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## CAMUS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE PARADOXICALLY MULTIDIMENSIONAL HUMAN BEING

### Abstract

The article analyses important issues of philosophical anthropology from a socio-philosophical viewpoint. By defining a human being in different stages of the development of philosophical thought, one or another of his genus's essential characteristics are distinguished. Modern philosophy documents that human beings are paradoxical, contradictory beings and subject to complicated definitions. This analysis is based on the different approaches of well-known researchers, leaning on the human paradox and trying to rationalise it as much as possible. The article combines the main approaches that provide an opportunity to justify humans' philosophical essence and nature comprehensively.

*Keywords:* self-overcoming, self-recognition, the meaning of life, paradox, dual nature, human being, truth, despair, multidimensionality, anthropological.

### Introduction

The concept of “human” is a complex, multi-content, multi-layered phenomenon, and there are no unified approaches to its formalisation. In the professional literature, this problem is analysed in the context of philosophical, anthropological, sociological, economic, ethical and other worldview approaches. Within the framework of the general patterns of the development of modern civilisation, such transformations are taking place and are questioning the existence of the meaning of human life, freedom and responsibility. The trends of modern all-societal development prove that the primary dimension of the modern human being is paradox or multidimensionality.

Despite this observation, the famous anthropologist M. Scheler (1988) within the framework of the work “Human Position in the Universe” (p. 35). Almost all times have a pronounced anthropological orientation, but now is truly a time of an “anthropological renaissance”. The famous

anthropologists Lebedev and Lazarev, within the framework of their famous “Multidimensional Human: Ontological and Methodological Research” research work, it is rightly noted that the multidimensional nature of an individual cannot be presented by only one dimension of existence, for example, social, and multidimensionality is defined as the totality of all existing social relations (economic, political, legal, ideological, etc.) (Lebedev & Lazarev, 2010, pp. 28-29). In developing this point, they essentially oppose the Marxist understanding of human being interpretation, where a human was considered one-dimensional: one-dimensional individual, one-dimensional thinking, and one-dimensional society (Marcuse, 1964, p. 15). In contrast to the “lawn” nature of human beings, analysts argue that human nature is not only multidimensional but also multi-level. According to analysts, the multidimensionality of a person can be justified by at least three methodological principles:

- Interval (contextualization),
- Conceptual development,

- Conceptual consolidation.

Thus, thanks to this methodology, it is possible to complete and summarise the value present in various interpretations of human beings and nature.

The multidimensionality of human beings is manifested in that, on the one hand, as Protagoras observes, the human being is the measure of all things (Diogenes, 1986, p. 348). On the other hand, humans are interpreted as *homo sapiens*, *homo politicus*, *homo economicus*, *homo Ludens*, etc. By the way, among all these possible *homos*, *homo philosophicus* is perhaps the most complete and comprehensive (Shakaryan, 2005, p. 124).

The paradox is that the massive material growth and diversity in modern society is accompanied by the relativism of values, which contributes to the growth of social and moral-psychological dissatisfaction of the modern individual. The paradox of modern civilisational progress is expressed in the fact that along with the growth of real opportunities, there is not an increase in satisfaction but a decrease. The disproportionately high growth of ambitions accompanies the growth of real opportunities. There is a discrepancy between a human's ideas and reality, as a result of which the individual finds it challenging to adapt to radical changes, one of the influencing factors of which is the freedom he gained. The latter arises out of domestic, professional, socio-cultural and other duties and needs guidance, while the modern human being, who has reached the status of *homo Ludens*, categorically rejects any prospect of socialisation of "idleness".

In order to describe the modern human, Camus predicts what future historians will say of us. "A single sentence will suffice for modern man: he fornicated and read the papers. After that vigorous definition, the subject will be, if I may say so, exhausted" (Camus, 1956, p. 6). *Homo Ludens* challenges all previous social, moral, and political institutions, and as a result, this political life is dramatised (Huizinga, 1949, p. 56). The

contradiction, the antinomy of modern processes, is determined by the latter creating a unified civil space in society (common fashion, taste, style, etc.), while the real multidimensionality of people continues to be preserved, which proves that historical monism is violated and modern social developments are summed up in pluralist history (Barseghyan, 2022b, p. 61).

Modern socio-political changes leave fatal destruction behind them on an incredible scale. As a result, modern human beings have become sceptic because they see the shadow sides of the changes. On the one hand, human is considered ideal because they made all the classifications, and on the other hand, the consumer attitude of the individual is increasing, bringing with them universal problems.

Social systems have specific development patterns, so it is natural at all times for a human to follow specific moral values, norms, and rules. However, deviations from the intended path almost always happen, disrupting the social environment, and hindering their effective operation, development and reproduction.

According to Camus, the two world wars questioned the existence of the rational-moral human. In this context, representatives of philosophical anthropology define humans as moral beings (*homo moralis*) (Abrahamyan, 1995, p. 118). Meanwhile, societal developments prove that humanity is not only not moral being by nature but maintains moral consistency only in certain situations. In the post-war period, the shadow sides of civilisation become evident. Furthermore, a deviation from the moral assumption of society is observed, the logical consequences of which are social syndromes or "accidents" (Stepanyan, Manukyan, Tevosyan, & Iliushina, 2022, p. 117).

The problem of humans is justified based on three main paradigmatic developments. The first, chronologically, includes the new times, considered a triumphant stage of human progress.

