# A CRITIQUE ON ABSURDITY;

# A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CLARIFICATION OF ONTOLOGY

A Master Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

American Public University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

June 2018

American Public University

Charles Town, WV

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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American Public University System, June 1st, 2018

Charles Town, West Virginia

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Abstract

Contained in this thesis is logical proof that the existentialist claim, existence comes prior to essence, is fundamentally flawed. By examining both existence and essence phenomenologically, I will demonstrate that the premises of the existentialist argument is bias, and therefore, their conclusion that man is entirely free is nothing more than subjective partiality; or rather, opinion merely and not fact. From this truth I will offer conjecture, through Albert Camus' work *The Myth of Sisyphus* and his ideas on the absurdity of existence. This absurdity analogized with Sisyphus helps demonstrate that the essence of existence is indifference to the participants in existence, or simply put, objective; however, man subjectively understands existence, as he is conscious of the underlying laws which necessarily define existence itself. Consciousness, or our

understanding of existence, is subjective. Congruently, man's understanding of existence, otherwise referred to as ontology, is always phenomenological.

To accomplish the previous, I will first demonstrate that ontology is inseparable from phenomenology, as *being* is understood in relation to anyone's own individual experiences with the attributes of existence. Beyond doubt it will be demonstrated that essence is innate within existence. Ultimately, I will demonstrate that existence is best defined with the underlying attribute, choice. Volition will be proven and then presented as a solution to the dilemma of absurdity. Better stated, ontology, or existence, is phenomenological, or subjective.

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# I: INTRODUCTION

The intent of this essay is to demonstrate, through philosophical discourse, that existence must be freed from the existentialist's circumscribed absurdity, which they conclude arises due to consciousness. The existential argument is weak and I will prove their conclusions regarding the nature of existence unreasonable. The logic of their argument is flawed as existentialists derive an objective truth of existence from the subjective awareness of *being*. This sort of reasoning is contradictory to their argument, for if subjectivity was in some manner response for objectivity, then existence would be contingent. Ironically, the existentialist assertations are, simultaneously, proof towards their lack of validity. They will argue that existence is without an innate essence, yet it will be proven that this is unreasonable, or at least less likely than the opposing argument, that man is born with an innate essence.

Existence is unable to predate essence, for within existence there is a more deducible aspect of *being* itself. This more deducible aspect of existence necessitates a set of constants governing existence, thus nature, or man's essence. The argument of the existentialists leads to the conclusion that an attribute of consciousness is awareness of

the absurdity regarding existence, yet this objective declaration relies on man's own subjectivity regarding existence. Also, such a claim demonstrates an essence within *being*. Consider the following objective law regarding *being* to support the previous: man will never objectively know what it means to exist, nor truly know what it means not to exist; we can merely rationally choose truths in accordance with our own rationale.

Man is unable to choose consciousness, as he is either perhaps born with it, or develops it shortly after existence. Consciousness is a mere attribute and not a necessity, yet man has no choice in the matter and therefore, not the cause of consciousness. Rather, consciousness is an attribute of existence, and this is precisely what constitutes an essence. To deny consciousness' existence prior to our own is simply fallacious. There must be an underlying law governing such, as it is only present in man; at least to the degree we know of consciousness. Baruch Spinoza confirms this sensibleness in his work *Ethics,* when he states "what is caused differs from its cause precisely in what it has from the cause" (15). Innate cognizance of being is undeniable in existence, at least for man. We are aware of ourselves. Yet this trait is not universal. This point will be expounded upon further in the critique.

Consciousness gives rise to the absurd according to existentialists, yet the absurd is also a result of experience. I will merge both reflection and experience, as they are congruent. The two, being reflection based understanding, or rationalism, and experienced based understanding, or empiricism, are nothing more than an attribute of the

same cause. It is impossible to separate rationalism, or of the mind, from empiricism, or of the body, even when "we get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking" (Camus 3). Experience, and awareness of such, influences one another to form consciousness, and consciousness affects how one experiences existence. Also, experience directly affects ones rationale. The two, empiricism and rationalism, are congruently related in existence, thus phenomenological. This is a relationship undeniable.

Man is aware that the meaning of existence is defined by the individual undergoing it, and consequently, consideration of past experience clearly influences future participation, as man is sensible. Thusly, ontology must be phenomenological according to anyone conscious! If such was not the case, man would be unaware of the absurd, as consciousness precedes our experience, once developed; it is an attribute. At least to man, awareness affects experience just as experience affects awareness. Consider the following as proof: the experience of pain at a point in time logically results in future avoidance of the experience which caused the initial discomfort. This is undeniable, as self-preservation is innate within man's constitution. Hence, this is his essence.

Man's understanding of being is reflective, or rather, deductive in nature. Likewise, this deductive application of consciousness affects future experience, for surely opinion affects future involvement of a particular experience. With experience of a

particular, man is able to predict logically, based merely on rationale and previous involvement.

Accordingly, it is logical to conclude that man's understanding of existence is inductive as well; this is commonsensical. From previous experience comes knowledge of such. Conscious beings apply past experience to forecast future occurrences. It is simply a characteristic of awareness, and, candidly, irrefutable. Within man's essence is the attribute of consciousness. We know this to be true, as man behaves differently than all other known forms of *being*. Man's awareness affects his existence, thus the dichotomy in behavior. Accordingly then, man's ontological understanding of existence is phenomenological in nature, as the two, *being* and consciousness, are both complementary and contingent upon one another. Yet, one does not necessitate another. The previous logic is true regarding the mind/body relationship as well. Within these groupings lie a phenomenological reliance. Rene Descartes will disagree with the previous, yet his objection will be resolved later in the critique. The mind and body exist in reciprocity, just as consciousness and existence influence one another.

Man's understanding of being is partial towards his own essence concerning reflection. Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology, endorses such in *Ideas*, when he states "the phenomenological method operates exclusively in acts of reflection" (174). This sort of reflection provides context concerning future experience, and, accordingly, *being* is perceptual, at least to a degree. Yet, we also know that experience affects ones

perception, as one is more rational with experience of a particular than he is without experience.

Existence is influenced by reflection, just as reflection is molded by experience. However, it is possible to reflect without prior experience, yet not with awareness of the reflection. Man is compelled, both mentally and physically, often by abstract thought alone.

Influential thought does not necessarily require experience, as man's "regularity of an impulse or a repulsion in a soul is encountered again in habits of doing or thinking" (Camus 4). Impulses are also characteristics of essence and if such was lacking, similar experiences would produce corresponding consequences, yet this is not the case. An identical experience may produce a multitude of reactions, without further influence from any other experience. It is within choice that man finds himself phenomenologically bound.

Universal characteristics are experienced in different contexts due to the subjective nature of *being* itself. No singular response is necessitated from an individual cause or experience. Man has freedom of choice regarding choice, or at least in as much as his essence allows. Man's actions are related mutually with his awareness of his *being*.

Choice is the determinate which molds *being*, and helps affect future experiences. This is a developed process and not with an infinite destination. The passions of man are not determinate. Aristotle confirms such logic when he declares that the "same thing is a

cause of opposite things" (Arist. *Met*.V. 2, 1013b10-20, trans. Sachs). Within choice the absurd is dissolved. Just as something is, so too could it not be. However, choice is limited by awareness, and thus, so too is potentiality constrained by actuality.

## II. PHENOMENOLOGY

The absurd is comprehended phenomenologically and originates from the most basic inquiry of existence: what does it mean to *be*? Consider the absurd as an attribute of a more primal substance, yet one which affects the here-and-now. Awareness of *being* subjectively leads man to a desired objective based merely on worldly constructs, and mostly, for the continuation of *being*. Yet, this desire for the furtherance of *being* diminishes the actualization of present existence. This is the origins of the absurd and the premise which gives birth to the existential argument.

Man's capability of prediction, or potentiality, is limited by his actual ability of inductive reasoning at any given point in time. Thus, to declare an objective truth, such as the existentialist's declaration that essence arises from existence, is simply incorrect.

It is a subjective comprehension of *being* based merely on an attribute of a less-divisible substance. Unfortunately, however, such declarations give context to actuality and influence further potentiality.

Man's conscious search for purposefulness results in the absurdity of *being* according to existentialists, as they argue there is no inherit meaning to life. Man exists merely, and does so without any particular objective. Essence is a derivative of existence. Existentialists contend essence is but an attribute of being and not a cause in-and-of-itself. Their rationale will lead man to conclude life is devoid of any true purpose, and thusly, render him free to choose according to his own resolve. But yet again, it serves well to recall that awareness is subjective in nature. Also, logically, the lack of a subjective experience does not constitute the non-existence of that which is unexperienced. Similarly, the same is true of essence. The undiscovered exists to the same degree as the discovered. Awareness does not give life to a particular subject matter, nor does the lack of awareness diminish such. Both essence and existence are uneffected by acknowledgement. Yet, within consciousness lies the influence of reflection. Essence may not be ignored, as within potentiality actuality resides.

Existentialists will have you believe that *being* is the foundation of essence, and therefore, man's desired purposefulness of existence is nothing more than desire or prejudice; yet, self-preservation seems to be an attribute, at least for a time; otherwise it

would never come into *being*. Also, they argue, the subjective conclusions pertaining to morality is inconsequential, as the ultimate fate of all beings participating in existence are objectively defined and profoundly indifferent to belief. This is an inference of fate and the lack of choice, as death is the culmination of life according to existentialism. Death, and nothing more! This is the determined fate of man. However, I offer a solution in essence. Nature itself approves and provides evidence as well. All beings have a presupposition, yet it seems as if man alone is aware of this essence.

Let's rephrase the existentialist's rationale: regarding the time frame of the universe, in a relatively short time, the sun will expand during its own death and incinerate any proof of man's existence. Purpose, therefore, is merely a delusion of consciousness and man's desire of self-preservation is hopeless, yet innate. It is not verifiable through either deductive or inductive reasoning. Better put, existence is finite and, consequentially, relegated as purposeless, as existence will eventually fade. Self-preservation is a futile ambition ultimately. In accordance with this logic, no decision leads one closer or further from an objective purpose, as all are relegated the same consequence, resulting in annihilation. Time dictates such and leads man to inquire if choice, too, is an illusion. This inquiry will be addressed further along.

