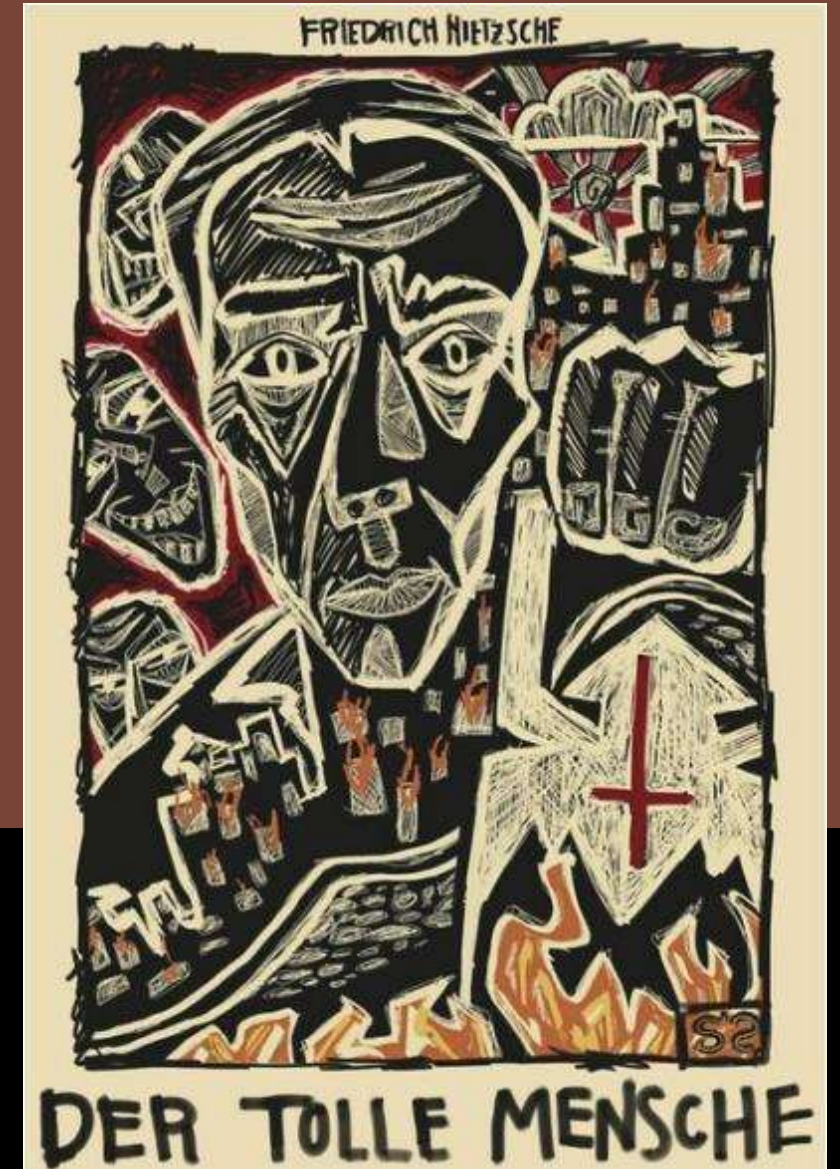
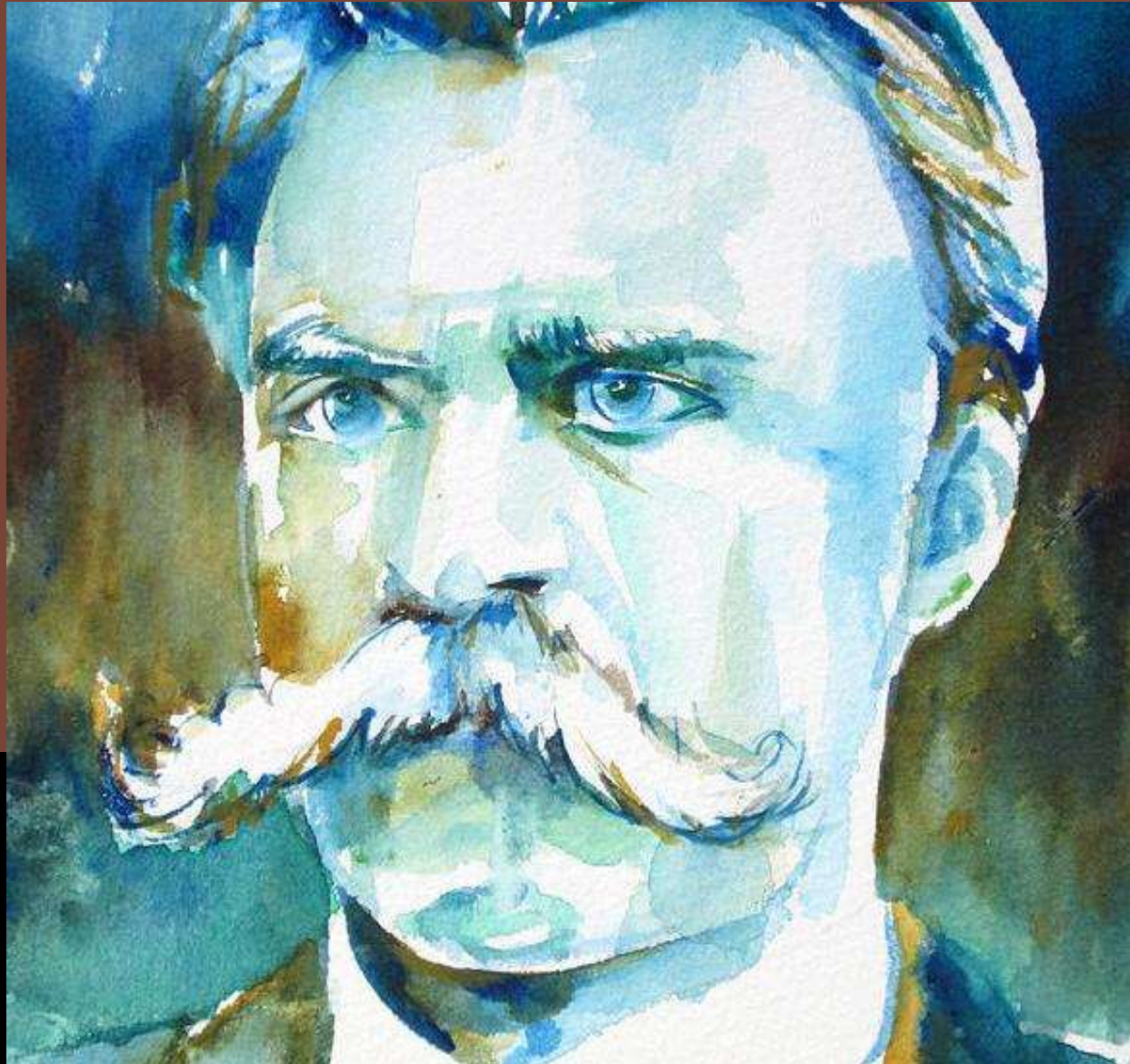
GRAND INQUISITOR

