

Erich Fromm and Albert Camus Similarities and Differences in Their Analysis of Psycho-Social Illness and its Treatment*

by

Douglas Puccini and Norman Elrod

... it is man's fate that his existence is beset by contradictions which he is called on to deal with, without ever solving them. When he has overcome the primitive state of human sacrifice, be it in the ritualistic form of the human sacrifices of the Aztecs or in the secular form of war, when he has been able to regulate his relationship with nature reasonably instead of blindly, when things have truly become his servants rather than his idols, he will be confronted with the truly human conflicts and problems; he will have to be adventuresome, courageous, imaginative, capable of suffering and of joy, but his powers will be in the service of life, not in the service of death. The new phase of human history, if it comes to pass, will be a new beginning, not an end.

Erich Fromm (1955b, pp. 103-104)

Accept existence as it is — a sign of strength? No, that is servitude. Accept existence as it was. For the present — struggle.

Albert Camus (1951b)

Every wall is a door.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (quoted by
Albert Camus, 1951 or 1952, p. 33)

* A short version of this essay was given as a speech by both authors in alternation with each other on Friday, the 4th of April 1997, in Ascona, Switzerland, during a meeting of the International Erich Fromm Society.



[Douglas Puccini speaks:]

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

My name is Douglas Puccini and I invite you to consider informally with us this afternoon certain aspects of mental disturbances in and among people as well as certain responses to psycho-social distress. The subject matter of our paper is centered on two topics which Erich Fromm and Albert Camus dealt with extensively in their writings: human destructiveness and human freedom.

Our colleague Norman Elrod will begin by presenting some of his reflections on how Erich Fromm and Albert Camus viewed psycho-social illness, human destructiveness and human freedom, emphasizing at the same time that he considers his ideas to be tentative, indicative of a wish to go into the subject in much greater detail.

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[Norman Elrod speaks:]

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

If we recall when Fromm and Camus lived — Erich Fromm was born in 1900 and died in 1980, Albert Camus was born in 1913 and died in 1960 —, it is not surprising that both of them, being as they were, very highly aware, took human beings seriously in their destructive activity and in their striving to be free. Fromm's summary of what took place in the 20th century until 1945 reads as follows:

[The First World War,] in which millions died for the territorial ambitions of the European powers, although under the illusion of fighting for peace and democracy, was the beginning of that development which tended in a relatively short time to destroy a two-thousand-year-old Western tradition of hope and to transform it into a mood of despair.

The moral callousness of the First World War was only the beginning. Other events followed: the betrayal of the socialist hopes by Stalin's reactionary state capitalism; the severe economic crisis at the end of the twenties; the victory of barbarism

in one of the oldest centers of culture in the world — Germany; the insanity of Stalinist terror during the thirties; the Second World War, in which all the fighting nations lost some of the moral considerations which had still existed in the First World War; the unlimited destruction of civilian populations, started by Hitler and continued by the even more complete destruction of cities such as Hamburg and Dresden and Tokyo, and eventually by the use of atomic bombs against Japan (Fromm, 1961b, pp. 258-259).*

Fromm responded in various ways to these events and developments. One of his responses was the formulation of a concept of character which he set forth in the first part of his work *Man for Himself* (Fromm, 1947). Another response to the problem of *man against himself* was the study of specific individuals who wrought havoc against others. I am thinking of his analyses of Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Heinrich Himmler (Fromm, 1973).

Camus's reaction to human destructiveness as he encountered it in the 1930s and later was in essence similar to Fromm's. The results of his studies did not, however, reach the reading public in a sociological form as was the case with Fromm. He clothed his ideas in literature, for example in novels like *The Stranger* (Camus, 1942a) and *The Plague* (Camus, 1947), as well as in plays like "Caligula" (Camus, 1941). And Camus expressed his ideas on the nature of human beings and their psychosocial illness in poetic analyses, for example in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Camus, 1942b) and *The Rebel* (Camus, 1951a).

As all of us who are familiar with these two men and their works know, they did not resign themselves to fate as dictated by destructive human beings. If, for example, Hitler's and Stalin's doctrines of salvation were seductive, concealing a wolf in sheep's clothing, were there other doctrines which are definitely affirmative of life? Analysis of alternatives was needed! And so Fromm explored psychoanalysis, orthodox Judaism, Christianity and Zen Buddhism. Camus undertook a thorough study of socialism, communism and Catholicism. Both of them came to the conclusion that doctrines of salvation, regardless of their origin, cannot be

* A comment by us to this quotation can be found at the end of the speech.

trusted. Doubt, as Fromm (1947) put it, not irrational, but rational doubt is called for under these circumstances:

Historically, rational doubt is one of the mainsprings of modern thought, and through it modern philosophy, as well as science, received their most fruitful impulses. Here too, as in personal development, the rise of rational doubt was linked with the growing emancipation from authority, that of the church and the state (p. 201; cf. pp. 199-200).

Camus proposed no therapy whatsoever for the psycho-social illness of mankind. But like Honoré Balzac, who wrote an important novel about a country doctor (Balzac, 1833), not to mention Franz Kafka and his "Country Doctor" (Kafka, winter 1916/1917), as well as Arthur Schnitzler, whose study of a city doctor is full of profound meaning (Schnitzler, 1892), and Boris Pasternak, the author of an extremely important novel dealing with the challenges of life facing a sensitive doctor in the Soviet Union (Pasternak, 1957), Camus realized that among people who no longer believe in supernatural forces it is understandable that they turn to the doctor for their salvation, expecting him, in Kafka's words, "to solve everything with his tender surgical hand" (Kafka, winter 1916/1917, p. 130). * Camus's Dr. Rieux does not set out to solve all problems.

