Dr. Sisyphus or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Boulder

“Philosophy is perfectly right in saying that life must be understood backward. But then one forgets the other clause—that it must be lived forward. The more one thinks through this clause, the more one concludes that life in temporality never becomes properly understandable, simply because never at any time does one get perfect repose to take a stance—backward.” —Kierkegaard, *JP* I 1030 (*Pap. IV A 164*), 1843

“The *lie* of the ideal has so far been the curse on reality; on account of it, mankind itself has become mendacious and false down to its most fundamental instincts—to the point of worshiping the *opposite* values of those which alone would guarantee its health, its future, the lofty right to its future.” —Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (*BWN* p. 674)

Introduction: Iconoclastic Theological Underpinnings

Albert Camus, in 1942, writes *The Myth of Sisyphus* in which he personifies Sisyphus, the mythic king of Corinth who is punished with the endless task of rolling a giant boulder up a hill only to have it roll back to the bottom upon nearly reaching the top, as the absurdity underlying human existence. He frames this essay with the question of suicide, which he claims to be the most essential of philosophical concerns. Camus endows Sisyphus with a joyful demeanor as he is endlessly reacquainted with near success followed by utter failure. Camus writes,

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one’s burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms worlds. The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.¹

His interpretation of Sisyphus weaves together the arguments of various iconic authors such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Kafka, Dostoevsky, Husserl and Kant. Camus answers his proposed question of suicide with a Nietzschean, Kafkaian individual who acknowledges and takes comfort in the absurdity of human existence and, in doing so, is granted a sense of freedom (philosophical or actual suicide in this sense is slavery). It is an acknowledgement that all people are the tragic greek hero, like Oedipus, and despite knowing that one’s very existence is also one’s undoing; one presses on nonetheless. As Camus writes,

“But the point is to live.” In other words, you learn to stop worrying and love the boulder. Within Camus’ absurdist framework, I examine more closely what I propose to be the coterminous claims of the two polemicists that Camus pits against one another, Friedrich Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard. In the process, I argue that, like Kierkegaard (whose work is distinctively theological), Nietzsche also maintains an underpinning of theology within his works. In order to accomplish goal, I elucidate the tripartite, transgressional processes that both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard describe in respective works, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Either/Or*.

In illustrating this tripartite, I find that Camus has, in a way, shortchanged Kierkegaard. By this I mean that, in spite of the seemingly opposing conclusions of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (Kierkegaard’s return to some sense of Christianity and Nietzsche’s supposed dismantling of all things Christian through the character Zarathustra), both authors, in their fight against organized religion or Christendom, philosophized within an apophatic, existential, *Jesusesque* theology. “Apophatic,” because both authors describe their notion of god through negation. “Existential,” because both authors advocate necessity of the individual’s quest to discover and acknowledge the truer nature of (or rather lack there of) human existence. “*Jesusesque,*” because both authors expose the hypocrisy and troubling manner in which organized religion has functioned, and yet end up positing a worldview based in Christian redeemer grammatology. I find that the *Jesusesque* nature of Camus’, Nietzsche’s, and Kierkegaard’s philosophies are also their downfall. Leading a person on a quest of becoming a proper redeemer character is an unreal and impossible goal that only adds to the pressures of nihilism creeping their way into one’s patterns of thought. A person transgressing through this tripartite must remember the continual process of becoming, and that one can never fully become a *truest* redeemer (hence the “*esque*” I include in “*Jesusesque*”).

Finally, I find that both author’s philosophies are theological, because they both make normative claims about human existence within a religious horizon.

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3 In line with Kierkegaard’s distinction between Christianity and Christendom, I too make this distinction. I use the term Christianity more ambiguously, but I use the term Christendom to mean: the specific modern implementation of ancient Christian theology by priests, bishops, the pope, among any other organized and hierarchical formations of Christianity to which Nietzsche and Kierkegaard both assault. Essentially, I find that both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard look to expose the irony between that which Jesus did and that which Paul and modern Christians manifested into modern Christendom.
I begin my argument by shadowing Karl Jaspers’ examination of the misanthropic, iconoclastic, rhetorical strategies employed by both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. I then delve into the specifics of each of their respective stages towards usurping modern institutions, and upon the acceptance of an absurd reality, combating the possibility of crippling nihilism. For Nietzsche these stages are the camel, the lion, and the child; for Kierkegaard the stages are the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. Kierkegaard divides the religious stage into two parts, A and B. It is with the religious B individual that Camus finds discord between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. After scrutinizing Camus’ use of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, I retort that the religious A and B individual together embody the Nietzschean child. The child or religiously A & B person immanently creates a novelly *transcendent* meaning of life; or what Paul Tillich describes as the “dynamics of faith.” Tillich writes: “Faith is a total and centered act of the personal self, the act of unconditional, infinite, and ultimate concern. The question now arises: what is the source of this all-embracing and all-transcending concern?”

Paradoxically, an absurdist must posit some sense of meaning, even if from *nothing*, so as to not fall into nihilism, wherein nothing has meaning. Kierkegaard describes meaning as a faith in the absurd, in which he labels the absurd as some manifestation of a Christianity. Nietzsche describes meaning as a highest potential powerfulness and splendor (*Mächtigkeit und Pracht*), which he arguably labels as the Eternal Return. Presumably, then, both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard advocate a Sisyphean love of the boulder through apophatic, existential, Jesusesque theology. In the conclusion, I offer my own gestures towards what an individual might make of these author’s philosophies by highlighting the essential difference Kierkegaard constructs between anxiety and fear.