- The parable of the “Grand Inquisitor” appears in *The Brothers Karamazov*
- It tells the story of Jesus Christ returning to Seville, during the time of the Spanish Inquisition
- He performs miracles to astonished crowds, but is arrested and sentenced to death by the Church the next day
- The Grand Inquisitor visits Christ in his cell and explains to him why the modern Church no longer needs him...









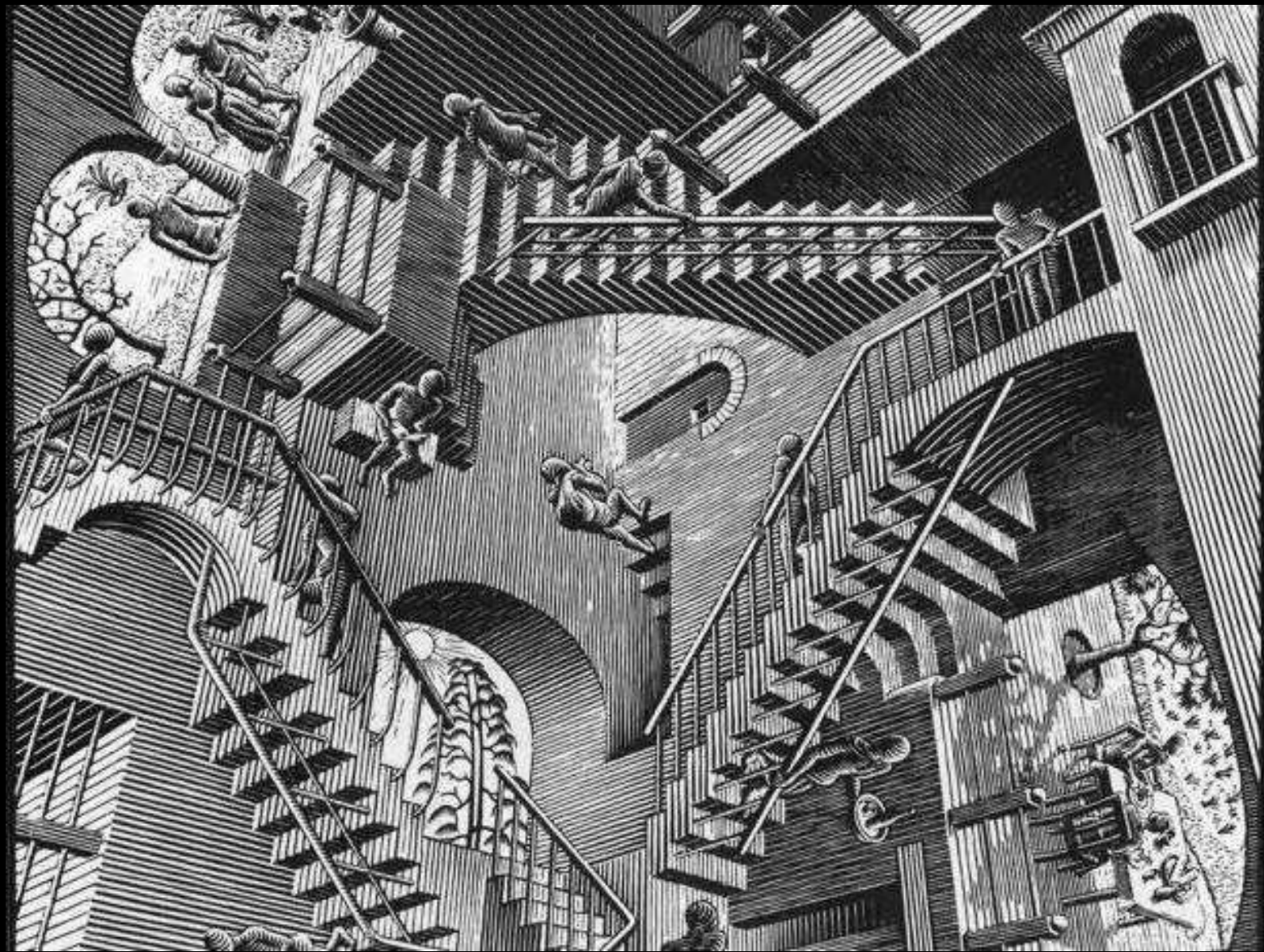


DEFINING ABSURDISM

- The struggle of the individual against authority
- The collapse of traditional ideas about morality and God, be it the 'Law' or role of religion in society
- The emphasis on the individual's self-determination to be who they are *despite* the uncertainty or absurdity of their condition
- But is this all about the *death of God*, or the *birth of human freedom*?
- Can we make meaning in a meaningless world?

How would you define *absurdity*?



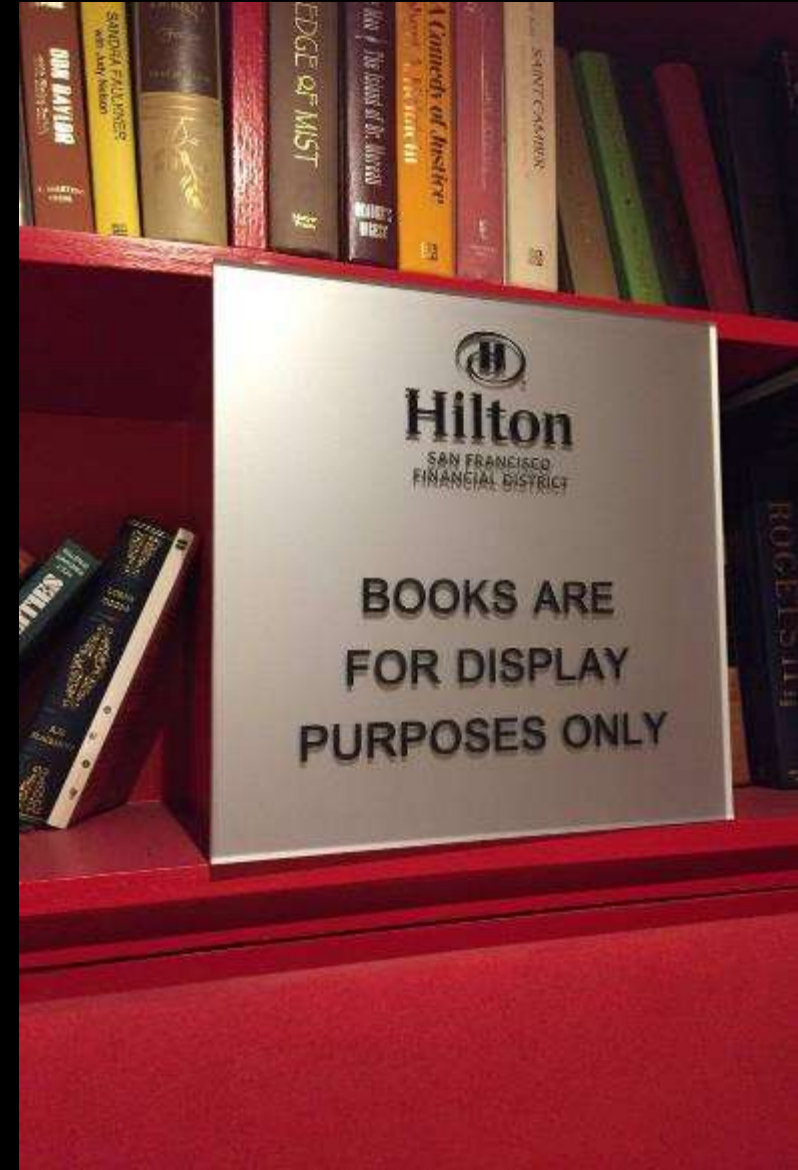


Welcome to
St Pancras
International
Southeastern
highspeed
services

We wish you a
journey.

...

10:29:00





THE ABSURD

How would you define *absurdity*?

For Camus, facing the absurd is a common theme in his novels and essays

‘The fundamental subject of “The Myth of Sisyphus” is this: it is legitimate and necessary to wonder whether life has a meaning’ (Preface)

But what does confronting the absurd amount to?

This is what the *Myth of Sisyphus* investigates...

‘At this point of his effort man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world.’

‘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 a 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.’



