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Meaning of Happiness in Camus's *A Happy Death*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Prakash Chandra Shrestha has completed his thesis entitled “Meaning of Happiness in Camus’s *A Happy Death*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from October 2009 to February 2010. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Meaning of Happiness in Camus's *A Happy Death"* by Prakash Chandra Shrestha, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Content

Abstract

Albert camus's novel *A Happy Death* portrays the meaning of happiness, freedom and death. The protagonist of the novel Patrice Mersault earns his fortune and kills the invalid Roland Zagreus for the sake of money. Zagreus, a cripple man is not able to live his life because life is too much for him so, he has written a note of his death wish. It is also Zagreus' existential choice that only one of the two men lives his life to the fullest rather than both living unhappily. Death is the ultimate freedom of choice for Zagreus because he has already tasted his life perfectly. After killing Zagreus, Mersault leads a life of travel, hedonism and leisure but feels happiness escaping him. His health is uncertain but his wallet full. Through the analysis of various enegmatic situations of the protagonist throughout the novel, this thesis argues that Mersault's failure to gain happiness is his inability to recognize that the true happiness emerges from within rather than from outside.

I.Introduction

Albert Camus's *A Happy Death* tells the story of the choices that face a young Algerian who defies society's rules by commiting a murder and escaping punishment, and then experiments' with different ways of life on his journey towards death 'without anger, without hatred, without regret'. *A Happy Death* is in many ways a fascinating first sketch for *The Outsider* but it can also be seen as a candid self-portrait, drawing on Camus's youth, travels and early relationships to create a lyrical, dreamlike picture of the sun-drenched Algiers of his childhood.

A Happy Death is divided into two parts each consisting of five chapters: 'Natural Death', then 'Conscious Death'. The core of 'Natural Death' is the murder of Roland Zagreus. Mersault, the hero, kills him in the first chapter, takes his money, and falls ill on his return home. An ordinary office worker, patrice Mersault, the neighbour of barrel-maker whose life is even more wretched than his own and the lover of a girl whose first lover was the invalid Roland Zagreus, makes the latter's acquitance through this girl, learns from a conversation with him how he made his fortune, and taking advantage of this confidance, murders him; he then leaves the country, his health uncertain but his wallet full.

The five chapters of 'Conscious Death' present Mersault's stay in Prague, Mersault feels happiness escaping him; he regains his sense of it as he returned to the sun. Back in Algiers, he makes two experiments in happiness: first by living with three girls in the House Above the World; then in an ascetic solitude in the chenoua, mitigated by visits from his wife Lucienne or from the three friends. He has conquired happiness, and retains it in death itself' evoking Zagreus. This resume of the novel suggests its chief theme: How to die a happy man? In other words, how to live as one so that death itself is happy?

A Happy Death does not appear to end in the first sketches, with the hero's death:'craving for death and the sun' we read in one outline; this is only a craving. In another, death is confronted, but located at the end of the first part: 'last chapter: Pursuit of the sun and death (sucide- natural death). One notable feature: death and the sun are related. Once the sun, a sensuous image, is replaced by happiness, a moral myth, a decesive step will have been taken towards the final conception.

The main thread of this novel is henceforth clear: it will be an inverted illustration of the proverb: Money does not make happiness. Happiness through money, becomes the chief theme. At this moment, Zagreus supervenes, who is yet only the ' invalid', in order to enlighten Mersault as to the problem of the relationships between money and time and to show him the truth of another proverbial statement- Time is Money, equally true in the reverse: Money is Time- which will form a fundamental principle in his art of living.

For a man who is 'well-born', to be happy is to partake of the common lot not with the will to renunciation, but with the will to happiness. In order to be happy, time is necessary- a great deal of time. Happiness too is a long patience. And time is the need for money which robs us it Time can be bought. Everything can be bought. To be rich is to have time to be happy when one is worthy of being so.

Although Albert Camus wrote a broad range of work including short stories, plays, essays, philosophical tracts, and a handful of novels--during his relatively short career, it is profoundly apropos that the single work for which he is most famous is entitled The Stranger. Meursault, that novel's famous main character, exists with a sense of the world and a morality that sets him apart from human society at large. Similarly, in his notebooks, Camus often hinted at an overriding sense of always being an outsider in the world, no matter his location or circumstances; once, for

instance, he wrote, "It is constantly my lot to remain apart,"(11) though he was well-known for his charm, particularly his success with women; and, as an impoverished Frenchman who was born in colonized Algeria, he noted, "Yes, I have a native land: the French language,"(93) thus emphasizing the sense of displacement felt by a man who belonged in neither the rich, colonialist French society of Algeria, nor the native, poor, Moslem population.

In addition, late in Camus's life, his politics and personal beliefs, particularly regarding Communism and the struggle within Algeria, set him diametrically apart from the dominant members of Paris intelligentsia, including the existentialist peer with whom he's most often paired with Jean-Paul Sartre. But despite the fact that many critics, past and present, view Camus as an intellectual "lightweight" among the existentialists --producing contradiction-riddled philosophic tracts that presented the ideas of others with only a vague, oversimplified understanding of their work, and that touted a kind of "can't we all just get along" mantra that seemed unrealistic, bourgeois, and pithy to his peers--few twentieth century writers captured the imagination and interest of so many. Sartre may well have been Camus's intellectual superior, but Camus provided readers with something far more strangely, electrifyingly intimate: a naked demonstration of a man struggling doggedly to determine his literal and figurative place in the world. Commenting on Albert Camus’s literary writing Richard Ellmann writes:

Camus brilliantly evokes the moment when a man discovers a lack of purpose and meaning in acts that he has performed habitually and unthinkingly or rather, when he begins to demand that they have a meaning for him and discovers that they can provide none. Other men, nature, metaphysical reality, the very forms of logic strike him as absurd- that is, radically incommensurable with the one who appeals to them

for his meaning. He can confidently assert nothing but the bare fact that he exists and that he is bound in a relation of incompatibility and hatred of things other than himself. (804)

To this end, an unnerving contradiction persists in much of Camus's work: it is personal--in that we learn in great detail what likely kept Camus awake at night--but wholly impersonal as well, since, until the very end of his career, his personal experiences stayed outside the realm of his writing. Even in Camus's own notebooks, translator/critic Phillip Thody's introduction notes that the journals kept between 1935 and 1942 "did not contain any open reference either to his first or to his second marriage, and provided no details about his membership in the Communist Party or his work as a journalist on Alger-Républicain" (Thody, iv). Scholar Paul de Man also noticed Camus's remoteness from his own journals:

> Camus deliberately tore himself away from his natural inclinations and forced upon himself a number of alien concerns. As a result, the Notebooks reflect an increasing feeling of estrangement and solitude. One feels an almost obsessive commitment to work, a rejection of any moment of private experience as self-indulgence (21).