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II

Methods and Strategies

Despite Nietzsche never having responded to, or necessarily read Kierkegaard, who is his elder by about fifty years, the resemblance between these authors’ stylistic techniques and philosophical conclusions are strikingly similar. Karl Jaspers compares the connecting commonalities of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. He describes the two as such: “Their thinking created a new atmosphere. They passed beyond all of the limits then regarded as obvious.” Jaspers argues that Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, unrecognizably during their own existence, sent the Western philosophical enterprise spinning into a “new atmosphere.” The assumptions and positions of the classic modern enlightenment philosophers such as Kant and Descartes were thrown into question and, that the modern faith in progress and reason should no longer by taken on faith. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, through intentionally confusing prose, challenged what Stuart Hall refers to in his lecture, “The Floating Signifier,” as the “panoptic glass of the enlightenment.” Hall is drawing on Foucault’s notion of panopticism, which Foucault developed as a social theory in his work, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*. He explains,

> Generally speaking, it might be said that the the disciplines [components of panopticism] are techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities…they try to define in relation to the multiplicities a tactics of power that fulfills three criteria:… to obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost…to bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity…to link this ‘economic’ growth of power with the output of the apparatuses (educational, military, industrial or medical) within which it is exercised; in short, to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system

This modern panopticism, birthed during The Enlightenment, relies on the notion that reason and rationality have the all encompassing ability to conquer any concepts, beliefs, or even groups of people through classification. It is this notion of reason that Nietzsche and Kierkegaard look to subvert through their apophatic, theological critiques of Christendom in particular. Rousseau, in his meditation on the origins of inequality, picked up on the possible damning nature of dogmatic faith in rationality before

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7 Stuart Hall, Lecture: *Race: The Floating Signifier* (1997). Media Education Foundation. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMo2uiRAF30&list=PL6927D30BB26C0E8D&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMo2uiRAF30&list=PL6927D30BB26C0E8D&index=1)).
both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, “Reason is what engenders egocentrism, and reflection strengthens it.” I find fault in Rousseau’s position of a primitive, basic, savage man who is, in a sense, pure, yet his stance on reason as the catalyst for egocentrism provides a basic understanding of the dangers surrounding a dogmatic faith in reason. Nietzsche and Kierkegaard certainly hold on to this assertion and continue to take it to its logical conclusion.

Jaspers continues his assessment of these polemists as follows: “Both questioned reason from the depths of Existenz. Never on such a high level of thought had there been such a thorough-going and radical opposition to mere reason. This questioning is never simply hostility to reason; rather both sought to appropriate limitlessly all modes of rationality…their whole thought strove toward the genuine truth.” I include the emphasis in this quote because I find irony in the use of “genuine truth,” considering the foundation of both philosophers is that of an absurdist reality in which there is no “genuine truth,” or meaning. Yet, an absurd framework is a “genuine truth” in itself, but it is a framework that is concerned with truer truths rather than a truest truth. An appropriation of the limitless modes of rationality calls into question every and all transcendental, dogmatic, genuine truth. However, this too is a dogmatism within itself, though it is a dogmatism which intends to counter hegemonic, panoptic dogmatisms. We might call what Kierkegaard and Nietzsche posit a anti-dogmatic dogmatism. Though he doesn’t refer to this notion with the same terminology as I do, Tillich exemplifies anti-dogmatic dogmatism when he explains the intimate dynamic play between faith and doubt, “One could call it the existential doubt…It does not question whether a special proposition is true or false. It does not reject every concrete truth, but it is aware of the element of insecurity in every existential truth.” This existential doubt or anti-dogmatic dogmatism retains the sentiment of “I could still be wrong.” Deciphering truth or falsehood is no longer the essential quest of philosophy, but rather this sentiment maintains that truths and falsehoods do not exist, and the quest of philosophy is to examine and dismantle panoptic power structures.

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10 Jaspers, Reason and Existenz, 25. My emphasis.
11 Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, 20.
Dangers reside within both panoptic-dogmatism and anti-dogmatic dogmatism. Panoptic-dogmatism has lead to imperial and colonial enterprises, thus dominating groups of people as if they were less than human. The United States attempted total annihilation of Native Americans, the Nazi’s enactment of the Holocaust, and the Dutch and British Empire’s apartheid of South Africa and India are all horrific manifestations of the modern quest for a truest truth. These instances of panoptic-dogmatism were justified, ironically, under the guise of freedom and reason. On the other hand, anti-dogmatic dogmatism can lead to nihilism or Camus’ articulation of suicide wherein an individual becomes lost and unable to function well or at all. Accepting the premise of an absurd reality allows one to see through and tear down, dominant institutions; yet, considering the potential to usher in a sense of nihilism, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Camus look to overcome this potential suicide, a dangerous attitude lurking in the mist of absurdness.

Advocating for the meaninglessness of existence, as is the primary property of anti-dogmatic dogmatism, has the potential to lead to suicide as proposed by Camus. Camus exemplifies these dangers: “To tell the truth, it is a futile question. On the other hand, I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others paradoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living (what is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying).”\textsuperscript{12} However, therein lies a particular and crucial difference between these two dogmatisms. Jaspers, enthusiastically so, continues to describe this philosophical shift in thought of which Nietzsche and Kierkegaard were the catalyst (essentially the move from modern to post-modern philosophy),

In a magnificent way, penetrating a whole life with the earnestness of philosophizing, they brought forth not some doctrines, not any basic position, not some picture of the world, but rather a new total intellectual attitude for men. This attitude was in the medium of infinite reflection, a reflection which is conscious of being unable to attain any real ground by itself. No single thing characterizes their nature; no fixed doctrine or requirement is to be drawn out of them as something independent and permanent.\textsuperscript{13}

This is the genius of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche’s move of positing the paradoxical nature of philosophical inquiry. It is to revel in the paradoxical relationship between creating meaning and meaninglessness. In other words, the only permanent truism pertaining to thought and reason is that there

\textsuperscript{12} Camus, \textit{The Myth of Sisyphus}, 4. I believe Camus is invoking the “capital T truth.”
\textsuperscript{13} Jaspers, \textit{Reason and Existenz}, 25.
is no permanent truism. It is a joyful sickness. Jaspers continues to describe how Nietzsche and Kierkegaard characterize this paradox,

Everything permanent was as if consumed in a dizzying suction: Kierkegaard by an otherworldly Christianity which is like Nothingness and shows itself only in negation (the absurd, martyrdom) and in negative resolution; with Nietzsche, a vacuum out of which, with despairing violence, a new reality was to be born (the eternal return, and the corresponding dogmatics of Nietzsche). This dizzying suction revolves around the explicitly perplexing and ambiguous nature of both authors’ prose. Nietzsche’s intentional paradoxical statements and Kierkegaard’s use of pseudonyms are among their attempts to make their prose difficult to read and interpret. In this sense, their actual material writing is representative of the impossibility to interpret “genuine truths.”