3. HOPE OR SUICIDE

*What is the key problem
facing philosophy, and
why?*

LE MYTHE
DE SISYPHE
PAR ALBERT CAMUS



LES ESSAIS XII

nrf

GALLIMARD





SUICIDE

The Absurd emerges from the conflict between a human desire for reason, order and God, and the indifferent silence of the universe

Faced with a totally meaningless world, our first reaction is to escape it, through suicide

Suicide is a reaction to the 'absence of any profound reason for living'

While taking this to be a logical response (the other is religion), Camus wants to explore how we can resist the absurd and live fully

This means developing a philosophy not attuned to reason, but to real life, as we live it



‘Hope of another life one must “deserve” or trickery of those who live not for life itself but for some great idea that will transcend it, refine it, give it a meaning, and betray it.’

‘It is quite false to try to see in Don Juan a man brought up on Ecclesiastes. For nothing is vanity to him except the hope of another life. He proves this because he gambles that other life against heaven itself.’

OR HOPE...



¶ ECCLESIASTES, or the Preacher.

C H A P. I.

¹ The Preacher sheweth that all humane courses are vaine: ⁴ Because the creatures are restlesse in their courses, ⁹ They bring forth nothing newe, and all olde things are forgotten, ¹² And because he hath found it so in the studies of wisedome.



he wordes of the Preacher, the son of David, King in Ierusalem.

² * Vanitie of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanitie of vanities, all is vanitie.

beeene already of olde time, which was before vs.

¹¹ There is no remembrance of former things: neither shall there bee any remembrance of things that are to come, with those that shall come after.

¹² ¶ The Preacher was king ouer Israel in Ierusalem.

¹³ And I gaue my heart to seeke and search out by wisedome, concerning all things that are done vnder heauen: this sore trauell hath God giuen to the sonnes of man, || to be exercised therein.

¹⁴ I haue seene all the workes that are done vnder the Sunne, and behold, all is vanitie, and vexation of spirit.

¹⁵ * That which is crooked cannot

|| Or so of-
fend them.