* Missing from the list of authors just mentioned is Anton Chekhov, the physician whose long short-story "Ward No. 6" is considered one of the most impressive tales ever told, combining, as it does, realism with symbolism on various levels of human experience. This fact was brought to the reading public's attention by various writers, among them Thomas Mann. Mann (1954) wrote:

Ungefähr fünfundzwanzig Jahre — das war alles, was ihm an Zeit zu seiner schöpferischen Entfaltung und Vollendung gegönnt war, und wahrhaftig, er hat die Frist genutzt: Rund fünfhundert Erzählungen tragen seinen Namen, von denen nicht wenige den Umfang der "long short story" haben, und Meisterwerke sind darunter, wie "Krankenstation Nr. 6", worin ein Arzt sich aus Überdruß an einer dummen und miserablen Welt der Normalität mit einem interessanten Verrückten derart befreundet, dass diese Welt ihn selbst als verrückt befindet und ihn einsperrt. Die Novelle, 1892 geschrieben, 87 Seiten lang, ist, obgleich sie jede direkte Anklage

Solving things in this sense means salvation. This is not Dr. Rieux's calling. His calling is to heal earthly illness. He sees himself involved in a "never ending defeat" (Camus quoted in Heinz Politzer, 1959, p. 10). Camus (1951a) wrote: "Even by his greatest effort man can only propose to diminish arithmetically the sufferings of the world. But the injustice and the suffering of the world will remain" (p. 303). Creation, being and destruction are a troika human beings cannot escape from.

vermeidet, so grauenhaft symbolisch für die korrupte Hoffnungslosigkeit der Zustände im Russland von damals, die Entwürdigung des Menschen in der Spätzeit der Selbstherrschaft, dass der junge Lenin zu seiner Schwester sagte: "Als ich gestern abend diese Erzählung zu Ende gelesen hatte, wurde mir direkt unheimlich; ich konnte nicht mehr in meinem Zimmer bleiben, ich stand auf und ging hinaus. Mir war, als wäre ich selbst im Krankensaal 6 eingesperrt" (p. 321).

David Greene (1959, p. 8) mentioned in an introduction to nine stories by Chekhov that this doctor of medicine wrote even more short-stories than the number given by Mann. Greene spoke of about 600. As for Chekhov as an artist, Greene described him as a writer very similar in his work to Camus. Greene wrote, beginning with a piece of advice Anton gave to his brother:

"Don't invent sufferings which you have not experienced and don't paint landscapes you have not seen, for a lie in a story is a hundred times more boring than in a conversation." If there is one uncontrovertible observation that can be made about Chekhov's work it is that he practiced what he was preaching — he gathered his materials directly from the life he knew, even if his vision seemed to focus more on the minor cracks of life's surface than on the great crevices which Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy preferred to explore. One of Chekhov's friends has recorded his saying, "I will describe life to you truthfully, that is, artistically, and you will see in it what you have not seen before — its divergence from the norm, its contradictions" (p. 8).

When we were preparing the final version of this paper we came across the following statement by Fromm which fits in perfectly with our method of approach to the subject under discussion. In Fromm (1994) we read:

In my opinion social analysis and personal analysis cannot really be separated. They are part of the critical view of the reality of human life. Perhaps it is much more useful to the understanding of psychoanalysis to read Balzac than it is to read psychological literature. Reading Balzac trains one better in the understanding of man in analysis than all the

In his novel, *The Plague*, published in 1947, Camus analyzed human destructiveness and psycho-social illness. In the description of the individual life histories of the people exposed to a plague epidemic in the Algerian port of Oran — Camus's place of birth — many forms of human action and reaction are presented, e.g. fear, denial, indifference, courage, love of one's neighbor and solidarity with threatened and discriminated people. Critics took the plague to be a symbol of the psycho-social illness caused by the Nazis. Camus himself wrote in his diary that with his symbol of the plague he was thinking about the Second World War as a specific period in human history, but the plague was also intended to be a paradigm for human existence as such (Camus, 1942, 1943, 1944 or 1945, pp. 164-165; cf. Politzer, 1959, pp. 11-12; Carol Petersen, 1961, pp. 61, 64).

Did Camus understand human destructiveness as a matter of fate when he chose rats as the carriers of the plague, meaning, perhaps, psycho-social illness? Yes, human destructiveness is with us and will stay with us. There is no getting around it. But what is really important, Camus thought, are the attitudes and activities that are possible within a destructive situation. Not all of us must become "rhinoceroses", to speak with Eugène Ionesco, but "each of us ... must keep endless watch on ourselves" (Camus, 1946, p. 224). For Camus everything depends on this

analytic forces in the world, because Balzac was a great artist who was able to write case histories, but with what richness, with what wealth, really going down to the unconscious motivations of people and showing them in their interrelations to the social situation. That was the attempt of Balzac: he wanted to write the character of the French middle class of his time: If one is really interested in man and in his unconscious, don't read the textbooks, read Balzac, read Dostoyevsky, read Kafka. There you learn something about men, much more than in psychoanalytic literature (including my own books). There one finds a wealth of deep insight, and that is what psychoanalysis could do, should do with regard to individuals (p. 103).

During the discussion of this paper on the 4th of April 1997 in Ascona, Switzerland, where the International Erich Fromm society was meeting, one of Fromm's former pupils reported that his teacher stressed the importance of familiarity with world literature, both past and present. Now, it seems to us as if he were quoting more or less from what we have just read in *The Art of Listening*.

"endless watch", "watch" meaning here observation of what is real and control of destructive activity in the interest of life. As Camus (1951a) wrote in *The Rebel*, "We all carry within us our places of exile, our crimes and our ravages. But our task is not to unleash them on the world; it is to fight them in ourselves and in others" (p. 301).

But in this fight a sense of grim humor can be cultivated:

Upon his arrival in Buchenwald a small Frenchman requests a talk in private with the official who receives him, who is also a prisoner: "Just between you and me I'm a special case — I'm innocent" (Camus, 1989, p. 59).