Jaspers analyzes the similarities between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard in three different aspects. First, what is common between the two thinkers is their questioning of reason. Second, the historical context behind their thinking within Existenz. Thirdly, Jaspers notes how these authors understood themselves and the meaning produced from this understanding of their own personally philosophical situation. Through this analysis, Jaspers offers the most important feature of these two prolific philosophers:

They abandon us without giving us any final goals and without posing any definite problems. Through them, each one can only become what he himself is…They posed a question which is not yet clear but which one can feel; this question is still open. Through them we have become aware that for us there is no longer any self-evident foundation. There is no longer any secure background for our thought.

This open-endedness is the essential shift in western philosophical inquiry away from essentialism to the assumption that nothing is essential. However, behind this assumption lies the dangers of nihilism and dogmatic skepticism, both of which Nietzsche and Kierkegaard strive to avoid, despite a lack of essential meaning. In this sense, just as Sisyphus must continually roll the boulder up the hill and have it roll back down again, so must every philosopher be prepared to have her boulder of philosophical inquiry roll back down. In other words, the philosopher must be willing to scrap any particular theory and begin anew. It is an acknowledgment of doubt, without the doubt becoming crippling.

15 This notion along could make for an excellent article, but it is not the concentration of this paper.
17 Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 47.
III

The Tripartite

If nihilism is to be avoided in an absurd reality, one must produce purpose by desiring desire itself. Obviously, everyone desires, or else we would all die of starvation or a lack of procreation; however, what I mean by “to desire desire itself” is to not shy away from transcendent reasons (what Kierkegaard refers to as “the object of desire”) to avoid suicide or nihilism, but rather acquire and continuously develop within a Kierkegaardian faith or Nietzschean splendor. To desire desire itself is to acquire a love for and have faith in the ongoing process to describe the ineffable. All meaning is made within desiring desire. It is a continual process of looking backward, under, over, and forward, and the key to undertaking this journey is self-reflection. To achieve sublime self-reflection, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche both propose a tripartite set of stages a person can go through in life. Nietzsche describes these stages as the camel, lion, and child, whereas Kierkegaard describes his stages as the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religiously A & B individual. I want to be clear that I am not offering these stages as an all-encompassing dogma and best way of being, but rather as a possible solution in confronting the devastating effects of modernity and hegemonic practices. Furthermore, I insist that these stages are intimately connected and dynamic. By categorizing them, I have committed a panoptic sin, yet in order to explain and examine the similarities between these authors, I find it is necessary to implement a form of categorization while also maintaining that these categories are fluid. To begin, I offer these two tripartite metamorphoses found in Nietzsche’s Thue Spoke Zarathustra and Kierkegaard’s, Either/Or.

In his Zarathustra Nietzsche describes what he calls “The Three Metamorphoses.” These metamorphoses consist of three stages: the camel, the lion, and finally the child. Individuals traverse through three stages in order to transform their consciousness to become free and thereby achieve power and splendor in society. Granted, in this section of Thue Spoke Zarathustra Nietzsche uses the hypothetical concept of the Übermensch or Overman, but the metamorphosis seems to describe the degree to which one becomes Nietzsche’s free spirit. Though the two concepts are certainly distinct and evolve throughout Nietzsche’s career, there is much overlap between them. Arguably, the Übermensch is the
extreme logical conclusion, yet unattainable goal, of a free spirit. However, what is more essential to the goal of this paper is the process itself. First the spirit is a camel. The camel is a beast of burden, always taking orders, never free. Nietzsche writes, “...so asks the spirit that would bear much; then it kneels down like a camel wanting to be laden.” Carrying the burden of traditional values, the camel is unable to challenge institutions such as Christianity or Capitalism. The camel is a misguided truth seeker, a seeker of a static truth rather than the mobile, fluctuating truth Nietzsche’s free spirit seeks. However, this is a necessary stage; as stated earlier, the spirit is always becoming.

The camel, laden with this burden, begins to move into the second stage. The camel has a multitude of convoluted tasks that it must perform before it realizes that it may shed these traditional burdens. Nietzsche writes:

…to humiliate oneself in order to mortify one’s pride? To exhibit one’s folly in order to mock at one’s wisdom? ...to abandon our cause when it celebrates its triumph? To climb high mountains to tempt the tempter?...to feed on the acorns and grass of knowledge, and for the sake of truth to suffer hunger of soul...”

Among its other tasks, the camel, sickened, begins to find that the traditional search for knowledge is fleeting. In other words, that there is no essence of knowledge, no foundation. The camel exposes itself to these situations and, in doing so, begins to shed its burden. Nietzsche might be alluding to philosophers such as Pascal or Plato, who position the truth of reality into orderly categories. The camel, recognizing its vulnerability in these new situations, proceeds forth. As Nietzsche states: “All these most difficult things the spirit that would bear much takes upon itself: and like the camel, which, when laden, hastens into the desert...” It is in the desert where the camel, now laden with these discrepancies in thought, wrestles with this new notion of truth, which lacks foundation and becomes a lion.

Once the camel has wandered the desert and sheds the burden of a singular, essential, truest truth, the second phase commences. Nietzsche writes:

\[18\] Once again, this concept as well has enough to unpack to be developed into an article of its own.
\[20\] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 25.
\[21\] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 25.
But in the loneliest wilderness the second metamorphosis occurs: here the spirit becomes a lion who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert. Here he seeks his last master: he wants to fight him and his last god; for final victory he wants to fight with the great dragon.\textsuperscript{22}

The great dragon can be interpreted as the burden the camel once carried, the notion of a singular grounded truth, such as Nietzsche’s proposed Christendom. The dragon’s golden scales sparkle with transcendent truth. He describes the dragon, “The values of a thousand years glitter on those scales, and thus speaks the mightiest of all dragons, ‘All the value of all things glitters on me.’”\textsuperscript{23} The camel \textit{can} not merely shed this burden, but rather \textit{must} become a lion in order to destroy the dragon and thereby open for itself a space of freedom in which the next stage, the child, may laugh, play, and construct. The lion is a destroyer, but not a creator. Nietzsche comments on the task of the lion as follows: “He [the camel] once loved ‘thou shalt’ as most sacred; now he must find illusion and arbitrariness even in the most sacred things, that he may steal his freedom from his love: the lion is needed for such prey.”\textsuperscript{24} Nietzsche’s use of “thou shalt” is one of many transparent rhetorical jabs at Christendom yet, it is also an example of how Nietzsche maintains a Christian grammatology.\textsuperscript{25} The lion can see the meaningless of essentialized “thou shalt” truths, and, through the act of destroying, the dragon realizes that its former master is no more than a mere illusory \textit{truest} truth. However, herein lies the dangers of nihilism. Upon this realization, the destruction of illusory truths is possible, yet what accompanies this is the realization that reality is indeed meaningless. The affirmation of an absurd reality can open the door to what Camus describes as suicide. To avoid suicide, one must progress to the third stage of the metamorphosis and learn to create meaning from the meaningless, or as I have put, to desire desire itself.