4. CAMUS AS STOIC?



STOIC

Transience

Disposition

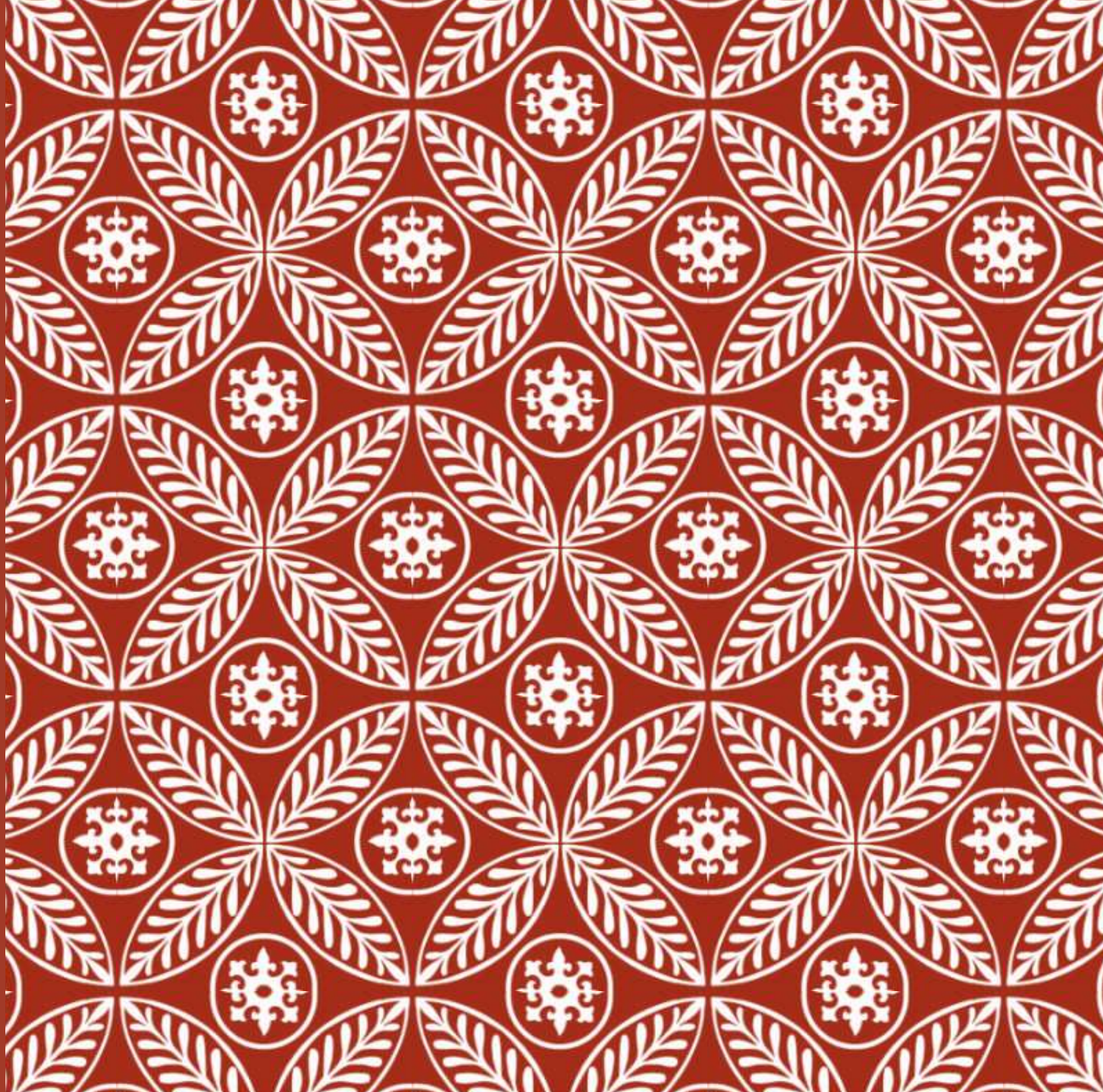
Fate

STOIC

Self-Knowledge

Compassion

Living with Nature



Our life involves an 'unceasing struggle' and 'confrontation' to find meaning in an otherwise meaningless world

The absurd arises out of this encounter between the human mind's need for a hospitable reason and happiness, and the world as it is

How can we live in this desert?

An emphasis on *askesis*: living knowingly with death and transience

Living with integrity, indifferent to much

CAMUS AS A
STOIC?



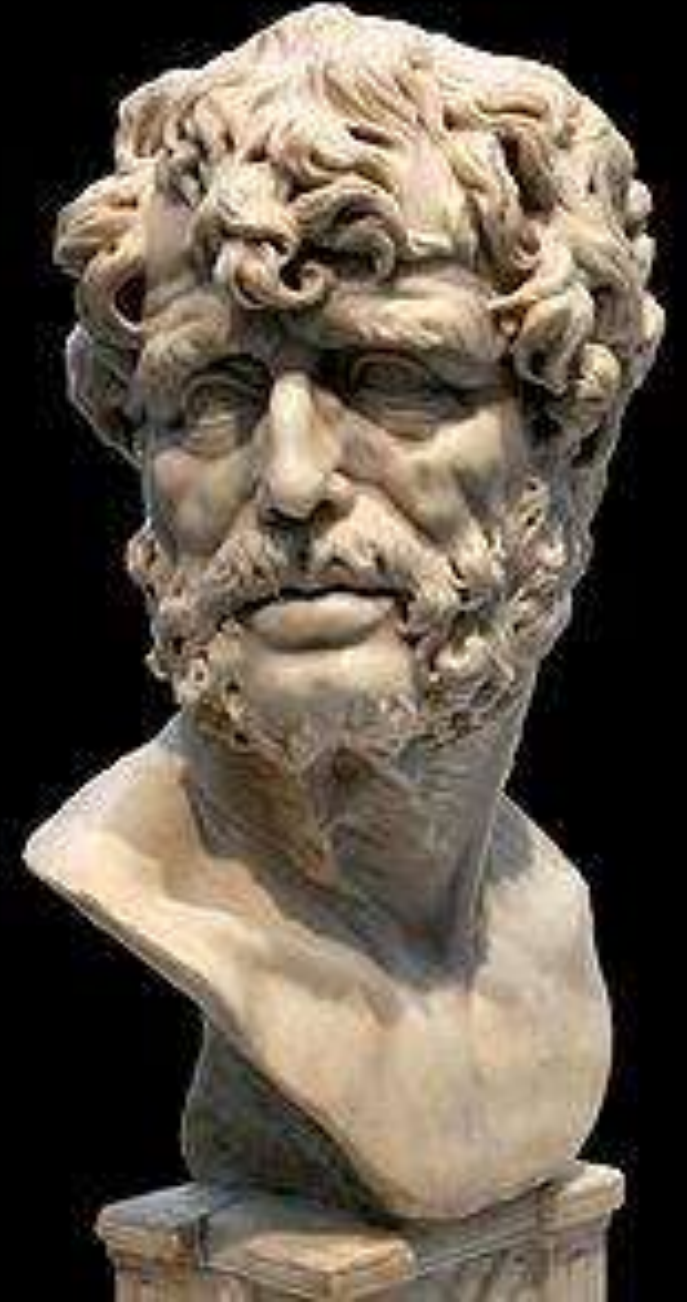
SENECA

Reflections on the shortness of life have produced some of the richest philosophical and religious work

In the Roman world, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca both encourage not to fear death, but to face it

The playwright, essayist and political advisor of Nero, Seneca, captures this beautifully in his essay *On the Shortness of Life*

Nature has given us plenty of time (generally...), so why do we not make the most of it?



SENECA
ON THE
SHORTNESS
OF LIFE
LIFE IS LONG
IF YOU
KNOW HOW
TO USE IT
PENGUIN
BOOKS
GREAT IDEAS

‘You will hear many people saying: ‘When I am fifty I shall retire into leisure; when I am sixty I shall give up public duties.’ And what guarantee do you have of a longer life? Who will allow your course to proceed as you arrange it?

Aren’t you ashamed to keep for yourself just the remnants of your life, and to devote to wisdom only that time which cannot be spent on any business? How late it is to begin really to live just when life must end! How stupid to forget our mortality, and put off sensible plans to our fiftieth and sixtieth years, aiming to begin life from a point at which few have arrived!’ – *On the Shortness of Life*







EVERYDAY LIFE

It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, bus, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, bus, 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. “Begins”—this is important.