Fromm, as we know, was also in favor of a thorough study of human destructiveness. He made a distinction "between biologically adaptive, life-serving, benign aggression" common to animals and human beings and "biologically nonadaptive, malignant aggression unique to human beings" (Fromm, 1973, p. 212). The former is reactive to specific threats to one's vital interests. It is a part of our phylogenetic program for survival. It cannot be wiped out. Biologically non-adaptive aggression is of a different nature. It is present in all of us, not as a drive but as a potential form of reaction to human intercourse. When it is realized, i.e. turned into an actual state through human action, "it is biologically harmful because it is socially disruptive" (p. 212). But since it is not inborn, it is capable of being changed, transformed, indeed, under specific circumstances even extirpated (pp. 212-213; cf. pp. 482-483). For this to take place, much depends on the "character structure" or "character system" of the individual under study (Rainer Funk, 1989, p. 436) and on the "social character" of the society in which this person lives (Fromm, 1941, pp. 277-299). Fromm — and probably Camus as well —, thought conditions such as lovelessness and absence of pleasure in a child's surroundings further feelings of helplessness and emptiness, preconditions for acts of non-adaptive, malicious aggression. Of course, if exploitation and a lack of hope are noticeably present in society, the individual's productive powers will be frustrated and destructive reactions can be expected. If these destructive actions become the dominant characteristic of a person's behavior, then Fromm spoke of necrophilia. He (1973) defined necrophilia in the characterological sense as "the passionate attraction to all

that is dead, decayed, putrid, sickly; it is the passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive; to destroy for the sake of destruction; the exclusive interest in all that is purely mechanical. It is the passion 'to tear apart living structures' " (p. 369).

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[Douglas Puccini speaks:]

I myself would like to say the following about how Erich Fromm and Albert Camus dealt with psycho-social illness, human destructiveness and human freedom. Certainly freedom and enslavement of human beings are central themes in Fromm's and Camus's works. Camus as a son of poor immigrants urged to leave the French state, became an immediate eyewitness to the enslavement of fellow human beings in his native country, Algeria. On the other hand, he and his family being French, belonged to the class of the foreign rulers. Camus discussed the conditions among masters and slaves at a point in time when the topic "North Africa under occupation" was as yet hardly manifest in the public consciousness. As time went on he witnessed many people in his country turning to radicalism in their striving for freedom, equality and justice. Camus urged, as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1850b) had urged about 100 years before him, moderation. He refused to suggest in his works that his readers should act first and think later, just as he was opposed to lulling them to sleep with consoling remembrances of things past. Camus called for thoughtful, heartfelt action.* "Good deeds" in the traditional sense were not on Camus's program. In *The Plague* his Dr. Rieux says that acting against the plague first requires reflection; on this basis knowledge can be gleaned as one of the possible results of action. And so as a doctor Rieux treats his patients who are afflicted with the plague, and as a person who would like to learn from experience he writes his chronicle which we read as a novel. Dr. Rieux assumes that psycho-social illness

* François Bondy (1992, p. 71) considers Camus to have been essentially a relativist, but his temperament was that of a man prone to absolutism.

originates from and flourishes on the ground of ignorance. Dr. Rieux says:

The evil that is in the world always comes from ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence, if they lack understanding. On the whole men are more good than bad; that, however, isn't the real point. But they are more or less ignorant, and it is this that we call vice or virtue; the most incorrigible vice being that of an ignorance which fancies it knows everything and therefore claims for itself the right to kill. The soul of the murderer is blind; and there can be no true goodness nor true love without the utmost clear-sightedness (Camus, 1947, p. 126).

One of the means by which we can oppose slavery is to pose questions which we may not be able to answer either in thought or deed satisfactorily, but which we may think about in utmost seriousness. In this case we are challenged to live with open questions, yet experiencing life joyfully, if possible. Camus advocated recognition, knowledge, action, honesty and love. Like his friend Tarrou in Oran during the plague, Dr. Rieux learns modesty (p. 236). Camus depicted Dr. Rieux as a physician identifying himself with those struck down by the illness: "There was not one of their [the afflicted's] anxieties in which he did not share, no predicament of theirs that was not his" (p. 278).

As I understand it, Fromm took the same approach to mankind's enslavement, and he also emphasized that people contribute much to their own bondage. In the course of maturation and development the boy or girl loosens and/or unties primary attachments with others, according to Fromm. This process leads to a strengthening and organized structuring of the self. The self-awareness thus gained can further development of the self. One can become more and more aware of what one can do and think and feel, etc. A young person becomes aware of her or his capacities; personal interests can become important to the child (cf. Fromm, 1941, pp. 24-39). However, Fromm (1956) wrote:

This awareness of himself as a separate entity, the awareness of his own short life span, of the fact that without his will he is

born and against his will he dies, that he will die before those whom he loves, or they before him, the awareness of his aloneness and separateness, of his helplessness before the forces of nature and of society, all this makes his separate, disunited existence an unbearable prison (p. 13).

It comes as no surprise that Fromm thought that under the conditions just described human beings experience anxiety, anxiety in their aloneness, their separateness. It was obvious to him that this anxiety must be coped with. The individual "would become insane could he [or she] not liberate himself [or herself] from this prison and reach out, unite himself [or herself] in some form or other with men [and women], with the world outside" (p. 13; cf. Gerard Chrzanowski, 1977, p. 499). One of Fromm's deep concerns was the form of re-union the individual enters into (Fromm, 1941, pp. 19-20). Fromm stated in *Escape from Freedom*: "Religion and nationalism, as well as any custom and any belief however absurd and degrading, if it only connects the individual with others, are refuges from what man most dreads: isolation" (p. 20). There is a great temptation, as Fromm pointed out, to seek refuge in symbiotic, narcissistic, masochistic and sadistic relations. One concrete way of escaping from experiences of separateness, Fromm wrote, "lies in all kinds of *orgiastic states*" (Fromm, 1956, p. 15):

Alcoholism and drug addiction are the forms which the individual chooses in a non-orgiastic culture. In contrast to those participating in the socially patterned solution, such individuals suffer from guilt feelings and remorse. While they try to escape from separateness by taking refuge in alcohol or drugs, they feel all the more separate after the orgiastic experience is over, and thus are driven to have recourse to it with increasing frequency and intensity (p. 16).

Fromm went on to show that recourse to "all kinds of *orgiastic states*" (p. 15) has

three characteristics: they are intense, even violent; they occur in the total personality, mind *and* body; they are transitory and

periodical. Exactly the opposite holds true for that form of union which is by far the most frequent solution chosen by man in the past and in the present: the union based on *conformity* with the group, its customs, practices and beliefs (p. 16).