The lion is not a true creator, but a destroyer and thus perhaps a \textit{creator}, in a sense, of space for the child stage of the metamorphosis. Nietzsche explains why the lion cannot also be the creator: “The child is innocent and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred Yes-saying. Yes, for the game of creating, my brothers, a sacred Yes-saying is needed: the spirit

\textsuperscript{22} Nietzsche, \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, 25.
\textsuperscript{23} Nietzsche, \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, 26.
\textsuperscript{24} Nietzsche, \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, 26.
\textsuperscript{25} Throughout \textit{Zarathustra}, Nietzsche writes in parables and “thou shalt” statements in order to criticize the downfalls of Christendom, yet also utilize and promote the benefits of a Christian style prose.
now wills his own will, and he who had been the world’s outcast now conquers his own world.\textsuperscript{26} The child now has the capability of achieving \textit{Mächtigkeit und Pracht} within its own creative, sovereign space. The child, having forgotten its former master, is able to affect humanity, however small or large, and create new values. The child does not retain the knowledge of the camel or lion, that is of anything eternal or transcendent. Now the child is absorbed in spontaneity and creative play. I can see a multiplicity of material manifestations of this ideology. How one chooses to affect humanity is not a matter of good or evil, but dependent upon one’s motivations and desires. Examples of a child might range from professors who instill critical thought and self reflection upon their students to civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X to even Islamic extremists such as Osama bin Laden.\textsuperscript{27} The point is not necessarily the merit of what was accomplished, but rather that classic power structures such as nation-state politics and legal racism were challenged, offering a new space in which issues such as religion, racism, capitalism, and modernity can be discussed and possibly subverted. However, one should think of this process as cyclical considering that these issues are still present, and even upon a complete subversion of these institutions new ones are bound to become reified and the process begins again. Imagine a child playing with its toys, possibly building blocks, as it constructs and creates. Children sit, sometimes, in complete seriousness as they toil away creating just what they have imagined, yet at the same time complete joy and cheerfulness courses through them; unafraid to tear it all down and start anew.

Kierkegaard, like Nietzsche, stresses the difficulty in defining these \textit{stages} and their fluidity. Kierkegaard too, finds metamorphoses to be a more appropriate term to which he adds: “The different stages taken together constitute the immediate stage, and this shows that the individual stages are more

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{26} Nietzsche, \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, 26. I want to note here, for later in the paper, that “the child” in German is \textit{das Kind} a neuter noun. I propose that Nietzsche intentionally chose child, a non-gendered noun, rather than \textit{der Übermensch}, a masculine noun. Furthermore, it is important to note that Nietzsche often employs the term “yes-saying” as the affirmation of life in opposition to what he claims Christendom does, which is “no-saying” and implementing of life negating ideologies involved with claiming heaven is some other more perfect plane of existence.
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\textsuperscript{27} Refer to Faisal Devji, \textit{The Terrorist in Search of Humanity: Militant Islam and Global Politics}, (New York: Columbia, 2008). Devji explains how Militant Islamists, like any global humanitarian group, has pushed the classic nation-state politics on to a novel global scale politics. Clearly I do not intend to say that Nietzsche would be in favor of the violent acts of Islamic Extremists, in fact I believe it could be argued that Nietzsche was a pacifist, but to maintain a multitude of \textit{truths} there must be room, philosophically, for a multiplicity of outcomes of the child creative potential.
\end{quote}
like disclosures of predicates, so that all the predicates tumble down into the wealth of the last stage, since this is the real stage.”

Kierkegaard is more concerned with the individual achieving the real stage than with an explicit critique of institutions as is Nietzsche’s explicit intent. However, by outlining these stages through musical metaphor, Kierkegaard redefines and complicates the notion of what it is to be a Christian, throughly shattering the theologies and doctrines of his contemporaries. In this sense, the main difference between Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard’s philosophical systems is that Nietzsche, who denounces nearly everything Christian among most modern institutions, attacks Christendom theology from the outside; while Kierkegaard, who far more explicitly upholds Christianity as the real, attacks Christendom from the inside. Yet both conclude their metamorphosis with a Jesusesque redeemer figure who is enlightened, sovereign, and capable of positing a new worldview whether it be for the individual or a collective.

The Jesusesque nature of this figure resides in that a singular person has the power to affect a paradigmatic shift in society and furthermore, the use of Christian grammatology in Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, which he refers to as his anti-gospel, and Kierkegaard’s formulation of a highly individualized Christianity. In fact, Nietzsche refers to Christianity (Christendom) as a history of misunderstanding and that Jesus was the one and only Christian who, in his attack against Jewish hierarchy, offered: “…not to ‘redeem men’ but to show how one must live.”

Nietzsche’s Zarathustra is not the redeemer in a savior sense as Christendom intends Jesus to be. Rather he is a redeemer, who shows a way of being as did the truer notion of Jesus that Nietzsche presents. Instead of relying upon a savior, one ought to take responsibility for how one lives. Moreover, Kierkegaard also stresses the importance of taking increasing responsibility for one’s actions, values, power, and desires. In other words, self-reflection. Kierkegaard alludes to Mozart’s operatic characters in order to describe these stages of thought leading towards a sublime Christian individual. Just as classical music is heard in a progression of sections yet should be understood in its entirety, so too does Kierkegaard intend his respective metamorphic stages as sections to be understood as a whole. The first section is the aesthetic.