However, in spite of Camus's fierce efforts to keep his work and personal life separate, the sudden and early end of his life--a car accident in France in 1960, when Camus was only forty-six--came shortly after a seemingly drastic change in his perspective; for inside that car was a working draft of his novel, The First Man, the most blatantly personal work he wrote. From this, as well as information provided by biographers Olivier Todd and Herbert R. Lottman, we learn about the major events of Camus's life, specifically those that left permanent scars and echoed throughout his writings: his widowed mother's illiteracy, partial deafness, and near silence; his

family's extreme poverty in Algeria; his diagnosis, at age seventeen, of tuberculosis, which afflicted him on and off throughout his life; his life in Nazi-occupied France during World War II; and, finally, his quarrel and break with Parisian Leftist intellectuals after the publication of The Rebel, which worked in part to critique and condemn communism. Thus, if we interpret these turning points as Camus's raw material, we notice experience after experience that likely made the writer feel the full weight of his solitude, in ways large and small.

Not surprisingly, critics have long taken note of, and examined, the different ways in which emotional and physical separation manifests itself in Camus's texts. But as critic Germaine Bree noted, Camus's readers and critics "shared his concern with the ambient problems, political, ethical, or philosophical," and so "the terrain covered by critical studies of Camus's work is consequently very broad, and often reflects the strains and stresses of a particular historical moment" (Bree 2).

In 1937, Camus was a twenty-three-year-old journalist for the newspaper Alger-Républicain and already divorced from his troubled, drug-addicted first wife, Simone Hié. His first collection of lyrical essays, Betwixt and Between was published that year, while Nuptials was published two years later. The essays in both books largely reflected Camus's love of Algeria, with long, winding, poetic sentences and sensuous descriptions of the landscape and its people. Hellenist and pantheistic elements thus pervade the essays, which is no surprise, given Camus's fixation on Greek thought and culture.In this way, we see Algeria's landscape and climate informing much of Camus's work, thematically and symbolically. In addition to presenting water as an element of renewal, connection, freedom, and rebirth, Camus also often refers to the sun as an oppressive, intolerant, violent force. For instance, in The Stranger, Camus describes the sun, in the critical murder scene, as a sort of

accomplice--if not the main impetus--to Meursault in the shooting of the Arab on the beach, as critics like Roger Quilliot and John Erickson have noted.

> Neither the employment of water or of the sun as symbols, of course, is original in any way, but some critics, like S. Beynon John, have noted how this conventional use of symbols places Camus among neo-Romanticists, and because of Camus's intensely personal, sensual use of these familiar symbols, they remain free of the deliberate and rather artificial air they sometimes weave (144).

In addition to introducing symbols, Camus's early work also briefly hinted at the heartbreak he felt at the inaccessibility of his nearly mute mother. Though the full picture isn't made clear until the publication of The First Man, thirty-four years after Camus's death, we do get, in the essay "Between Yes and No," a small window through which to view Camus's private agony. Speaking of "the child," rather than "I"--and thus emphasizing distance even from himself--Camus wrote, “He feels sorry for his mother; is this the same as loving her? She has never hugged or kissed him, for she wouldn't know how. He stands a long time watching her. Feeling separate from her, he becomes conscious of her suffering. She does not hear him, for she is deaf” (33).

This forecasts not only an image that will come back in subsequent works, but also seems to shape Camus's repeated failure to include female characters of any complexity or significance in his prose.

Finally, the early essays also hinted at where he would progress next intellectually. Regarding death, he wrote, in *The Wind at Djemila*, "I do not want to believe that death is the gateway to another life. For me, it is a closed door. I do not say ... I have too much youth in me to be able to speak of death. But it seems to me

that if I had to speak of it, I would find the right word here between horror and silence to express the conscious certainty of a death without hope"(17). And later, in *The Desert*, Camus wrote:

> And what more legitimate harmony can unite a man with life than the dual consciousness of his longing to endure and his awareness of death? ... [this landscape] took me out of myself in the deepest sense of the word. It assured me that but for my love and the wondrous cry of these stones, there was no meaning in anything. The world is beautiful, and outside it there is no salvation. (39)

Thus, in early passages such as these, we perhaps see Camus's first grapplings with existentialism and the notion of the absurd, concepts that would absorb his thoughts and pervade his writing for the next several years. William H. Harris and Judith S. Levey in The New Columbia Encyclopaedia present Albert Camus as one of the most important authors and thinkers of the 20th century. They comment on his style in this way:

> Noted for his vigorous, concise, and lucid style, Camus soon gained recognition as a major literary figure. His belief that man's condition is absurd identified him with the existentialists, but he denied allegiance to that group; his works express rather a courageous humanism. The characters in his novels and plays, although keenly aware of meaninglessness of human condition, assert their humanity by rebelling against their circumstances. (437)

I should note that while Camus wrote and published the lyrical essays in Betwixt and Between and Nuptials, he also struggled with his first attempted novel, *A Happy Death,* which acted as a kind of writing warm-up for Camus's The Stranger. First

published posthumously in 1972, *A Happy Death* shows Camus asking, through the actions of Patrice Mersault (a clear forerunner of The Stranger's narrator), whether one can possibly meet death feeling content with how he lived his life. In this case, Mersault, living and working as a clerk in Algeria, decides that a lack of money keeps him from the freedom he needs to live and be fulfilled, so he kills a rich, paralyzed man named Zagreus. Mersault soon quits his job as a clerk, travels, stays in a house with three women who are friends, leaves them and soon marries, then dies of an illness that began with a chill on the same night of the murder. In the end, Mersault does indeed die happy, telling readers,

> And all those who had not made the gestures necessary to live their lives, all those who feared and exalted impotence--they were afraid of death because of the sanction it gave to a life in which they had not been involved. They had not lived enough, never having lived at all ... what did it matter if he existed for two or for twenty years? Happiness was the fact that he had existed. (103)

Camus believed there was no God, and he struggled with the consequences of that premise--i.e., if there's no afterlife, and life is meaningless, is it worth living? The first line of The Myth of Sisyphus cuts right to this point, stating, "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide"(3). What strikes Camus as absurd is mankind's perpetual hope for an afterlife, or immortality, in spite of man's certain knowledge that death is inevitable. Near the end of his essay, Camus points to Sisyphus as the ultimate Absurd hero, in that the mythical Greek figure keeps pushing the rock uphill again and again, though its rolling back down is a foregone conclusion, and Sisyphus himself is aware of this never-changing consequence and his life's fate. Camus concentrates most on that instant before Sisyphus heads back down the hill,

and the last line of the essay claims that, "One must imagine Sisyphus happy"(64). Thus, Camus champions the person who is wholly aware of his/her absurd plight, but who nonetheless chooses not only to live, but to seek out happiness and embrace life, all of it, good and bad.