Ontology, or the study of *being*, has now been established as phenomenological in nature. Logically then, it is safe to conclude man's empirical association of past experiences contribute in providing perspective towards present existence, with, of

course, support from inductive reasoning. This process of awareness-refinement-greater awareness-greater refinement is cyclical, ad infinitum. This is the essence of consciousness; it entails the opportunity of further awareness with further experience, and behaves in accordance to the potentialities afforded by this mindful rationality. Similarly, man's understanding of the mind, or rationale, aids his comprehension of the body, or his ability to comprehend empirically, and vice-versa.

Ontology necessitates analysis concerning the interdependence between the rational mind and the empirical body in regard to the underlying implications of *being*. Thusly, a phenomenological approach will be applied as the methodology within this critique on absurdity. Also, the methodology will include contributions from the major proponents of existentialism in an attempt to better define their argument; the argument which ultimately results in the conclusion of the absurd in relation to existence.

## III: THE ABSURD

The absurd is the result of man's deductive reasoning regarding the all-inclusive nature of death, empirically confirmed, in addition to man's inductive yearning for purpose in a world of temporality, rationally confirmed. Better stated, the absurd occurs as a product of both the mind and body; the actuality of body- death, and potentiality of mind- consciousness. Innate in existence is the desire to continue *being*. This is our essence.

The absurd does not originate from empirical evidence alone. Rather, one must be aware of *being* and reflect ontologically. With thought, the conscious mind logically determines the finiteness of existence. Death can be discovered by thought or by empirical evidence, yet, either way, one is confirmed by the other.

In life, the body becomes aware of its own reliance on the mind, and vice-versa. Potentiality is hindered by the actuality of existence. This actuality/potentiality dichotomy is undeniable, as thought affects experience, just as experience affects thought. Albert Camus endorses just this, when he states that, if the plight of Sisyphus is tragic, it "is because its hero is conscious" (89). Pain and suffering are synonymous with existence, yet this is not tragic. It is awareness of the inevitability of such pain which Camus is referencing as tragic. Existentialists use this point to diminish meaning in existence. According to their logic, the only thing determined in existence is death and suffering; from this lot man has no volition. *Being* becomes tragic to man, as he alone is

aware of the fate of all in existence. This is the origins of the absurd; conscious comprehension of the temporality of existence.

It is the awareness of man's own tragic destiny which gives birth to the absurd. Absurdity, and tragedy for the matter, occurs simply because of consciousness; this is his essence. In consciousness comes knowledge of the temporality of existence. Subjective existence is but a breeze in the wind; seemingly forever present, yet also, forever ephemeral. Existence is evanescent and because of such, death will conquer all. This, too, is a deducible attribute of *being*. It will certainly conquer all who exist; it is the nature of existence, the inevitable potentiality of actuality. Man's essence!

It is within this realization regarding the factuality of ontology in which the absurd is born. These inductive truths seem to only be recognized by man, as he alone is both conscious and thus rational. However, his comprehension of ontology is inseparable from his rational reflection towards subjective empirical experience. If man was not conscious and able to rationalize, he then could not conclude existence to be absurd, as such a declaration originates, consequentially, due to self-awareness. Man's reflection of past experiences influence his present *being*; his predictions of future experience influence his present *being* similarly. This is undeniable.

Absence of acknowledgement does not constitute lack of existence. Accordingly, all which exists must necessarily not eventually, otherwise the two, *being* and *non-being*, lack differentiation. They do however, thus they are an attribute of the same substance,

as one is always the case when the other is not present. This dichotomy necessitates an affect, even if such is merely the law which determines the two can neither exist nor co-exist together. Life and death coincide in the same phenomenological association as the mind and body; both are mere attributes of an original affect, or substance. As well, they affect one another. The mind can cause pain to the body, just as the body can cause pain to the mind. Similarly, it is from existence in which non-existence arises, just as it is from non-existence in which life arises.

Regarding the mind and body, one simply cannot exist without the other, and therefore, related. This dependency dictates that neither can be the cause in-and-of-itself, as the other is necessary for continuation. This is the actuality of *being* and *non-being*; an essence, or rather, the unwritten fundamental rule which determines existence and non-existence. Let's call this a law.

Death and life are bound together, as the two share a dichotomic relationship. Man endeavors to understand this relationship as to substantiate *being*. However, just as existentialists claim essence is a product of existence, so too is true of similar logical inferences: death is but a law of existence. Death is incapable of existing without *being* itself. Without existence, death would be not. It is not a cause in-and-of-itself. *Being* necessitates deaths existence; this is an attribute of existence. It seems as if death, or non-existence, is governed by another, thus not its own cause.

Essence is not contingent upon existence in the manner that death is. Essence is that which provides an innate propensity of choice while in actuality, which, therefore affects *being* itself, as ontology is phenomenological. Also, *being* is just that, nothing more. It proceeds as the one participating chooses, yet the potentiality of this particular *being* is influenced by an essence.

The existentialist's premise resulting in the absurd is erroneous, thus their logic merits analysis. Because something is known to exist in regard to another simply does not oblige the duality of existence. I offer death as proof; it is dependent, as it relies upon existence. Yet, dependence on another does not necessitate recognition from the participant. Consider the sun: it is indifferent to the plants which benefit and develop life from such. It is a relationship, yet one is the cause of another. The plant benefits more-so than does the sun, yet they are phenomenologically related, at least as the plant is concerned. So too is true of man's relationship with existence. *Being* is indifferent to association.

Potentiality is only halted by actuality. Man's comprehension of essence is reflective, yet so too is man's understanding of existence. This is where the absurd arises, yet still, essence comes prior. It demands not acknowledgement nor reflection; it simply is. Existence happens regardless of reflection. A rock exists in the same context as does man. To claim essence comes into being once realized is ridiculous. Surely an animal, or a rock for the matter, exists, just as man does. As well, surely other creatures which lack

consciousness still retain a propensity in their existence. The only difference is consciousness, yet such is not a necessary component of existence. Rather, it is an attribute. *Being* exists regardless of confirmation and originates within its own nature. Better put, *being*'s potentiality remains oblivious to its own actuality, yet this realization does indeed influence the participants of *being*. Man comes to know existence phenomenologically and this knowledge influences further experience, yet this is not the nature of *being* itself.

Man is born into existence, yet existence, itself, remains indifferent by the presence of participants. A substance, or affect, is uninfluenced by the attribute, or effect. If such were not the case, the logic would be reversed and the attribute would be the cause of the substance. This is ridiculous. Consideration alone neither confirms nor denies existence. Rather, consciousness of existence is an attribute of *being*, but not a necessity. Yet because of this attribute, man is cognizant and able to make declarations, including the existential argument regarding the absurdity of existence. But, if existence comes prior to essence, why then is man able to rationalize that which is yet to be experienced? The existentialist perspective lacks merit! That which is yet be experienced still may be rationally induced based on previous experiences.

Again, consciousness in *being* is an attribute of a prior substance. Yet, consciousness exists regardless of actuality. Within any substance lies a potentiality. However, this potential is determined by choice.

Potentiality is but yet an option and seemingly exists in-and-of-itself. However, actuality provides choice in the degree in which potentiality is fulfilled. For example, man is capable of fear without experience. This is how evolution works. Self-preservation resides as an attribute of existence and seems logically fit as proof of instinct, or better put, essence. To avoid death is likely to increase the possibility of existence, and keeps *being* as such. Witnessing the fate of prey, the one observing is likely to avoid the predator from that moment. The innate influences the here-and-now, and if not, existence would simply cease to exist. Yet those in existence prefer to self-preserve; this is instinct and assists continuation in *being*. Fear is the only other explanation, yet fear too still demands an essence.

Man experiences *being* both empirically and rationally. Experience and thought of such are united. Consider for example the torment faced by Sisyphus when learning of his fate. His fortune of forever pushing the bolder uphill is merely bodily. The tragedy occurs when rationalizing the consequences of such a lot. This interaction constitutes the absurd. It is man alone who determines the meaning behind his own task. Choice is but a subjective attribute of existence. If such were not the case, the cause of tragedy would not be present.

This existential argument regarding the absurd presumes that which is yet to be perceived is that which is yet to exist; this is the existentialist proposal. This summary may seem simplistic, yet if existence precedes essence, then characteristics of existence

come into *being* by acknowledgement. This is illogical, even in definition. This line of reasoning is false and will be expounded upon further with the inclusion of Spinoza and his propositions. Man's understanding of existence lies in the interaction of potentiality and actuality, yet subjective awareness does not affect objective reality. Such is pretentious.

Within essence lies a law which restricts existence. Essence is the cause. But, within an attribute lies a portion of the original substance which merits an effect, and it is through consciousness, an effect, in which substance is understood, ultimately justifying a phenomenological approach toward ontology. Consciousness is nothing more than a causality relationship; one which the phenomenological approach does not render cause objectively upon realization. The relationship between consciousness and existence is one of transcendental phenomenology, at least to man. Although consciousness and existence share a direct relationship, consciousness is innate in regards to man's existence.

## IV: EXISTENCE

What is the purpose of existence, a conscious man ponders? This is an inquiry which arises naturally in man's subjective lifetime, as he wishes to determine the meaning of his own existence, especially with awareness of his pending fate, being death. This thought process, though, seems to be an attribute unique amongst the conscious. Empirical evidence of death is constant in nature, and therefore, obviously influences the existence of those who can rationalize the all-encompassing nature of such. With awareness in existence, the absurd is realized.

The nature of man is phenomenological without doubt! Due to man's consciousness, or self-awareness, it is quite easy to conclude that he does exist, just as all other creatures. Yet man is presumably aware of this existence more-so than others. This is commonsensical. Accordingly, Charles Darwin and his text *The Origin of Species* does well by inducing the main attribute of continued existence: the capability of adaptation. And, as it currently stands, man is indeed best equipped for change, as he is able to adapt more efficiently than other forms of life. Although, this adaptation is not within the species, but rather, the environment. Consciousness of *being* allows the one aware to modify certain features to better serve their wants. Existence, though, does not necessitate awareness, as a tree exists in equal proportion to man, although the tree does seem to lack self-awareness. Existence then, obviously, does not require consciousness.