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Kierkegaard describes the aesthetic as the Page from *Figaro* who is ‘drunk with love.’ This drunkenness, “compresses [life] into an opaque dejection.” The sadness to which Kierkegaard alludes is not so much the individual feeling sad but rather, the individual not being able to recognize that they are sad. This sadness refers to a lack of self-reflection and responsibility and thus, the aesthetic’s primary concerns are mundane tasks and anxieties determined by the dominant world view (Christendom). This person, like the camel, apathetically trudges along through the desert led by bit, bridle, and master. The aesthetic camel responds only to the sensation from the pull of the bridle just as someone who is drunk with love responds only to the sensations caused by one’s love without reflecting on why one is drunk love. Kierkegaard writes, “The sensual awakes, not to movement but to motionless rest, not to joy and gladness but to deep melancholy. Desire is not yet awake, it is moodily hinted at. In desire there is always the desired, which rises out of it and comes to view in a bewildering twilight.” The aesthetic potentially ignites a flickering desire towards discovering why one desires. This act is a feeling of melancholy to which Kierkegaard comments: “The reason for [the aesthetic's] melancholy lies in the profound inner contradiction...” The aesthetic starts to realize the contradictory nature of a person’s fragmented identity. There is a separation between the desire that that which is the object of desire. The aesthetic feels desire, yet has not reflected upon what is the cause of desire. Upon realizing that one does feel melancholy due to this separation, one can progress into the second stage.

The ethical stage, represented by Papageno from Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* involved in all sorts of “dubious gibberish,” and is able to “gain an opportunity to illuminate the erotic from a new angle, through noticing how the attempt to invest it with a deeper ethical view, which allows it to try its hand at all sorts of weighty dialectical ordeals, is a venture that has gone quite beyond the boundaries of music, so that even for a Mozart it has been impossible to lend it any deeper meaning.” The ‘erotic’ should be considered as the ineffable, and the “venture that has gone quite beyond the boundaries of music,” is a critique of prior modern philosophers who are unable to philosophize without their “weighty dialectical

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ordeals” and instead one ought to revel in an absurd reality. The ethical person, like the lion, is able to recognize and identify ways of being or “try its hand at all sorts of weighty [dialectics].” As the aesthetic becomes the ethical it spits out its bit, shakes off its bridal, and grows a mane. By recognizing its previously contradictory experience it necessarily breaks through boundaries and weighty dialectics which once confined its existence, and realizes the meaninglessness of existence. Existence is paradoxical, but this realization is no longer contradictory, but rather intriguing. Mozart’s works were indeed operas, but by no means were they, in a classic sense, operas. It is this intrigue that awakens desires, and a self-reflective responsibility: “Desire awakens, and as one always first realizes one has been dreaming at the moment of waking, so here too the dream is over. This arousal in which desire awakens, this tremor, separates desire and its object, gives the desire an object.”

It is essential to understand the fluidity of these stages because as the aesthetic comes to see the separation between desire and the object of desire, it is able to recognize this object, thus labeling existence as paradoxical and become the ethical. Furthermore the ethical person takes responsibility for what the object of its desire is, as opposed to the aesthetic who blindly followed sensual desire without recognition of its object. Despite this recognition there is still something left to be desired. The ability to recognize one’s object of desire is, in a sense, to tear it down as the lion does. To recognize that Christendom is the object or cause of desire, one can dismantle this object and attempt to stop the misguided effects of those previous objects of desire. However, after this object is torn down there is a void. Kierkegaard writes: “But even if I could describe its peculiarity perfectly and explain the reason for it [the object of desire], there would still always be something left over which I cannot say and yet wants to be heard.” To fill this void the individual moves toward the third stage in order to attempt to describe the ineffable, or what cannot be said “yet wants to be heard.” They themselves, despite acknowledging a meaningless void where a truest reality once stood, must provide for themselves, a novel and truer description of the ineffable.

Kierkegaard invokes Don Juan from Don Giovanni as representative of this third stage. This stage can be considered the religious stage, where in his later work, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, he divides the religious person into two categories: A & B. This separation signifies the ongoing nature of...
this metamorphosis and the fluidity of these stages. This separation leads back to the contradictory nature of the aesthetic, but only after one has gone through this tripartite metamorphosis. Don Juan, the religious A&B, like the child, obtains creative sovereignty to posit a novel world-view. In the third stage Kierkegaard makes explicit the Hegelian dialectical relationship of the three stages. The third stage is a synthesis of the aesthetic thesis and ethical antithesis.

The contradiction in the first stage lay in the face that desire could acquire no object, but was in possession of its object without having desired it, and therefore could not reach the point of desiring. In the second stage, the object appears in its multiplicity, but since desire seeks its object in this multiplicity, in a deeper sense it still has no object, it is not yet specified as desire. In Don Giovanni, on the other hand, desire is specified absolutely as desire, is connotationally and extensionally the immediate unity of the two preceding stages. Kierkegaard then splits the religious synthesis into two antithetical parts. He sets up the paradoxical nature of the synthesis in Either/Or as follows: “Desire in this stage is therefore absolutely sound, victorious triumphant, irresistible, and demonic.” Later, in Concluding Unscientific Postscript, he explains the intimate connectivity between the third and first stages, implying that this dialectical metamorphosis is never ending. The third stage is spilt between Religiousness A and Religiousness B, wherein A is within a state of immanence and B is within a state of opposition to immanence. In Religiousness A the individual sets itself aside from itself, in which its own fractured self is the object of desire. The Religiousness B then creates, through that immanent desire, a new external (transcendental) object of desire, similar to the external object of desire for the aesthetic, yet the difference being that this new object has been thoroughly reflected upon.