Camus's depiction of a meaningless, Godless universe quickly situated him as a peer of other existentialist writers (though Camus resisted this label throughout his career), such as Jean-Paul Sartre. It also caused him to be perpetually associated with the notion of the absurd throughout his career, which became a source of frustration for him--for although his works on the absurd made him famous, they were limited to the individual's understanding of himself, his circumstances, and his own death. Many scholars recognized, however, that Camus evolved from the notion of the absurd to the next logical questions--how does that inevitably doomed individual conduct him/herself within a community, or society?

Camus's existence, from the outset of his life, lay among the fringe. He did not exactly belong among the indigenous, poor Arabs who populated North Africa, but neither was his family of the class of moneyed French colonialists who emigrated there and sought to "civilize" the Arabs. Instead, like the Mediterranean Sea itself, he lay somewhere between Algeria and France, always maintaining simultaneously his status as both an insider and an outsider--a position that permanently affected his literary style and colored his perspective.

And although Camus became far less detached in his writing style near the end of his short life, critics like S. Beynon John noted that his fixation on Greek myths and tragedies manifested itself in this "removed" style. Even works that are set in, or near, the present time have the feeling of an allegory or Greek tragedy, wherein people aren't psychologically realized, three dimensional beings with their own past,

but are instead vehicles for beliefs or ideological systems. As John states, "Myth is a substitute for faith and the metaphors of religion, and myth, by its very nature, is anonymous and collective: it swallows up the individual life" ("Albert Camus" 91). Similarly, Paul de Man wrote that through the consistent depersonalization of Camus's style, “the writer always chose to hide behind the mask of a deliberate, controlled style or behind a pseudo-confessional tone that serves to obscure, rather than reveal, his true self “ (19).

However, as we review the progression of Camus's work and ideas, one can't help but feel that Camus, though possibly flawed as a thinker, was never less than honest with his readers, and that he hoped--by working through, on paper, his own questions--to find not only answers for himself, but to share them with his vexed, cynical, post-war fellow citizens. Camus viewed this as his job, a task he took very seriously; for we see a rigid intolerance in Camus's notebooks for personal experience or anecdotes, allowing only things relevant to work to appear. This reveals, as de Man notes, “the solitude that torments Camus is most of all an estrangement from what he considers his authentic former self “(22).

Thus, although Camus began with questions regarding nature and man's limits in the physical world, and moved on to questioning his function in the larger human community in times of crisis, he ended by arriving at his own memories, still perhaps searching for connection to others by way of finally, hopefully, understanding himself. And despite criticisms incessantly voiced during Camus's life (and since), we should note that great minds are very often out of sync with their times. Camus's reservations regarding communism were obviously well-grounded, we now see in retrospect, and his stance on Algeria, while perhaps idealistic, was both honest and understandable, and his "Civilian Truce" was wholly meritorious in principle. Such

hindsight should thus render Camus's intellectual bravery imminently laudable. He likely knew the consequences of publishing The Rebel, but he did so anyway, cutting himself off from Sartre's pack, despite subsequent personal attacks from that powerful intellectual lobby. This is not to say, of course, that Camus's intellect exceeded his peers, but unlike others, he willingly admitted when his ideas changed and why, and he always stood by the controversial conclusions he so publicly struggled to attain. As critic Susan Tarrow put it, “Camus's works will remain perpetually relevant not because he had the 'right' answers, but because he persistently asked the right questions”(200).

The world is nothing and the world is everything--this is the contradictory and tireless cry of every true artist, the cry that keeps him on his feet with eyes ever open and that, every once in a while, awakens for all in this world asleep the fleeting and insistent image of a reality we recognize without ever having known.

II. Concept of Happiness and freedom in Existentialism

Existentialism may perhaps be considered most fruitfully as a historical movement which is not easily definable. The nineteenth century philosophers, Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, came to be seen as precursors of the movement. Existentialism, as a philosophical movement, flourished after the devastating World Wars, which destroyed the world physically as well as spiritually. As a result, the world is filled with uncertainty, despair, anxiety, absurdity and frustration. So, Existentialism became an appropriate philosophical perspective that could address the contemporary situation. Existentialism itself is a revolt against traditional philosophy which rejects the belief that life has an inherent meaning, but instead requires each individual to posit his or her own subjective values. Human beings are fundamentally different from objects in that they are first simply there, and only later define a purpose or identity for themselves. In Sartre's words: "We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself" (2).

According to Existentialism there is no independently existing order or structure on which one could rely for ultimate purposes or guidance. Any honest reflection will reveal, according to most existentialists, that the universe is a looming unknown, and the experience of nothingness an inescapable characteristic of human existence. The first responsibility of existentialism is, according to Sartre, "to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him" (16).

According to Sartre, “by existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and human subjectivity” (10).

Existentialism denies the concept of human nature or human essence. They claim that human is a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept. Existentialism views human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe with the freedom of choice. Since there is no guardian of human existence, human is totally responsible for his position in the world. But his freedom of choice becomes a curse for him- as Sartre says ‘man is condemned to be free’- because the very nature of the world that possesses no inherent truth, value or meaning. So the human condition in this world is absurd that is marked by futile struggle for existence. According to Sartre, it has developed into two major trends; theistic and atheistic, “There are two kinds of existentialists, first, those who are christian, among whom I would include Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both catholic; and on the other hand the atheistic existentialists, among whom I class Heidegger, and then the French existentialists and myself” (13).

Though, both of these groups try to speak of human existence in a subjective sense, the relationship with God differs. One of them negates the existence of God and His relations with people and the world. This group says that humankind is God. All his functions depend upon his choices. But another group, which conceives of God as the source of inspiration and as the guiding principle, gives God the highest position in the world.

In *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, Sartre states explicitly that, in his view, God does not exist, and that it is necessary to draw the consequences of His absence to the end. In another place he says that existentialism is nothing else but an attempt to draw

the full conclusions from a consistently atheistic position. On the last page of this essay he specifies his position in the following way:

> Existentialism is not atheist in the sense that it would exhaust itself in demonstrations of the non-existence of God. It declares rather, that even if God existed that would make no difference from its point of view. Not that we believe that God exists, but we think that the real problem is not that of His existence; what man needs is to find himself again, and to understand that nothing can save him from himself, not even a valid proof of the existence of God. (39)

From these statements it is clear that Sartre himself adopts an atheist point of view. He has even developed several arguments to illustrate the truth of this claim.[40] On the other hand, he says explicitly also that the question of the existence of God is not immediately relevant for his position in regard to ethics.