Fromm did not mince words. He (1964) thought we have only two alternatives when we are faced with our isolation: We either regress, as we have just heard, or go forward. The regression he considered to be an "archaic solution to the problem of human existence" (p. 118). Going forward meant optimal realization of our human nature (pp. 118-119), for example by the development of our ability to reason (Fromm, 1956, p. 13). Put somewhat differently, either people come to terms with the world through spontaneous love and productive work or they find security through their conformity to a world which destroys their freedom and integrity as human subjects (Fromm, 1941, p. 23; cf. 1955a, pp. 193-197).

Both Fromm and Camus pointed to the necessity of co-operation in order to ensure common survival (cf. Fromm, 1941, pp. 20-21), which takes place, according to Fromm, on the basis of advancing "to the full realization of positive freedom which is based upon the uniqueness and individuality of man [and woman]" (p. viii). Camus was puzzled by certain major problems which cannot be dealt with exclusively on a theoretical basis, problems which demand an answer on the behavioral level, for example, can a person be happy and isolated at the same time (Camus, 1942, 1943, 1944 or 1945b)? One of Camus's mottoes was simply "carrying on" (Camus, 1947, pp. 284-285). His Dr. Rieux mentions at the end of the plague that life goes on, that one must carry on, endure despite the death of his friends and his wife (pp. 268-269). If the "plague" is "just life, no more than that" (p. 283), then Dr. Rieux, in solidarity with "the victims", shares with them their "only certitudes ... love, exile and suffering" (p. 278).

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[Norman Elrod speaks:]

Both of us, Puccini and I, meet people time and again who seem to be addicted to their illness, people who suffer from anxiety and insecurity and who are at the same time looking for a way out of their addiction to illness. We try to empathize with these people, try to understand their sufferings, their unique life histories and the social conditions under which they became psychically disturbed. We frequently, we assume, discover powers at work or on call that would be greatly helpful in support of the psychoanalysis. Of course, we also come up against forces which oblige the patient to remain more or less as he or she is. These latter forces can be imbedded in actual, historical interpersonal relations. Frequently these social-psychological factors are allied intrapsychically with super-ego demands for a continuation of the *status quo*. In such cases it is obvious that our support of the ego must be twofold: on the one hand strengthening the ego at the expense of the super-ego and on the other hand helping the ego in its efforts to organize the self more effectively in dealings with the social world.

Puccini and I agree on what has just been said. It appears that Fromm and Camus were sometimes not in agreement as to what might contribute to healing psycho-social illness. Fromm considered genuine love as the only form of relatedness which guards simultaneously the integrity and reality of the persons involved (Fromm, 1958, p. 320) and thereby furthers various life-giving forces. Camus, not at all certain about his own capacity to love in a way understandable to most people, even to Fromm, could never have written a book like *The Art of Loving*. In the last two sentences of his diary of 1959 — and he died tragically in an automobile accident shortly thereafter in early January 1960 — we read: "From time to time I accuse myself of being unable to love someone. And this may be true, but I was capable of *choosing* a few persons whom I cherished in my heart as best I could, regardless of what they did" (Camus, 1959).

Camus's literary figures are frequently faced with decision making. They can change their ways if they choose to do so. Indeed, Camus perceived chances for responsible, authentic behavior, but he could neither promise "'Pie in the Sky' when you die" nor "bread on earth for

everyone".* If achievement and satisfaction are attained, that is wonderful, but both are just for the moment. Life is an open book, but it is a

* As to the "Pie in the Sky" we are referring to Joe Hill's (1954) lyric "The Preacher and the Slave":

Long-haired preachers come out every night
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;
But when asked about something to eat,
They will answer with voices so sweet:

CHORUS

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land in the sky.
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

And the starvation army they play,
And they sing and they clap and they pray.
Till they get all your coin in the drum,
Then they tell you when you're on the bum.

CHORUS

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land in the sky.
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

Holy rollers and jumpers come out
And they holler and jump and they shout.
And when eating time comes 'rond they say,
"You will eat on that glorious day."

CHORUS

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land in the sky.
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

If you fight hard for children and wife,
Try to get something good in this life,
You're a sinner and bad man they tell
When you die you will sure go to Hell.

story about the "wholly human origin of all that is human" (Camus, 1942b, p. 99; cf. Petersen, 1961, p. 88; Beat Schmid, 1990, S. 46; Jean Daniel, 1992, p. 57; Wolfgang Komm, 1992, p. 50). Camus's Dr. Rieux notes: "What interests me is — being a man" (Camus, 1947, p. 237). On the basis of this consistent humanism Camus could argue with conviction against capital punishment:

The age of enlightenment, as people say, wanted to suppress the death penalty on the pretext that man was naturally good. Of course, he is not (he is worse or better). After twenty years of our magnificent history we are well aware of this. But precisely because he is not, no one among us can pose as an absolute judge and pronounce the definitive elimination of the worst among the guilty, because no one of us can lay claim to absolute innocence. Capital punishment upsets the only indisputable human solidarity — our solidarity against death — and it can be legitimized only by a truth or a principle that is superior to man (Camus, 1957c, pp. 157-158; cf. Petersen, 1961, p. 89).

CHORUS

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land in the sky.
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

Workingmen of all countries unite,
Together we'll stand an we'll fight.
When the world and its wealth we have gained,
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

CHORUS

You will eat, bye and bye
When you've learned how to cook and to fry;
Chop some wood -- do you good,
And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye.

At the end of "The Artist at Work" (Camus, 1957b) Camus's protagonist painter dies in his attic room, leaving behind an almost completely blank canvas on which he has been working for a long time. Only at the center of the canvas is there a word written in extremely small letters. It can be deciphered, but it is not certain if the word should be read "solitary" or "solidary". "To be or not to be?" was not Camus's question. His was: "To go it alone or to go it with others?" "Solitaire" or "Solidaire"? Time and again he treated this subject (Camus, 1989, pp. 44, 68, 85; cf. Petersen, 1961, pp. 75, 91-92; Komm, 1992, p. 48).