Kierkegaard explains Religiousness B as outside the self, an external object of desire, yet it is not one of absolute transcendence considering this object, though external, still emerged from a state of immanence. Though Religiousness B recognizes the real material, external manifestations of objects of desires, the origin of these manifestations, coming from a state of immanence, cause the necessarily paradoxical characteristics of the three stages. Kierkegaard explains again the metamorphosis:

36 Kierkegaard, Either/Or: A Fragment of Life, 93.
*Immediacy, the [a]esthetic,* finds no contradiction in existing; to exist is one thing, contradiction is something else that comes from without. *The ethical* find contradiction but within self assertion. *Religiousness A* comprehends contradiction as suffering in self-annihilation, yet within immanence; but, ethically accentuating existing, it hinders the existing person in abstractly remaining in immanence or in becoming abstract by wanting to remain in immanence. The *paradoxical-religious* breaks with immanence and makes existing the absolute contradiction—not within immanence but in opposition to immanence. There is no immanental underlying kinship between the temporal and the eternal. because the eternal itself has entered into time and wants to establish kinship there.\(^{38}\)

What is important to unpack from this description of the tripartite metamorphosis is the difference between Kierkegaard’s notion of the eternal and Kant’s noumena. Unlike Kant’s unknowable noumena, Kierkegaard, by identifying the paradoxical nature of the dialectical synthesis, offers that the eternal is not only knowable, but is created by the individual rather than existing *a priori* and manifesting necessarily. Because the eternal comes from a state of immanence, it is necessarily contingent and thus paradoxical. A transcendent eternal, like Kant’s noumena, is necessarily necessary and thus stagnant, motionless, and it is an ideal unable to account for change. Kierkegaard describes the three stages as having the potential for creation, motion, and change: “This paradoxical inwardness is the greatest possible, because even the most dialectical qualification, if it is still within immanence, has, as it were, a possibility of an escape, of shifting away, of a withdrawal into the eternal behind it; it is as if everything were not actually at stake. But the break makes the inwardness the greatest possible.”\(^{39}\) Like Nietzsche’s child, “a self propelled wheel” can escape into an eternal that the individual itself created. The child, and Religiousness A&B, “now wills his own will, and he who had been the world’s outcast now conquers his own world.” However, in doing so, one must take care to recognize when one has fallen drunkenly in love with one’s novel world-view and prepare to transgress back through the tripartite. The religious child climbs atop an newly fashioned aesthetic camel that, once again, trudges apathetically through the desert.

IV

Apathetic Theological Systems

In both cases, the child and Religiousness A&B is a Jesusesque individual, but one of immanent godliness not transcendent godliness. Kierkegaard, far more explicitly than Nietzsche, identifies his Religiousness A&B as a redefined Christianity. Kierkegaard remarks that though the true origin of the Don Juan character might never be known, “we know is that it belongs to Christianity.”40 He furthers this notion by offering that if one examines Christendom through the lens of the tripartite metamorphosis one will see the paradoxical nature of this redefined Christianity, in which meaning is created from inside in an otherwise meaningless outside. He writes: “As abstract and objective, speculative thought completely disregards existing and inwardness and, since Christianity indeed paradoxically accentuates existing, is the greatest kissable misunderstanding of Christianity.”41 Kierkegaard, through his denial of previously held purely ideological, transcendent, objective notions of objects of desire, God, the eternal and the object of ultimate concern forwards, in a sense, a truer practice of Christianity by asserting that the very notion of a concept and world-view being truest is preposterous. The proposition that there is a truest world-view is denied by the immanent creation of propositions, desires, motivations, and world-views.

Paul Tillich describes two notions of faith, idolatrous and true. A true faith, ironically so, is comfortable with the paradoxical, yet intimate connectivity between faith and doubt or an anti-dogmatic dogmatism. This faith acknowledges that there may by truer propositions, but never a truest proposition. Idolatrous faith, on the other hand, is faith without doubt, whereby an individual, like the camel and aesthetic, understands what is true to be truly true, ultimate, and transcendently necessary or panoptic dogmatism. This notion of faith allows for the acknowledgment of a truest proposition. Tillich writes, “The more idolatrous a faith the less it is able to overcome the cleavage between subject and object…In true faith the ultimate concern is a concern about the truly ultimate; while in idolatrous faith preliminary, finite realities are elevated to the rank of ultimacy.”42 Wrapped in irony, what is truly ultimate is to remain doubtful that anything is ultimately true. This proposition is offering a notion of what is truly ultimate, yet

40 Kierkegaard, Either/Or: A Fragment of Life, 95.
42 Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, 12.
only after reflection of what the object of one’s desire is. The child and Religiousness A&B are linked to the camel and aesthetic in the sense that they both indulge in the object of their desire or their ultimate concern. However, the child or Religiousness A&B are aware of from where the object of desire emanated and why one desires; unlike the camel’s or aesthetic’s apathy towards, or lack of reflection on, where the object of desire or ultimate concern emanated. The key difference is that the object of desire is imposed upon the camel, whereas the object of desire for the child is self (immanently) imposed. However, as I stated in the prior section, this subtle difference between Christendom and Christianity is easily lost.

Camus finds that the Kierkegaardian “retreat” back to explicit Christian grammatology is a denial, by Religiousness B, of the truer state of the meaningless of human existence that was previously realized by an individual’s procession from the ethical to Religiousness A. He writes: “Kierkegaard wants to be cured…The entire effort of his intelligence is to escape the antinomy of the human condition. An all the more desperate effort since he intermittently perceives its vanity when he speaks of himself, as if neither fear of God nor piety were capable of bringing him peace.” Camus misinterprets Kierkegaard’s conclusion as a retreat back to transcendence rather than what Kierkegaard actually does, which is a deconstruction and redefinition of Christendom into an individualized Christianity. Camus continues: “Thus it is that, through a strained subterfuge, he gives the irrational the appearance and God the attributes of the absurd: unjust, incoherent, and incomprehensible…Since nothing is proved, everything can be proved.” 43 Though I agree with the majority of Camus’ statement and find it an accurate description of what Kierkegaard intends to do, which is to signify the absurd as God, I disagree with Camus’ description of Kierkegaard’s process as one of subterfuge. Kierkegaard, by maintaining the contradictory nature of the whole but also split Religiousness A&B individual, he, like Nietzsche’s child and Camus’ absurd man, maintains the contradictory nature of human existence. Camus comments: “This is why I cannot get lost in the glorification or the mere definition of a notion which eludes me and loses its meaning as soon as it goes beyond the frame of reference of my individual experience.” 44 However, by negating the defining of notions of the ineffable, Camus has, himself, offered a definition of the

43 Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, 39.
44 Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, 56.
ineffable. For Camus, however, this notion cannot be understood beyond the individual experience. An individual is immanently related to the ineffable, this is the absurd. Kierkegaard, like Camus, proposes that the individual creates meaning immanently but takes this a step further than Camus by claiming that through this immanent creation something external, an object of desire, is also created.