He never claims Camus seems, initially at least, to adopt a different point of view here. to be convinced that God does not exist; nor does he ever attempt to prove that there cannot be a God. He merely states that he himself, as well as many other people today, do not believe in God. He also says that he does not know whether this world has a meaning that transcends it, and then adds: " But I know that I do not know that meaning, and that it is impossible for me to know this. What could a meaning outside my condition mean to me?" (42).

Existentialist View of Human Happiness

Existentialism is often associated with such themes as the absurdity of human existence and the worthlessness of our lives given our inevitable death. One might well wonder what view of happiness could arise from such a view. Sartre characterizes the human condition by our forlornness at the loss of external values and determinants of our nature; anguish at the resultant responsibility to create human nature ourselves; and despair of finding value outside of ourselves and reliance upon what is under our own control. Forlornness, anguish, and despair: Mr. Sartre, it would seem, was not a happy camper. For another 20th century French existentialist philosopher Albert Camus, however, the loss of any external source of value did not present quite such a dismal prospect. Camus compares our situation to that of the mythical figure Sisyphus. In his essay "*The Myth of Sisyphus*" he explains that:

> The Gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor. (88)

It is easy to see the similarity between this situation and ours according to the Existentialist. Just as Sisyphus can find no end to his activities, no final resting place where he has finally reached his goal or lived up to some set of pre-existing standards, so we find that all of our activities lead to nowhere. There are no external values that we can live up to, no external viewpoint from which our life can be viewed to be valuable. Our life is a series of meaningless actions culminating in death, with no possibility of external justification. Yet, Camus will say that we must imagine Sisyphus happy? "One must imagine Sisyphus happy."(90) Why? Why should this fool be happy eternally rolling a ball up the hill to nowhere? At first, when one was

still expecting to get ones value from outside of oneself, all this might seem depressing. Camus says:

> When images of the earth cling too tightly to memory, when the call of happiness becomes to insistent, it happens that melancholy rises in man's heart: this is the rock's victory this is the rock itself. The boundless grief is too heavy to bear. These are our nights in Gethsemane. But crushing truths perish from being acknowledged. […] Sisyphus, proletarian of gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn. (122)

As we saw before, no matter what his external circumstances, Sisyphus is always free to make of them what he will, to rebel against them within his island of subjectivity. No matter what the Gods make him do, he is always free to give the Gods one of these defiant gesture.

The despair and rebellion we feel at the loss of our external sources of value are the necessary price of a greater value and happiness that comes from within. One must lose all hope of external value before seeking value within. The theme that true happiness must come from within is one that is familiar to all of us, and it is the key to understand the existentialist conception of happiness.

If, after all sources of external value have been taken away, you can find value within yourselves, you would have found what philosophers haven looking for throughout the ages: a way of achieving human happiness that is not vulnerable to the uncontrollable contingencies of the natural world. If we find ourselves isolated from

external value by our radical individuality, we can make a world of ourselves, a universe of our own experience, in which we can and must find ourselves happy. Camus writes of Sisyphus:

> The absurd man says yes and his effort will henceforth be unceasing… he knows himself to be the master of his days. At that subtle moment when man glances backward over his life, Sisyphus returning toward his rock, in that slight pivoting he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which becomes his fate, created by him, combined under his memory's eye and soon sealed by his death. […] But Sisyphus teaches a higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (91)

The Existentialist's secret of happiness, then, is to get ones value from within oneself. In doing so, one loses the promise of external value, but they find a more real happiness, one that cannot be taken away by the external forces beyond their control. We as individuals, owe nobody happiness and nobody owes us happiness. Happiness is ours to grasp or to surrender, as we choose, in any given moment. We must not willingly surrender to other persons our ability to experience happiness. Other persons cannot make us feel happy. We cannot make other people feel happy. The feeling of happiness, of emotional well being rests solely, within ourselves, within our own grasp.

The Existentialist View of human Freedom

Sartre, denying God, put man in god's place: he ascribes to man a type of freedom and a type of responsibility that he cannot possibly possess, that only God can possess. He fails to see that human freedom is in no way diminished by an individual's free acceptance of an objective constraint on his behaviour. This is because human freedom is finite freedom; only an infinite freedom, a divine freedom, would be diminished by objective constraints. Sartre says that what all existentialists, both athestic and christian, share in common […] is that they think that existence precedes essence, or, if you prefer, that subjectivity must be the starting point" (13). Sartre explains what this means by contrasting it with the opposite slogan: Essence precedes Existence. He uses the example of a paper-cutter to explain how the old view treated human being as artifacts, whose nature is tied to a preconceived essence and to a project outside of them, rather than as absolute individuals. He says in *Existentialism and Human Emotions:*

> Let us consider some object that is manufactured, for example, a book or a paper-cutter: here is an object which has been made by an artisan whose inspiration came from a concept. He referred to the concept of what a paper-cutter is… . Thus, the paper-cutter is at once an object produced in a certain way and, on the other hand, one having a specific use… . Therefore, let us say that, for the paper-cutter, essence…precedes existence. (13-14)

On this view, Sartre is attacking, we get our nature from outside of us, from a being who created us with a preconceived idea of what we were to be and what we were to be a good for. Our happiness and our fulfillment consist in our living up to the external standards that God had in mind in creating us. Both our nature and our value

come from outside of us. According to the existentialist, however, Existence precedes Essence. Sartre explains:

> What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. […] Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence. Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. (15)

Thus, there is no human nature which provides us with an external source of determination and value. Sartre says: "If existence really does precede essence, there is no explaining things away by reference to a fixed and given human nature. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom" (18).

