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AN ANALYSIS OF ALBERT CAMUS' REVOLT PHILISOPHY IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS NOVEL 'THE PLAGUE'

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyze reflections of revolt philosophy put forth by French philosopher Albert Camus (1913- 1960) in his novel 'The Plague'. In the first part of the paper formed with three parts, the place of Albert Camus in the Existential Philosophy is mentioned. Opposed to the philosophers who think that people have to believe in the existence of God to know themselves, it is important to question concrete human-being for Camus. As a result of this questioning, he cannot explain the meaning of the situation people are in, life and the reality that everything comes to an end with that with mind and believing. Starting from this idea he bases his ideas on the terms of ridiculous, revolt and suicide. So, in the second part, Albert Camus' terms absurd, revolt and suicide are discussed. In the third part, understandings of God and religion, main problems of the study are dealt on the context of religion and reverend images in the novel The Plague.

Camus who mainly intends to question human life uses the plague as a metaphor in his novel. As a result of this plague he symbolizes dreadful feelings of suffering, fear of death etc. that they can come across throughout his life. In addition to this, he also put an emphasis on the idea that religious doctrines cannot answer any questions on how people lead their lives. Generally taken it is seen that Camus supports the idea "Even if God exists, nothing will change." with his novel. This idea can be qualified as one of the most hugging messages of the novel. However, it doesn't come to mean that Albert Camus is a sheer supporter of atheism.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

The paper aiming to analyze reflections of French philosopher Albert Camus' revolt philosophy in his work The Plague is comprised of three parts. In the first part, the place of Albert Camus in existentialist philosophy is mentioned within the general description of it.

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Existentialism has appeared as a movement against the general systems aimed at understanding the universe. After 18th century, extreme trust in social sciences led the claim that sciences can solve all kinds of problems to settle in minds. On the other hand, production of heavy weapons with scientific improvements world wars fought via these weapons has brought out the argument that science can be dangerous for human-beings. The fact that civilians were mostly killed and injured during the second world war caused people to feel intense unhappiness and desperateness. Camus put forward his ideas in such an environment. Pessimism of the world wars have given shape to his philosophy.

The terms 'revolt', 'absurd' and 'suicide' are the fundamental terms of Albert Camus. In the second part of the paper, Camus' these fundamental terms are analyzed within the frame of the novel *The Plague*. This novel is one of the best novels that Albert Camus has out forward his absurd feeling. According to him, absurd is the way of living that people live as if they are going to live forever although they know that they will die someday. In order for people to have absurd feeling they have to be aware of death. In the beginning of the novel *The Plague* people are not aware of death reality because they lead a fast and modern urban life. The outbreak that make people realize this starts with the holocaust of mice. Then the outbreak causes peoples' death. The disease spreads gradually all over the city. people start to take precautions against it. A state of emergency is declared in the city. Then almost all the people have become aware of the reality of death. Meanwhile people have also become aware of absurd feeling. These people having been aware of death reality come across with two choices: dying willingly and hope. Camus analyzes these two choices within frame of the term 'suicide'. So the term 'suicide' is dealt in the second part of the paper. In this part the term 'suicide' is analyzed starting from the figure Cottard who has committed suicide in the novel. As for Camus suicide is an act that one ends his/her life thinking that this life does not worth living. Camus who asserts that the suicide issue has been approached as as a social act by such sociologists as Durkheim, emphasizes that there is a strong relationship between personal thoughts and suicide. Cottard figure in the novel commits suicide in accordance with Camus' understanding. On the other hand, Cottard's attempt to commit suicide is also in accordance with Camus' idea that people rarely commit suicide for the sake of a view. Camus thinks that even if people commit suicide because of illnesses and sorrows cannot be healed these are not the fundamental factors. When the feeling 'absurd' has come to an intolerable state, people decide to spirit off himself to get rid of this feeling. Camus underlines his idea that people under the effect of the feeling 'absurd' should choose to live instead of committing suicide. In other words, people should revolt against the meaningless of the life. Therefore, the term 'revolt' is explained in the second part of the paper. As for Camus, people who revolt say 'Yes' by choosing to live although they are aware of death reality. However, people say 'No' to living and give up everything thinking that they will die somehow or another. Camus asserts that people who are aware of their own rights and have some responsibilities can say 'No'. He also adds that this 'No' showing up as a revolt against God puts forward three favorable values: personal value of him who find himself once again, becoming

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aware of the fact that people have similar faith with other people, collaboration environment built by this faith partnership. Revolt in the novel 'The Plague' corresponds to third favorable value. Doctor Rieux, Tarrou and Grand are among the revolting figures in the novel. Doctor Rieux a good example of solidarity is one of the figures that he has characterized most in the novel. An atheist revolting character Doctor Rieux reflects Camus' understanding of God and religion. In accordance with this Camus' understanding of God and Religion is analyzed in the third part of the part of the paper. Rieux, the most important revolting character in the novel, is a person who does not take shelter in holy and says 'No'. Camus names after this kind of a revolt supernatural revolt. This supernatural revolt rejects all the goals of the universe and people's own condition. Considering all of these Doctor Rieux can be called an atheist supernatural revolter. Tarrou is also an atheist revolter. However, the fact that most important two characters in the novel are atheist does not mean that it is important to be an atheist if one is to revolt, which has been clearly explained by Camus. A supernatural revolter does not have to be an atheist whilst he does not have to be a devoutly religious person. As can be deciphered from the novel religion is a system of believes that necessitates devoutly religious people to leave everything to the God's assurance. In the opposite case religion cannot be even a matter of discussion. Therefore, believing in a religion is not only believing in the existence of God but also believing in that God holds all the strength in his hands. Priest Paneloux is the exhibitor of this idea in the novel. Priest Paneloux resigning himself to the God unconditionally thinks that people are punished by the God with plague outbreak because of their sins. So and so his words telling people that they are in a disaster and they have deserved it proves his ideas. Depending on it, Camus thinks that devoutly religious people only resign themselves to the God and do not put any efforts to get rid of the disasters.

At the end of the paper an important theme that has been underlined by Camus has been found out: "There is no answer to the question how people what kind of a life people should lead via these religious disciplines". In order to form a basis for this idea, Camus comes to terms with God and religion in most of his works including The Plague. Another theme put forward by Camus in his novel that God is unjust. A sinless child death has changed even Priest Paneloux's ideas in the novel. If a disease is a punishment of the sins, a sinless child's death because of this disease seems unexplainable. When it comes to the death of child, all the religions become absurd to Camus. Because if we are talking about a world sinless people come across with cruelty, and the God is supervising it, then we should doubt about the justice of him. As a result, even if the God exists, there comes the choices of acceptance and revolt. Emphasizing that people need to make choices in accordance with this idea, Priest Paneloux has also had to say "Brothers, there comes the time. You will either believe in everything or reject everything". It shows that people who believe in God even if they assert that they resign themselves to the God unconditionally have to make some choices. Therefore, it can be deduced at the end of the paper that Camus support the thesis that "Even if God exists, nothing will change" just like another existentialist philosopher Sartre. This idea can be qualified as one of the most hugging

messages of the novel. However, it doesn't come to mean that Albert Camus is a sheer supporter of atheism.

Keywords: Albert Camus, existentialism, revolt, absurd, God, religion.

ALBERT CAMUS'NUN BAŞKALDIRMA FELSEFESİNİN 'VEBA' ADLI ROMANI BAĞLAMINDA ANALİZİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Fransız filozof Albert Camus (1913-1960)'nun ortaya koyduğu başkaldırma felsefesinin 'Veba' romanındaki yansımalarını analiz etmektir. Üç bölümden oluşan çalışmanın ilk bölümünde, Albert Camus'nun varoluş felsefesindeki yerine değinilmiştir. İnsanın kendini tanıyabilmesi için Tanrı'nın varlığına inanmaları gerektiğini düşünen filozoflara karşı gelen Camus için önemli olan somut insan yaşamının sorgulanabilmesidir. Bu sorgulama sonucunda o, insanların içindeki buldukları durumunu, yaşamını ve her şeyin ölümle birlikte sona ermesini akıl ve iman ile anlamlandıramamaktadır. Bu noktadan hareketle düşüncelerini saçma, başkaldırı ve intihar gibi kavramlar etrafında şekillendirmiştir. Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde de Camus'un bu saçma, başkaldırı ve intihar kavramları işlenmiştir. Üçüncü bölümünde ise çalışmanın temel sorunsalı olan Tanrı ve din anlayışı Camus'nun 'Veba' adlı romanında işlenen din ve din adamı imajları bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir.

Asıl amacı insanın yaşamını sorgulamak olan Camus romanında veba salgını bir metafor olarak kullanılmaktadır. Bu salgın nihayetinde insanın yaşarken karşılaşılabileceği acı çekme, ölüm korkuları vs. gibi ürkütücü duyguları sembolize etmektedir. Bunun dışında Camus romanında insanların nasıl yaşadıkları konusuna dini öğretilerin herhangi bir cevap veremeyeceği düşüncesini de vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma genel olarak değerlendirildiğinde Camus'nun 'Veba' romanıyla "Tanrı var olsa da bir şey değişmeyecekti" düşüncesini savunduğu görülmüştür. Bu düşünce aynı zamanda romanın en önemli temalarından biri olarak da nitelendirilebilir. Ancak bu düşünce, Camus'nun düpedüz ateizmi savunduğu anlamına gelmez.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Albert Camus, varoluşçuluk, başkaldırı, saçma, Tanrı, din.

Introduction

French philosopher Albert Camus, born in Algeria is one of the most important figures of the Existential Philosophy. Camus, who was not able to finish his philosophy education because of his health problems, emigrated to France in 1938. He published his first work here. He made quite name for himself with this novel 'The Stranger' published in 1942.

Camus, witnessing the Second World War, got to known as one of the famous writers in literature with his trials, dramas, stories and novels written during this time. When the works of

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Camus, who won Nobel Prize in Literature with his works in 1957, are analyzed in detail, it can be seen that the war had left shattering traces in his soul. Purposelessness of the life, life's deprivation of meaning and aim, absurdity of our existence, meaninglessness of the world and the revolt against this constitute fundamental topics of his works. The revolt is against the God or the Gods in and of itself for Camus who built his revolt philosophy on absurdity.

1. Camus' Place in Existential Philosophy

Existentialism is a philosophy that rooted in the works of Kierkegaard and Russian novelist Dostoyevsky and is a modern philosophy that emphasis of personal choice on metaphysical deadweight revived in the works of Gabriel Marcel, Martin Heidegger, Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre (Moseley, 2011: 276). Existentialism seeing philosophy as human science shapes its thoughts according to human-beings. The idea that existence reveals itself in the human-beings leads the philosophers to explain the meaning of concrete existence and living of individuals (Buyukduvenci, 2001: 7).

The argumentation that existence comes before quiddity is among the fundamental features of existentialism unlike traditional philosophy who supports the idea that quiddity comes before existence. According to the existentialist firstly human-beings appear and then they build their quiddity (Cevizci, 1997: 699). Therefore, human-beings are not accomplished creatures. They have to build themselves all the time (Aydemir, 2014: 99). On this context existentialism stand for a duration that continues till death for human-beings. Therefore, existentialist philosophers describe human-beings as existence and the other living-beings and things as creatures.

'Choice', 'honor' and 'struggle' remain in the forefront of existentialist values. Indeed, choice conduces to absurd in existentialism. Individuals' freedom lays the burden on individual again in terms of his/ her choices. That means individuals are responsible for their own choices (Moseley, 2011: 276). On the other side individuals seem to be make their choices liberally without feeling any apprehension; however, they don't make any choices in real terms. Meanwhile existentialist values try to keep people away from the events and situations that cause them to feel distressed, fearful and apprehended. While doing this, they try to strengthen the conscious, turn their desires on. In this way they will be aware of the situation they are under and will be able to move away from distresses, fears and apprehenders that they come across frequently in their daily lives (Buyukduvenci, 2011: 16).

Theist existentialists defend the opinion that people have to believe in God in order to identify themselves and lead a wander idly. These philosophers seeing God as an excess being put an emphasis on the idea that the freedom deprived of belief in God is not real (Magill, 1992: 22). Theist philosopher Soren Kierkegaard claimed that it is not possible to comprehend God the biggest reality exceeding human mind with human mind. In this sense a real Christian is a human-being, who has a still soul, is in search all the time, and feels desperate and apprehended. Therefore, s/he achieves his idea causing absurdity that cannot be understood with human mind and throws a light on a big secret (Timucin, 2006: 731).

Camus does not accept theist philosophers' ideas. He called this situation that those theist philosophers are in 'philosophical suicide'. According to Camus, Gods of such theist existentialists as Kierkegaard can only survive by denying human mind. In this context he emphasizes that people make rescuer leaps growing out of religious inspiration though it is conflicting and longing to possess eternity (Camus, 1991: 56-57).

2. Main Terms of Albert Camus

Albert Camus claimed that people always ask the question “Is there a meaning of life?” Although he analyzed this question scientifically, teleologically, and metaphysically, he cannot give a suitable answer. To this respect he asserts that it is not possible to answer the question “Is there a meaning of life?” Accordingly, he approaches to the questions about which human-beings, universe and world that people stay silent argumentatively. Camus tried to explain most of his ideas about the meaning and value of life using the terms absurd, revolt and suicide with metaphors.

2.1. Absurd

The term absurd is an adjective that is used for ideas, thesis that are against the mind openly, displaying an obvious not implicit or secret discrepancy, are contradicted with the obvious truths of common sense, have contradictions in itself and judgements that contradict with the truth that is compulsory in all reason. More specifically it is a term used for meaningfulness, contradictions and purposefulness of life in existentialist philosophy (Cevizci, 1997: 592).

Camus used the term absurd in the meaning that exceeds its dictionary meaning. According to him, absurd is the situation people are in, the life they lead and their choices. Indeed, the fact that everything comes to an end with death is absurd all by itself. Camus used the term absurd in a different sense. In this aspect, the term absurd corresponds to the conscious people or ideas that have a clear view of preposterousness of universe. As for Camus while some people are conscious of the feeling of absurdity, others leads their lives without being aware of this feeling (Zulfu, 2010: 7).

Camus doesn't see the existence itself absurd. According to him absurdity originates from conscious not from existence itself. Indeed, it is not possible for absurdity to rise to surface where there is not conscious and meeting of conscious and existence takes place. Starting from this point of view it can be said that the relation of absurd with the world is the expression of people's being detached from the world and not establishing a relationship suitable for their aspiration (Bayraktar, 2000: 84). Briefly, absurdity is used for everything whose meaning cannot be explained in the problem of meaning (Zulfu, 2010: 7). In other words, only human-beings can realize the feeling absurd. Camus clarifies the situation as asserted below:

“If I were a tree among trees, a cat among animals, this life would have a meaning, or rather this problem would not arise, for I should belong to this world. I should be this world to which I am now opposed by my whole consciousness and my whole insistence upon familiarity.” (Camus, 1991: 49).

Albert Camus' novel ‘The Plague’ is one of his literary works that he had put forth the feeling absurd best. Events in the novel that has been published since 1947 take place in the harbor city of Algeria Oran. The events in the city and the feelings of the characters pivot on the plague outbreak. A calm, commercial city Oran turns into a different city after the plague outbreak. The writer thinks that people leaning their routine lives have no doubts. According to him this expression is suitable especially for city-dwellers of Oran.

As they abandon themselves to their daily acts, city-dwellers do not suspect about anything before the plague outbreak. Therefore, they are not aware of their feelings. One of these feelings is absurdity. In Oran, it is quite important for the city-dwellers dealing with commercial activities to finish their works on time. As asserted by the writer (2014a: 5-6), these people cling to life with their habits. People who are accustomed to something spend their times more easily. From this point of view, it can be said that these people scarcely ever question the life itself including absurdity problem as they prioritize their habits.

As mentioned before, according to Camus the fact that everything comes to an end with death is absurd itself. However, city-dwellers of Oran stay away from the reality of that because they are absorbed in their fast, modern urban life. As Camus stated everything comes to an end with the reality of death (Camus, 2014a: 105).

The plague that leads people to realize the reality of death breaks out with the holocaust of the mice in the novel. From this point nearly every event turns around the plague outbreak. So that people comprehend the reality of death. People uninterested in death at the beginning face the reality of death with the outbreak of the plague. This situation makes people comprehend the feeling absurdity. The feeling absurdity turns into a conscious feeling any more for city-dwellers. (Camus, 2014a: 5-8).

As can be understood from the novel, Camus stating that there is nothing absurd apart from the world itself the reasons that drive people to question the meaning of life reveal absurdity. Once again it is possible to talk about absurdity in nearly every detail, rule and practice that is or may seem to be deprived of meaning. People may encounter some events and situations that will be milestones in every phase of the life. However, although all the people face such kinds of events, it may not change anything in their lives and they may interiorize them and lead their life as if nothing has happened. Camus does not accept this. His fundamental interlocutors are the people who have comprehended absurdity as a result of the events and situations they have experienced. Therefore, it can be claimed that absurdity occurs at two stages. In this first stage absurdity is felt. In the second stage a conscious transformation emerged from the first stage occurs (Zulfu, 2010, p. 8).

2.2. Suicide

As can be seen according to Camus philosophy, the feeling absurd is caused by the disengagement between the world off wisdom and human consciousness. Human beings cannot comprehend the feeling absurd completely even if they feel the monotony of the life.

People can comprehend the feeling absurd when they have started to question the life. Camus called this situation 'demolishing the decorations'. As for him, the decorations disguised in habits are demolished when the question 'Why?' is asked. At the end of this conscious transformation takes place. So that the chain of daily motions is broke and an awakening actualizes (Camus, 1991: 31-32).

Camus thought that people take two choices into consideration after awakening: committing suicide and hope. In this context Camus explains committing suicide as the action to cease one's life intentionally by thinking that life isn't worth living. However, he emphasized that suicide was not handled in this way in the past. Claiming that suicide was handled as a social event in the past Camus urges upon the fact that there is a close relationship between individual thought and suicide. Therefore, states that there may be lots of reasons for people to commit suicide. For all that Camus claims that it is not that much difficult to understand the consequences of committing suicide. With his quotation "In a sense, and as in melodrama, killing yourself amounts to confessing." Albert Camus implied that people who interiorize the idea that life isn't worth living, the inexpediency of lamenting, meaninglessness of convulsion repeated every day, and feeling no necessity to live (Camus, 1991: 3-10). Why Camus saw suicide losing touch with life can be clearly understood from his own words below:

"They then abdicated what was most precious to them, their life. Others, princes of the mind, abdicated likewise, but they initiated the suicide of their thought in its purest revolt. The real effort is to stay there, rather, in so far as that is possible,

and to examine closely the odd vegetation of those distant regions.” (Camus, 1991: 10).

As Camus mentioned before suicide is an action that is done at the thought insignificance of living any more. When absurdity has become intolerable, individual decides to put himself away, in other words to commit suicide in order to get rid of this feeling. In this context suicide is a product set by absurdity (Akis, 2007: 50).

Albert Camus gave place to the phenomenon suicide that he had handled philosophically in his novel *The Plague*. In the novel, Cottard who attempts to commit suicide met his neighbor whose relations never go beyond greeting at stoop. Grand is holding a box of colorful chalks in his hand at that time. Grand drops the chalks while he is taking them to home. Cottard asks Grand what those chalks do while he is helping him to collect them. Later on he asks Grand to give him a red chalk. Although he is quite amazed at this request, Grand cannot estimate the reason why he wants the chalk (Camus, 2014a: 17).

Before committing suicide Cottard writes on the door that he has committed suicide with his red chalk. Dr. Rieux the first person to read the note goes inside by pushing the door. He sees a felled hair at first. Then he recognizes Cottard when he hears some groaning. Dr. Rieux diagnoses that Cottard’s backbones are not broken even if he is out of breath for a while (Camus, 2014a: 17).

Later on a detailed investigation on the suicide is opened. Some questions are also directed to Grand one the people Cottard has seen before committing suicide. Grand declares that he is not closely aquatinted with Cottard; however, he has had a chance talk to him only twice. Grand also adds that it is not possible for him to guess Cottard will use the chalk to commit suicide (Camus, 2014a: 27).

One of the people leading the investigation on the attempt to commit suicide is Dr. Rieux. Dr. Rieux realizes that Grand calls Cottard ‘desperate man’ whenever he mentions him. Moreover, Cottard glosses over the question about the reason for the suicide by giving answer ‘personal despairs’. Calling his attempt ‘insanity moment’ Cottard says also that he will never ever attempt to such kinds of things (Camus, 2014a: 27). So indeed he never attempts to commit suicide any more.

It can be realized in the novel that a reason for the suicide is not given clearly. However, it can be claimed that Cottard’s attempt to commit suicide is convenient for Camus’ thought that people do not commit suicide just because of an apprehension. On the other hand, even if people commit suicide as for the despairs and illnesses that will never heal, Camus does not see these as the main reasons (Camus, 1991: 23).

Camus asserts that people decide to commit suicide when they feel that it is not worth living. On this context Grand is the person understanding Cottard’s attempt best within the frame of Camus philosophy. The fact that Dr. Rieux realizes Grand’s calling Cottard ‘desperate man’ whenever he mentions him and the writer’s drawing attention to this realization directly give clues about Camus’ understanding of the phenomenon suicide. For as much as committing suicide is an action involving dying intentionally at the point that all hopes have shattered.

2.3 *Revolt*

Camus highlighted that a person under the influence of absurdity feeling should choose to live rather than commit suicide. In other words, the person aware of this absurdity feeling should revolt against the meaninglessness of the world. This person who revolts against the meaninglessness of the world is the person who chooses to live without buckling under fate (Yoney, 2013: 63).

According to Camus real moral life is the revolt moral based upon qualification. The revolt means saying 'No'. A 'Yes' is hidden in every 'No' (Sharpe, 2014: 163). As for this idea although a revolting person is aware of death, s/he says 'Yes' with her/ his choice to live in a manner of speaking. A person who gives up in contemplation that death is there somehow or other in the end says 'No' to life (Yoney, 2013: 63).

Camus bears out that people having awakened their rights and responsibilities can say 'No'. He also came up with three values generated from the 'No' in the form of revolt against God: individual value of the person, who finds himself again; realizing that the person shares the same fate with other people; creating a solidarity atmosphere on this fate relationship (Sharpe, 2014: 163). Briefly the person aware of her/ his rights and supporting them to finish gets rid of slavery of the world. So and so, the issues of justice or injustice are not related only with the person himself. The person can also revolt against the injustice against other people. However, this situation does not mean making a claim on but means not bowing to injustice (Yoney, 2013: 63). In this context Camus describes revolt as the action of a conscious person comprehending her/ his rights. Nonetheless this conscious may blossom by itself from the adventures of the person (Camus, 2014b: 31). Dr. Rieux's the main character of the novel *The Plague* consciousness has come along with the adventures.

Dr. Rieux invites a healthcare commission to the province to negotiate about the precautions for the plague outbreak. Richard the head of Chamber of Doctors is also in the commission. Taking the floor in the meeting Richard says that as the outbreak has not been proved yet, they had better think about the precaution again. He also adds that the plague has to be recognized officially in order for the precautions to be taken. He thinks that it will be more proper if they hold out the illness on the people taking the possibility of the illness' leaving off by itself. However, being aware of the illness itself whatever the name of it is, and the possibility of it to take hold of the whole city, he revolts against the illness and the others, which means he says 'No'. After a bit with the spread of the disease the others have to accept the situation and some precautions are taken (Camus, 2014a: 38-41).

Finally convinced to take precautions Dr. Richard contrary to Dr. Rieux consoles himself with the hope that the disease cease by itself. The disease really ceases by itself in the end in the novel. The disease breaking out in April lasts in first following February. That's why the outbreak last ten months. It is understood in November that the disease will end by itself. Because from this month then on no increase is seen in the number of the people died. The curve increasing without ceasing stays still since November. Henceforward the number of people died of the illness decreases. One of the happiest people on this diagram is Richard (Camus, 2014a: 182).

As seen in the novel unlike Dr. Rieux Richard let the events flow and avoid from making a special effort for the disease to cease. There is no information about the religious belief of Rieux. However, it is known for sure that the revolting people in the novel are generally irreligious or are not devoutly religious even if they are religious. Tarrou and Grand are also among these people. Tarrou and Grand are also among the ideal characters of the writer. These characters give clues about Camus' belief in God and religion to the writer.

3. Camus' Understanding of God and Religion

3.1. Camus' Understanding of Religion

Converging to the revolting morals on the basis of the absurdity idea the life and the world is meaningless Albert Camus comes to terms with God and Christianity in his works. The idea that God has left people standing by with folded arms without offering them a fate rather than death underpins his thoughts (Hochberg, 1965: 94).

Camus handled his problems with God related with the phenomenon freedom even with radically evil. According to him there is a problem of evil rather than freedom in front of the God. There are two options in this situation. According to the first option, we are not free and the God who handles all the strengths is responsible for this evil. On the other hand, according to the second option people are free and the God is not the one able to cope with everything. People are also responsible for this freedom. From this point of view Camus finds the idea that a superior being, God in other words, gives freedom to the people ridiculous (Camus, 1991: 70).

Relating his problem with the God with the terms freedom and evil Camus drew attention to this problem in both the topic and handling of the characters of the novel *The Plague*. Taking hold of the whole city the disease plague is evil itself. According to the religious people, this disease has been dispatched to the people from the God. However, the death of sinless people as well as transgressor people causes another evil. Apart from that when the characters of the novel are taken into account it can be asserted that though he is atheist, the main character Dr. Rieux represents the revolter. He has realized, identified and struggled against the disease from the ground-up. Dr. Rieux has started to work in coordination with the other institutions and preached authorized people at taking precautions.

The most important revolter of the novel Dr. Rieux is the person resorting to a holy creator and says 'No'. Camus (2014b: 37), names this kind of revolting supernatural revolting. According to him, supernatural revolting means denying people's own condition and the whole goals of universe. Taken all together Rieux represents an atheist, supernatural revolter.

As mentioned earlier, another most revolter people of the novel is Tarrou. Settling in the city Oran before the disease has broken out and taking some notes in this city Tarrou scrutinizes every day he has spent in the city carefully. The notes taken by him can be characterized as formal documents. Exemplifying a great solidarity example with Dr. Rieux and municipal officer Grand, Tarrou puts forward original ideas on the precautions to be taken, decrease and increase of the outbreak to the authorized people. In addition to this just like Rieux Tarrou is an atheist revolter (Camus, 2014b: 20-21; 196-197).

The fact that two most important characters of the novel are atheist does not mean that Camus accepts atheism is precondition of being a revolter. He verbalized this case frankly. According to Camus (2014b: 39), a supernatural revolter does not need to be an atheist. Whatever his/ her religion is s/ he damns the holy creator. When all these are taken into consideration, a devoutly religious person cannot be a revolter.

Camus puts forward his ideas on his religious belief on Danish philosopher Kierkegaard's ideas in philosophical texts. According to a devoutly Protestant Kierkegaard, the structure of fundamental sensation is hopelessness. Hopelessness is related with the factor of freedom of the people. As people are free, they always come across with an option. In the existentialism process people always want to be 'I' and evade responsibility of being 'I'. If a person wants to be 'I' or himself or herself in another words, s/he will necessarily face with her/ his burdens and sink into despair. Conversely if this person does not accept being her/ his own, s/he will try to be another person and will sink into greater despair. Our fundamental structure is originally organized to be potentially 'I'. It can be deduced from these two situations that despair is a feeling that cannot be escaped. Kierkegaard compares this feeling with terminal illness (Kierkegaard, 2013: 63-67).

According to Camus, Kierkegaard who sees hopelessness as an illness wants to heal up. This is Kierkegaard's biggest wish. Camus claims that Kierkegaard is aware of the meaningless of this life. However, Kierkegaard is hopeful about healing up as he mentioned in his diaries. For as much

as Kierkegaard supports the idea that people who surrender in God endlessly, or make belief relations with eternal being in another words (Camus, 1991: 54-55).

Camus called these people believing in God unquestioningly the ones buckling under the rules of God. Because buckling under the rules of God is completely dissimilar to revolting. However, Camus claimed that although these people are real prisoners, they find a deep freedom in this adopted imprisonment (Camus, 1991: 72). On this context, religion is a belief system giving solace and hope all the time and offering them to buckle rather than revolt. Camus gave places to some dialogues supporting this idea.

Tarrou who come to talk about the outbreak with Dr. Rieux asks him why he sacrifices his interests if he doesn't believe in God. Thereupon Rieux claims that nobody really believes in God, if people really believed in God, he couldn't perform any healing duties and would leave them all to the God (Camus, 2014a: 96-97)

3.2. Camus' Understanding of Religion

As understood in the novel, religion is a belief system that necessitates leaving oneself totally to the God's assurance for real believers. Believing in a religion is not only believing in the existence of the God but also believing in the idea that God holds all the power and uses them for the sake of the people. To this respect, Camus thought that a real believer only buckles and does not make an effort to get rid of disasters. We can come across with the traces of Camus' these ideas in some dialogues from the novel.

As an example, Dr. Rieux says that the best thing to be done is not to believe in God and to fight against death as far as in me lies looking at Tarrou. Approving this Tarrou says that such kind of an achievement will be temporary. However, Dr. Rieux opposes this that this not reasonable to give up struggling (Camus, 2014a: 132). Priest Paneloux who is mentioned in the novel thinks just opposite what Dr. Rieux thinks. He who leads people to the Gods accepts the phenomenon of death instead of fighting against it and calls this as the choices of the God.

Priest Paneloux is of the opinion that people are punished with such an outbreak as the plague by the God because of their sins. Indeed, his speech that people are in a disaster and they deserve it in his first sermon approves his idea. Later on he adds that people need to think with the outbreak of the plague. In fact, the God whose compassion is supreme doesn't want this disaster. Yet if people stumbles relying on the compassion of the God then they will absolutely be punished. The God is fed up with waiting and deny his compassion and forgivingness to people (Camus, 2014a: 99-100).

Camus used such expressions that people can visualize Priest Paneloux impressively while he is describing him who blame sinful people for causing the plague in the city. In order to increase the effectiveness of the sermon he made use of environmental factors. The effectiveness of the sermon given in an atmosphere getting more and more tense, was increased with the visualizations that the rain becoming intensifying ruining the silence in the church. Furthermore, when the priest is finished with his words, the rain stops and the sun rises (Camus, 2014a: 99-103).

The fact that the plague has captured the whole city and a sinless child dies from the disease leads to changes in the priest's thoughts. Because it the disease is the punishment of the people's sin, it is not possible for a sinless child to die from it. As a result of these questionings some changes are seen in the priest's thoughts. Paneloux using accusing expression with a firm and sonorous tone in his first sermon makes a smoother start in his second sermon. Having difficulty in speaking the priest uses expression with the subjects 'We' instead of 'You' just opposite to the first sermon. He adds that there are some cases that can be explained by the God but not by the people just like the case the death of sinless child cannot be explained. He emphasizes that it is easy to determine the borders of

goodness and evil however it is quite difficult to make a distinction when it comes to evil. More clearly when it comes to the death of a sinless child, a problem that cannot be explained arises. Making everything easier the God wants people to find beneficial things for themselves by leaving them with the plague. Within these dilemmas Paneloux ends his sermon saying that time has come for them to totally believe in everything or to totally deny everything (Camus, 2014a: 220-223).

Albert Camus didn't represent an absolute Christianity analysis on this religion chaos in this novel. The priest shows the God's supreme will as a reason for the plague. Therefore, it is emphasized that goodness and evil originate from the God and there is a reason for evil and people should take lessons from this. After the first sermon some changes are seen in the priest's belief. Starting to query himself with the death of a sinless child the priest underlines the God's mystery with a view nearly the same as the idea "I believe because it is absurd" (Berg, 2012).

Another idea remarked by Camus is related with injustice of God. If a sinless child can die, then all the religions are absurd for him. Because if one can talk about a world that innocent people are persecuted, and the God directs these, we need to be skeptical about the justice of the God. As a result, even if the God really exists, the options to accept of revolt against the disasters arouse (Hochberg, 1965: 94).

Conclusion

The fundamental aim of Albert Camus is to question the human life in his novel *The Plague* that he based on existentialist philosophy. He uses the outbreak of the plague as a metaphor in his novel. This outbreak symbolizes the feelings of suffering and fear of death that can be faced by people during their lives. Some people struggle against this against the scary view in the novel whereas some people buckle by taking shelter under consolation with the sermons of the ecclesiastics. Fighting against Dr. Rieux revolts against the injustice experienced by people and struggle against the disasters to the end. On the other hand, Priest Paneloux names the plague outbreak as the admiration of the God and inculcates people in the way to buckle by consoling them.

The main problem in the novel is what kind of a life people should lead. In this context, people come across with different options every day. Should we commit suicide like Cottard in the novel? Should we throw ourselves at the mercy of the God? Or should we revolt like Dr. Rieux? Albert Camus indicating the revolt as the best thing that can be done does not pass over making the ideal character Dr. Rieux comes to terms with the God and religion. Dr. Rieux is the winner of this revenge. However, Priest Paneloux talks about the choices people come across just like the philosophy of Camus.⁷

One of the most important problems of the novel is the change in Priest Paneloux's manner because of the death of the child. Actually this change has some similarities with French philosopher Sartre. This problem can be uttered as "Would there be any differences even if the God exist?". It can be seen in the novel that Priest Paneloux starts to explain the meaning of religious disciplines in term of the human values after the death of the child. In other words, Priest Paneloux has had to address these religious disciplines based on holy books again within the frame of human values. The fact that he offers two alternatives to the people they may believe in everything or deny everything and asserts that they should choose one of these options summarizes the philosophy that makes Camus be named an existentialist philosopher. Taking into consideration in this aspect, the question on the existence or nonexistence of the God is not among the main problems of the novel. Likewise, there are no mentions as to this question in Camus' philosophical texts.

One the most important themes of the novel that Camus wants to put emphasis on is that "There aren't any suitable answers to the question what kind of life should be led via religious

discipline". In order to form a basis for this claim Camus gets even with religion and the God in most of his novels including The Plague. It can be deduced from his novel that Camus supports the ideas "Nothing would change even if the God exists". Furthermore, this idea can be qualified as one of the most hugging message of the novel. However, needless to say this does not mean that Camus is a defender of atheism.

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