Camus thought he recognized life's challenge, but he confessed that for him the *striving* for life, liberty and companionship as well as for justice, truth and beauty is the main thing. If duration is to exist as a category of thought, then let it be seen in this striving; Camus thought this "struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (Camus, 1942b, p. 99). At the end of his speech of acceptance, at the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature, delivered in Stockholm, 10 December 1957, Camus (1957d) summarized his position as follows:

Truth is mysterious, elusive, ever to be won anew. Liberty is dangerous, as hard to live with as it is exciting. We must progress towards those two objectives, painfully but resolutely, sure in advance that we shall weaken and flinch on such a long road. Consequently, what writer would dare, with a clear conscience, to become a preacher of virtue? As for me, I must say once more that I am far from all that. I have never been able to forget the sunlight, the delight in life, the freedom in which I grew up. But although that nostalgia explains many of my mistakes and shortcomings, it doubtless helped me to understand my calling, and it still helps me to stand implicitly beside all those silent men who, throughout the world, endure the life that has been made for them only because they remember or fleetingly re-experience free moments of happiness.

Reduced in this way to what I am in reality, to my limits, to my liabilities, as to my difficult faith, I feel freer to show you in conclusion the extent and generosity of the distinction you have just granted me, freer likewise to tell you that I should like to

receive it as a tribute paid to all those who, sharing the same fight, have received no reward, but on the contrary have known only woe and persecution. It remains for me then to thank you from the bottom of my heart and to make you publicly, as a personal token of gratitude, the same age-old promise of allegiance that every true artist, every day, makes to himself, in silence (p. 198).

Fromm, as we understand him, seemed to believe that he had a clear idea about how things stand, about what is right and what is wrong. In *The Art of Listening* Fromm (1994) wrote: "To speak of analysis I consider it a very important task of the analyst to show the person whom he analyzes the real alternatives, very drastically and not pussyfooting, and maybe to put it in careful terms so that one says and doesn't say it" (p. 109). In the same work Fromm wrote a little later, trying to clarify the point he had just made: "To help the analysand to get aware of his alternatives is part of analyzing him. It is not expressing value judgments; this is just stating — in fact I can state them in any other field — these are the forces and if you go this way this will happen; if you go that way that will happen. These are the alternatives which by themselves determine there is no other way" (p. 110).

Fromm seems to have assumed that he could have the patient's total life situation in mind. Camus would have perhaps thought this was self-deception. Can the analyst, Camus might have asked, really attain a bird's-eye view of the patient's total psychic reality? Camus thought "accident" and "fate" are also factors to be reckoned with. And he might have suggested "surprise" as a helpful category in psychoanalytic thinking. "Certainties" exist; for example, it is certain "that freedom is not a gift received from a State or a leader but a possession to be won every day by the effort of each and the union of all" (Camus, 1953, p. 71). But "certainties" in matters dealing with human volition are hard to come by,

unpredictability being here more to the point, as Emerson (1841, pp. 150-151) explicated in the last four paragraphs of his essay on heroism.*

* These four paragraphs read as follows:

To speak the truth, even with some austerity, to live with some rigor of temperance, or some extremes of generosity, seems to be an asceticism which common good-nature would appoint to those who are at ease and in plenty, in sign that they feel a brotherhood with the great multitude of suffering men. And not only need we breathe and exercise the soul by assuming the penalties of abstinence, of debt, of solitude, of unpopularity, but it behooves the wise man to look with a bold eye into those rarer dangers which sometimes invade men, and to familiarize himself with disgusting forms of disease, with sounds of execration, and the vision of violent death.

Times of heroism are generally times of terror, but the day never shines in which this element may not work. The circumstances of man, we say, are historically somewhat better in his country, and at this hour, than perhaps ever before. More freedom exists for culture. It will not now run against an axe at the first step out of the beaten track of opinion. But whoso is heroic will always find crises to try his edge. Human virtue demands her champions and martyrs, and the trial of persecution always proceeds. It is but the other day that the brave Lovejoy gave his breast to the bullets of a mob, for the rights of free speech and opinion, and died when it was better not to live.

I see not any road of perfect peace which a man can walk, but after the counsel of his own bosom. Let him quit too much association, let him go home much, and stablish himself in those courses he approves. The unremitting retention of simple and high sentiments in obscure duties is hardening the character to that temper which will work with honor, if need be, in the tumult, or on the scaffold. Whatever outrages have happened to men may befall a man again; and very easily in a republic, if there appear any signs of a decay of religion. Coarse slander, fire, tar and feathers, and the gibbet, the youth may freely bring home to his mind, and with what sweetness of temper he can, and inquire how fast he can fix his sense of duty, braving such penalties, whenever it may please the next newspaper and a sufficient number of his neighbours to pronounce his opinions incendiary.

It may calm the apprehension of calamity in the most susceptible heart to see how quick a bound nature has set to the utmost infliction of malice. We rapidly approach a brink over which no enemy can follow us,

Camus might have accepted "probability" as a useful term in psycho-analysis, agreeing basically with Alexander Pope (1733), who wrote:

Say first, of God above, or man below,
What can we reason, but from what we know?
Of Man, what see we but his station here,
From which to reason, or to which refer?
Thro' worlds unnumber'd tho' the God be known,
'Tis ours to trace him, only in our own.
He, who thro' vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns,
What vary'd being peoples ev'ry star,
May tell, why Heav'n has made us as we are.
But of this frame the bearings, and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Look'd thro'? or can a part contain the whole?
(Epistle I, 17-32)

"Let them rave:
Thou art quiet in thy grave."