Camus is shortchanging Kierkegaard in this sense. I find that Kierkegaard acknowledges the very real material manifestations of ideological dialectical syntheses, whereas Camus leaves the absurd in the realm of ideas and does not acknowledge that by signifying the meaning of life through the absurd, he has posited an external object of desire. Simply by describing a meaningless reality, Camus has given meaning to the meaningless. Leading into Camus’ misinterpretation of Kierkegaard’s Religiousness A&B and use of the term Christianity, he, like Kierkegaard, uses Don Juan as the exemplary absurd hero. Metaphorically speaking about the story of Don Juan, we might think of the many women whom Don Juan seduces as representative of various truths. Similarly, Nietzsche equates truth(s) (certainly the truth to which Nietzsche is referring here his notion of ever changing truer truths, rather than static essential truest truth) and women in the beginning of Beyond Good and Evil as follows: “Suppose truth is a women--what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women?” Don Juan might love many different women, but he does this wholeheartedly and does so for no other reason than the experience of love itself. The object of Don Juan’s desire is his own experience and thus, by being identified as the object of desire this object is both internal to Don Juan and external from himself. Camus describes Don Juan in the following manner: “It is not through lack of love that Don Juan goes from woman to woman. It is ridiculous to represent him as a mythic in quest of total love.” A “quest of total love” would be a denial of the contradictory nature of human existence and that meaning is not created outside the individual, thus a truest proposition or “total love” is impossible. Camus continues: “But it is indeed because he loves them with the same passion and each time with his whole self that he must repeat his gift and his profound

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45 Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, in Basic Writing of Nietzsche, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 192. Nietzsche’s use of the feminine is also a notion which requires much to be unpacked, which I have attempted to do in a prior unpublished essay, “The Camel, The Lion, and The Child: Castrated, Castrating, and Affirming.” I argue that Nietzsche’s overt derogatory statements about women and the feminine are sarcastic statements to highlight sexism in his time making him a proto-feminist in a sense.
quest. Whence each woman hopes to give him what no one has ever given him. Each time they are utterly wrong and merely manage to make him feel the need of that repetition.”46 This is representative of the Sisyphian struggle to create meaning, which Kierkegaard expresses in his philosophy. Kierkegaard connects the stages of his tripartite and splits Religiousness into two parts in order to exemplify the “need of that repetition.” Merely because Kierkegaard uses Christianity to describe the absurd does not mean he has regressed to some sense of a priori truth, but rather that by progressing through, what Camus calls a Kafkaian metamorphosis, his redefined Christianity signifies the absurd. But certainly the repetition of this metamorphosis necessitates that Christianity will not be redefined once, but indefinitely. Novel significations of Christianity, or the absurd, the eternal, or even God will continue to be signified as different individuals, throughout time, undergo a Kafkaian metamorphosis.

Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Camus all propose a Jesusesque redeemer which takes comfort in the anxiety and struggle surrounding the creation of meaning. Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, Camus’ absurd man, Kierkegaard’s Religiousness A&B, all of which have characteristics of a suffering, enlightened individual with the creative capability to affect change in society. Despite Nietzsche’s and Camus’ explicate attack on Christendom, they still maintain that effective change occurs through a Jesusesque redeemer. My own critique of these three authors is their explicit need to rely on the individual. I think that one might consider that the tripartite metamorphosis does not necessarily apply to the individual, but rather should occur in a collective, willing and openminded, capable to effect paradigmatic change. The stress these authors place on the individual is resoundingly covered in Christian grammatology regarding a savior, redeemer character. The essential difference for the authors in question is that their redeemer character’s story is one of immanence and continued suffering, destruction, and creation, whereas the classic savior story is one of linear transcendence and revolutionary action.

This redefinition of the redeemer character is the drastic shift Jaspers describes with regards to both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. Therefore, if one is to properly understand human existence one must understand that, like Sisyphus, the task of rolling the boulder is never complete. In that sense, if the Jesus story is to be understood through the tripartite lens, rather than dying on the cross and being resurrected

only once, Jesus continually and perpetually dies and is resurrected. Nietzsche explains: “…I am against any attempt to introduce the fanatic into the Redeemer type: the word impérieux…is alone enough to annul the type.”47 The power and authority of “the Redeemer” is not founded in unjustified fanaticism or panoptic dogmatism but instead, is justified by highly critical, self-reflective anti-dogmatic dogmatism. Thus the meaninglessness of meaning is first understood, then destroyed and finally recreated indefinitely. The creation of meaning is exemplified by the punishment awarded to Sisyphus, but rather than think of it as punishment, we need not worry and love the boulder we push. Just as Don Juan loves for the sake of love, we too must push the boulder for the sake of pushing the boulder yet, all the while still acknowledging the presence of the truer transcendentally immanent purpose of making it to the top of the hill is never a truest purpose. The object of desire is to roll the boulder for the sake of rolling it, nothing more. Existence is thus contradictory, but we need not worry. To revel in this contradiction is to allow one’s anxiety to be creative and powerful and thus, avoid nihilism, apathy, and suicide. However, to worry about contradictory existence is to allow one’s anxiety to become fear, thus leading to nihilist suicide.

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47 Nietzsche, The Antichrist, 604.
V

Conclusion: An Anxiety Continuum

Nietzsche and Kierkegaard both rejected the Lutheran and Episcopal environments in which they were raised, and proceeded to present an ethic and epistemology within some frame of apathetic, existential, *Jesusesque* theology. These polemicists offer a tripartite transgressional process for a particular right way of being, functioning, or rather thinking within an assumed absurd reality. I have argued that both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard look to embody a protean-archetypal-amalgamation of Sisyphus, and furthermore that in order to transgress through this particular framework a subject ought to find comfort in an absurd reality by kindling a love of the boulder. It is my hope that, by illuminating the transgressional process which Nietzsche describes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and Kierkegaard in *Either/Or*, I might gesture the reader towards their own love of the boulder. By this I mean, a subject might take comfort in absurdist contemplation and become comfortable that a person is no more than a messy, poorly organized, desire-machine with no way of knowing if a true purpose exists. This being said, these iconoclasts look desperately to avoid nihilism.