From man's essence consciousness is transformed from an innate potentiality to an actuality. Consider the reverse logic. Within a seed a potentiality. This is the possible attribute of the initial substance. If the seed blossoms, then potentiality is met and is transformed into an actuality. If not, such a potentiality is not diminished, but rather, just not actualized. The potentiality still exists, yet it simply will never come into *being*. If such was not the case how then could one explain the uneven distribution of consciousness to merely one being of existence, being man? You simply cannot.

Existence seems to prefer unconsciousness in a much larger quantity than it does consciousness. However, consciousness seems to differentiate man from all other beings of existence. This attribute alone separates man from other forms of *being*, as man is directly aware of the past, present, and to some degree, the future. Simply put, man is able to utilize deductive reasoning towards the past to help define the present here-and-now; which influences the near future inductively. Rene Descartes suggests that our rationale is limited by past experiences and looks to discredit predictability as a means of logic, as such is inductive. This is worth mentioning here, for later in this essay his deduction-based methodology will be shown to be too simplistic. Consciousness is but a mere potentiality of *being*.

Man's ability to foresee the consequent of a cause allows for the manipulation of the soon-to-be present based on inductive reasoning. This skill arises as a direct result of consciousness and is in direct conflict with Rene Descartes, who suggests inductive based

reasoning lacks in virtue. His disdain for such a method lies with the reasonable capacity of inaccuracies.

With inductive reasoning, man becomes aware of his mortality. It is for this attentiveness an inquiry regarding existence becomes common for the conscious. Even if our senses falsely perceive the present, the future of all which exists in not with error. It is death. All things which exist will one time not! Death is not a subject which man misconceives, yet rather, logically originates with either rationale or empiricism; regardless the origin, one form of evidence is confirmed by the other. This knowledge absolutely influences *being*.

Man can logically utilize his consciousness to determine death. And, given the finiteness of existence, and with past deductions and future inductions, man moves forward in no particular direction. He must decide what to do with his time before it expires. The temporariness of existence seems to promote the pursuit of happiness above all else, as survival alone is futile. In accordance with this reasoning, existentialists will have you believe that the here-and-now is all which matters, but such a mindset is bias.

Existence brings forth consciousness, which, in lieu of the two, brings forth the absurd. The absurd is merely a reminder that man is free to choose without metaphysical consequence, as death is indifferent. Choice is nullified by death it seems suggested. Death is the pending fate of man and his conscious reckoning of such constitutes his *being*.

With awareness of the inevitable that death consumes all inhabitants, at least in the manner man knows them to exist, he must conclude how to participate in *being* which ultimately is indifferent to the subject. With knowledge of the previous, existentialists declare:

Premise 1: Man desires purpose in his existence, as he is to die.

Premise 2: Existence has no purpose, as it, too, will ultimately be destroyed.

Therefore, existence precedes essence, as there is no innate meaning in a world which logically will not exist forever.

This argument is why existentialists conclude that man is utterly free. Such proponents of this reasoning sponsor the idea that existence alone determines essence, and therefore, life has no purpose, as destruction is inevitable. All morality and suspension of desire is little more than choice regarding ontological relativism, and it is as utterly as meaningless as participation in all individual desires. Neither choice has a consequent which one cannot dissolve in death.

Existentialists use the conscious understanding of inevitable death to determine that choice is in vain. As life has no inherent meaning, choice, too then has no infinite implications. Decisions are as arbitrary as, ultimately, the consequences of such choices. Ultimately, both will be removed. Others will argue that man has no choice what-so-ever, and is fated to behave according to nature alone. Determinists declare

choice is nothing more than a delusion of existence. This argument will be disproven when volition is addressed.

The lack of purpose is determined to be the conscious driving force behind the absurd, and is best articulated by Albert Camus' analogous tale of Sisyphus, the Greek punished for eternity for his behavior. Absurdity is the child of man's inner conflict, but also, it is the origins of his greatest ability, freedom from fear. With awareness of the absurd, it is rational to deduce that those conscious may easily reject fear of all origins, as it arrives from the indication of undesired consequences, yet all undesired consequences share a fate with all desired consequences, being temporality. The conscious understanding of *being* brings forth fear of death; however, this distress also is capable of restricting fright while in existence. To fear that which is inescapable lacks prudence.

## V: SISYPHUS

The tale of Sisyphus does well analogizing the absurd. It tells the legend of a mortal forever cursed to push a boulder up a mountain's ledge just to see it "fall back on

its own weight" (Camus 88) when nearing the apex. With awareness of the undeniable pointlessness of this repetitious endeavor, Sisyphus relentlessly executes his cursed task, day after day, night after night. He refuses to yield to his actuality, even with knowledge that the task is ultimately for not; his potentiality is no more. Sisyphus is aware of the absurdity of his situation, for man is a conscious being, and Sisyphus is a mortal. With mindfulness he is able to deduce that his life's task will be in vain as there is no finite conclusion of purpose. Ultimately, his duty will be unfulfilled. His boulder will never reach the top of the mountain, nonetheless the effort given. Sisyphus is cursed a life of labor, not of triumph.

The more he pursues, or the more he yearns, the more absurd Sisyphus' life becomes. His craving will never be quenched thus justifying the insignificance of his existence, or at least it seems so. Once man logically deduces their own fate, and for the matter, the fate of all men, one would imagine "with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor" (Camus 88). With death as a pending certainty, why would one toil towards a task which ultimately matters not? Furthermore, what a pity to torment over an unfulfillable chore! As demonstrated with Sisyphus, the enterprise of man is thusly absurd, as life's desires are no different from life's torments; they both lack objective meaning.

Consider the absurdity of this Greek. The legend of Sisyphus, forever spiting the gods, fated to task in unfulfilling labor; yet, even with such absurdity of fate, Albert

Camus assumes Sisyphus, man as well, happy! Happy so, even in lieu of this quandary. Essence will help reveal how, as suggested by Camus, Sisyphus can be happy, even with attentiveness towards the absurdity of existence. Our *being* matters subjectively. It influences experience for those inheriting the modified environment and provides empirical evidence of existence and the rationale to unite the two. With choice comes consequent, just as with life comes death. They mirror one-anther in phenomenological contingency. The former is responsible for the latter. Man's actuality directly affects man's potentiality!

Man desires survival and preservation of existence, yet, regardless of his ambitions, he will inescapably perish, along with all other forms of existence. The sun is an attribute of existence in the same context as man, yet less aware and further enduring; the similarities are that of existence and fate. The ending of existence is a fortune shared by all which exist, yet it is with man alone awareness of such is found.

Mythological embellishment of Greek epics are customary, as oral traditions confirm in lieu of preexisting attitudes. We as man tend to craft comprehension in regards to experience, or rather, comfortability. Consider *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and its historic context. Entailed in this story is the historic origins of most major religious stories, from the Garden of Eden, tale of the deluge, to the man who found eternal life. This epic gives rise to a multitude of attributes, as most major religions encompass within their beliefs, some resemblance of Gilgamesh, with or without context. Contained within

this work is an idea which does not require experience, yet grows accordingly because of such. Again, consider the plant/sun relationship; it is not mutual. Religious stories do not discredit the former muse of such. Rather, such exhibits the previous point verified which states that existence is not independent of the contributors. All knowledge is subject to the interpreter and ontology is inseparable from experience, and thus, phenomenological. However, our experience of *being* simply cannot define *being* itself. This is a subjective nature.

All which exists does so in congruency, with a unique bond of interdependence, and, unfortunately, fate. Yet, experience is particular, even with shared attributes of such. For just as each epic encompasses within it some attribute of tradition, so too does ontology contain within it subjective prejudice towards traditional thought, especially regarding *being*.

Death is objective and impartial, yet our experience with such is not. Experience gives perspective to the essence of life, being the quenching of such, yet how one deals with it removes such objectivity. Again, it is easy to consider the absurdity of existence an objective truth and resolve man a tragic fate, but such is not the case. Still, it can be imagined Sisyphus as happy, as the objective truth of death is ontologically comprehended individually, even if fashioned by convention. We do have choice, and such is an attribute of existence. We alone give context to awareness, both rationally and

empirically. Our actuality is defined by our comprehension of such, thus manipulating the potentiality of our *being*.

According to Homer, Sisyphus is no average mortal. He is "the wisest and most prudent of mortals" (Camus 88). He is more shrewd than all others, the "craftiest of men" (Homer Book 6 Line 150). Son to the god of wind; holder of the throne in Corinth. His birth justifies a higher importance, yet, as previously stated, his fate is the same as all others who participate in existence. Purpose is a desire of mind. It is born of the innate self-preservation trait of existence and the awareness of the pending failure of this trait. However, it does suggests that Sisyphus is no mere mortal. His essence destines him for a dissimilar life, even if such a fortune is an omen of jinx. It seems to be his fate.

Sisyphus' cleverness is more developed than his peers. Evidence is the tale of legend, and one such legend describes a time when Sisyphus observes the size of his cattle herd diminishing, while, simultaneously, his neighbor's herd growing. Seeing as he is so wise and crafty, Sisyphus concludes the purpose for such an anomaly between the two herds, and then sets out to entrap the thief responsible for the inverse relationship. By marking the hooves of his cattle, the wise Sisyphus is able to prove the guilt of Autolycus, the assumed malefactor. It is quite clear that the herd of his neighbors is growing proportionately with the reduction of Sisyphus' own. This he proves.

Proof of guilt, however, is not satisfactory retribution for Sisyphus. He requires more. With guilt comes reprisal, and vengefully, Sisyphus entices Autolycus' daughter,

Anticleia. Proceeding then, and in accordance to legend, Anticleia becomes the mother of Odysseus, which suggests that Sisyphus is the father of the Greek hero in *The Odyssey*. Homer references such when he speaks of the creation of Odysseus. He reveals that Anticleia, while still a virgin, was violated by Sisyphus and conceived Odysseus. Clever indeed is Sisyphus; revenge by perpetual assault! However, this same proclivity towards punishment will be immolated by the gods themselves when determining Sisyphus' fate.

