

Prometheus and Camus' Ethics of Rebellion

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Camus named the different stages of his writing after characters from Greek mythology. The first stage is the “absurd” cycle represented by the myth of Sisyphus. The second stage, the cycle of “rebellion”, is represented by the myth of Prometheus, and the myth of Nemesis represents the unfinished third stage, known as the cycle of “moderation.” Prometheus is a crucial mythological figure and an ideal figure of rebellion as outlined in the second cycle of Camus' work. Prometheus; under Camus' pen, contained an ethical truth, which he carried to the end of his life. The author used a negative way to define the extension of the image of Prometheus, not only to resist negatively in the face of nihilism but also to reflect his self-contradiction from the mainstream discourse as an intellectual engaged in public discussion. He was determined to disassociate himself from the “progressive” address of the French left-wing intellectuals and speak his truth, though his point of view was not very popular then. Through portraying Prometheus, Camus attempted to dismantle the underlying basis and logic of nihilism by taking *the other* as the starting point and “moderation” and “tension” as the methods. At the same time, he tried to build a stable way to end the violence that was generally legitimized and establish a solid and absolute ethical value that created a relationship of solidarity among human beings.

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With the pandemic outbreak, Camus and his *Plague* have attracted widespread attention from readers worldwide, French academia in particular. The journal *Cités* launched a special issue of Camus in its first issue in 2021, *Camus, écrivain politique (Camus, the Political Writer)*. In the same year, *Aden* published *Albert Camus et ses amis algérois: incertitudes avant « l'absurde événement » (Camus and his Algiers friends: Uncertainty before the Absurd Event)*, etc.; that is, Camus once again became the focus of scholarship.

Camus' works are well-known for constantly incorporating ancient Greek mythological figures, such as Sisyphus, Prometheus, and Nemesis. He drew a different image of Prometheus in *The Rebel* and *Prometheus in Hell*, and made him the representative mythological figure of his philosophy of rebellion. Unlike Sisyphus, the figure of absurd philosophy, Prometheus shifted from “how do I live in such a condition” to “how do I live with *the other* in such a condition.” It represented the change from caring about one's living situation to *the other's* state of existence. This perspective marked Camus' shift from existentialist absurdity to the ethical rebellion and from *self-Centeredness* to *otherness*. Thus, the book *The Rebel* and the image of Prometheus it presents are important for examining the moral dimension of Camus' philosophical thoughts and help to discover another Camus beyond the existentialist label.

The scholarly research on *The Rebel* mainly focused on Mediterranean hedonism, the existence of limits, as well as their connection with ancient Greek philosophy and aesthetic thought. Under some circumstances, these researches were discussing the revolting spirit itself but were less about the philosophical dimensions other than absurdity and existentialism. Therefore, this paper intends to analyze Prometheus and Camus' ethics of rebellion from the images of Prometheus in *The Rebel* and *Prometheus in Hell*. The definition of Prometheus' rebellion was done in a negative way, which highlighted the distinctiveness of Camus' ethics of rebellion. This ethic showed an affirmation of the meaning of love and an endorsement of the moral solidarity of human beings. It was Camus' concern for the current human condition and his hope that human beings would overcome nihilism and regain their concern for others in the "post-nihilistic" stage.

I. Attempts to Transcend Nihilism: Negative Rebellion

From the beginning of his work, Camus intervened in various political discussions with a firm moral stance. With a sense of intellectual responsibility and morality, he tried to correct the blindness and fanaticism of the group of people who represented the will of the people and determined the direction of history in the Second World War. In contrast to Jean-Paul Sartre's aloofness from politics, Camus showed a relatively personal solid position. From 1944, when he was an editor of *Combat*, Camus published dozens of anonymous editorials before he left the newspaper in 1947. Camus was different from the start; his friendship with Sartre and others seemed to integrate him into the circle of Parisian intellectuals. However, his experience of poverty and his Algerian origins pushed him to oppose this group of left-wing intellectuals. As a result, Camus was completely isolated after the publication of *The Rebel* because of the issue of communism and Algiers. For him, the most unbearable thing was the idea of conquest, which turned justice into a horrible kind of abstraction and pushed people away from humanity. In his involvement in politics, Camus always maintained unillusioned honesty and vigorously defended the middle way. This kind of honesty and defense made Camus intolerant to the moral ambiguity and hypocrisy of his "comrades," who sacrificed the generation in front of them for abstract truths or a paradise suspended at the end of history and closed their eyes and ears to the evils of the concentration camps. He went against the political tide of his time and eventually became an outsider in the political area. However, he never betrayed the most important thing in his heart—the real humans and his loyalty to them.