CAMUS VS THE STOICS

‘The soft lines of these hills and the hand of evening on this troubled heart teach me much more’ than the natural sciences

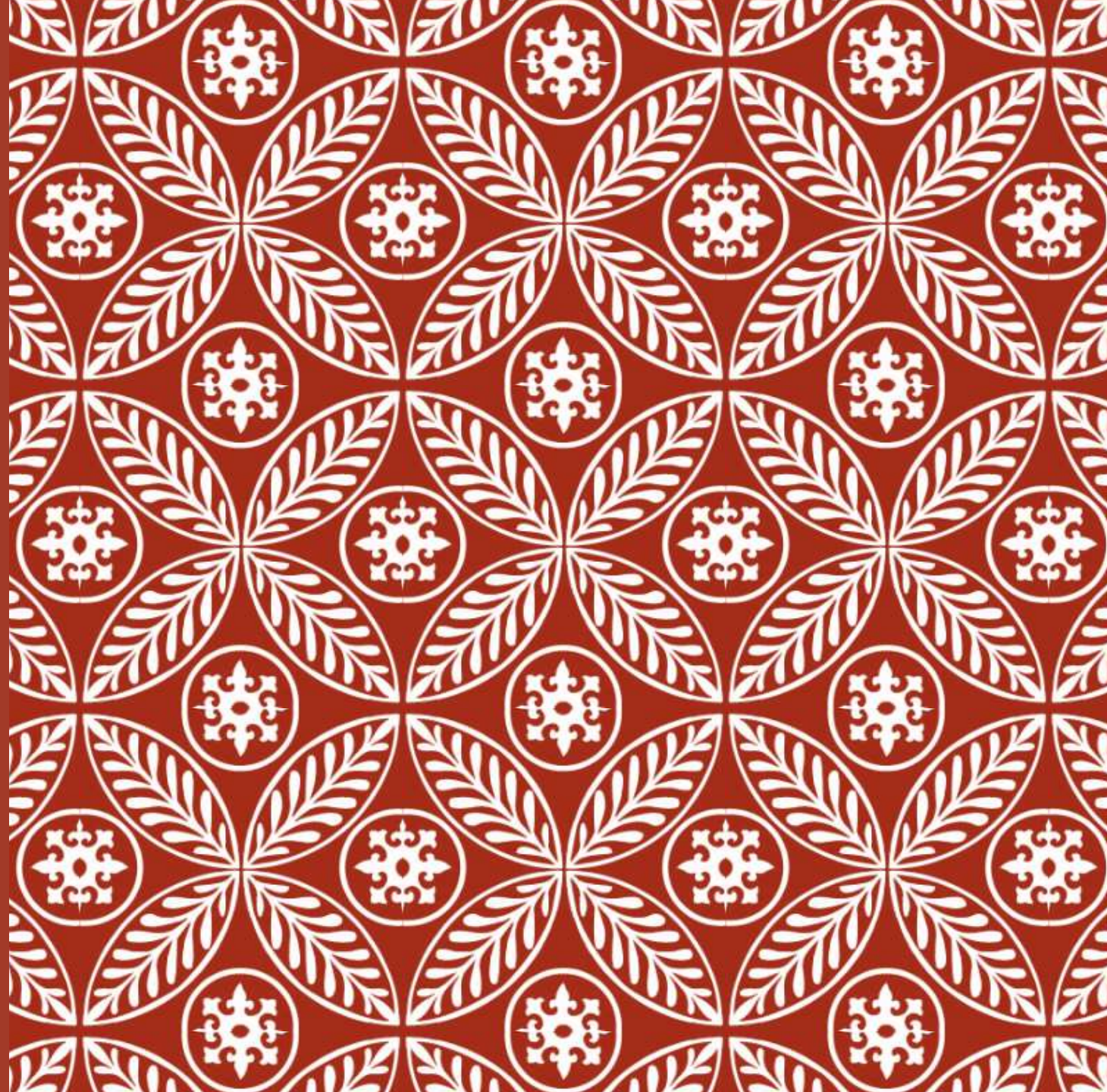
‘This heart within me I can feel, and I judge that it exists. This world I can touch, and I likewise judge that it exists. There ends all my knowledge, and the rest is construction’ (Montaigne?)

The rest is undefinable, like ‘water slipping through my fingers’

Refusal of providence or absolute harmony

‘there is no future. Henceforth this is the reason for my inner freedom. ... the absurd man feels released from everything outside that passionate attention crystallizing in him.’

5. REBEL



1944

DÉPARTEMENT de Seine et Oise
COMMUNE d'Epinay sur Orge.

CARTE D'IDENTITÉ

Nom : MATHE
Prénoms : ALBERT
Fils de Jacques Mathé
et de Madeleine Pannetier.
Profession : Rédacteur.
Né le 7 Mai 1911
à Choisy-le-Roi.
Département : Seine.
Domicile : Rue du petit Vaux.

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Nez : Droit.
Forme générale du visage : Allongée.
Teint : Mat.

Empreinte digitale :
Signature du Titulaire :



HOW DOES REVOLT EMERGE?