The shrewdness Odysseus employs is legendary in-and-of-itself, yet now with consideration of his lineage, such stories in Homer's *The Odyssey* seemingly gain merit and display an innate essence deducible in heredity. It this text Homer tells of Odysseus' craftiness, suggesting he is, indeed, of Sisyphus's lineage. If Homer's accounts are correct, the ancestry is such. Odysseus is:

1. Grandson to Aeolus, king of Thessaly, "keeper of the winds" (The Complete Works of Greek Mythology 4), a task assigned by Zeus himself, king of all gods.
2. Son of Sisyphus, "craftiest of all men" (Homer Book 6 Line 150), "wisest and most prudent of mortals" (Camus 88).
3. Nephew of Salmoneus, the hated brother of Sisyphus and agitator of Zeus for his imitation of thunder, lightning, and rain.
4. Uncle to Bellerophon, slayer of the monster Chimera.

By analyzing his lineage, it is evident that there essential attributes innate within this family. From what is known from Charles Darwin and *The Descent of Man*, it is likely that Odysseus' propensity towards outwitting his foe is inherent from his alleged father, the cursed Sisyphus. This lineage survives with use of the inherent cleverness exhibited by this family. This is a necessity for both evolution and existence, self-preservation.

There are many myths about Sisyphus, yet one reoccurring theme is vengeance. Mythology tells accounts of such. Another fable demonstrates Sisyphus' bitter nature, and tells of his attempt to extract revenge on his hated brother, Salmoneus. Sisyphus' detestation of his brother leads him to seek punishment. Sisyphus, advised by the oracles, utilizes their insight. They communicates with him his brother's fate: inner-family death and murder. However, this only occurs if Sisyphus interjects; and interpose he most certainly does. Sisyphus seduces Tyro, daughter of Salmoneus, and fathers two children with her. It is apparent that Sisyphus's ingenuity is only matched by his flamboyancy regarding reprisal, and as warned, one of the two sons born of this amalgamation will eventually slay their grandfather, Salmoneus. Yet, when learning of such a fate, Tyro defies such misfortune. Instead of consenting to her child's fulfillment of prophecy, she, instead, slays the two children.

What disaster; a tribulation which would render any mortal distraught. Yet, this is not the case with Sisyphus. He resumes to taunt the gods, even at risk of further wrath. With little concern towards the fury of the gods, Sisyphus decides to reveal the nature of

the gods, being capricious by constitution. Sisyphus finds the gods to be fickle and ill-hearted as man. And, if the gods are incapable of demonstrating prudent behavior, such which is allegedly to be mimicked by man, then man is unconstrained by morality and is to behave in the means he deems best. Like the gods, man is free from consequence.

Sisyphus now equates himself to the proportion of the gods. To accept the will of the gods is to accept the absurd. The ways of the gods are absurd and futile, just as, and in similar approach, to the lot of man. The gods curse man with such, even if nothing else.

Sisyphus is punished for the distain he displays when revealing the nature of the gods. Instead of reverence, he offers "a certain levity in regard to the gods" (Camus 88). It is clear that he opposes their contradictory nature and desires to challenge them. His behavior is of a man scorned, demonstrated by opposing expectations of actuality. Due to such, Sisyphus steals, rapes and kills. He knows the capriciousness of the gods and chooses to live like his oppressors, regard to consequences removed.

The only thing which surmounts Sisyphus' behavior is his impious neglect of the gods and their standards. Obedience arises from fear and he has none; his actions demonstrate such. Within the removal of consequence arises freedom of choice. Decisions are established by prediction of result, yet if one yields the same result

regardless of decision, choice then ceases to exist. However, volition does indeed exist; This will be proven shortly.

Sisyphus openly challenges Pluto, god of the underworld, by putting death in chains. Loneliness in the underworld leads Pluto to seek remedy, thus dispatching Ares, the god of war, who discovers death imprisoned and restores him to existence. Yet, the challenge is issued. A mortal is enticing the gods! Knowing their absurd nature, Sisyphus defies their authority. The decisions of both man and god are inconsequential in this logic, as they result, ultimately, in the same outcome.

According to the legend, Sisyphus, in exchange for water for his city, reveals to the confused river god Asopus, that Jupiter, another god, is the one who abducted his daughter; the one who's absence is perplexing himself. Jupiter and the higher gods will not accept this revelation well. Such betrayal demands consequence. This is a message taught by the gods yet participated with amongst man. The cleverness exhibited by Sisyphus, and his son for the matter, seems to be the same attribute cursed by the gods.

The gods desire victory and, with that, death of opposition; mainly Sisyphus. However, the antagonist, Sisyphus, was unwilling and more clever than his captors. Remarkably still, he taunts the gods, and they wish to punish him for his hubris. For revealing to Asopus the secrets of the gods, Zeus orders Thanatos to punish him. However, Thanatos is no match for such a clever mortal, and he ends up incapacitated in chains. Sisyphus has managed to shackle death! During this time man is immortal; the

lingering nearness of death is disabled. The gruesomely deformed and mangled living corpses are forced to walk the earth in pain, begging for finality.

Eventually Ares, the god of war, frees death and sets to deliver Sisyphus to Hades. Sisyphus, however, being the most clever of all men, tells his wife a strategy to elude death once again. He instructs her, after his death, to perform sacrifices to Hades and Persephone, queen of the underworld. She is to do so during his funeral, yet avoid burying the corpse. He merely asks that his body be provided a coin as to pay Charon, ferrier of the dead, as to cross the Styx River towards the eternity of death. Ultimately, in blind love, she follows her husband's last request. Yet, in regard to the fulfillment of his last request, Sisyphus is disgusted by the "an obedience so contrary to human love" (Camus 88) shown by his wife. She disregarded Greek tradition and disposed of her husband in the manner he requested.

When Sisyphus arrives in the underworld, he tells Persephone he has no reason to be there, stating his lack of funeral ceremonies as the main reason. According to tradition, the dead require funeral rites. Also, he notifies the queen of the precedent she will set by accepting a unburied soul. And too, in anger Sisyphus petitions Pluto to release him from the underworld so that he may "chastise his wife" (Camus 88) for her noncompliance. If allowed to return to Earth, Sisyphus promises to reprimand his wife, arrange a proper funeral, and venerate the gods. He is to do all three tasks in the same amount of days.

When resurrected, however, Sisyphus' love for all which is worldly returns. He is astonished by the smile of the sea; the sights are enough to make man truly happy. Ignoring consequences, he disparages the will of the gods again, especially death. The subjective happiness provoked by participation in nature exceeds the wrath of the absurd gods.

Sisyphus' pleas work and his cleverness leads to his return of the living. Persephone grants his temporary release, yet Sisyphus has no intent on returning to death. Due to his furlough, he lives many years on earth until old age takes him once again. It is at this time death gets retribution. In response for the trickery of Zeus and Hades, Sisyphus is sent to Tartarus, the lowest region of underworld. Sisyphus, king of Corinth, is now condemned to forever push a massive boulder to the apex of a hill, in vain, as when he nears the top, the rock will forever fall backwards on its own weight. Thus, repetition of the unobtainable is the eternal punishment of Sisyphus.

It is Mercury, the Roman version of the Greek god Hermes, who delivers Sisyphus back to the underworld and to his punishment. Ironically, the messenger of the gods is most notorious for his mischievous and clever nature, very similar to Sisyphus himself. Both have a tale of their cleverness involving cows. Sisyphus marked his herd's hooves, while Hermes reversed the hooves of the sacred herd he stole from his half-brother Apollo, as to confuse any followers. Also, Hermes is credited for assisting the possible son of Sisyphus, Odysseus, providing relief from reprieve.

As the myth tells, Mercury, or Hermes, returns the presumptuous Sisyphus to the underworld, where his rock awaits. It is at this time one presumes the pending punishment Sisyphus must endure is enough to sadden any man, for it is at this point the inevitable atonement awaiting Sisyphus is actualized. However, this is not the case. Sisyphus is not only an absurd hero, but also a recipient of an absurd fate; a fate allotted to all men, once aware. He is an absurd hero, not merely for his punishment, but also for his desires which merit such punishment. His appetite is just as absurd as his fate, Camus suggests. Sisyphus' existence and fate is analogous to essence and consciousness; both are phenomenologically related.

Sisyphus's abhorrence for death is similar to his adoration towards life. It is no different than Sisyphus' ridicule of the gods in life is the same reason for the god's mimicry of Sisyphus in the afterlife. The two share a relationship, as each are influenced by the other, although in inverse proportion. As one increases so too does the influence of the other.

Condemned to forever push a bolder upwards just to witness it return to the foot of the mountain once near the apex, through Sisyphus mythology gives Sisyphus ample opportunity to comprehend his existence. Monotonous labor pushing a boulder up a mountain, day in and day out. Never will Sisyphus accomplish his task. Never will Sisyphus fulfill his desired purpose. This tale renders the understanding of existence as dependent, which seems absurd, yet with further analysis and assistance from Soren

Kierkegaard, the originator of such acknowledgement regarding absurdity, existence will be restored to help Sisyphus, and man, find happiness.

## VI: KIERKEGAARD

Who better to include in this critique than the founder of the existentialist movement, the one who birthed such a notion? Soren Kierkegaard is the founder behind the philosophy which declares a law in *being*: existence precedes any innate essence. He is a proponent of individual experience, as it demands more thoroughness in thought as compared to objectivity. Although some truths do not require participation to maintain validity, most truths gain just that through individual involvement. This, however, is subjective in nature. From experience, he suggests, essence is fashioned. He declares essence an attribute of existence.

Truth must first be clarified in order to proceed with prudence. Truth exists both objectively and subjectively according to Kierkegaard. An objective truth is universal, regardless experience. This type of truth is indifferent to the individual. This substance

is uninfluenced by its own attributes. An effect is unable to petition the cause; if such were the case, it would lose its objectivity.

Consider a triangle: it consists of three sides, regardless the individual in participation. No experience is necessary to discover such, as three-sided-ness is the essence of a triangle; have it not three sides, it would not be a triangle. This is an objective truth. Subjective truth, inversely, is the opposite of the latter. Subjectivity relies on the one experiencing *being*. Kierkegaard is more concerned with this form of truth, as he deems subjective experience more beneficial than factuality. Objective truth does not help in man's ontological inquiry, as the experience of *being* is that which provides context to reflection and influence. Accordingly, this relationship is phenomenological.