From this perspective, *The Rebel* seemed to be of great importance among Camus' works. It marked a significant turn in his life—a withdrawal from the Parisian left-wing intelligentsia, a blatant break with the dominant political discourse of the time. Camus described *The Rebel* as his autobiography. The readers can also sense the similarities between the Prometheus in his book and Camus himself, especially in how he drew the image of Prometheus. His portrayal of Prometheus was not as straightforward as that of Sisyphus, which was to tell "what it is" but by explaining "what it is not," so its extension became clearer. Readers would have a deeper understanding of the difference between Prometheus and the current philosophical and political tide, as well as Camus' self-proclamation of his public departure from the mainstream French left-wing intellectuals.

This negative approach to writing was perhaps a reflection of Camus' ongoing exile. He never saw Paris as his spiritual home and always wanted to return to his own world of poverty and sunshine. Long before his renunciation with Sartre, Camus thought that he and Sartre were not as close as people considered because the sky of Le Havre was not the sky of Algiers. This physical and spiritual incompatibility caused Camus' loneliness

and allowed him to look at the French bourgeois intellectuals from a distance and analyze their weaknesses. Camus once mentioned in *Combat* that he resented being called a bourgeois intellectual again and again because he had seen what absolute poverty was, and he was a real proletarian. Camus was tired of left-wing intellectuals talking about communism constantly but never getting personally involved in the real life of the poor. This denial and loneliness, which isolated him from the society he lived in, made Camus eager to grasp the only roots of his thought: poverty, love, and loyalty to people, whereas his moral and ethical standpoint drew him into deeper conflicts. Although Camus had turned from an orthodox left-wing intellectual posture of attacking the Nazis to attacking left-wing dictators like Franco and Stalin, his moral and ethical standpoint remained the same: the love of real, living human beings. Camus made this position clear in his constant rejection and reflection on the progressive political trends of his time, leading him to work tirelessly to find a middle way. In this sense, there is a strong resemblance between Camus and the Prometheus he sketched out through negation.

Camus attempted to deny the abstraction and legitimate violence that nihilism brought through Prometheus. In *The Rebel*, Camus tried to show through deep analysis that Nietzsche and the others' attempts to transcend nihilism were nothing more than a reproduction of nihilism. Nietzsche intended to summon Prometheus but ended up summoning the evil and despotic Caesar. According to Camus, Nietzsche's "saying yes to everything" ultimately led to the affirmation of the existence of slave masters and the worship of power. Nietzsche's world had no purpose, no direction, and no Gods. And thus, a *Superman* must emerge to rule the earth and give advice to the world. So, an individual's *Will to Power* was destined to be incorporated into the collective *Will to Power*.

In addition, Nietzsche's ethical value position put the behaviors under its guidance beyond the binary definition of good and evil, as the behaviors were judged from a formal perspective for their value according to the power of its will. The combination of two forms of will to power—individual and collective—leads to blatant violence. From Sade to the Romantics, Ivan Karamazov, and Nietzsche, these "metaphysical rebellions" were linked by "absolute affirmation". They shared the common characteristic of being torn between absolute freedom and absolute solitude and between denying everything and moving toward irreversible violence. The so-called "absolute affirmation" meant that after the legitimacy of divine sovereignty was questioned and overthrown, all standards of value were gone, and everyone could become God. To become God means to reject the laws of all others and to demand that one's own laws rule the world: "But to desire without limit comes to accepting being desired without limit. License to destroy supposes that you yourself can be destroyed. Thus, you must struggle and dominate. The law of this world is nothing but the law of strength; its driving force the will to power" (Camus, 1960, p. 37).