In the gloom of our ignorance of what shall be, in the hour when we are deaf to the higher voices, who does not envy those who have seen safely to an end their manful endeavour? Who that sees the meanness of our politics, but inly congratulates Washington that he is long already wrapped in his shroud, and for ever safe; that he was laid sweet in his grave, the hope of humanity not yet subjugated in him? Who does not sometimes envy the good and brave, who are no more to suffer from the tumults of the natural world, and await with curious complacency the speedy term of his own conversation with finite nature? And yet the love that will be annihilated sooner than treacherous has already made death impossible, and affirms itself no mortal, but a native of the deeps of absolute and inextinguishable being (pp. 150-151). [Elijah Lovejoy, an abolitionist publisher, was killed by a pro-slavery mob 7 November 1837 in Alton, Illinois — noted down in Emerson's journal, V, 437. "Let ... grave" are lines 4 and 6 in Alfred Tennyson's "A Dirge", which appeared in *A Dirge, Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* 1830.]

The criticism Camus might have made of Fromm would be as follows:

'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.
(60)

*

[Douglas Puccini speaks:]

In conclusion I would now like to describe an area of my former clinical activity, where, in my opinion, the ideas of Fromm and Camus discussed here apply. For some 15 years I carried out psychotherapeutic work with adolescents and young adults in a counseling center and in psychiatric clinics. This included 6 ½ years of directing a long-term therapy station for drug addicts. I saw these people involved in conflicts between desires and reality. They tried for a long time to feel at ease in our everyday culture and to establish basic relations of a meaningful nature within this everyday culture as well as to fulfill their desires and satisfy their wants from what this culture had to offer. But their real experiences with people may have led to a sadistic superego developing within them, to which their self-destructive acts are traced back, so that they turned away from the everyday culture that had promised them justice, work, neighborly love, fellowship and happiness as a reward for their adaptation and submission, and created an anti-culture around the drug in search of alternatives. They were drawn to people who they felt were suffering in a similar way. From them they hoped to find security and understanding and simply to feel at ease, and they reinforced that feeling by the pain-relieving effect of the drug. Yet sooner or later they were compelled to realize that the safety, security, and understanding were largely based on an illusion, a self-deception, and now they continued to consume drugs in order to suppress this renewed pain and disillusionment. Much as in the everyday culture, there were alienated relationships, alienated work organized according to strict economic laws, dishonesty, personal offense, and a lack of possibilities of satisfaction and sublimation in the anti-culture. It appeared to me that

their criticisms of the everyday culture were justified, and their reasons for dropping out understandable. That their aggressiveness against others turned into an aggressiveness against themselves can be explained by a theory of internalizing individual, collective and societal compulsions. With respect to their drug consumption, one can speak of an internalized external determination. However, the extent of self-destruction in these people may be explained, in my opinion, only on the grounds of a severe superego pathology accompanied by an omnipresent feeling of guilt. What I said in my discussion of Camus and especially of Fromm, who described the fear of freedom and the inclination towards renewed slavery, is confirmed here.

In therapeutic activity I was always facing the question of what real alternative to drug consumption I might offer the drug addict. It was not always the most difficult task to lead them back into everyday culture, because they were often pursued by the police, and in most cases they were threatened with imprisonment. But as soon as they abandoned drugs, the feelings of guilt resurfaced, and along with these the tendencies to subject themselves to the everyday culture once more in the hope of being lovingly reinstated and accepted. It was much more difficult to establish a basic relationship with them. The original distrust of living human objects that had led them to cultivate a relationship with the lifeless object "drug" that they falsely thought they could manipulate was still there. Whatever I could offer as an alternative to drug consumption and the drug scene, namely real relations and the human environment, was nothing but what they were originally running away from in everyday culture, even though I understood my offer to be of a different nature. I had to leave open the question of what was right and meaningful, and, in a well-meaning way and considering the personal injuries they had experienced, I had to communicate to the drug addicts what possibilities and probabilities I saw connected with their return to everyday culture. In the end it always remained open whether the renewed attempt to feel well in the everyday culture and establish loving and productive relationships within it was the right and necessary thing, or rather the secure distance to the sickening environment established by continued drug consumption.

*

[Norman Elrod speaks:]

We want to emphasize that Camus and Fromm, regardless of what reservations Camus might have had about some of Fromm's ideas, were brothers in spirit, colleagues in the study, diagnosis and treatment of psycho-social illness.

After we presented this paper in Ascona, Switzerland, on Friday, the 4th of April 1997 during a meeting of the International Erich Fromm Society we discovered a passage in Fromm's *The Sane Society* (Fromm, 1955) which contradicts what we have quoted from *The Art of Listening* (Fromm, 1994) and coincides with what we think Camus might have said critically to Fromm. The ideas Fromm set down in writing in 1955 are, therefore, quite relevant to what is stated in this paper.

Fromm wrote:

Because of the very conditions of our existence, we cannot feel secure about anything. Our thoughts and insights are at best partial truths, mixed with a great deal of error, not to speak of the unnecessary misinformation about life and society to which we are exposed almost from the day of birth. Our life and health are subject to accidents beyond our control. If we make a decision, we can never be certain of the outcome; any decision implies a risk of failure, and if it does not imply it, it has not been a decision in the true sense of the word. We can never be certain of the outcome of our best efforts. The result always depends on many factors which transcend our capacity of control. Just as a sensitive and alive person cannot avoid being sad, he cannot avoid feeling insecure. The psychic task which a person can and must set for himself, *is not to feel secure, but to be able to tolerate insecurity, without panic and undue fear.*

Life, in its mental and spiritual aspects, is by necessity insecure and uncertain. There is certainty only about the fact that we are born and that we shall die; there is complete security only in an equally complete submission to powers which are supposed to be strong and enduring, and which relieve man

from the necessity of making decisions, taking risks, and having responsibilities. *Free man is by necessity insecure; thinking man by necessity uncertain* (Fromm, 1955, p. 196).

Certainly one indication of Fromm's and Camus's affinity is the emphasis Fromm placed on aloneness and Camus on being an outsider; indeed, one translation of his work *The Stranger* (Camus, 1942a) is "The Outsider" (Camus, 1947, p. 2). Another sign of their nearness to each other is their intensive study of dictators at the same time, with Fromm concentrating on Hitler and Camus investigating the life of Caligula, projects both of them worked on intensively in the closing years of the 1930s. Although Camus wrote "Caligula" in 1938 (Camus, 1941), its première was in 1945 with Gérard Philipe in the role of the Roman ruler (Petersen, 1961, p. 34; cf. pp. 35-36; Brigitte Sändig, 1995, pp. 48-49). Fromm's work on Hitler at this time appeared in *Escape from Freedom* (Fromm, 1941) and in "Should We Hate Hitler?" (Fromm, 1942).