Nothing outside of us can determine what we are and what we are good for; we must do it ourselves, from the inside. What we will be and what will be good for us is a radically individual matter. If we are radical individuals, there is no place else for our nature and value to come from, except from within us. It is this view of human nature, or the lack thereof, from which the existentialist conceptions of freedom and value flow. Sartre says in *Being and Nothingness*:

> Freedom can not determine its existence by the end which it posits. Of course it exists only by the choice which it makes of an end, but it is not master of the fact that there is a freedom which makes known to itself what it is by means of its end. A freedom which would produce its own existence would lose its very meaning as freedom. Actually freedom is not a simple undetermined power. (624)

As an existentialist Sartre views human reality is free because it is not enough. It is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been separated by a nothingness from what it is and from what it will be. He further exclaims in *Being and Nothingness*:

> Man is free because he is not himself but presence of himself. The being which is what it is can not be free. Freedom is precisely the nothingness which is made-to-be at the heart of man and which forces human-reality to make itself instead of to be. As we have seen, for human reality, to be is to choose one self; nothing comes to it either from the outside or from within which it can receive or accept. (568)

Sartre also argues that in order to be free, we must desire the freedom of all men. To see others as slaves of our desire is to make ourselves a slave of desire. To be free, we must desire the freedom of all men. Freedom exists only within specific conditions. But within such given conditions, according to Sartre, people always have choices to make. They are not predetermined like objects or animals; they always live within a space, as it were, of possible alternatives. Even a man on death row, a person with hardly any choices left, still has decisions to make--even if it amounts to nothing more than the choice to die willingly or in some sort of inner rebellion. The point, according to Sartre, is that human being exists in a fundamentally different way than animals or objects: they exist as beings who, within certain conditions, define themselves and their lives.

III. **Human Happiness and Freedom in *A Happy Death***

Happiness is never easy to acquire and to define in a general term due to its meaning which may be strange for every individual. The protagonists of the novel *A Happy Death*, Patrice Mersault and Roland Zagreus also endure the different appetite of happiness. Zagreus, a disable man cannot able to use his own property and money for his improvement and happiness. Zagreus resumed: "I have someone to help me, to set me on the toilet, and afterward to wash me and dry me… Then he went on: And you, Mersault, with a body like yours, your one duty is to live and be happy"(31). Zagreus promotes Mersault to live the life of its fullest because of his physical capability to enjoy the life which he lacks. Albert Camus does not draw the clear ground of happiness and death but he leaves some traces that it can be obtained in the innocence of the heart. Zagreus, a cripple character could feel the empty side of happiness where he must take others' help to be alive. So, he drank very little, preferring to urinate only once a day. Zagreus said, "Even now, if I had the time… I would only have to let myself go. Everything else that would happen to me would be like rain on a stone. The stone cools off and that's fine. Another day, the sun bakes it. I've always thought that's exactly what happiness would be" (31). Happiness requires the wholeness of existence like sun and rain; day and night; life and death. Most of the time, money comes as a necessary condition of happiness. Money doesn't insure happiness, but it buys time; time allows the possibility of happiness. I know perfectly well that most rich men have no sense of happiness. But that's not the question. To have money is to have time. That's my main point. Time can be brought. Everything can be brought. To be or to become rich is to have time to be happy, if you deserve it. Zagreus exclaimed in order to inspire Patrice Mersault,

> What I'm sure of; he began, is that you can't be happy without money. That's all. I don't like superficiality and I don't like romanticism. I like to be conscious. And what I've noticed is that there's a kind of spiritual snobbery in certain "superior beings" who think that money isn't necessary for happiness. Which is stupid, which is false and to a certain degree cowardly. You see, Mersault, for a man who is well born, being happy is never complicated. It's enough to take up the general fate, only not only with the will to renunciation like so many fake great men, but with the will to happiness. Only it takes time to be happy. A lot of time. Happiness to, is a long patience. (34)

Money can be a means to buy a certain material objects but can't buy the depth of true happiness which emerges from within. Happiness has no historical background, it rooted before the invention of money. Money emerges in the certain ladder of human civilization and it also covers the tiny space of happiness for human race. We find Zagreus' clear motive when he defines the relation between money and happiness for certain class. Zagreus explains it in the following way: "Don't think I'm saying that money makes happiness. I only mean that for a certain class of beings happiness is possible, provided they have time, and that having money is a way of being free of money" (36).

Money deserves the potentiality to buy time but it has no connection with happiness. A penniless traveller has a strong sense of happiness than a wealthy prince. Happiness needs no any requirement for its strength, your existence is enough for it. Money can only buy the time which gives us the space to be happy.

Money, on Zagreus' view, buys time and time is the precondition to happiness. But money alone can't do it. Mersault himself thus embraces a will to

happiness which seems clearly to grow out of Nietzsche's will to power. Camus is not taking happiness as a particular achieved state. He says that achieving"… women, art, success" are only the trappings. The will to happiness is the willingness to embrace and accept one's world, no matter what; almost an aestheticism of one who is aloof and unattached to the world. Patrice Mersault's quest for happiness is his ambition to live. But, he has not utterly realized the consciousness, required for happiness. He asserts,

> He understood. How long he had carved a women's love! And he was not made for love. All his life- the office on the docks, his room and his nights of sleep there, the restaurant he went to, his mistress- he had pursued singlemindedly a happiness which in his heart he believed was impossible. In this he was no different from everyone else. He had played at wanting to be happy. Never had he sought happiness with a conscious and deliberate desire. Never until the day … And from that moment on, because of a single act calculated in utter lucidity, his life had changed and happiness seemed possible. (61)

Camus affirms that happiness is conscious state of the single moment, you can not possess it like an object. It depends on, how you live, in a moment to moment. I liked Camus' variation on the theme from Nietzsche since his will to power is too often understood in senses relative to war and violence. On the other hand, Mersault's will to happiness is such a focused and limited aim.

The entire episode of Zagreus' murder is confusion. It seems Zagreus strongly suggested his own murder to Mersault and wants Patrice to have the happiness he can not achieve. Yet this is ambiguous. Is this a humanitarian act from which he dramatically benefits, or is this purely and simply a murder of greed? Mersault's

crime of murder is justified by Camus in this way: “In the innocence of his heart, Mersault accepted this green sky and this love- soaked earth with the same thrill of passion and desire as when he had killed Zagreus in the innocence of his heart” (96). Camus defines happiness as ever-present consciousness and there must be a minimum of ignorance in order to perfect a life in happiness. Happiness emerges from within in the very innocence of heart. So, we have to live the way it’s easiest for us to live- not forcing ourselves. We may in wrong concept that we must choose to be happy but, every existential choices seem to be a necessary conditions for happiness. Every occurance is not the result of your choices but the happenings of its existence. Camus comments on the choices made by his protagonist, Patrice Mersault in this way:

> You make the mistake of thinking you have to choose, that you have to do what you want, that there conditions for happiness. What matters- all that matters, really- is will to happiness, a kind of enormous, ever-present consciousness. The rest – women, art, success is nothing but excuses. A Canvas waiting for our embroideries. (91)

Mersault’s thirst for happiness, he makes two experiments in happiness: first, by living with three girls in the Prague or The House above the World; then in an ascetic solitude in the Chenoue, mitigated by visits from his wife Lucienne or from the three friends. He has conqured happiness, and retains it in death itself, evoking Zagreus.