Through Prometheus, Camus sought to deny the illusion of greatness and the "reality" which was absent from the world. In *Prometheus in Hell*, he rejected the world's definition of Prometheus, which denies the Value of Rationality brought by Prometheus, focusing only on *Instrumental Rationality*. He also dismissed people's separation of ends and means and people's aim to achieve the ultimate end at the cost of eliminating all means. Camus argued that Prometheus was a symbol of humanity, but people ignored that, shaping him into a stone statue of humankind. People—the mainstream of European thought at the time—focused on illusory greatness, a reality placed at the end of time, rather than on the real human world, an idea despised by Camus. According to Camus, the only truth was the human being, the living flesh, not the abstractions that required the sacrifice of this flesh in exchange. This posture of constant detachment from ideology or philosophical dogma led Camus to be a

negator, and his Prometheus was always in negation. Camus denied not a particular ideological or political position but unreality. For history, the individual was transient and expendable. Still, in Camus' eyes, each person's life was all they had, so it was undesirable to subjugate real life to the inevitability of history. The negation used by Camus in outlining Prometheus showed a high sense of responsibility and ethical and moral consciousness, trying to defend some fundamental ethical laws in an age full of egoism and extremes.

II. The Ethics of "*The Other*": Dissolving Nihilistic Foundations

What Camus saw and heard during and after the occupation, his editorial experience with *Combat*, and his cynical observation of Parisian intellectuals prompted Camus to speak his truth. According to Camus, the real problem lies in nihilism, and only by understanding nihilism correctly can people be led to survival. Thus, in the opening chapter of *The Rebel*, he proposed: "I rebel—therefore we exist" (Camus, 1960, p. 28), dismantling the basis of nihilism: Prometheus lived and died with humans. He tried to confirm that he had something in himself that deserved the attention of humans; otherwise, he would rather have died. For Prometheus, getting everything meant realizing that some value of his concern was indeed shared with all humankind. Thus, for Camus, *the other* was a prerequisite for Prometheus' existence: If we do not exist, then I will cease to exist. As a result, the philosophy of rebellion that Camus presented through Prometheus was, first and foremost, an ethics of *the other*. This kind of ethics is intended to care for the real existing other and oppose the alternative form of nihilism, historicism. The latter locked man into the inevitability of historical logic and made him expendable and doomed to be ignored.

The essence of this ethic was to affirm shared values with *the other* in communication and coexistence and to allow such values to be surfaced in taking responsibility for *the other*. Prometheus represented the rebels who acted in the name of a value they shared with all and affirmed a metaphysical group consistency of interest in the rebellion movement. "The rebel, on the other hand, from his very first step, refuses to allow anyone to touch what he is. He is fighting for the integrity of one part of his being. He does not try to conquer, but simply to impose" (Camus, 1960, p. 23). The rebel's apprehension of his value was reached in interaction with the value relations of *the other*. Still, uniquely, the rebel did not confirm his value in the difference between the value of *the self* and *the other*, but just the opposite: he confirmed his value in the sameness of the value with *the other*. This congruence of group stakes allowed the Prometheans to produce something recognizable as self-identity, making them become complete men of self-identity. Since then, no matter what, the shared value would have been kept amid distress. Therefore, it was easy to recall Sartre's concept of "*Nothingness*". Man brought nothingness into the world, and in the process of nihilizing the world, man also nihilized himself. Man's existence was always transcending himself by constantly denying himself and his present situation and also by constantly outlining himself by denying external objects that are outside himself. By denying what he was not to prove what he was and what he would be. Sartre's *self* existed in "not what he is, but what he is not" or "what he will be." On the other hand, Camus' *self* existed in "what is men in common." Camus' demand for rebellion assumed the existence of at least some human nature, and this nature was the only characteristic that identified the human self. At the same time, this affirmation of shared values transcended the realm of individual values. These common values were placed above *the self* and thus provided a reason for people to rebel, to rise against conditions of isolation and oppression.