Consider mortality and the absurdity of death. We can be without error in predicting that we will one day die. This is an objective truth verified with both rationalism and empiricism. It is an inevitable fact regardless the participant. This is simply stated as the following:

Premise 1: With existence, non-existence follows.

Premise 2: Man exists.

Therefore, man will eventually not-exist.

Death is indifferent to opinion. The subjective truth of mortality, however, is much more personal. We must consider death in our everyday life. This contemplation, similar to

Sisyphus' initial pause while witnessing his bolder begin its normal decent, merges both actuality and potentiality. As Camus declares about this union, "this is the hour of consciousness" (89). The experience of death is more personal to the individual, and assists in framing existence for man. This is a direct derivative of consciousness, phenomenology. It is within this conscious experience of death which creates varying opinions on what death constitutes, and consequently, what life actually is as well.

Experience gives subjective truth validity, as most truth requires perspective. Our experience with such creates faith within ourselves, not objectively, but rather, subjectively. The potentiality of deceit seems to diminish with experience for those conscious. With confirmation man endorses the prudence of his own found truths. He believes increasingly in his own reflections as he has faith in himself, if nothing else. The purpose of faith is not to prove, but rather to act upon a belief determined while in phenomenological contemplation. This process gives birth to choice and is the guiding force which restricts objectivity. To know unquestionable or to be able to prove validity diminishes the subjectivity of faith and its effectiveness.

At times, belief may vary as new experiences provide further insight, but to believe without certainty is the point Kierkegaard encourages and this attitude is offered as a solution towards the absurd. Faith! He declares that we seek purpose yet the universe is indifferent to such. It is for this reason faith is necessary. The pending fate of all which exists will ultimately lead to the same consequent. Faith, then, offers a

subjective truth to help man understand mortality, and, ultimately, existence. Faith must be an inner-truth, not an outward expression.

Absurdity seems to suggest one should maximize their happiness while minimizing pain. However, this form of existence is one Kierkegaard warns against. This is the ethical mode of existence he suggests, and is best articulated with parenting. With such example, the parent concerns themselves with the well-being of their children ahead of their own, even with the innate trait of self-preservation. Altruism seems present, yet putting your child ahead of yourself is still a self-serving partaking. Simply, we are attached. It is a subjective value judgement.

Unfortunately, the ethical mode of existence is still not enough to weaken the absurd nature of existence. It is only with faith in something more which provides relief from our desires for purpose in a world which is at odds with this desire. Kierkegaard provides example for this teleological suspension of the ethical mode of existence with a story of sacrifice. Given the command by god, the story tells of Abraham's willingness to obey his faith and willingness to the detriment of his own well-being. It is this concept which offers solution to absurdity. It is this leap of faith which gives purpose to a world which is indifferent to its inhabitants. Absurdity exists, but so too does the positive attributes of existence. This removes the dread of absurdity. Living for another removes the fear of one's own fate. The anxiety which is inseparable from ontology exists merely

due to existence and the conscious awareness of self. Absurdity exists in unison with existence due to man's understanding of mortality.

## VII: HEIDEGGER

To understand more easily the solution to absurdity offered through faith consider Martin Heidegger's interpretation of this dilemma. Just as Kierkegaard suggests, subjective truths define our understanding of ontology, and for this reason, this inquiry into *being* is phenomenological. This field of investigation looks to analyze subjective existence and the objectivity of the being itself. The two are conjoined, as our understanding of the world affects the way in which we exist within it. Man's discovery of truth in the universe is merely perspective. Also, when a truth is decided upon, other truths are sacrificed. Actuality reveals while, simultaneously, conceals. With actuality comes proper potentiality, thus our choices matter. Our understanding of the universe and our understanding of *being* is contingent upon the truth the individual decides upon.

Our being in the world is always partial, yet there are certain givens, such as our facticity. Man concerns himself with that which he cares for. However, care is similar to truth, as we care deeply for that which we love, but also, we care deeply for that which we hate. The passions arise from our views on that which we are aware.

From this point Heidegger tells us of our fallenness. It is this realization which gives man the dread mentioned beforehand. Society is constructed in a manner which renders man inauthentic. He merely is born into an environment which will help shape his existence and has no input in such fallenness. He accepts tradition obediently, even in situations which are decided for him. Here lies the origins of the absurd. It initiates from fear and desires to avoid struggle. Remember, self-preservation is innate within existence. Fear then seems to serve some purpose.

Ultimately, to live authentically, existentiality is introduced to aide. Existentiality is simply when man lives for his deepest passions, removed from consequent. It is a balance between man's actualities and potentialities. However, to achieve such man must be free. This is the goal of existentialists such as Kierkegaard and Heidegger. By lacking essence, man is rendered free to do as he so chooses.

## VIII: CAMUS

Absurdity, according to both Kierkegaard and Heidegger, results from the existentialist proposition that essence is an attribute of existence. Man's lack of purpose, as contended, renders his existence to be without meaning. Albert Camus doesn't seem to agree with this existential logic, as he states "it is probably true that a man remains forever unknown to us and that there is in him something irreducible that escapes us" (4). Awareness, however, does not determine neither the quality nor quantity of existence. It is within essence this is defined. Furthermore, even if this 'something irreducible' in man is nothing more than a desire for purpose or the continuation of *being*, it is an objective essence, or potentiality, innate within man; that which exists regardless of acknowledgement or fulfillment.

The feeling of absurdity is shared by all conscious men in reflection. Man's suffering is attributed to the dichotomy of self-awareness and existence; the former exists in potentiality while the latter exists as an actuality. These two man desires to unite. The absurd is an objective reality revealed to all whom are subjectively aware. Therefore, to categorize Camus as an existentialist is false, as he acknowledges the likeliness of an essence, even if merely in the desire to unite the previous two. With knowledge

regarding the fate of existence, death, essence still is not negated, even if potentiality is all that remains.

Knowing that death is imminent, man yearns for relief through subjective understanding of objective reality. Although this seems illogical, it is obtainable. Consider this proof: man will never experience *being* objectively. As demonstrated previously, ontology is necessarily phenomenological in essence. Yet, although man will never experience existence objectively, he too will never experience non-existence subjectively. Subjectivity exists within being, as objectivity exists in non-being. Subjectivity is not a result of objectivity, nor more so than objectivity is a result of subjectivity. Their causes are unknown, yet they affect one another, and therefore likely to originate from a similar substance. They exist in relation with one another in-so-much as one influences the other. Just as the mind and body are attributes of a more fundamental substance, so too is the relationship between existence and non-existence.

Within man is an innate desire, unaffected by consciousness as far as it relates to potentiality, yet comprehended in actuality. Consider the following logic as proof: a predatory animal does not know that he enjoys the taste of meat until his desire for such compels him to hunt and kill his prey. His essence of meat-eating is motivated by the potentiality of desire and not the actuality of the flavor. The previous arises prior to the latter, yet the latter may affect future desires. Essence is undeniable. A pecan seed has within it the potentiality of a pecan tree, however, a pecan tree does not always result

from a pecan seed. Potentiality necessarily antecedes actuality, as actuality is unable to precede potentiality simply because existence is an actuality. Within the same logic, existence absolutely cannot precede essence, as potentiality is necessarily the cause of actuality.

Non-existence will never be subjectively experienced, nor will existence ever be objectively understood. We are unable to deduce objectivity, as we exist. This existence is the subjective actuality of the potentiality of choice. Yet, unawareness does not negate existence no more than it does confirm such. There are many forms of being which lack consciousness and are unaware of death. Yet, their fate will be just as all others, without the need for conscious confirmation. Consciousness is not a necessity of existence, yet it is a potential, as man is aware that he exists because he is capable of validating his own existence. However, he exists just as all other forms of being, even if more aware of himself than others in existence.

To fully understand this logical truth, consider Camus' approach to the absurd. Contemplate the idea of suicide, both physical and philosophical. The physical is of the body and the philosophical of the mind. With this attentiveness consider the inferred logic which reasons existence cannot be absurd, and rather, the absurd is within man's phenomenological relationship with existence. Camus claims the absurd is possibly avoided through faith and hope. This is what he means by philosophical suicide. Ignoring the absurd offers no reprieve, as it exists as an actuality regardless of

recognition. Ignorance negates no more so than awareness confirms. According to Camus, no empirical evidence of a god or divine creator exists, nor of a harmony able to satiate of wanting of such. Therefore, these desires are but mere creations of man and nothing more. The conscious desire to circumvent death is a fictitious practice and is for not, as it offers no evidence of conquest. Yet, the lack of confirmation from one does not also substantiate the converse. Lack of proof regarding the metaphysical does not therefore prove that the metaphysical is non-existent. Existence is perpetually apathetic to acknowledgement. This we have previously verified.

This logic is in agreement with the existentialist reasoning, which concludes that which exists, must first do so for an affect, or essence, to be born. Yet again, that which does exist do not require acknowledgement. Consider life: the existentialist perspective declares it to come first, which logically suggests *being* exists prior to essence. This is their argument. There is an assumption in this argument though. Why does essence require awareness prior to existence? Existence itself does not have this requisite. This logic is invalid even within existential reasoning. It is fallacious to ascribe a subjective cause to an objective concept. One may not be the cause of another, yet influenced by the effect caused. Actuality is a consequent of potentiality, just as existence is a consequent of potentiality. This is our essence.

The absurd hero is one who is aware of his fate yet appalled into unacceptance. Spite regarding man's fate is the hero's method of recourse to absurdity; he both

acknowledges its existence while, simultaneously, acts in a defiant refusal of the consequences it necessitates. Yet, hatred and love are both a passion of man. Passion, too, is actualized in existence, yet arises due to a potentiality. Same is true of our desire for objective reality logically rationalized by subjective truth. Our subjective reality leads one to conclude the non-existence of the metaphysical essence based on physical reasoning, just as objective reasoning concludes the metaphysical confirmation of lack of subjectivity. Kierkegaard warns of this, as he states that one who claims the absolute knowledge of god is as incorrect as the one who claims absolute knowledge of his existence. Faith is required.