ABSURD REASONING

‘Time is out of joint – O cursed spite, That I was ever born to set it right’ – Hamlet

Camus calls on us to face this silent, uncaring universe, a ‘waterless desert’ where objective meanings are lost, with no God or immortality

The challenge instead is to face this inherent meaninglessness, and through it, live our lives fully

Our freedom is ‘not the best living but the most living’, deriving pleasure in our fate (*amor fati*)

‘Thus I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion.’



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Don Juan, the seducer

A man who is not unhappy or missing out on deeper meanings, but who lives for passion in the present

The Actor

One who insists on living different lives, free of the illusion they will be remembered. They live for the present

The Conqueror

One who also lives for the present, maximising their power, endlessly struggling while recognising the futility of lasting gains



THE ABSURD WORK OF ART

The absurd artist does not believe they can merely describe the world as it is...

Rather, they seek to portray the world as they see it, boldly and defiantly, knowing too that these works are ephemeral

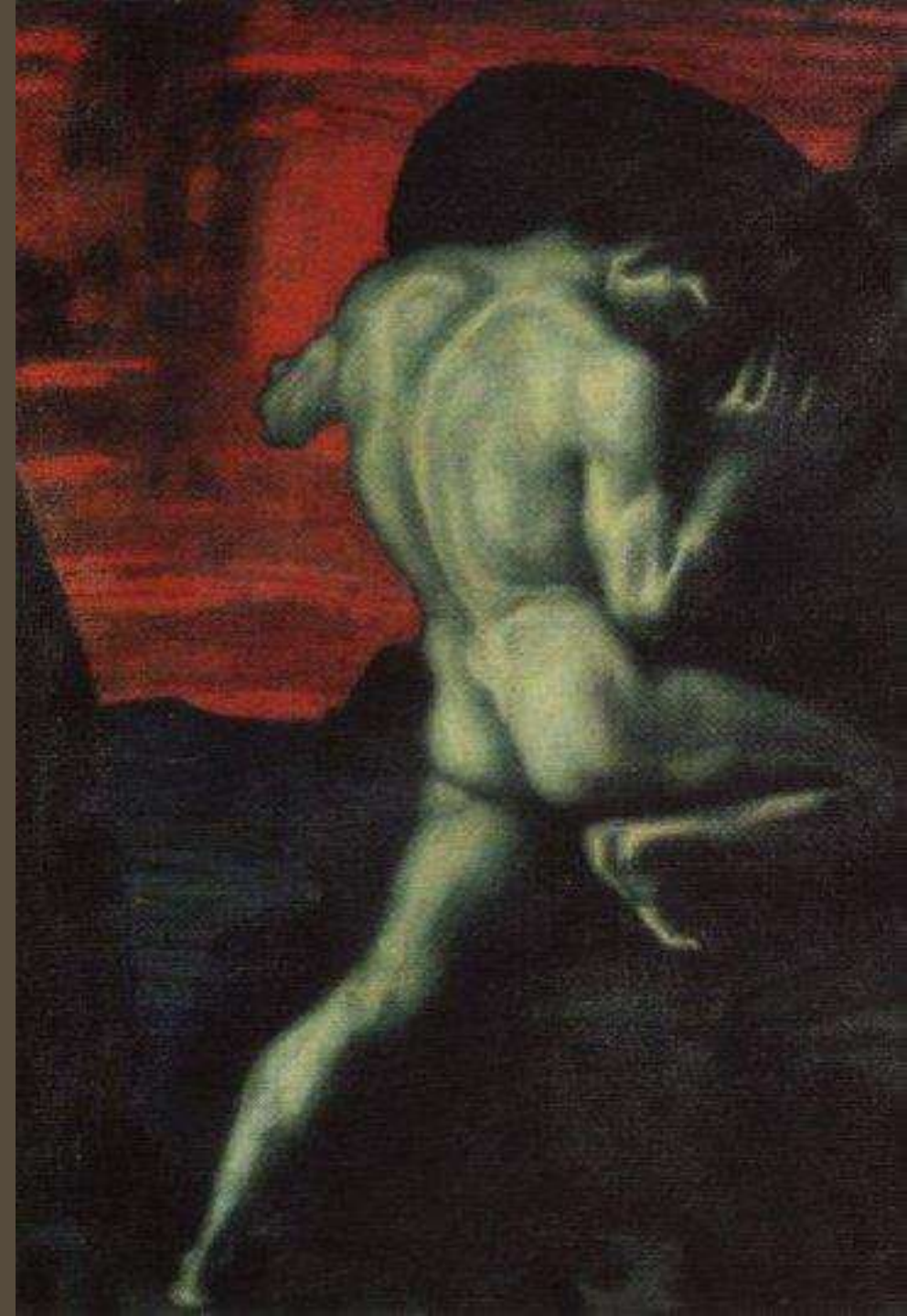
‘Of all the schools of patience and lucidity, creation is the most effective. It is also the staggering evidence of man’s sole dignity: the dogged revolt against his condition, perseverance in an effort considered sterile. It calls for a daily effort, self-mastery, a precise estimate of the limits of truth, measure, and strength. It constitutes an *ascesis*. All that “for nothing,” in order to repeat and mark time.’