Nietzsche and Kierkegaard intended to subvert institutions in the Christian environments within which they wrote. These two polemicists may appear to offer oppositional conclusions to one another; yet, as I hope to have shown, they both offer quite similar apophatic, existential, *Jesusesque* theologies. Nietzsche and Kierkegaard both play with what Camus concludes as the most urgent of philosophical concerns, the meaning of life.\(^4^8\) The similar tripartite progressions presented by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche offer an answer to this most urgent concern, and their answers transcend the context in which they wrote. Thus, I find that these philosophical theologies continue to be relevant within a contemporary society. The human condition has not changed, but continues, as it always has, to be the anxiety of death. Anxiety will be the substratum of the human condition until a material form of immortality is possible. The only consistency across humanity is that one day each one of us will die. Hannah Arendt comments that this anxiety was only intensified to a global scale by the creation and detonation of the bomb.\(^4^9\) A


holocaust of humanity in its entirety is now an actualized possibility; nevertheless, as frightening as this possibility is, anxiety should not necessarily be crippling. I propose that, in light of my analysis of these iconoclasts, we might think that the potential to progress through the tripartite hinges on the right amount of anxiety. An amount of anxiety which allows one to stop worrying and love the boulder. We might think of finding this love of Sisyphus’ boulder on a continuum of anxiety.

A fear of mortality is crippling; whereas anxiety is a potent force for intellectual enlightenment. Fear and anxiety are often thought to be synonymous, yet Kierkegaard proposed that there is a critical difference: “…I must point out that [anxiety] is altogether different from fear…whereas anxiety is freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility.” Anxiety might be thought of as the agent which propels a person to depart Plato’s cave and unshackle oneself from mere shadowy representations of reality. In the middle of this hypothetical continuum lies anxiety, similarly to Aristotle’s golden mean. This golden anxiety is creative, transformative, and allows for an individual to progress through the tripartite stages. Kierkegaard continues his explanation of anxiety by describing, coincidentally enough, children: “In observing children, one will discover this anxiety intimated more particularly as a seeking for the adventurous, the monstrous, and the enigmatic.” However, supererogatory anxiety leads to devastating manifestations of fear found on either side. Fear keeps the shackles tightly locked. This fear develops into one of two nihilisms. On one end, anxiety becomes fear that embodies the camel’s apathy, and on the other side, anxiety becomes a fear that leads to suicide. These two forms of fear are detrimental to living, in Socratic terms, an examined life. These are the very nihilisms that the absurdist and existential philosophies of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Camus seek to defeat.

One one end of this continuum, fearful apathy leads to a complete lacking of care for nearly anything of truer meaning. This apathy might be comparative to many young millenials’ overwhelming concern for being popular, or where they are going to party on any particular weekend to weekday evening. This is to be stuck in the aesthetic or camel stage. This fear detains a person from questioning the foundations of hegemonic institutions and the objects of desire. This apathetic fear maintains a comfort

51 Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 42.
with essentially the way things are or, to what I would argue in the United States as a hegemonic Capitalist, colonial, white, Christendom. This fear keeps people from ever progressing through any part of the tripartite stages towards enlightenment that Kierkegaard and Nietzsche describe. This fear is complacency, or what Kierkegaard refers to as fear of the eternal in his notes on The Concept of Anxiety. I assume Kierkegaard is referring to his redefined notion of the eternal, for in the margins of these notes is written: “Inwardness is eternity…” to which he continues: “But eternity is a very radical thought. Whenever it is posited, the present becomes something entirely different from what it was apart from… This is something that men fear.”

Fear, in this sense, maintains the inability to seek change for the betterment of humanity. In a sense, an inability to seek what Derrida describes as justice. On the other end of the continuum, anxiety turn into a fear that leads to suicide. This act of committing suicide comes from an overwhelming fear of a meaningless existence and that one day you will die. A fear of death that then leads to death. The continual rolling of Sisyphus’ boulder becomes too much to bear. This individual may very well have progressed through some or all of the tripartite stages, yet the continual progressing through these stages is so immense and oppressive that suicide becomes the obvious option. It is this end of the continuum that Camus describes as the most serious of philosophical questions. Camus’ examination of the relationship between an absurd reality and the possible solution to this reality is suicide.

Camus, like Nietzsche and Kierkegaard (though more indirectly), appeals to avoiding suicide as the answer to a posited absurdist reality. The individual in this case has allowed the potential of creative and childish anxiety to become crippling fear. A mistaken and erroneous response to absurdity as far as Camus is concerned. One ought not allow one’s anxiety to manifest itself as fear, but rather one ought to maintain a golden mean of anxiety that perpetuates the individuals transgressions through the tripartite stages.

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52 Kierkegaard, The Concept of Anxiety, 206.
53 See Jacques Derrida, “The Deconstruction of Actuality: An Interview With Jacques Derrida,” in, Deconstruction: A Reader, ed. M. McQuillan (New York: Routledge Press, 2000) 543. Jacques Derrida in a 1993 interview, “The Deconstruction of Actuality: An Interview with Jacques Derrida,” in which he answers the question, “Is there such a thing as the undeconstructable, and if so, what is it?” If anything is undeconstructable, it is justice. The law is deconstructable, fortunately: it is infinitely perfectible. I am tempted to regard justice as the best word, today, for what refuses to yield to deconstruction, that is to say for what sets deconstruction in motion, what justifies it.”
54 Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, 3-6.
A joyful, playful medium between these two notions of fears is anxiety. An anxiety of our own mortality through which an individual might progress through the tripartite stages and manifests their own sense of purpose and meaning in the light of absurdism. Anxiety is the underpinning of the creative power of the child or religious individual. In this sense, an individual might reinvent justice by the destruction of modernity, though this is no doubt a difficult and ongoing task. How does one decide what is best? Is it simply a matter of convincing others through argumentation what you think is right and implementing the least harmful system oriented towards justice? Were Nazis not interested in justice? Is the conservative right in America not interested in justice? Are leftist socialists not interested in justice? The question is: justice for whom? The goal ought to be justice for humanity in its entirety. The tripartite progress allows for the possibility to recreate a world in which there is justice for all, not the few. In the writing of this paper, I do not want to deny that there are serious and detrimental material obstacles which restrict an individuals sovereignty to progress through this metamorphosis such as racism, poverty, and illness. Yet despite these restrictions, every individual has some agency in which they may transfigure their surroundings and mentalities effectivity subverting oppressive power structures no matter how small.