Existence is not absurd, man's relationship with it is. The conscious man desires that which is unobtainable with full clarity. However, the obtainability of desire does not diminish that which is innate. The absurd is a limitation, not of existence, but of man's capabilities and biases. As suggested by Camus, if existence is deemed absurd, then simply end it. *Being* involves pointless suffering, existentialists will declare, so quit participating in it. This is definitely a choice allocated by existence. It is easier to not exist than it is to exist, subjectively, as the latter involves no choice while the former does.

Camus also offers an example of mental suicide. He suggests it rests with acceptance of religious dogma. To behave in accordance with another's instruction may offer relief, yet this relief is merely an escape of freedom, a forfeiture of choice. True

belief is grounded in reflection and affects individual actions; religious dogma is nothing more than the rejection of man's innate trait of volition.

Religious orders are a point in which Camus and Kierkegaard disagree, yet consider the idea of faith instead of religion. It easily reconciles the two. Blind obedience is not conviction, but rather, what Heidegger deems as fallenness. Through facticity of the past along with existence in the here-and-now, man is given the opportunity to live authentically. Dogmatic devotion does not constitute faith, but rather, pure obedience. Faith requires something more than simple acceptance; faith requires belief in something greater than self. This is the faith which assists one from avoiding such philosophical suicide. If the origins of belief are not grounded in subjective choice, then it is likely inauthentic. Faith requires self-discovery.

Man rightfully derives anxiety as an attribute of existence. Aware of the temporality of his *being*, man blurs the line of the present with the future. This causes anxiety, similar to the dread mentioned previously. Order and justice do not always prevail, as the world is indifferent to its inhabitants. Consciousness of such is the origins of absurdity. Affirmation of good is not always easily obtainable, just as consequence of bad deeds is not always the case. This is due to the inherent lack of purpose regarding existence. We simply exist and create morals around that which man desires, both subjectively and collectively. Even in essence, nothing is guaranteed outside of potentiality. Yet, such is often unfulfilled. This, however, can be avoided with belief in a

world which will punish that which is condemned as wicked and reward that which is deemed as brave. Better put, one can easily avoid the purposelessness of existence with philosophical suicide.

Religious dogma provides just as much relief from the uncertainties as does science, material goods, or whatever else satisfies man's desire of purpose. It distracts. To say religion is fallacious is congruent with saying it is correct. To declare science is the ultimate reality is erroneous, just as ignoring it would be. It is worth remembering existence is understood phenomenologically. Within existence comes a certain bias for man. Consider this the essence of existence to himself. It is born of consciousness and as such is not a universal attribute, as a tree has not the same bias as man regarding existence.

A better way to rid man of the absurdity present in *being* is to accept the capricious nature of such existence. Confront it without fear instead of cowering away from destiny. Embrace the lack of purpose and begin living. Absurdity is fundamental to ontology as existence does not have a set rubric or guideline. The direction of existence lies in choice.

Ultimately, Camus determines Sisyphus happy, even with consciousness of the absurd. "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus 91). This is a conscious choice, but does man truly possess freedom of choice?

# IX: CHOICE

Does such a thing as choice even exist? To some it appears as if choice is similar to purpose; it is desired as a means to avoid the absurd. Is the mind more reliable than the body, or is the body more reliable than the mind? Both rationalism, mind, and empiricism, body, have been utilized to provide an answer. The two pronounce that either true knowledge originates from deductive intuition or inductive experience. The rational philosopher argues the former, as knowledge is intrinsic, while the empirical philosopher argues the latter, as knowledge is obtained through sense-perception alone. The epistemological question regarding the mind-body relationship posits a dualistic dichotomy, as the mind and body becomes separated in an attempt to define the origins of true understanding. Such dichotomy is best expounded upon with reference to Plato, who reasons that form precedes matter, and Aristotle, who claims that matter precedes form. Such is similar to the cause of essence. Does it precede or proceed *being*?

The dualistic dichotomy demonstrated by both Plato and Aristotle continued prominent in philosophy until Baruch Spinoza united the two with his work, *Ethics*. In this work, Spinoza successfully links Plato's rational beliefs with Aristotle's empirical contentions, as he cannot comprehend how dual attributes, or effects, can affect one another if they originate from different substances, or causes. Because of such rational, Spinoza deduces that all attributes, or effects, originate from the same substance, or cause. This logic is in direct opposition to Spinoza's predecessor, Rene Descartes.

While rejecting Cartesian Dualism, Spinoza bonds Plato and Aristotle by suggesting both the mind and body are one, as they both are attributes , or effects, of the same substance, or cause. For, as Spinoza declares in his scholium regarding Proposition VII, Part II of *Ethics*, "thinking substance [the cause of mind] and the extended substance [the cause of body] are one and the same substance [cause], which is now comprehended under this attribute [effect], now under that" (35). Spinoza is validating that the mind and the body are one; the reason other philosophers miscomprehend such mind-body unity is because they are attempting to apprehend different attributes (effects), and not their substance (cause). This clarifies the dichotomy Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes wrongfully identify.

Resulting from the comprehensive union of the mind and body, Spinoza proclaims that all attributes (effects) of the mind and body originate from the same substance (cause), being God. He further deduces that all attributes (effects) are determined, as they

originate from the same substance (cause), and therefore, are necessitated to be that way by God. Although it is reasonable to conclude that all follows from one substance (cause), as Spinoza suggest in *Ethics*, it is unreasonable to conclude that all that follows, necessarily follows from that one substance (cause). This argument, however, does give merit to the necessity of essence preceding existence.

With proper background information presented to preface our inquiry, let us start with the origins of the mind-body dualistic argument in tradition with the occidental perspective alone, as the oriental perspective is historically more monistic.

Plato argues his theory of forms as the only way to obtain true knowledge. Forms are non-material, and therefore, not subject to the modification which all matter undergoes. This theory is exhibited when Plato states, "he will do this most perfectly who approaches the object with thought alone, without associating any sight with his thought, or dragging in any sense perception with his reasoning, but who, using pure thoughts alone, tries to track down each reality pure and by itself" (57). Here, Plato confirms his belief in innate rationale, or rather, rationalism, over sensory experience. One easily can comprehend Plato's reasoning for promoting the mind over the body, and consequently, by separating the two, he inevitably is promoting a dualistic dichotomy of the mind and body as well.

Plato's pupil, Aristotle, argues contrariwise, by stating, "when we said that mind is in a sense potentially whatever is thinkable, though actually it is nothing until it has

thought? What it thinks must be in it just as characters may be said to be on a writing tablet on which as yet nothing actually stands written: this is exactly what happens with mind" (J. Smith Pt. 3, Book 4, Para. 9). This quote is a direct refutation of Plato's theory of forms, and equally, an acceptance of tabula rasa, or the lack of innate ideas. If we lack innate ideas, then we may not deduce true knowledge prior to experience, and thusly, one may only induce true knowledge based on sense-perception alone; this is a conclusion that empiricist set as an axiom and seems to justify the existentialist perspective, yet Spinozian logic will easily dismiss such.

Let us continue our inquiry by developing the empiricist argument, for only then will be able to compare such an argument against the rationalist deductions.

The empiricist view suggested by Aristotle (as well as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume), induce that knowledge is *a posterior* (based on experience). Their belief that knowledge rises from experience is confirmed with neuroscience regarding synaptic plasticity, which explains how neuronal circuits in our brain become established and get reinforced through experience. Such accounts are best communicated by Askenasy, who states "cognitive sciences assume that brain activities have an infrastructure, but there is also evidence that consciousness itself may change this infrastructure" (1). Our brain changes with our body, as existence necessitates our brain to develop, and, in accordance with Plato, the brain, being matter, is subject to change. Both empiricist and rationalist would agree, therefore, to develop this point further would

hinder our inquiry, thus, we shall accept that our ontological perspective shapes our brain as factual.

However, to confirm that all knowledge arises from experience alone, as suggested by empiricists, one must not only confirm experience-based knowledge, but also, invalidate intuition (an attribute of essence). This is not an easy feat, as the same neuroscience which confirms experience-based knowledge also demonstrates "small clusters of pyramidal neurons in the neocortex interconnect according to a set of immutable and relatively simple rules" (Markram 1). If the brain's synapses are immutable, it must be indifferent to experience, must it not? Such a conclusion is logical to deduce based on neurological studies demonstrating that the brain not only forms synapses from experience, but also that the brain has innate synapses which form overtime regardless of experience. This logical conclusion explains "why we all share similar perceptions of physical reality, while our memories reflect our individual experience" (Markram 1). The previous discredits the assumptions of existentialists as well, yet still, further proof will be offered.

Benjamin Leibniz argues, "our knowledge of the world depends entirely upon our perceptual apparatus" (Strathern 44). Yet, "at both ends of the visible spectrum we know that things exist beyond the limits of our ability to perceive them. There is ultraviolet and infrared, to say nothing of radio waves, cosmic rays, and so forth" (Strathern 44).

Since we can obviously deny that true knowledge arises from experience alone, we must conclude that certain knowledge is *a priori* (free from experience). Such rationale seems acceptable based on the aforementioned, thus confirming rationalism, and leading us closer to Spinoza; thus, while moving closer to Spinoza's rationalism, we move further away from empiricism and existentialism.

To believe all knowledge arises from sensory experience alone is absurd, and because of such absurdity, let us shift our focus towards the opposing argument in our inquiry. For we have sufficiently demonstrated that humans are not born as a blank slate.

Rene Descartes, the father of rationalism, looks to establish that which cannot be questioned. With deconstructive reasoning, he discards anything which can be doubted, and instead looks to uncover "one thing only which is certain and indubitable" (Descartes 139). By establishing this one certain premise, he then can deduce all which follows.

Ultimately, Descartes arrives at one premise he cannot disprove: thought exists. For even if he doubts the premise that thought exist, that doubt alone requires thought, thus negating such a doubt. From this premise Descartes concludes he exist, as he is thinking. This is simply put in Aristotelean syllogism: I think; thinking exist, therefore, I exist. This is as logical as:

Premise 1: A = B,

Premise 2: B = C;

therefore, A = C.