We do not know if the two men ever met and exchanged words with each other. We also do not know if Camus was familiar with Fromm's works. We do know, however, that Fromm was very familiar with Camus's *Caligula* and held it in high regard. In 1964 Fromm wrote:

To create life is to transcend one's status as a creature that is thrown into life as dice are thrown out of a cup. But to destroy life also means to transcend it and to escape the unbearable suffering of complete passivity. To create life requires certain qualities which the impotent person lacks. To destroy life requires only one quality —the use of force. The impotent man, if he has a pistol, a knife, or a strong arm, can transcend life by destroying it in others or in himself. He thus *takes revenge on life for negating itself to him*. Compensatory violence is precisely that violence which has its roots in and which compensates for impotence. The man who cannot create wants to destroy. In creating and in destroying he transcends his role as a mere creature. Camus expressed this idea succinctly when he had Caligula say: "I live, I kill, I exercise the rapturous power of a destroyer, compared with which the power of a creator is merest child's play." This is the violence of the cripple, of those

to whom life has denied the capacity for any positive expression of their specifically human powers. They need to destroy precisely because they are human, since being human means transcending thing-ness (Fromm, 1964, p. 31; cf. p. 66; 1968, p. 14-15; 1970, p. 250).

In a later study Fromm returned to Camus's *Caligula* and wrote:

Albert Camus's play, *Caligula*, provides an example of an extreme type of sadistic control which amounts to a desire for omnipotence. We see how Caligula, brought by circumstances to a position of unlimited power, gets ever-more deeply involved in the craving for power. He sleeps with the wives of the senators and enjoys their humiliation when they have to act like admiring and fawning friends. He kills some of them, and those that remain still have to smile and joke. But even all this power does not satisfy him; he wants absolute power, he wants the impossible. As Camus has him say, "I want the moon."

It is easy enough to say that Caligula is mad, but his madness is a way of life; it is one solution of the problem of human existence, because it serves the illusion of omnipotence, of transcending the frontiers of human existence. In the process of trying to win absolute power Caligula lost all contact with men. He became an outcast by casting them out; he had to become mad because, when the bid for omnipotence failed, he was left a lonely, impotent individual.

The case of Caligula is of course exceptional. Few people ever have the chance to attain so much power that they can seduce themselves into the delusion that it might be absolute. But some have existed throughout history, up to our time; if they remain victorious, they are celebrated as great statesmen or generals; if they are defeated, they are considered madmen or criminals (Fromm, 1973, pp. 322-323).

Emerson's "Every wall is a door" is cited in one of Camus's diaries (Camus, 1951 or 1952, p. 33). We have discovered that Camus relied on this idea in closing an address he delivered at the University of Upsala in

December 1957. We assume Camus's position as stated here would have been accepted by Fromm:

It is said that Nietzsche after the break with Lou Salomé, in a period of complete solitude, crushed and uplifted at the same time by the perspective of the huge work he had to carry on without any help, used to walk at night on the mountains overlooking the gulf of Genoa and light great bonfires of leaves and branches which he would watch as they burned up. I have often dreamed of these fires and have occasionally imagined certain men and certain works in front of those fires, as a way of testing men and works. Well, our era is one of those fires whose unbearable heat will doubtless reduce many a work to ashes! But as for those that remain, their metal will be intact and, looking at them, we shall be able to indulge without restraint in the supreme joy of the intelligence which we call "admiration".

One may long, as I do, for a gentler flame, a respite, a pause for musing. But perhaps there is no other peace for the artist than what he finds in the heat of combat. "Every wall is a door", Emerson correctly said. Let us not look for the door, and the way out, anywhere but in the wall against which we are living. Instead, let us seek the respite where it is — in the very thick of the battle. For in my opinion, and this is where I shall close, it *is* there. Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps then, if we listen attentively, we shall hear, amidst the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope. Some will say that this hope lies in a nation; others, in a man. I believe rather that it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications of history. As a result there shines forth fleetingly the ever-threatened truth that each and every man, on the foundation of his own sufferings and joys, builds for all (Camus, 1957e, pp. 190-191).

Comment to a Quotation Out of Erich Fromm's "Afterword to George Orwell's Novel *1984*" (Fromm, 1961b)

This quotation illustrates clearly how Fromm time and again was aware of the social setting in which individuals lead their lives. It is also an illustration of how he handled historical facts. It *is* a hard fact that millions died in the First World War because certain European powers were intent on expanding their territories. According to R. B. Nye and J. E. Morpurgo (1955, p. 663) casualties amounted to about 13 million. And in the autumn of 1929 the "Big Prosperity Bubble" did burst, and in Wall Street on the 24th of October "the panic hit" (p. 678). But Fromm, in his dealing with hard facts, seems to have frequently mixed fact with conjecture without pointing out to his readers what was known and what was assumed, supposed. Furthermore, in the quotation under discussion Fromm makes statements which are not even factual, as he implies. He suggested, for example, that Joseph Stalin was behind the introduction of the "reactionary state capitalism" that went into effect in the Soviet Union, which is incorrect. It was Nikolai Vladimir Ulyanoff Lenin who instigated a certain return to the capitalist mode of economics (state capitalism) in 1921. This example also reveals Fromm making a value judgment in a way as though it were an obvious fact. We are referring to his evaluation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) as being a "betrayal of the socialist hope", at the least, we might say an "interpretation", at the most an unproven "fact".

As for Germany between 1933 and 1945, it is clear, as Fromm implies with the word "barbarism", that destructive forces predominated throughout the country and were spread abroad. But the term "barbarism" is inappropriate in this regard, since barbarism refers to uncultured persons, persons "without sympathy for literary or artistic culture", something which cannot be said without reservation for Adolf Hitler, who considered himself a painter and one who appreciated Richard Wagner's music. And the state apparatus which the German government organized under Hitler was anything but lacking in "ignorance", although it was "cruel" (Leslie Brown, 1973, p. 181).