Mersault’s wandering seemed no more than the happiness of an anxious man. And deep inside himself he felt a dim exhaustion. Mersault steeped himself in this humilating yet priceless truth: the conditions of the singular happiness he sought were getting up early every morning, taking a regular swim- a conscious hygiene. For Mersault, loving life is not going for swim. It’s living in intoxication, intensity. Women, adventures, other countries… It’s action, making something happen. A

burning, marvellous life. Mersault failed to realize the true nature of happiness and and spent his time in pleasure seeking activities. Commenting on this point Camus writes:

> His actions in the world, his thirst for happiness, Zagreus' terrible wound baring brain and bone, the sweet, uncommitted hours in the house above the world, his wife, his hopes and his gods- all this lay before him, but no more than one story chosen among so many others without any valid reason, at once alien and secretly familiar, a favourite book which flatters and justifies the heart at its core, but a book someone else has written. For the first time, Mersault was aware of no other reality in himself than that of a passion for adventure, a desire for power, a warm and intelligent instinct for a relationship with the world- without anger, without hatered, without regret.(98)

Mersault felt how close happiness is to tears, caught up in that silent exaltation which waves together the hopes and despairs of human life. Mersault realized that his life and his fate were completed here and that henceforth all his efforts would be to submit to this happiness and to confront its terrible truth. Mersault's desire of happiness and a happy death, makes him away from the world where he murders Roland Zagreus and seeks happiness in the House above the World. Ultimately Mersault has realized his passion for wealth and power, his uncommited actions for happiness.

If every individual makes it his objective in life to lead a happy life in accordance with man's evolutionary, emotional structure, then it is self evident that all of humanity, every individual in the world, would be happy. It is more important to concentrate on the enhancement of our own happiness than to find a non-existent

purpose in life, or in wasting our life trying to make other people happy. It did not matter if you exist two or twenty years, happiness was the fact that you had existed.

Zagreus deserves the wisdom of his happiness and absolutely uses his choice of freedom. Zagreus finds his happiness in his death because he has already tasted his life which is too much to endure. For Zagreus, Death is destiny. It has to be so because it is the origin—You come from death and you go to death. Life is just a moment between two nothingness, just a flight of birds between two states of non-being. If death is destiny, as it is, then the whole of life becomes a preparation, a training for it—a discipline in how to die rightly and how to die totally and utterly. The whole of life consists in learning how to die.

Man has taken death as the enemy of life; as if death is there to destroy life, as if death is against life. If this is the conception then of course you have to fight death and life becomes an effort to survive death. Then you are fighting against your own origin, you are fighting against your destiny, something which is going to happen. The whole fight is absurd because death cannot be avoided. If consciousness becomes meditative then you accept death then death is nothing apart; it is you. Then you accept death as response, a final relaxation. Zagreus accepted death because he had recognized his happiness and also achieved the knowledge of cosmic consciousness. Camus clarifies:

> The world always says the same thing. And in that patient truth which proceeds from star to star is established a freedom which releases us from ourselves and from others, as in that patient truth which proceeds from death to death. Patrice, Catherine, Rose and Claire then grew aware of the happiness born of their abandonment to the world. If this night was in some sense the figure of their fate, they marvelled that it

> should be at once so carnel and so secret, that upon its countenance mingled both tears and the sun. And with pain and joy, their hearts learned to hear that double lesson which leads to the happy death. (74)

Everybody is afraid of death for the simple reason that we have not tested of life yet. The man who knows what life is, never afraid of death but he embraces and welcomes death. Death is the ultimate crescendo of life. Those who have known death from inside, lose all fear of death like Roland Zagreus.

> He realized now that to be afraid of this death he was staring at with animal terror meant to be afraid of life. Fear of dying justified a limitless attachment to what is alive in man. And all those who had not made the gestures necessary to live their lives, all those who feared and exalted impotence- they were afraid of death because of the sanction it gave to a life in which they had not been involved. They had not lived enough, never having lived at all. (103)

Life and death are two aspects of existence simultaneously happening together. Death is not against life- life is not possible without death. Death is the very ground on which life exists. Death and life are two wings: the bird can not fly with one wing and the being cannot be without death. Each act in life, each move in life brings death closer. Whether you are afraid of death or not, death is the only certainty. In life, nothing is certain except death. When you obtained the freedom to die for your happiness then you really enjoy your life. “He did not want to die like a sick man. He did not want his illness to be what it is so often, an attenuation, a transition to death. What he really wanted was to encounter between his life- a life filled with blood and health- and death” (100).

And look at the human mind; we always talk about death as if it is an accident. Whenever someone dies, we say his death was untimely as an accident. Only death is not an accident- only death. Everything else is accidental. Death is absolutely certain. You have to die but *A Happy Death*.

A Happy Death is always a natural death which is the culmination of a life lived naturally, without any repression- just the way the animals live, the birds live, the trees live without any split. So, Zagreus' death seems to be a conscious death due to his planning for his own murder. And finally, Mersault also realized the union between life and death which they had shared.

> He was overcome by a violent and faternal love for this man from whom he had consummated a union which bound them together forever. That heavy approach of tears, a mingled taste of life and death, was shared by them both, he realized now. And in Zagreus' very immobility confronting death, he encountered the secret image of his own life. (104)

Zagreus' death is the Philosophical suicide for Mersault eventhough it was committed by himself. Mersault reveals his own secret countenance by the Zagreus' death that he conquered his disease and confronts a happy death.

The idea of death makes one aware of one's life, one's vital being – that which is impermanent and will one day end. When this vitality is appreciate, one feels free – for there is no urgency to perform some act that will cancel the possibility of death, seeing as though there is no such act. In this sense, all human activity is absurd, and the real freedom is to be aware of life in its actually and totally, of its beauty and its pain.

Happiness doesn't intrinsically fit with absurdity. The absurd man has to find a way to be happy despite his beliefs. Longstaffe says that "Meursault was rationally against the value of living, but emotionally for it" (64). One can only derive perverse or negative happiness in life by trying to draw pleasure from its absurdity. This is perhaps why revolt is the highest value Camus promotes in this novel, because it has a negative, rebellious quality.

The happiness Meursault finds at the end of *A Happy Death* therefore seems to be built on unstable ground. If one probes too deeply it is illogical. As Craig says, with this world view one must choose between consistency or happiness (65). Camus seems to choose inconsistency. The existentialists, Camus included, did not place a high priority on reason. Sartre says that for Camus, "the world is neither completely rational nor irrational" (25). Cruickshank further claims that the absurd is "anti-rationalism" (50).