From such unquestionable reasoning, Descartes puts forth, “I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time that I pronounce it, or that I mentally conceive it” (140). In accordance with the mind-body relationship, Descartes determines the greater ability of the mind over the body, which not only establishes the mind as superior as compared to the body, but also, verifies the mind-body dualist dichotomy advocated by both Plato and Aristotle. Such dualistic conclusions are substantiated with Descartes declaration, “I consider that I possess no senses; I imagine that body, figure, extension, movement and place are but the fictions of my mind” (139).

As the latter proof exhibits, we should now note that Descartes is in accord with both Plato and Aristotle, as all three reason for mind-body dualism, yet Descartes is more closely associated with Plato, as both are rationalist as well as dualist.

It is also important to note Descartes’ deductions are based on verification of existence. If we exist, we necessarily are subject to change, as we are composed of matter. In his second meditation, Descartes deduces two types of changes, which can be more clearly understood as two causes of motion.

The first cause of motion, as Descartes declares, is that which is moved “in many ways not, in truth, by itself, but by something which is foreign to it” (141). The body, to Descartes, is separate from the mind, and therefore, incapable of self-movement, as the body is reactionary merely. For confirmation of the latter, let us consider the following quote from Descartes: “for to have the power of self-movement, as also of feeling or

thinking, I did not consider to appertain to the nature of body" (141). It is clear that the body, to Descartes, is simply an attribute (effect), as it does not possess the ability of self-movement; consequently, the body moves in harmony to an external substance (cause). This will be expounded upon soon enough with Sir Isaac Newton's Laws of Motion.

The second cause of motion exists within itself, being self-movement. This is expressed when Descartes clarifies how senses are separate from the mind, as "thought is an attribute [effect] that belongs to me; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am, I exist, that is certain" (141). The senses are based on experience, and therefore, fallible to a rationalist such as Descartes. Thought, alone, requires no guidance of motion, yet it can control the body, and therefore, is capable of beginning motion, as it is self-caused; this logical rationale allows freedom of choice. Such freedom is an important fact for our inquiry. A point which we will develop more thoroughly soon enough.

The two causes of motion ascribed by Descartes are prudent, as we know from Sir Isaac Newton, "Every body perseveres in its state of being at rest or of moving uniformly straight forward except insofar as it is compelled to change its state by forces impressed (G. Smith Pt. 5, Para. 1)." To Descartes, the mind is a basis of motion, being non-material, while body is an result of motion, existing in constant motion. Physics apply only to the body then, because the mind is unique to the material cause and effect relationship.

To give equality to our inquiry, we must now consider the opposition to Rene Descartes. Since we have established that sensory-experience alone (empiricism) is incapable of producing prudent understanding of true knowledge, it serves us best to go forward with the rationalist perspective.

Baruch Spinoza deduces that the mind-body relationship portrayed by Descartes is unsound, as he expresses in Proposition XII, Part I in *Ethics*, "no attribute [effect] of a substance [cause] can be truly conceived from which it follows that the substance [cause] can be divided (9). To Spinoza, as well as Descartes (proofs to come later), the body and the mind are mere attributes (effects), as neither are substances (causes) of and within themselves, as God is the cause of all. Surely a mind cannot create itself, nor could a body? Such is absurd! Because such absurdity is exhibited in mind-body duality, Spinoza infers that they are one, as neither the mind nor body can be separated from one another, as they originate from the same substance (cause).

We have now introduced both dualism, being the mind-body dichotomy, as well as monism, which Spinoza concludes. Let us now guide our inquiry away from the mind-body dichotomy and resolve if Spinoza's conclusions, being that the mind and body are one, is more prudent than Cartesian Dualism.

Descartes, who believes all existence is a result of God, would be in accord with Spinoza, who concludes similar. To confirm such, let us contrast the two ontological arguments for the existence of God, one authored by Descartes, the other by Spinoza.

In Book Five of *Meditations*, Descartes puts forth the following proof for the existence of God: "While from the fact that I cannot conceive God without existence, it follows that existence is inseparable from Him, and hence that He really exists" (172). This is a subjective truth, agreeable with Kierkegaard, and reinforced by Baruch. Spinoza is in agreement with Decartes' findings, which is confirmed in the demonstration of Proposition XIV, Part I of *Ethics*: "Since God is an absolutely infinite being, of whom no attribute [effect] which expresses an essence of substance [cause] can be denied, and he necessarily exist, if there were any substance except God, it would have to be explained through some attribute [effect] of God" (9).

We have now revealed that both Descartes and Spinoza agree with the cause of true knowledge, God, as well, provided the proof promised previously. We will now be best served to accept the following as an axiom: God is the substance (cause) of all attributes (effects), for if so we not the case, motion always would exist and, by default, so would we. Therefore, no object could be at rest. Conversely, if motion never existed than neither do we, therefore, nothing moves (proofs for both the former and latter has been previously provided). Without an original substance (cause), matter always would exist in motion or never exist in motion. Both propositions are absurd, and thus our inquiry is best facilitated by accepting God as the original substance (cause). Still, based on such agreement of the previously mentioned axiom, Spinoza concludes findings which oppose Descartes.

Spinoza cannot comprehend how two opposite attributes (effects), mind and body, can affect one another. If both the mind and the body are of the same substance (cause), God, as agreed upon by Descartes and Spinoza, how then could the mind affect the body, and vice versa, if they both are caused by another? Such rational is understood by examining Premise II, Part I of *Ethics*, where Spinoza states "Two substances having different attributes [effects: mind and body] have nothing in common with one another" (2). If two attributes (effects) did have something in common, they must originate from the same substance (cause), which we already revealed is in accordance with both Descartes and Spinoza.

Let us further demonstrate the logic Spinoza rejects Cartesian Dualism and, conversely, promote monism, which, from here on out, will be referred to as pantheism due to the divine nature of the original substance (cause), God, agreed upon by both.

One cannot arrive from a physical description of my body, to what I am actually feeling, yet they are one in the same, at least as much as they affect one another. For when one feels sad, so does the body. As well, when one physically feels sad, one's mind feels the same sadness. One cannot be happy mentally but sad physically, as that is absurd. Conversely, one cannot be happy physically, yet sad mentally, for that, too, is absurd. The dichotomy originates with understanding merely, as sadness occurs due to a cause, yet we understand it through either our mind or body, but, as previously proven, the cause, being sadness, affects both.

We should now reconsider the Spinoza quote referenced previously in our inquiry: “thinking substance [the cause of mind] and the extended substance [the cause of body] are one and the same substance [cause], which is now comprehended under this attribute [effect], now under that” (35). If the mind and body were separate attributes (effects), they would necessarily originate from separate substances (causes), and either, lack the ability to affect one another, or originate from different substances (causes), which we have previously demonstrated to be absurd; if attributes (effects) have the ability to affect one another, then they must originate from the same substance (cause). Such a proposition is more logical than the contrary, and therefore, demands no further proof, yet more will be given in the upcoming quote from Spinoza.

We have provided enough reasoning to move away from Cartesian Dualism, thus moving us closer towards Spinoza’s pantheistic view, as we have proven both Descartes and Spinoza agree upon one original substance (cause), God, but Descartes concludes that two attributes (effects), mind and body, originate from that one substance (cause), which we have recently demonstrated to be erroneous. We must now analyze the consequences of the acceptance of pantheism.

If all that exists originates from one substance (one cause), all attributes (effects) must have within them, an attribute (effect) of that substance (cause). This is best stated by Spinoza, who declares “what is caused differs from its cause precisely in what it has

from the cause" (15). Simply put, all attributes (effects) have within it, a characteristic of the original substance (cause).

If we follow this logic, we will soon be lead to believe that our actions are determined, and therefore, our inquiry regarding volition ceases. Such is Spinoza's view, as he points out in Proposition XXVII, Part I of *Ethics*, "A thing which has been determined by God to produce an effect, cannot render itself undetermined" (19). He goes on further to state in Proposition XXVIII, "Every singular thing, or any thing which is finite and has a determinate existence, can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another cause… and so on, to infinity" (19).

Let us note that if we are determined to exist, as suggested by Spinoza, then, just as easily, we could not have existed, as easily as we do, for such was a determination by God alone. However, since we do exist, we know that there must have been a choice involved, for if there were not, we either would have always existed, or conversely, never existed. Yet we do exist, such is proven by Descartes. Consequently, we know that our existence validates choice, although choice originates from God alone, and not of our own volition.

We must now shift our inquiry towards choice, for if something is, it just as easily could not. Choice alone necessitates an either-or dichotomy, does it not? If it were not so, God immediately loses omnipotence, as He would be rendered reactionary, thus

necessitating another substance (cause) for influence. Such is absurd as proven otherwise previously, so we shall consider the latter as valid as we move forward with our inquiry.

Choice must certainly exist, even if only to God, otherwise we would have always existed, or never existed. For something to come into being necessitates a cause; we have proven such a premise valid previously, and hence, will set such as an axiom, without exhibiting further proofs. Because of such an axiom, we shall now investigate the neuroscience which validates such.

Benjamin Libet conducted an experiment which, in his opinion, disproves volition. In his experiment, Libet notes that "freely voluntary acts are preceded by a specific electrical change in the brain [the 'readiness potential'] that begins 550 milliseconds before the act" (47). He then states that our intentions of action come after the readiness potential, but prior to the act of movement. Because readiness potential occurs prior to the act of movement, Libet declares that our will is actually subconscious, as the readiness potential originates prior to our conscious knowledge of such will. From this premise he concludes that we can control the act, but we do not chose the act consciously. Volition, then, does not exist due to the fact that natural laws determine one's readiness potential. This is in agreement with Spinoza's conclusions.

Admittedly, Libet's research seems to offer clear evidence to end our inquiry, yet, if we analyze the study, we may easily debunk his conclusions.

Libet's findings were based on an experiment in which he analyzes the electrical changes in one's brain, when asked to voluntarily flex either their right or left hand while looking at a rapidly moving clock. With this experiment Libet notes, "the brain was evidently beginning the volitional process in this voluntary act well before the activation of the muscle that produced the movement" (49). The result, in Libet's opinion, is antithetical to the traditional idea of volition. To Libet, "in the traditional view of conscious will and free will, one would expect conscious will to appear before, or at the onset, of the readiness potential, and thus command the brain to perform the intended act" (49). This is not the case in his experiment though, as the brain demonstrates electrical change prior to consciousness of the decision.

Let us further analyze Libet's experiment to determine if, one, his premises were correct, and two, if his conclusion follows logically from his premises.

First, the experiment wishes to study the origins of movement, yet the study requires the participants to both move their hand freely and to note the time on the faster-than-normal clock when the urge to move comes about. This study necessitates two separate though processes which require brain activity, yet Libet combines both activities into choice alone: one being memory and the other action. But how do we know if the electrical impulse changes when the participant decides to perform the action of flexing their hand, or when the participant makes a mental note of the time on the

clock? Surely, memory and motion require separate brain activity, as argued by Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes, otherwise they would be one in the same.

Secondly, prior to any action, one must ask themselves the either-or question. Such was proven earlier with God's determination, as He too requires an either-or inquiry.

A potentiality and actuality debate necessarily occurs prior to any decision. Such does not occur because volition does not exist, but rather, such occurs because we are thinking beings; such is proven by Descartes earlier in our inquiry. We weigh the potential of an idea prior to committing it, or conversely, not committing it.

As mentioned earlier, Libet states "in the traditional view of conscious will and free will, one would expect conscious will to appear before, or at the onset, of the readiness potential, and thus command the brain to perform the intended act" (49). However, if this were true, our inquiry ceases, and we must accept Spinoza's pantheistic determinism. Yet it is in our best interest if we consider all possibilities before our inquiry expires.

Perhaps, the readiness potential occurs first because we are mentally debating when to perform an action, or if to at all. The two milliseconds difference between readiness potential and consciousness of the decision occurs likely because the participant is deciding to either move their left or right hand, or when to perform the movement, if at all. As well, the choice of movement has already been made for

participants of the experiment, for if the participant would not to move their hand, the experiment would proceed to infinity, thus the only true choice given is when to move. This seems more logical, and equally proves volition does exist, as God provides the same limitations based on our pantheistic proofs.

Let us further illustrate this point. I can never be a tree, regardless of my effort, as my potentiality does not necessitate such; yet I determine actuality alone, as I desire to do so. For if all reached potentiality, we would be one in the same, which we know from experience is not the case. By such reasoning, therefore, one must have a say, albeit, their say is limited by potentiality. Because experience provides enough evidence to disprove any argument non-congruent with such, we will offer no further proofs regarding our inquiry on the subject matter.

Libet himself admits such agreeance when he states "one could consciously accept or reject the programme offered up by the whole array of preceding brain processes" (53). Volition, then, is the understanding of actuality and potentiality, and since some actualities never come to fruition, as demonstrated by nature, volition necessarily exists. For if all potentialities came to fruition, every attribute (effect) originating from the same substance (cause) would be the same; this is a point which we previously have proven to be invalid, as the mind, or the body for that matter, is different with each individual, yet originate from the same substance (cause). If such was not the case, every individual who exists, or existed, would have no differentiation. Since we

know such is fallacious, God is either rendered bias, as He provides more opportunity to some, and not others, or similar attributes (effects) lose the ability to affect one another; an argument which Spinoza would utterly reject in similar fashion to his rejection of Cartesian duality. Consequently, if the potentiality-actuality nature were determined, every individual would be the same, otherwise, God plays favorites, as proven previously to be absurd. If such were not so, Spinoza would not have suggested in his corollary of Proposition XVII, Part V of *Ethics*, "God is not affected with any affect of joy or sadness. Consequently, he also loves no one and hates no one" (169).

Let us now shift our inquiry away from Libet and Spinoza, and back to Aristotle. As Aristotle states, the "same thing is a cause of opposite things, for the thing that is present is responsible for this result" (Arist. *Met*.V. 2, 1013b10-20, trans. Sachs). By choosing not to do something is the same as choosing to do so, as far as attributes (effects) are concerned in our inquiry. This rationale has been demonstrated earlier in our discussion, with Spinoza, who congruently declares, "what is caused differs from its cause precisely in what it has from the cause" (15).

Since we know, due to the axiom proven earlier, that God has volition, then we, too, must have volition, since we are an attribute (effect) of the one original substance (cause), who both Descartes and Spinoza conclude is God; as an attribute (effect) must have a characteristic of its substance (cause) within it, as confirmed by Spinoza. This

characteristic must include volition, otherwise, potentiality and actuality would be one in the same, which proven previously is absurd.

By demonstrating that one thing is capable of producing two converse things, Aristotle also demonstrates volition. For a cause, as argued by Aristotle, is "that out of which something comes into being" (Arist. *Met*. V. 2, 1013a10-20, ed. Sachs), and therefore, the veto ability of choice, as argued by Libet, must be a cause in itself. If we are capable of causing an attribute (effect), how can we then not be capable of choice, for as we proved earlier in our inquiry, causing something is the same as not causing something? If such were not the case, existence would have always been, or never been. Therefore, choice alone must be the cause of an attribute (effect). Causes, again, only exist potentially, which confirmed by Libet, Aristotle, Descartes and Spinoza, exists in an either-or paradox.

Apparently, the main characteristic we are born innately with as an attribute (effect), originating from one substance (cause), God, is the ability to reach our potential, or, unfortunately, not, as the actuality of such potential is up to our volition alone.

## X: CONCLUSION

"There is only one really serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" (Camus 1). This quote does well demonstrating the inaccuracies of existentialism. If life is without meaning as the absurd is ever present and life lacks authenticity, then why exist? Choice has been offered as an available option to address absurdity. Should the conscious man commit suicide? Obviously there is some sarcasm within this quote, as Albert Camus elicits humor towards those assumptions from the absurd existentialist. He is exhibiting that purpose is relative, as it is a conscious decision, and likely not promoting suicide. It is from this faith in existence and choice that man understands purpose as a subjective truth of ontology. From his spite for absurdity truth is created. This is our essence! All is relative, phenomenologically.

Our understanding of existence is just that, our understanding. To define such as purposeful is incorrect, for to do such is illogical. Purpose is derived from the one deriving such. If such is not derived, existence still remains. Purpose is not a precursor, but rather, phenomenological in our existence. It provides context.

It is worth pointing out, however, that a lack of purpose does not constitute a lack of essence. Meaning and purpose are relative, as the individual assigning such is bias to his understanding of purpose itself. This term must first be defined then applied to the

one inquiring into such ontology. Due to this logic, existence demands a phenomenological comprehension. To derive knowledge in any other method denies interpretation as part of existence. This is why the faith recommended by Kierkegaard is of much importance towards understanding the absurd. Man must believe in something outside of himself, for to avoid such, existence becomes a mere fleeing of worldly pleasures, which, ultimately, become mundane and ordinary. Also, such pursuits exist finitely only.

The seeking of happiness and minimization of pain is as pointless as the search for purpose. This is a thing which one must have faith in, for all pleasures will be replaced with pain, even if only in the removal of such. There resides the essence of absurdity.

Essence is innate. To deny such is to deny Charles Darwin's research on the matter, as well as the proofs demonstrated with Baruch Spinoza. Essence determines all which is. Consider the example: a walnut seed has the potential to become a walnut tree. It can actualize such potential. However, a walnut seed will never become a pine tree, as such is not its constitution. This is not its essence. If the seed never reaches its potential, the essence of such is not lost, but rather, never actualized.

Existence is fashioned similarly. Innate within man is the ability to actualize potential, even if potentiality differs from man to man; this is an objective truth. Also,

innate within man is consciousness, which is why we are able to rationalize absurdity. A tree has no such potential. To declare that essence is lacking merely due to our understanding of nature is fallacious. Objective truth is indifferent to confirmation of those in existence. Consider Camus' philosophical suicide notion. This is a potential; man alone has this choice, and if all paths ultimately lead to death anyways, then where is the value in *being*? There is none intrinsically. Yet the absurd does not have to remove essence from existence for this reason. The value of existence lies within the fulfilment of essence, subjective to the concerned. This purpose may be relative but it adds value to *being*. As well, it provides essence for the next generation of those participating in existence.

The world is indifferent to one form of existence over another, yet man needs not conclude his value less. This is a false creation founded upon the phenomenological relationship man has with *being*. Simply, man is bias, as he is both aware and in existence. The purpose desired by man is as flawed quest, as purpose is subjective in an objective pursuit. Yet, an effect may not affect the cause. Such is illogical.

In accordance to this logic, reconsider the existentialist argument, as the premises are false, thus the conclusion is unsound:

Premise 1: Man desires purpose in his existence, as he is to die.

Premise 2: Existence has no purpose, as it, too, will ultimately be destroyed.

Therefore, existence precedes essence, as there is no innate meaning in a world which logically will not exist forever.

To declare existence is absent of meaning is to say what was previously deemed as irrational. How can an effect petition an affect? You cannot; this is illogical! To declare existence lacks purpose is similar to declaring objectivity is defined by subjectivity, to say that man's understanding of *being* is uninfluenced by empirical evidence, to say that Sisyphus' consequent of the eternal boulder was the cause of his earthly impiety, to say that an effect the primal substance, or affect. You cannot reasonably conclude that existence is the affect of essence if the premise of the argument is flawed, and that it is. Existentialists forecast their rationale as objective, while, simultaneously, contradicting their phenomenologically derived truths.

Man gives meaning to his own phenomenological definition of *being* with faith. The ontological inquiry is indivisible from the one doing the investigation. The search lies in potentiality, not actuality. The conscious man is able to consider the absurd, but he is also capable of comprehending the bias contained within both rational and empirical evidence. After all, he is aware of himself. Faith lies in a feeling, one which only arises with experience. It is un-rationable. Yet, this is the cause of Sisyphus' sentiment towards the absurd. He is happy!

If man concludes the nature of *being* while denying the phenomenological consciousness which influenced such, as existentialists request, he then demonstrates just

that, bias. However, if he considers the inadequacies arrived by subjective conclusion, he is then free from “the price that must be pain for the passions of this earth” (Camus 89). Choice diminishes the absurd.

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