Also the use of the word "insanity" to characterize the state of affairs in the Soviet Union in the 1930s is inapplicable. "Inhuman", yes, but not insane! We need only remember what Stalin accomplished after the 1930s in the pursuit of his goals, for example, his success in his dealings with Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference between the 4th and 11th of February 1945, a fact well-known to Fromm (cf. Fromm, 1961, pp. 105-108). And in spite of certain definite indications of mental instability, Stalin died while still in power in March 1953.

We also think Fromm is remarkably inexact when he wrote that during the Second World War the "destruction of civilian populations" was "unlimited". We would argue with Fromm that if Hitler had had his way, he would have destroyed as much as possible in England with his bombing. But the Allies, we assume, could have severely damaged many more areas in Germany than they did, and more than two atomic bombs

could have been dropped on Japan before the Japanese leaders sued for piece on the terms of unconditional surrender.

Fromm also contradicts himself when he considers the First World War as having been "morally callous" and at the same time emphasizes that certain "moral considerations ... had still existed in the First World War". Of course, it is certainly not a crime when a person contradicts himself or herself. But we think it would have been wise of Fromm — considering the demands he made upon himself and others — to go into the matter more thoroughly to which he said two things at the same time.

We want to explain in some detail what we mean in this regard. We are referring to that part of the quotation which reads "millions died ... under the illusion of fighting for peace and democracy". It is not Fromm's statistic which we are questioning. We think Fromm was inadequately related to the mentality of countless American citizens during that period of the First World War, i.e. from April 1917 to November 1918, when the United States of America was actively engaged in combating the German military forces. And we assume that he is referring here to the people of the U.S.A. and not to the English or French. More specifically we suppose he is considering the thoughts and deeds of Thomas Woodrow Wilson, who was President of the United States during this phase of its history. After the fact and after countless investigations of the circumstances under which the United States declared war on Germany on Good Friday 1917, it is in a way correct to write about "the illusion of fighting for peace and democracy". We need only note that in 1917 President Wilson was under "pressure from industry, agriculture, and

banking" to support the Allied war effort. At that time "loans to the Allies reached 2,000 million dollars while those to Germany totaled only twenty-seven million". In other words, the "American financial state in an Allied victory was high" (Nye and Morpurgo, 1955, p. 653).

As to the background of these loans, Howard Zinn (1980) writes:

With World War I, England became more and more a market for American goods and for loans at interest. J. P. Morgan and Company acted as agents for the Allies, and when, in 1915, Wilson lifted the ban on private bank loans to the Allies, Morgan could now begin lending money in such great amounts as to both make great profit and tie American finance closely to the interest of a British victory in the war against Germany.

The industrialists and the political leaders talked of prosperity as if it were classless, as if everyone gained from Morgan's loans. True, the war meant more production, more employment, but did the workers in the steel plants gain as much as U.S. Steel, which made \$348 million in profit in 1916 alone? When the United States entered the war, it was the rich who took even more direct charge of the economy. Financier Bernard Baruch headed the War Industries Board, the most powerful of the wartime government agencies. Bankers, railroad men, and industrialists dominated these agencies (pp. 353-354).

But President Wilson was no puppet of the trusts. We know that in crises before 1917 he had stood up against certain power elites in the interest of what he considered to be honest business, for example, his denunciation of the tariff lobby as documented in his statement to the press 26 May 1913 (cf. Henry Commager, 1973, p. 87). Nye and Morpurgo (1955) noted in this regard:

"I am for big business", Wilson said, "and I am against trusts". The argument was not between big and small business, in his opinion, but between business and unfair monopoly. Legislate against unfair business methods, bar illicit practices, keep competition open and free (p. 643).

And sure enough, during Wilson's administration from 1913 to 1921 "more legislation of a progressive nature was passed, and the foundations for more laid, than under any previous administration since [Andrew] Jackson's [1829-1837]" (pp. 643-644). It is clear to us that other historians have probably come to very different conclusions regarding the worth of President Wilson's legislation as a whole. Ralph Harlow (1949) did not explicitly evaluate Wilson's work in Washington, D.C., and that goes for Lloyd Gardner (1967) and Howard Zinn (1980) as well. The question must remain open, as we see it. Owing to other obligations, we must end this specific study here.

As for the entrance of the United States into the First World War, Nye and Morpurgo (1955) wrote that President Wilson based his recommendation for this step on four major points: "unrestricted submarine sinkings, German sabotage in American industry, the failure of armed neutrality, and the German threat to the security of American and global democracy" (p. 657). The "global democracy" here yearned for by President Wilson was not, Zinn (1980, p. 355) contends, in contrast to Wilson's biographer Arthur Link, a condition sought by countless

Americans. But in his war message of 2 April 1917, President Wilson argued forcefully that the

world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire not conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind (Wilson quoted in Commager, 1973, p. 131).

Later, the President added to the aims of the United States the goal of participation in a "war to end war" (Charles Beard and Mary Beard together with William Beard, 1968, p. 403).

Zinn (1980) writes on how the President's words were responded to by the public as follows:

Despite the rousing words of Wilson about a war "to end all wars" and "to make the world safe for democracy", Americans did not rush to enlist. A million men were needed, but in the first six weeks after the declaration of war only 73,000 volunteered. Congress voted overwhelmingly for a draft.

George Creel, a veteran newspaperman, became the government's official propagandist for the war; he set up a Committee on Public Information to persuade Americans the war was right. It sponsored 75,000 speakers, who gave 750,000 four-minute speeches in five thousand American cities and towns. It was a massive effort to excite a reluctant public (p. 355; cf. G. Creel, 1920; H. Laswell, 1927, H. C. Peterson, 1939 and J. R. Mock and C. Larson, 1940).



On the second day of the meeting in Ascona the following page in one of our calendars became visible, apparently the cover of a song neither of us is familiar with, but all of which is probably a good illustration of what we just learned from Zinn: