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## ALBERT CAMUS: THE TEMPTATIONS

### OF EAST AND WEST

The influence of the Arab mode of life on Albert Camus during his youth and in his subsequent writings is a subject that has never been fully explored, although the effects of Arab, or should we say more generally, of Oriental culture, on Camus' formative years was extremely deep. He was to discover always within himself, for example, the taste for a certain austere simplicity. As he expressed it: "J'aime la maison nue des Arabes ou des Espagnols. Le lieu où je préfère vivre ou travailler . . . est la chambre d'hôtel."<sup>1</sup>

The description he gave in his first essays of his Spanish mother, Catherine Sintès, closely resembles the portraits of these silent and inscrutable Arab figures who adorn particular passages of *L'Envers et l'Endroit* or *L'Etranger*, or of the short stories published near the end of his life under the title *L'Exil et la Royaume*. It was, of course, typical of Camus to conceal in work subtle allusions of meaning which it is up to the attentive reader to interpret. He may have found in the maternal image the pure reflection of his own sensibility,<sup>2</sup> but were not the very same qualities apparent on all sides in this North African environment? In the *Préface* to the republished edition of *L'Envers et l'Endroit* written in 1954, over twenty years after the original essays had been composed, Camus said of his mother: "Par son seul silence, sa réserve, sa fierté naturelle et sobre, cette famille, qui ne savait même pas lire, m'a donné alors mes plus hautes leçons, qui durent toujours." (E, 7)

In the very same *Préface* Camus expressed the view that if he were not one day able to succeed in rewriting his first essays, then he would consider that his work had come to nothing. The great importance he attached to

*L'Envers et l'Endroit* is further indicated by his statement that: "une oeuvre d'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce long cheminement pour retrouver par les détours de l'art les deux ou trois images simples et grandes sur lesquelles le coeur, une première fois, s'est ouvert." (E 13) One may then be curious to know what exactly are these central images.

Here too we may expect to find the essential expression of his sensibility. Concisely speaking, they are comprised in *L'Envers et l'Endroit* of the vision of his mother and family, of the apartment where he grew up in Belcourt, the experience of his lust for life and its pleasures during a trip to Majorca, his anguish and despair during another voyage which he made to Prague, and, finally, the sketch of a strange woman who found her real self more completely while contemplating her own tomb, and this followed by the narrator's own experience of intense joy in a moment of absorption by the sun's rays. These images are accompanied by many reflections on life and its profound meaning. What is just as important is the fact that, while presenting the basic stuff of his experience, Camus simultaneously wove through his essays themes that were closest to his heart: silence and indifference, love and death, solitude, poverty, simplicity and innocence, lucidity and the absurd. Each one of these themes has, however, its own particular value and significance. There is, for example, the absurdity of a world in which love, beauty and the frenzy of living exist together with despair, suffering and death; a certain silence and impassibility which reply to the silence and indifference of Nature; a poverty which is no affliction for the humble who live in a natural paradise; there is also a form of diffuse lucidity which may in its extreme end in sleep and oblivion.

Though all his subsequent literary creations contain a more rich intellectual tapestry than does *L'Envers et l'Endroit*, it is nonetheless true that these themes recur as persistent *leit-motifs* throughout the overall orchestration of his work. We shall return to them when referring once again to the distant sources from whence they come. We must first of all examine how Camus was to assume his intellectual role in the twentieth century and see how his own fundamental attitudes, as depicted above, also influenced the development of his thought to a very high degree. In other words it could never be said that the original outlook (non-European in character) of the young man, as received from his family and his environment during his early youth, was ever really drastically modified by the intellectual pursuits of his mature years.

It is through a comparison with the ideas of another great writer of our time, André Malraux, that the early development of Camus' thought may be

most strikingly shown. It was Malraux who best summed up the crisis of modern man when he stated that, if Nietzsche had shocked the world towards the end of the nineteenth century by affirming that God was dead, the intellectual elite of the twentieth century were obsessed by just as disturbing a problem, the very disappearance of man himself.<sup>3</sup> In his incomplete novel, published in 1943, *Les Noyers de l'Altenbourg*, Malraux set forth the following question, a question upon which his entire work is constructed:

La notion de l'homme a-t-elle un sens? Autrement dit: sous les croyances, les mythes, et surtout la multiplicité des structures mentales, peut-on isoler une donnée permanente, valable à travers les lieux, valable à travers l'histoire sur quoi puisse se fonder la notion d'homme?<sup>4</sup>

In the month of October 1945, Camus made the following entry in his *Carnets*:

Le grand problème du temps est le conflit. Condition humaine. Nature humaine.

Mais s'il y a une nature humaine, d'où vient-elle?<sup>5</sup>

Camus had no doubt discovered these ideas around him in the times in which he lived; however, Malraux's influence has been clearly shown. (E, 1339) In both their works a search for man himself takes the form of a minute examination of diverse manifestations of human consciousness. For his part, Camus had recognized that many of the best French minds in his century had come to supremely anti-rational and anti-intellectual positions. He had become convinced of the dangers of intelligence and reason, for the world he loved had certainly never considered them as prime values. In one of the very first expressions we have of his ideas, an article written for the review *Sud* in 1932 entitled "La Philosophie du siècle", he expressed his great admiration for Henri Bergson. According to Camus, a sort of synthesis of the thought of his time was found in Bergson and, what is more, the foundations of a method:

Rien de plus séduisant que cette idée: écarter l'intelligence comme dangereuse, baser tout un système sur la connaissance immédiate et les sensations à l'état brut; c'était, en fait, dégager toute une philosophie de notre siècle (E, 1203-1204)

This Bergsonian vindication of instinct and intuition furnished, therefore, our author's intellectual point of departure. Indeed, it was always

principally in terms of the raw materials of human consciousness, rather than through reason and logic, that Camus sought to discover his human values.

The young Algerian writer first gave expression to the theme of consciousness in *L'Envers et l'Endroit*. It is, above all, in the essay "La Mort dans l'âme" that it is most cogently analysed. Here we have the essay concerning the voyage the author had made to Europe in 1936 for reasons of health. Besides the necessity of taking a cure for tuberculosis, this departure from home had another end, for in this way Camus experienced a sort of spiritual exercise. Travel deprives man of his usual props, throws him back entirely upon his inner self and thus obliges him to become more acutely aware of his existence and surrounding reality.

In a hotel room in Prague, nothing seems to soothe the feeling of solitude which preys over the young Camus' mind and brings him close to a state of panic. A certain incident draws him, however, out of the feeling of torpor which has begun to invade him. Without anyone having been aware, another visitor has died in an adjoining room. The young Frenchman is filled with horror and anguish. He is forced to struggle to crush the cries of revolt that rise within his breast, for he has just experienced the acute consciousness of his own human condition.

During the voyage home, between Vienna and Venice, he awaits a transformation; and when the train enters Italy, "terre faite à mon âme", (E. 37) at the sight of the first olive trees, of the human disorder and the brilliance of the sun, he begins to recover. This southern clime helps restore within him a lost equilibrium, he feels once again capable of embracing his ideal of consciousness:

J'avais besoin d'une grandeur. Je la trouvais dans la confrontation de mon désespoir profond et de l'indifférence secrète d'un des plus beaux paysages du monde. J'y puisais la force d'être courageux et conscient à la fois. (E,39)

Before trying to interpret this experience, we must first understand the conception he himself had of human consciousness before composing these pages. Instead of being simply a passive object, a recipient of experiences coming from the exterior, for Camus the human soul apparently was, on the contrary, an active force that imposed upon reality a meaning, and on the diversity of life a unity, which it did not necessarily have. For example, in formulating a definition of art in another early article for the review *Sud* (1932) he wrote: "Le Beau n'est pas dans la Nature, c'est nous qui l'y mettons". (E, 1200) Prior to experience, the mind has a tendency to see everything according to "dreams", that is to say, according to an idealized conception of reality.

A work of art was therefore for him, "la création d'un monde de Rêve, assez séduisant pour nous cacher le monde où nous vivons et toutes ses horreurs". (E, 1201) Thereupon, Camus expressed for the first time his fundamental attitude towards the exterior world based on the sense of its primitive hostility. However, what concerns us above all here is that these esthetic principles reveal the tendencies that he considered fundamental to human consciousness—dreams, illusions, idealisation and unification.

Camus also apparently believed that consciousness in itself is based on suffering, all relief really stemming from a subjectivisation of exterior reality. The lonely traveller of "La Mort dans l'âme", deprived of his normal field of experience and condemned to introspection, falls into a state of painful anguish. One might then ask if a Nordic surrounded by a Meridional environment, having experienced a similar break in his habitual field of "illusions", would have suffered in like manner. Indeed, Camus believed that every culture encompassed its own form of spiritual equilibrium and had its own particular value. As we have seen, it was above all "les sensations à l'état brut" which help human consciousness to find measure. Before the Italian countryside, the young traveller of the early essays reaches an "extrême pointe de l'extrême conscience", (E, 39) but he is nonetheless able to bear the harshness of this awakening because of the strength and richness of the sensations that he draws from the exterior world. We shall see where Camus' metaphysical approach and his concept of consciousness correspond remarkably closely to some very ancient notions on the subject.

If we turn then to *Noces*, composed in 1938 by one of the most reflective of men, we find that here he exalts a life of abandonment and of thoughtlessness. But the author, quite conscious of this contradiction, wished simply to introduce into his work and push to its extreme conclusions the method he had adopted as his own, that of vindicating the evidence of immediate knowledge and rudimentary sensations. We meet at first at Tipasa near Algiers the young people who adorn the beaches like gods, who find their *raison d'être* under the brilliance of the sun and among the odours and colours of the flowers by which the ruins are dotted. Here, one no longer contemplates the lessons learned by the intellect; the only thing that counts is to see, and before these ruins and the North African coastal splendour, for this young pagan narrator, all is clear. This lucidity reveals its greatest discoveries in "Le Vent à Djémila". Here he visits a dead city. In these places, feeling as dried out and worn by the wind as the stones which surround him, he declares:

Mais, si longuement frotté du vent, secoué depuis plus d'une heure,

étourdi de résistance, je perdais conscience du dessin que traçait mon corps.  
(E, 62)

It is this departure from consciousness that leads to the complete dissolution of the personality:

Bientôt, répandu aux quatre coins du monde, oublieux, oublié de moi-même, je suis ce vent et dans le vent, ces colonnes et cet arc, ces dalles qui sentent chaud et ces montagnes pâles autour de la ville déserte. Et jamais je n'ai senti, si avant, à la fois mon détachement de moi-même et ma présence au monde.  
(E, 62)

This passage expresses very clearly the profound philosophy contained in the work. This experience in the desert recalls, moreover, the assuagement of the traveller in "La Mort dans l'âme". There, also, the narrator, in order to appease a troubled consciousness, had abandoned himself to the beauty of the Meridional countryside from which he drew the very qualities of his soul. The whole of *Noces* is built on the romantic notion of the paramount importance of external nature with regard to the human personality. There is an intense correspondence created between the artistic form of the essays, the natural scene described and the human spirit involved. Thus, the author expresses his profound conviction that nature, though it brings barrenness and desolation, is also the source of profusion: through a union with nature, man finds his first source of balance and harmony. But, more than a simple attachment to the natural world, the visitor to Djémila shows us that, at certain privileged moments, one may even arrive at an identification with this source. Indeed, it is very clear that Camus' chief works underline the idea that, since Western man has neglected the instinctive appeals of nature both within himself and in the outer world, this constitutes the principal reason for his present disorientation. It is above all Christianity which is to be blamed for having turned man away from his presence in the world. The identification of man with nature is a principle, or should we rather say, a feeling, which Orientals have never put aside. In permitting the fusion of his soul with the desert scene, the narrator of "Le Vent à Djémila" does not in reality lose all human consciousness, for the description of this experience recalls the one given by Malraux of the Oriental mind in *La Tentation de l'Occident*:

Cette pureté, cette désagrégation de l'âme au sein de la lumière éternelle, jamais les occidentaux ne l'ont cherché, ni son expression, même aidés de la langueur que propose en certains lieux la Méditerranée. De lui vient la seule expression sublime de l'art et de l'homme: elle s'appelle la sérénité. (p. 40)

In contrast, one reads in *Noces*:

Mais être pur, c'est retrouver cette patrie de l'âme où devient sensible la parenté du monde, où les coups du sang rejoignent les pulsations violentes du soleil de deux heures. (E, 75)

This comparison appears even more significant when we realize the importance that Camus attached to the contribution of Oriental cultures to the Mediterranean world. In *Noces*, the idealized portrait which he has given of the Algerian people reflects a type of humanity completely foreign to us. The thing that distinguishes the European from the Oriental above all—and our author understood only too well the gulf that divided them—is that Western man has a quite particular consciousness of his existence apart from the world, whereas the Oriental is depersonalized, or, as Malraux has defined him, he has “la conscience, je dirais presque la sensation d'être un fragment du monde”.<sup>6</sup> It is more or less this latter mentality, described to us in *Noces*, whose sublime image is portrayed for us through Camus' desert experience.

According to the young writer from Algiers, any real culture is identified with a conscious state more or less common to its people and necessarily contains certain barbaric qualities. Here he discovered a turn of mind which ignored all mental structures—myths, dogmas, reasonings and systems. For the Algerians, metaphysical and intellectual qualities did not even seem to exist. Insensitive to the sublime idea's of virtue, but not deprived of native goodness, a very elementary moral code sufficed them. Thanks to an intense presence to objects as well as to other human beings, they felt all the more their closeness to the universe as well as to the rest of an anonymous humanity. Without concern for the past or hope in the future, for this godless people the only imperative was to be happy. Pride, profound indifference, innocence, love of life and of others, but without imagination entering to complicate the issue, here is the portrait of a people, a portrait furthermore excellently reflected in the author's masterpiece, *L'Etranger*.

In this Algerian fatherland, where so many cultures were interwoven, it is doubtless impossible to unravel the pure traits of any single one. “Ici, je laisse à d'autres l'ordre et la mesure”, (E, 56) the narrator exclaims in *Noces*, thereby rejecting the two great qualities of the Greek soul. But he maintained his relationship to this spirit in diverse other ways. Camus had discovered with much pride striking resemblance between the scenery and men of Algeria and those of ancient Greece. The very essence of his thought is expressed in the first lines of “Le Vent à Djémila”: “Il y a des lieux où meurt l'esprit pour que naisse une vérité qui est sa négation même”. (E, 61) And indeed, after

depicting the life of North Africa, he arrives finally—not through the intricacies of reason, but by a simple insight—at the basic truth which the body represents. Had not the Greeks exposed the naked human form on their beaches some 2000 years ago?

The Greeks had lived, moreover, quite aware of the real dimensions of life. Like them, the Algerians were also greatly in love with the present, admired physical beauty above all things, but understood that, having reached the twilight of their span, they should accept a long inescapable defeat. However, the factor which differentiated the Greeks, initiators of Western culture, from this North African mentality, was the balance that they had sought between the metaphysical or intellectual life and an intense experience of the beauty of the world. But, while the narrator of "Le Vent à Djémila" hopes to witness as lucidly as possible his own death, it is not with a Greek soul that he does so, but rather as "un fragment du monde", for he tells us:

c'est dans la mesure où je me sépare du monde que j'ai peur de la mort, dans la mesure où je m'attache au sort des hommes qui vivent, au lieu de contempler le ciel qui dure. (E, 65)

If, in Camus, the admiration of a Greek ideal of consciousness is implied, it seems, in fact, that the lucidity, or in other words, the primitive awareness he was speaking of in his essays (the one of which he had a very direct experience during his childhood) was more exactly Arab. What is more, one finds in his *Carnets* in April 1939, the sketch of a "Dialogue Europe-Islam" (CI, 155-156) written in the manner of *La Tentation de l'Occident*. Here, Camus opposes the Arab ideal of lucidity to the European virtue of authority. *Noctes* reveals a preference for Arab culture over European values.

In this projection of the Greek mode into his North African domain, Camus revealed, moreover, his awareness of the fact that Greco-Roman culture had not developed in pure isolation, but that it had been in contact with a much vaster world—a world in which for example, Chinese Taoism and Indian Buddhism had merged into the way of Zen. In this regard, he noted in his *Carnets* in the fall of 1942 the similarity he had observed between Chuang-tzu's Taoist point of view and the Epicureanism of Lucretius. (CII, 42) In another essay of the pre-war period, "Le Minotaure" of 1939, he described the people of Oran next their beautiful desert by saying:

tout contribue à créer cet univers épais et impassible où le coeur et l'esprit ne sont jamais distraits d'eux-mêmes, ni de leur seul objet qui est l'homme. (E, 820)

In this passage, he creates a milieu in which the human individual



appears to flourish. However, it seems, at the same time in this arid environment where all is but stone and sand, metallic sky and motionless bay, the principal temptation of man comes at the end of this lucidity; it is "un instinct profond qui n'est ni celui de la destruction ni de la création. Il s'agit seulement de ne ressembler à rien". (E, 830) We have seen also in "Le Vent à Djémi'a" that the narrator attained a state of consciousness akin to forgetfulness. Are not both these experiences similar to an absorption into a mystical trance with the universe in order to obtain complete union with nature and complete forgetfulness of self, the Nirvana of Buddhism? And the parallel is certainly not fortuitous, for the author refers further on in the same passage of "Le Minotaure" to a particular Arab mystic:

Pensons à Cakia—Mouni au désert. Il y demeura de longues années, accroupi, immobile et les yeux au ciel. Les dieux eux-mêmes lui enviaient cette sagesse et ce destin de pierre . . . (E, 830)

There are many apparent similarities between Camus' brand of humanism and the wisdom of the far East. The main link, for example, between Taoism and Buddhism lies in the concept that direct insight knows the truth by not knowing.<sup>7</sup> To the Taoist, knowledge leads to a perversion of the simplicity in which men are meant to live, for "tao" means the eternal way of the universe; the natural course of man is that of perfection and harmony. In the same way, the Buddhist rejects philosophical speculation as the path towards salvation; to him, the main interest for man lies primarily in psychology: it is not so much what is thought that matters, but one's state of mind. The great enlightenment of the Gautama Buddha had been that the principal cause of human misery was the intense yearning to live and to have. Salvation came through assuming an attitude of passive lovingness and achieving a state of peace and non-desire: to attain Nirvana, is to realize that the "I" is like a drop of spray which merges with the sea. Again in "Le Minotaure" Camus reflects on the Algerian landscape:

N'être rien! Pendant des millénaires, ce grand, a soulevé des millions d'hommes en révolte contre le désir et la douleur. Ses échos sont venus mourir jusqu'ici, à travers les siècles et les océans, sur la mer la plus vieille du monde. (E, 830)

However, in his novel, *L'Étranger*, the author illustrates the defeat which this conception of consciousness necessarily entails. Here we have the concise expression of his spiritual development up to the time of his sojourn in Paris in 1940. His protagonist, Meursault, is the embodiment of the ideas permeat-

ing not only *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* but all the lyrical essays concerning Algeria. In this respect, we might say that Camus' pagan hero has certain distinct resemblances to the Arab mystic and the Oriental notions just described. It is noteworthy that Meursault passes through a series of conscious experiences frequently disjointed by phases of happily induced sleep. While he is troubled, as might be a Hindu swami, by the sense of the unreality of the objective world, periods of lucidity are broken by moments of somnolent abdication; his last great burst of awareness is terminated by oblivion.

The Buddhist lays great stress on truthfulness and on total impartiality before all people, doctrines and beliefs. In reply, *L'Étranger* contains a most significant message. Meursault's profound honesty has come to nothing, for his benign tolerance of everyone and all points of view has notwithstanding led him to become the passive accomplice of a shoddy procurer, an affair which ends in a senseless murder. His abstention from any real initiative in life allows him, in any case, to become involved in a futile situation. Though he never lies, his refusal to speak at his trial ends in his condemnation. Thus, Camus is saying that pure lucidity is not enough: the real path of salvation lies in positive action and affirmation.

The struggle for consciousness represented by this absurd hero symbolizes in its wider implications the spiritual conflict of modern man. At the same time, it also illustrates a very personal dilemma the author faced continually:

Vertige de se perdre et de tout nier, de ne ressembler à rien. . . . La tentation est perpétuelle. Faut-il lui obéir ou la rejeter? Peut-on porter la hantise d'une oeuvre au creux d'une vie ronronnante. . . . (CI, 236)

On the one hand, there was the taste for disintegration of the self and dispersion, the temptation of the Orient; on the other, a need for order and concentration, the European ideal. Already, in *L'Envers et l'Endroit*, Camus had introduced the principal thesis found in *Noces*; he had also foreseen the possibility of relinquishing the search for man's nature that characterizes the second essays:

Qui suis-je et que puis-je faire, sinon entrer dans le jeu des feuillages et de la lumière? Être ce rayon où ma cigarette se consume. . . . Si j'essaie de m'atteindre, c'est tout au fond de cette lumière. . . . C'est moi-même que je trouve au fond de l'Univers.

Et quand donc suis-je plus vrai que lorsque je suis le monde? Je suis comblé avant d'avoir désiré. L'éternité est là et moi je l'espérais. (E, 48-49)

Here is the last of those basic images onto which he had opened his

heart during his youth. It is, of course, extremely close to those experiences of lucidity described previously which may otherwise be identified with the goal of Yoga: the ultimate merging of the individual consciousness into the cosmic oneness. In limiting one's self to this essentially Buddhist quest, a human being can attain a state of perfect felicity. However, it is clear that the Camus of *L'Envers et l'Endroit* had already turned away from this exorbitance of happiness by declaring: "Ce n'est plus d'être heureux que je souhaite maintenant, mais seulement d'être conscient". (E, 49) At the age of 22, he had already taken stock of the immense potentialities that surged within him and thereupon affirmed his intention of accepting the full weight of his Western heritage and the problems which forcibly ensued. The debate continued: during the period in which *Noces* was in preparation, Camus was simultaneously consecrating his efforts, in articles for *Alger-Républicain*, for example, and in his first play, *Révolte dans les Asturies*, to questions of political conflict and social justice.

In spite of this, the analogy between the Camusian and Oriental concepts of consciousness still remains valid, though the notion advanced by the author in his mature works is closer to the "satori" of Zen Buddhism than to the "samadhi" of Yoga. Samadhi is the elimination of the conscious self in the deep sleep of Nirvana, while "satori", also dangerously nihilistic in character, is the dissolving of the conscious self into the lucid activities of intuitive experience.<sup>8</sup>

It is the influence of Zen on the Oriental arts which has had such outstanding effects: the artist learns to become one with what he is doing; all thought, the self and affectation are put aside and spontaneity is the rule. True artistic attainment, whether it be painting, gardening or archery, is the result of depersonalization. And all of Camus' own creative endeavour, up to and including *L'Homme révolté*, was based on this principle. (CII, 267)

If, then, we turn to *L'Homme révolté* (1954), a compendium of the reflections of his mature years, we find that Camus identifies revolt with a certain attitude of the conscious mind. It is basically a mental tension between two extremes: between a sense of worthwhile identity which a man has, on the one hand, and a categorical refusal of intrusion beyond certain limits on the other. This suggests the existence of a human nature, for consciousness appears to be transcendental. The policy of revolt is "all or nothing"; the rebel is willing to give up everything, even his life, so that this sacred part should not be defiled at least in others. This tension has manifested itself through innumerable disorders and revolutions in human history, but its ideal expres-

sion has been in art, for art in turn is the highest form of revolt. It is the most pure expression of a refusal of reality as it is, on the one hand, and a conscious effort to effect change and to correct the world, on the other. In modern times, the extremes, as two ends of a bow, lie, for Camus, between a desire to harvest the fruits of the earth and a refusal of those ideologies which perpetuate Europe's violent plunge into history. Though he borrows the image from René, it is significant that our author closes his great essay with a symbol drawn from the Oriental tradition. The Japanese archer learns to release his bow "unintentionally"—while the body is taught, the mind makes no effort and the arrow appears to shoot itself.<sup>9</sup> The archer becomes one with his target:

L'arc se tord, le bois crie. Au sommet de la plus haute tension va jaillir l'élan d'une droite flèche, du trait le plus dur et le plus libre. (E, 709)

In steeping his work in forms of wisdom drawn from across the millennia of human history, as well as from many sources from within his own rich Western culture, Camus succeeded in giving it a virtually unparalleled universality. His intentions were apparent as early as 1937 in a discourse which he gave at Algiers on native culture. There, he declared: "L'Afrique du Nord est un des seuls pays où l'Orient et l'Occident cohabitent". (E, 1325) His Algeria and the whole Mediterranean, "Diffuse et turbulent", was for him a world much more oriental than occidental. Written in a country where co-existed such a variety of ethnic and cultural elements, the early essays reveal that this highly gifted writer had to overcome a profound inner disarray in order to develop within himself an orderly and classical mind.

Without believing that Mediterranean culture was necessarily superior to any other, he nonetheless considered that it was the source of all the great fundamental truths. Thus, his entire work is founded upon the hope of rehabilitating the true Mediterranean values and of reforming, through these values, modern Western civilization. The principal strength of Mediterranean culture lies in its tendency to melt down all frontiers. Owing to this force—of Islamic origin in Algeria, but profoundly characterized by the whole Orient—the Mediterranean forms a crucible where the strictest doctrines, those that were the most extreme and heterogeneous, tended to yield, to diffuse and to readapt. While the European minds created nations, those of India, for example, have always dissipated them on its territory. Christianity, also, having begun as an exclusively Judaic doctrine, finally evolved into catholicism, a universal faith. The superman type had little meaning in Islam or the far-

East. Gandhi, for example, whom Camus greatly admired, could scarcely be considered a potentate. In these naked regions where men have never really succeeded in imposing their laws, Camus believed he had found the matrix of an intensely human outlook on the world.

On the shores of the Mediterranean, all the principal spiritual currents of humanity meet, a characteristic enjoyed uniquely by this realm. Thus, 'Camus' attachment to its culture cannot be understood on the sentimental plane alone, since the tradition of these regions offered, in his opinion, the best hope for the realization of his two great humanistic dreams: the creation of an international and universal society and the development of a stronger and more advanced form of humanity. The fusion of East and West would be of inestimable value towards the realization of these ideals; the two worlds, the one in search of personal individualism and initiative and requiring scientific technology, the other with its need for a more natural and spontaneous life, as well as for wisdom and depersonalization, could be best served by this union.

#### NOTES

1. Camus, *Essais*, Paris, 1965, p. 7 (Pléiade edition). All subsequent page references are to this edition and are designated by the first initial of the title.
2. Camus, *Carnets*, mai 1935-février 1942 (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), p. 15. All subsequent page references are to this edition and are designated as CI.
3. André Malraux, *La Tentation de l'Occident* (Paris: Grasset, 1926), p. 174.
4. André Malraux, *Les Noyers de l'Altenbourg* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 130.
5. Camus, *Carnets*, juin 1943-mars 1951 (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), p. 184. (CII)
6. *La Tentation de l'Occident*, p. 68.
7. John B. Noss, *Man's Religions* (New York: MacMillan, 1966), pp. 165-179, 315.
8. Arthur Koestler, *The Lotus and the Robot* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1960), p. 245.
9. Alan W. Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1957), pp. 195-198.