Therefore inconsistencies in logic are not a major concern. The primary objective is to evoke the feeling of the world's absurdity and to show a possible response to it. In this, *A Happy Death* succeeds. It gives a stark picture of the life of a man who embraces the absurd, and then still manages to find some form of happiness.

Absurdity and Absurd Freedom

There are varieties of responses to the crisis of consciousness especially during and after world wars I and II. The old values concerning human existence ceased to operate. In the evolution of new vision, regarding man and his existence, no one is whole, rather one passes over a number of cross- fertilizing influences. Critics support that the idea of adsurdity and purposelessness of man emerged in literature with the publication of *The Myth of Sisyphus* in 1942. Camus argues that the absurd is the product of a collision or confrontation between our human desire for order,

meaning and purpose in life and the blank, indifferent "silence of the universe". The absurd is not in man nor in the world, Camus explains, but in their presence together… It is the only bond uniting them. Sartre, in his essay-review of *The Strange*r provides an additional gloss on the idea: "The absurd, to be sure, resides neither in man nor in the world, if you consider each separately. But since man's dominant characteristic is 'being in the world,' the absurd is, in the end, an inseparable part of the human condition" (33). The absurd, then, presents itself in the form of an existential opposition. It arises from the human demand for clarity and transcendence on the one hand and a cosmos that offers nothing of the kind on the other. Such is our fate: we inhabit a world that is indifferent to our sufferings and deaf to our protests. They saw the world totally absurd, incoherent, disordered and chaotic, not governed by the laws of providence, but by pure chance and contingency. This feeling of an existence without justification became the main proposition of twentieth century.

Mersault's absurdity can be observed when he comes home but shows no interest to see the dead body of his mother. Mersault's absurd feelings can be traced in the following lines:

> One day she died. People in the neighbourhood felt sorry for Mersault. They expected a lot from the funeral. They recalled the son's deep feeling for his mother. They warned distant relatives not to mourn too much, so that Patrice would not feel his own grief too intensely. They were asked to protect him, to take care of him. But Patrice, dressed in his best and with his hat in his hand, watched the arrangements. […] The naxt day, a sign appeared in one of the flat's windows: 'To Let.' (15)

Camus speaks through his cripple character, Roland Zagreus that his Death wish to escape from his miserable life. For Zagreus, life was too much for him. So, he had written a letter, which he had not dated and which explained his desire to die. Zagreus' death note provides us a vivid picture for his absurdity. He was totally aware from his absurd and monotonous life and wanted to grasp the core of his absurdity.

> For a long time he stayed like that, letting his fingers caress the trigger, lifting the safety-catch, until the world fell silent around him and his whole being, already half-asleep, united with the sensation of the cold, salty metal from which death could emerge. Realizing then that it would be enough for him to date his letter and pull the trigger, discovering the absurd feasibility of death, his imagination was vivid enough to show him the full horrror of what life's negation meant for him, and he drowned in his somnolence all his craving to live, to go on burning in dignity and silence. Then, walking completely, his mouth full of already bitter saliva, he would lick the gun barrel, sticking his tongue into it and sucking out an impossible happiness. (35)

Life for Mersault is utterly meaningless and worthless. For him the killing of Zagreus was neither a sin nor a crime. It seems that he equates life with death. If life is meaningless and absurd, killing is also the same. So, it is neither sin, nor a crime, just a meaningless act. For Camus and for Mersault too, it is death which renders human existence meaningless. Initially, Mersault murders Zagreus for his craving for happiness and Zagreus' wish for death. But finally, Mersault realized his absurd deeds and can lead his life towards a happy death which can't be possible without Roland Zagreus. Albert Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* writes:

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

There is direct connection between the feeling of absurdity, consequence of alienation, and longing for death. Zagreus, the hero of *A Happy Death*, is no more than the title itself suggests. It is obvious that Zagreus compares his estranged and alienated condition with that of the people he sees on the street through his windows. He seems more envious of them that they are with their friends, relatives, and partners, but Zagreus has been cast off alone in a narrow room.

Meursault must then find his own meaning, hope and happiness in spite of his belief in absurdity. Indeed, Camus would say that Meursault's happiness is a *result* of his belief in absurdity. The basis for this happiness is found in a few different places. First, a requirement for happiness is that one must embrace the reality of absurdity. Only then can one find true freedom. Indeed, one should not just accept it, but should revolt against it and the society that embodies it. In facing death, one should focus on the enjoyment of the immediate present of life, enjoying sensuality. Through these avenues, one can find happiness, not based on the typical sources of happiness offered by society and religion, but a happiness that is created by oneself.

A central theme of the book is the absurdity of the universe. Camus defines absurdity as "the irrational, the human nostalgia, and the absurd that is born of their encounter" (*Myth* 28). Human nostalgia is a longing for meaning, for order, perhaps even for God. However, the obvious irrationality of the world stands in contrast to that desire, and that discord results in absurdity.

Meursault's happiness is found within absurdity. Camus did not feel it was a contradiction or impossible to embrace absurdity and still be happy. In an interview he declared, "What I find in me is a taste for happiness" (*Lyrical* 355).

Living in the moment and embracing sensuality is perhaps the most sensible response to absurdity. If nothing we do matters, then perhaps the best response is to derive as much pleasure from this life as possible before it is over. Meursault's life is an excellent example of emphasizing sensuality. Although he is detached from human relationships, he fully experiences the physical and sensual world. He takes great pleasure in the House above the World where he discovers, "There is something divine in mindless beauty"(72). According to McCarthy, by extolling sensuality, Camus is saying that the body offers truths, and we should trust our instincts and experiences, instead of what society is telling us (91). Camus says that "the flesh is my only certainty" (*Myth* 87) and he gives Don Juan as an example of a man responding appropriately to absurdity by experiencing as much love as possible (*Myth* 71). Since with absurdity both the future and the past are irrelevant, it is important to live as fully as possible in the present moment.

The absurd man demands certainty above all else, and recognizes that he can only be certain of the absurd. The only truth about himself that remains constant is his desire for unity, reason, and clarity, and the only truth about the world that seems certain is that it conforms to no obvious shape or pattern. There may be a meaning to life, but there is no sure way of knowing what this meaning is. The absurd man wants to live only with what he can be sure of.