Camus carried this trait of Prometheus throughout his life. According to Camus, there was divine morality that could kill a human's soul. A human is just a human and must not place himself in place of God. Camus wrote a series of essays, such as "*Reflections on the Guillotine*," which revealed the religious forms taken by radical politics and gave a theological meaning to the end of the revolution. Camus eschewed the popular political choices of the day in favor of a determined individual posture. He constantly cautioned his readers against turning controversy into the kind of gruesome, frenzied abstraction that ruined so many lives. After the rebellion movement, Camus no longer accepted the sort of truth that would cause him to undertake the sentencing of a man to death. This sense of otherness and shared values were among the most important features that distinguished Camus' philosophy of rebellion from existentialism and, indeed, also from the Western metaphysical tradition. Camus always tried to tear off the label of "existentialism" from himself precisely because he was also aware of his fundamental differences with the existentialist tradition. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus refuted Husserl, Kierkegaard, and the existentialist philosophers, arguing that the former had ultimately retreated into a ponderous solidification, jumped from objective description to a priori consciousness, abolishing the mystery; the latter had either turned the world's anomalies and inexplicability into Gods, or had hidden them in eternity, returning to a frozen state of existence, which caused abolishing the absurd tensions and contradictions, leading to an abstract philosophy that summarized everything, ultimately ending in a calm epistemological unity. The former and the latter were essentially a pursuit of identity. One of the manifestations of this pursuit of identity was *the inaccessible other*. Heidegger's exclusion of *the other* and Sartre's opposition between *the self* and *the other* in "*Hell is other people*" are the inevitable result of existentialism's pursuit of identity and treating *self* as the subject. This act of building self-consciousness by erasing the consciousness of *the other* inevitably leads to the absurd tragedy of the dichotomy between *the self* and *the other*. Camus' conscious detachment from existential coherence in his first writing circle had a robust internal connection with the distinct sense of otherness and the emphasis on shared values in his second writing cycle.

However, Camus was not only aware of man's dependence on the collective but also of the devastating consequences that could be incurred in the collective pursuit of progress. Thus, *the other-oriented* Prometheus was not obliged to submit to singularity and identity because of this stake's consistency. Instead, this ethic was founded on responsibility and respect for *the other*, finding and protecting the right to the integrity of each individual within the group. The demand for light and solidarity is embedded in each Prometheus, not in the Prometheus rising to create a new order of light and solidarity. Camus refuted the latter and called it a "metaphysical rebellion" that began with the demand for justice, the need for power, and the demand to take the place of the overthrown master. Prometheus was not a conqueror. In search of identity, a conqueror would impose his own individual values on the whole civilization. Camus refuted Nietzsche's doctrine of the *Superman* for this reason. This kind of rebellion of rejecting all other laws and recognizing only one's own, which only resulted in pushing oneself far away from *the other*, was still an egoism in essence.

Further, we can also find Camus' dialectical acceptance of the ancient Greek ethical spirit. Camus' Prometheus was not concerned with the other out of a need for self-concern, and concern for the other is not an art of domination or a political device. He clearly distinguished himself from Aristotle by claiming that he did not believe that humans were inherently social animals but that society should, in turn, provide the conditions for the survival of the individual rather than the individual, and the connection between the individual and the other,

becoming the instrument that sustained society. The relationship between *the other* and the individual was not a condition for governing *the other* only but a requirement in the true sense that the human being was his sole purpose.

III. *Moderation and Tension: Suspending Nihilistic Logic*

In Camus' various editorials, commentaries, and essays on rebellion and justice, the attack on political radicalism was always an important theme. It was not enough to dismantle the logic of nihilism, as Camus understood that even when there was concern and love for others, the collective could still push the rebellious individual to extremes. Such extremes were often cloaked in the illusion of greatness. Therefore, it was more important to set a limit to rebellion. *Moderation* then became a requirement for the Promethean rebellion. The two paths of nihilism, "absolute affirmation" and "absolute negation," went in the opposite direction, destroying the premise of the existence of rebellion and making the rebels look disfigured on the path of rebellion, advancing to the emergence of "state terrorism." According to Camus, the Nazis' atrocities stemmed from their conscious use of man as a tool: to achieve certain ideals, it was necessary to eliminate the inferior race. Thus, Camus insisted that no matter the purpose, killing should not be considered the means to achieve that end, and there should not be a widespread belief that it was legal to kill for some reason. With such a perception, the general public may become more brutal toward each other and commit more killings. The state supported by such people would have the power to justify killing, which would lead to small-scale killings and large-scale terror, state-led political persecution, and massacres. This disregard for the value of other people's lives and the logic of pushing rebellion to the end crossed the line of moderation and led to the atrocity of mass murder.

When the rebellion crossed the boundary and ran towards absolute negation, it presented a kind of hatred of the same type and nature. This intense hatred and desire to conquer created the loneliness of the rebels. If all the evil in the rebel were justified and should be released, then, after beating his kind, he must turn to the conquest of creation. However, it was impossible to kill the product.

This situation occurred essentially because both "absolute negation" and "absolute affirmation" implied an indulgence of power, a departure from compassion for others, and absolute solitude. Camus' ideal Prometheus, on the other hand, represented an equilibrium of connection with others. It was also what Camus revealed through the example of "absolute negation": what would happen if the inferior nature of man's original evil were to be completely indulged. However, "Moderation is not the opposite of rebellion. Rebellion in itself is moderation, and it demands, defends, and re-creates it throughout history and its eternal disturbances" (Camus, 1960, p. 268). We seek a balance of rebellion because of the importance of others without indulging in the evil of nature. Otherwise, the self-concern of all will be at the expense of others. The end can only be a hopelessly sad one.

Camus' refutation of "absolute affirmation" and Nietzsche's not only clarified the limits of his rebellion ethics but also went beyond his thesis in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Making Sisyphus, who decided that "all is well" (Camus, 1991, p. 122), went further and became a Prometheus. He not only confirmed his fate and limits but was not satisfied with merely "confirming" them but rebelling against them. Camus said of Sisyphus, "He (Sisyphus) 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" (Camus, 1991, p.

123). "Everything is good" was also precisely the verdict Nietzsche gave to the world: *Amor Fati*. Nevertheless, Prometheus saw a terrible silence in such an acceptance and recognition of fate. To recognize chance meant to deny the source of rebellion: if one accepts that everything must be so, then why resist? By demanding absolute submission of the individual to the inevitable, the rebellion movement dissolved at its root. The Promethean rebels should live in the tension between the negation of "rising for common values with others, demanding respect and affirmation" and the affirmation of "keep praising the essence of humanity and the beauty of the world."

"*Tension*" was one of Camus' most fascinating concepts and a dynamic representation of "*moderation*." The many dichotomies in Prometheus are also due to Camus' deliberate emphasis on "*tension*": how to determine a morality without prescribing one? How to resent power without losing compassion for one's fellow man? And how to extrapolate reason to the edge of rationality and ensure that it does not cross the line? Camus did not answer these questions but showed that these conflicts made the Western world of thought come alive. Just as Sisyphus lived at the border of the absurd, when he "stands firm on the dizzying ridge," Prometheus lived at the moment when the bow is at its fullest.

However, the tension generated by such dichotomy may perhaps exist only in the possibility of reasoning and the impossibility of fact: "This very origin of this value guarantees us that it can only be partially destroyed. Moderation, born of rebellion, can only live by rebellion. It is a perpetual conflict continually created and mastered by the intelligence. It does not triumph either in the impossible or in the abyss. It finds its equilibrium through them. Whatever we may do, excess will always keep its place in the heart of man, in the place where solitude is found" (Camus, 1960, p. 268). But perhaps this tension between the possibility of reasoning and the impossibility of fact constitutes and highlights Camus' expression of the absurdity of rebellion: the attempt to clarify a truth that could never be reached, and therein lay the whole greatness of Prometheus. Prometheus's restrained opposition, like the "absurdity" of Sisyphus, was always in nervous tension, carefully maintaining its balance. Everything that would make stresses of absurdity and rebellion disappear for achieving identity and a sure eternity was to be rejected. So, they rejected hope, including the Gods of religion, supreme destiny, planning for life, and the metaphysics that finally eliminated contradictions. In Camus' divine genealogy, Sisyphus and Prometheus could be said to be in the same bloodline and ultimately reach an ideal relationship with the world and *the other*.