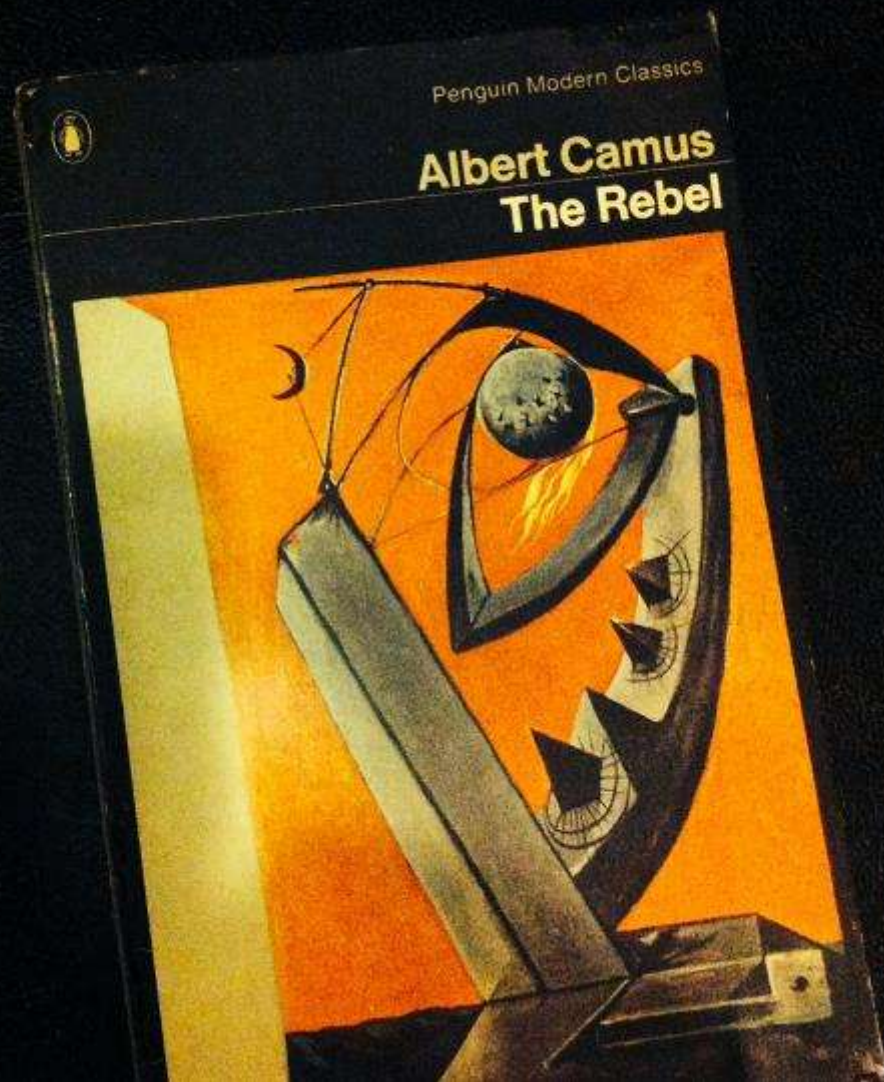


Thus, convinced of the wholly human origin of all that is human, a blind man eager to see who knows that the night has no end, he is still on the go. The rock is still rolling.

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain!
One always finds one's burden again. But
Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates
the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that
all is well.

This universe henceforth without a master seems
to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of
that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled
mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle
itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's
heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.





A LIFELONG REBEL

Camus was involved in Communist, Anarchist and Resistance struggles across his life

His essay “The Rebel” is a reflection on how revolt is fundamental to our freedom

The rebel engages in an ethical struggle, committing her/himself to the common good, and affirming the intrinsic value of life

‘I rebel – therefore we exist’

The self’s worth is realised in its commitment and solidarity with a community

A LIFELONG REBEL

Unlike Sartre, Camus refused to condone any form of politically-motivated violence

In “Neither Victims nor Executioners”, he makes an impassioned case for pacifism

‘I will never again be one of those, whoever they be, who compromise with murder.’

This meant that he controversially didn’t support the rebellion in Algeria



The absurd worldview is one in which God, reason, immortality or objectivity of any kind have collapsed

The human condition is defined by suffering, anxiety and the inevitability of death

But Camus encourages us to face this depressing situation and embrace it as *ours*

Ignorance is not bliss....

Instead it is only through the lucid recognition of the absurdity of existence that we can truly start living, abandoning delusions, enjoying the beauty, pleasure and loving relationships that make up our lives

ROUNDING UP ON CAMUS

FOR DISCUSSION ON MONDAY

1. What does Camus mean by the absurd?
2. To what extent does absurdity present a challenge to traditional philosophy or morality?
3. In what ways does Camus's thought agree or differ with previous Stoic approaches on our course?

Discussion: 1pm-3pm. You can use the same Zoom link from last week. It's also up on Moodle

WEEK 11: VIKTOR FRANKL

In our final week, we explore a contemporary of Camus

Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946)

Frankl was a survivor of Nazi concentration camps who explores and argues for how meaning in life is made through the moment of living

We will explore its explicit Stoic resonances

We'll also contrast its approach to the self and self-care with that of Foucault ("Self Writing") and Martha Nussbaum (*Therapy of Desire*)

We'll also round up on our reflections over the past 11 weeks...