The absurd is this conflict created between human reason and an unreasonable universe, and it exists only so long as one is consciously aware of it. In order to cling to the absurd, then, the absurd man must maintain conscious awareness of this conflict

within him without trying to overcome it. Camus identifies three consequences of trying to live with the absurd: revolt, freedom, and passion. Camus speaks through his character Mersault in this way:

> He was flooded by a dreadful pleasure at the prospect of so much desolation and solitude. To be so far away from everything, even from his fever, to suffer so distinctly here what was absurd and miserable in even the tidiest lives, showed him the shameful countenance of a kind of freedom born of the suspect, the dubious. (46)

Camus firmly counters the notion that a proper acceptance of the absurd entails suicide. On the contrary, he suggests, accepting the absurd is a matter of living life to its fullest, remaining aware that we are reasonable human beings condemned to live a short time in an unreasonable world and then to die. We remain aware of the conflict between our desire and reality, and so living the absurd is living in a constant state of conflict. It is a revolt against the meaninglessness of our life and the finality of the death that awaits us. Suicide, like hope, is just another way out of this conflict. Living the absurd is more akin to the predicament faced by the man condemned to death yet who, with every breath, revolts against the notion that he must die.

We generally live with the idea of freedom—that we are free to make our own decisions and to define ourselves by our actions. With this idea of freedom comes the idea that we can give our lives direction, and then aim toward certain goals. Camus explains " A craving for freedom and independence is generated only in a man still living on hope". (22) In doing so, however, we confine ourselves to living toward certain goals—to playing out a certain role. We might see ourselves as the good our mother, the charming seducer, or the hard-working citizen, and actions will be determined by this self-image we create. This idea of freedom is a metaphysical one:

it claims that the universe and human nature are such that we can choose our own course. The absurd man is determined to reject everything he cannot know with certainty, and metaphysical freedom is no more certain than a meaning of life. The only freedom the absurd man can know is the freedom he experiences: the freedom to think and to act as he chooses. By abandoning the idea that he has some role to fulfill, the absurd man attains the freedom of taking each moment of life as it strikes him, free of preconceptions or prejudices. The absurd man, Mersault realizes his absurd freedom while travelling on train towards Breslau.

> The very monotony of the journey satisfied him. This train which was jolting him halfway across Europe suspended him between two worlds- It had taken him abroad, and would deposit him somewhere, draw him out of a life the very memory of which he wanted to erase and lead him to the threshold of a new world where desire would be king […] He wanted to stay where he waws, contemplating his freedom. (55-56)

In abandoning the idea of there being any meaning to life, the absurd man also abandons any notion of values. If there is no meaning or purpose to what we do, there is no reason for doing one thing rather than another. That being the case, we can apply no standard of quality to our experiences. Instead, we can apply only a standard of quantity: the more one experiences the better. By quantity of experience, Camus doesn't mean a long life so much as he means the passion of a full life. A person who is aware of each passing moment will experience more than someone who is otherwise preoccupied will. The absurd man is determined to live in the present.

We are told that Sisyphus is the absurd hero "as much through his passions as through his torture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life

won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing." (p.89). Sisyphus is conscious of his plight , and therein lies the tragedy. For if, during the moments of descent, he nourished the hope that he would yet succeed, then his labour would lose its torment. But Sisyphus is clearly conscious of the extent of his own misery. It is this lucid recognition of his destiny that transforms his torment into his victory. It has to be a victory for as Camus says:

> I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (p.91).

Sisyphus' life and torment are transformed into a victory by concentrating on his freedom, his refusal to hope, and his knowledge of the absurdity of his situation. Camus does not wish to let something as important as the meaning of his life lie in the hands of a hope, no matter how great this hope is. He does not want to deny his rationality; he will not make the leap because he knows there is no security in it. Camus wants to "live without appeal"; he wants to live within the desert of absurdity. He gives an example of what he terms "the absurd man"; a character who is able to stay on within the absurd, and thus not need to appeal to God or some eternal truths to give meaning to his existence. The absurd man lives without appeal through the maxims of revolt, freedom and passion.Such a person can be found in the legendary figure of Don Juan. Don Juan is the ultimate womanizer; his life revolves around courting and seducing a woman of his choice, having his way with her, and then

leaving her for a new conquest. On a superficial level, Don Juan appears to be morally corrupt, and probably lacking in any depth, being a person interested only in the purely physical pleasures. However, Camus looks at this seducer from a different perspective: as an authentic person who has led a life being true to himself.

Don Juan lives only in the present. He refuses to accept morality, because morality is something that is eternal; as an absurd man he recognizes the irrationality of the world and thus rejects universal truths such as ethics. This gives him his freedom, freedom from the eternal and freedom to do as he wills; his ability to transcend himself. This also means the Don Juan is not enslaved by any essence of him being a seducer and a womanizer; at every moment he is aware of his choices, and makes that choice to continue being what he wants.

IV. **Conclusion**

We have discussed various views regarding Existentialism and its' effect on human life, happiness, freedom and death. Existential choice could not be paralled with the motto of life, liberty and happiness to everyone but it deserves different meaning to every individual.

Albert Camus's *A Happy Death* focuses on the idea towards happiness through money, time and even death. Zagreus' horrible attitude towards his life gives enoromous strength to the protagonist, Patrice Mersault to experiment in his own life. Zagreus' death note provides us the clear picture of his Existential choice- desire to die. Life is not worth living when it is too much. The wheelchair bound Zagreus essentially promots Mersault to murder him so that he can escape the humiliation of his infirmity and pass his wealth on to Mersault.

The monotonous and empty life of Patrice Mersault with his boring office job and a meaningless relationship with his girlfriend inspired him to kill his crippled friend Roland Zagreus, in order to obtain his wealth and use it to transform his otherwise mundane life. Camus asked to an honest individual in *A Happy Death* that what is truly means to be alive.

A Happy Death showed his hero resolutely fixing his consciousness on the inanimate world around him, striving to become one with the stones and achieve *a happy death* by blending gently and painlessly into the silent harmony of the universe, while retaining his lucidity until his last breath. The book's last sentence strives to convince the reader by rhetoric that the hero has indeed achieved A *Happy Death* he sought: "And stone among the stones, he returned in the joy of his heart to the truth of motionless worlds." Camus seems to have sensed, however, that the rhetoric was unconvincing and that the ideal of *a happy death* was an illusion. Perhaps he even

recognized that his hero's struggle to remain conscious of life until his last breath was, in reality, a protest against death and a contradiction of his desire to make the transition to death serene and imperceptible.

Thus, from the entire scenario portrayed in the novel Albert Camus tries to dipict the problems in human consciousness while obtaining the happiness and death. Zagreus seems to be achieved a happy death due to his ever present consciousness. Camus's protagonist, Patrice Mersault does not realize the happiness which emerges from within and he desperately searches it from one place to another.

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