IV. Love and Absolute Ethical Standards: An Attempt to Reconstruct Values

From 1948 onward, Camus published public discussions that, changing his previously moderate temperament, and started to point a sharp critical finger at the hypocrisy and tyranny of left-wing dictators. This year, he finally abandoned the careful balance he had once held and turned to an absolute scale of ethical values to crusade against the evils he saw. The year before *The Rebel* was published, he had been ashamed of his excessive objectivity. *The Rebel* was a significant attempt to rebuild ethical values after abandoning such indulgent accommodation. This scale of moral values demands love for the objective, living human being and requests that this kind of ethical values would not change with the change of regime.

Camus resisted three forms of love: the universal benevolence of humanists, utilitarian love, and religion in the name of virtue and love. Camus rejected these three forms of love because they denied the appearance of

rebellion and did not meet the requirements of rebellion. The Promethean rebellion left unity and emphasized otherness. On the other hand, Utilitarian love was directed toward the Self, still using the other as a tool for one's own ultimate well-being, and its departure from the ethics of *the other* was evident. Thus, the humanist's universal benevolence was a strong disguise in Camus' eyes. The universal benevolence of the humanist was not directed first and foremost to the other as an individual but rather to an abstract emotion that has nowhere else to be expressed. The modern conception of benevolence was extraordinarily sensual and conceptual, which understood the essence of love in terms of shared suffering and compassion, and ultimately tended to pursue sensual love and pleasure. When the consequences of such abstraction resorted to politics, it would inevitably lead to establishing a universal will.

To preserve the value of abstract goodness and the necessity of abstract love, it would, in the end, call for a resort to universal morality. When the order of universal love and morality was established, and people submitted to the legal institutions of absolute reason to judge all those who posed a threat to the order of universal love and morality, they were submitting to their own will. Therefore, Camus asked: who is qualified? If human nature was not all good, no one among us could act as an absolute judge to declare the total annihilation of the worst criminals because none of us can claim absolute innocence. "Prometheus, the first rebel, denies the right to punish. Zeus himself, Zeus above all, is not innocent enough to exercise this right. Thus rebellion, in its very first manifestation, refuses to recognize punishment and places it at the centre of his universe" (Camus, 1960, p. 210). No one was innocent. Thus, the universal love became a norm that was above the will of man, which was ineffable, unjustifiable, and unquestionable, rather than a value that was inherent in man. Every human being was unfinished. Thus, benevolence acquires the face of a new God and becomes a religion in the name of love. This religion of virtue begins with caring for others and making them treat each other justly but ends with the guillotine of one's fellow man. "Terror is the homage that the malignant recluse finally pays to the brotherhood of man" (Camus, 1960, p. 217). This love must include a first concern for the well-being of others. And it is the process, not the result, that is important: this means that its starting point must be oriented toward the well-being of others, and at the same time, it must not be a process in which the means of achieving well-being, love, overrides the well-being of others. The well-being of others must not be overridden by love to achieve well-being. From this perspective, Camus attempted to reconstruct absolute ethical values.

In the first pages of *The Rebel*, Camus quoted extensively from Scheler's refutation of Nietzsche's *Ressentiment* and outlined the prototype of the ethical model of Promethean rebellion. That was, this rebellion was absolutely beyond *ressentiment*. In a nutshell, it means that, due to shared values with others, the Rebel only wants to draw a line in the sand rather than replace the oppressor or put his values above the expected values of others. In Nietzsche's case, the root of rebellion was a kind of jealousy, in which the existential essence of others' survival was felt as a measure of one's value. Thus, the condition for the elimination of Nietzsche's jealousy must be that the condition of the other I am jealous of is mine. Camus' *other-oriented* ethics of rebellion does not feel a sense of hostility in the relationship between *the self* and *the other*, and the relationship between the value of the other's existence and the value of *the self's* existence was not one of comparison and jealousy, but rather one of connection, attachment, and love. Although Camus demonstrated that the positive element in the act of rebellion should not be overemphasized, the basis for the existence of jealousy was dismantled because of the base of rebellion. Yet, the result of jealousy taking control would not be the inevitable result of the process of rebellion:

the individual stood up for the common dignity of the group, and once the moment dignity was respected, the act of rebellion would end. So, it naturally did not demand further than the desire to defend dignity over the group. The ultimate requirement was only being respected and mutual understanding with others. Nietzschean rebellion based on jealousy invited *ressentiment* regarding the value and wealth that could not be acquired: the strong urge to take over from the master made them desire to deprive him of the pleasures of power. Thus, the enslaved people were motivated not by calling grapes sour but by fundamentally denying that the concept of "sweet" was "good" and reversing the value order of good and evil. The *ressentiment*-driven enslaved people tried to impose the humiliation they felt on humanity. Thus, the *ressentiment*-driven rebellion, under the guise of justice for the good of others, glorified the desire for power wielded by the master and gave a moral appearance to their evil grievance rebellion. This *ressentiment* was paradoxical, for even though the slaves have done their best to make the value of "good" worthless, their heartfelt desire for a better life for those in power still haunts them, inducing a sense of powerlessness.

In his refutation of *ressentiment*, Camus shared Scheler's view: "Whereas every noble morality springs from a triumphant acceptance and affirmation of oneself, slave morality is in its very essence a negation of everything 'outside' and 'different,' of whatever is 'not oneself': and this negation is its creative deed. This reversal of the perspective of valuation—this necessary determination by the outside rather than by oneself—is typical of *ressentiment*" (Scheler, 1998, p. 28). In Nietzsche's account of *ressentiment*, the value judgment possessed by the enslaved person is relative, not absolute. It was constantly changing in comparison with others. Thus, the pursuit of value was ever-changing, and the desire was never-ending. In Prometheus' rebellion, although his deal emerged vaguely in the coexistence with others, this value was not the relative value embodied in *ressentiment* but an a priori absolute value. An opposing external environment was necessary for forming the Nietzschean slave morality. As Scherer said, the Nietzschean slave's rebellion is essentially a reaction to the outside world, i.e., triggered by the conditions possessed by others. The value judgment of the Promethean rebellion was inherently embedded in the Rebel, and the existence of this value was further defined through interaction with others.

The image of the ideal Prometheus that Camus eventually sketched had much in common with Scheler's portrayal of the *noble person* (Scheler, 1998, p. 37). According to Scheler, "(*Ressentiment*) Lowering all values to the level of one's own factual desire or ability (a procedure not to be confused with the conscious act of resignation), constructing an illusory hierarchy of values in accordance with the structure of one's personal goals and wishes—that is by no means the way in which a normal and meaningful value consciousness is realized. It is, on the contrary, the chief source of value blindness, of value delusions and illusions" (Scheler, 1998, p. 41). This was precisely the value of rebellion that Camus called a prior, and interactions with others reinforce that. Camus' discussion of the importance of rebellion to Scheler's discussion of love also coincided. In summary, it was not the value of things but the value of the act itself that constituted the highest good. The act's value was inherent in rebellion as rebellion, not the result of rebellion, and not something that overrode opposition.

This a priori value, which did not arise in comparison, was Camus' attempt to reconstruct ethical values. To rebuild moral values, Camus tried his best to transcend nihilism and lived on solid ground with the ethics of rebellion represented by Prometheus. And his starting point was so simple: to make their generation bleed less and suffer less.

Conclusion

Camus used negative discourse to clarify his ideal image of Prometheus and his ethic of rebellion. He tried to stop the reproduction of nihilism by putting the brakes on people's Promethean ambitions when they were pushed to the extreme. In the face of preconceived ideologies and revolutionary discourses, Camus was always vigilant enough not to attach himself easily to either side. In an age when historical and political relativism overrides all values, Camus sought to defend an absolute ethical value, namely, the love of real human beings, and rebellion against evil. When nihilism is sweeping in again, it is vital to recall Camus' attempt to transcend nihilism and rebuild ethical values. Perhaps today, we should also find an outlet to face nihilism in our love for real, living human beings.

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