The second period is marked on the one hand by the spread of progress, and on the other hand,

the existential crisis becomes systemic. A human is defined as a rational being, while the antilogical manifestations of modern humans become apparent, expanding the arsenal of mass extermination.

Finally, the third stage describes a person living in the post-war period who silently screams about its meaninglessness in the search for the meaning of life. As Camus (1955) notices: "We get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking" (p. 7). Regardless of the pessimistic or realistic understanding of the meaning of life, it is evident that humans are creatures of habit and routine, but at the same time, as long as they live and create, their existence will have an effect.

#### Before the Truth, Above Despair

This research chronologically covers the post-war period, which is extremely epoch-making and controversial. In almost all philosophical ages, sages have faced the problem of human nature. It is difficult to give a clear and precise definition of human, but according to the Camusian interpretation, human is the force that ultimately counterbalances both the tyrants and the gods. For the post-war human, truth loses its meaning, but it is indisputable that human truth must be preserved because human values are born out of despair (Camus, 1995, p. 32). However, Camus speaks of the depreciation of human values, which seems to be primitive pessimism.

Meanwhile, in the post-war period, every nation in the process of reevaluation seeks to comprehend the meaning of human life as a finite being. Camus' eschatology leaves no room for optimism and hope; it turns a person into "an aimless plant", but unlike an ordinary mortal who is constantly looking for culprits for the obstacles encountered on the way to self-recognition and self-overcoming, he describes the state of mind of his heroes, using nature as a mediator. Even the name of Meursault, the hero of the novel "The Stranger", translated from French, means sea and sun (mer-sol), which means hu-

man achieves self-recognition thanks to nature. There are necessary and sufficient prerequisites for despair, while there are also qualitative turns every moment, finally making it possible to fall in love with life. From time to time, to more clearly and accurately describe a person's state of mind, we rely on the canonical epistemic positions of the philosophy of science (Barseghyan, 2022a, p. 113). If we try to physically interpret the truth from the lips of Camus' characters, we can assure that there are pulling and pushing forces in reality.

A similar position is expressed by one of the modern Greek theorists, who focuses on Camus' philosophy of the absurd, asserting that human beings live life with no meaning, sense or purpose. "At the same time, Religion and Science battle each other in providing explanations, and they confute each other. Religion proposes explanations, and Science disqualifies them. On the other hand, Science cannot answer the deepest human questions that involve the purpose of human existence. It can only answer why there is life, but not what is the meaning of it" (Karavornioti, 2020, p. 6).

On the contrary, the presence of God provides a future perspective of the afterlife, which in a sense is comforting. Camus (1955) explains it by saying: "The absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation" (p. 21).

For example, love, hope, and faith are full of attractive energy. There are two strands to the philosophy of existentialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the religious and the atheistic. A. Camus is the prominent representative of the latter, but he does not consider himself an existentialist. However, both his philosophical and artistic works have a profound existentialist connotation. In the novel "The Outsider", Meursault refuses to meet the confessor frequently, insisting that he does not believe in God and does not want to reevaluate his ideas about God because, in his opinion, the matter has no importance (Camus, 2012, p. 65). Thus, through introspection and self-awareness, he speaks of the dual nature of the

human being. The duality of humans is most evident in the following dialogue from Camus' *The Plague*, when Dr Rieux, speaking to Tarrou, puts his professional duty above the behaviour of a pseudo-Christian. "I have seen too much of hospitals to relish any idea of collective punishment. But, as you know, Christians sometimes say that sort of thing without really thinking it. They are better than they seem" (Camus, 2021, p. 61).

Camus, staying true to his linguistic style in the novel "The Outsider", justifies the professional commitment of the prosecutor with the logical consistency of speech. "He concluded by saying that his duty was painful but that he would carry it out resolutely. He stated that I had no place in a society whose most fundamental rules I ignored and that I could not appeal to the same human heart whose elementary response I knew nothing of" (Camus, 2012, p. 102). The responsibility of realising the collective debt does not leave the Dr Rieux in any situation too: "if he believed in an all-powerful God, he would cease curing the sick and leave that to Him. Nevertheless, no one in the world believed in a God of that sort, not even Paneloux, who believed that he believed in such a God. Moreover, this was proved that no one ever threw himself on Providence completely. In this respect, Rieux believed he was moving through the right path, fighting against creation as he found it" (Camus, 2021, p. 62).

A human with two faces cannot love another without loving himself. Camus argues for the duality and paradox of humans almost in all his novels, the epitome of intellectual decorum. "However that may be, after prolonged research on myself, I brought out the fundamental duplicity of the human being. Then I realised, as a result of delving into my memory, that modesty helped me to shine, humility to conquer, and virtue to oppress. I used to wage war by peaceful means and eventually used to achieve, through disinterested means, everything I desired. Nevertheless, the reason for my disinterestedness was even more discreet: I longed to be forgotten in order to

be able to complain to myself. Once my solitude was thoroughly proved, I could surrender to the charms of virile self-pity" (Camus, 1956, p. 27).

First, philosophy is decoded in style: unique linguistic and stylistic solutions distinguish each philosopher. Camus is no exception to this. As was mentioned, Camus is a representative of intellectual decorum style. In both of his works, "The Outsider" and "The Fall", he delves into seemingly insignificant details, which, as we will see later, are necessary for a complete description of the psychological portrait of his characters.

For instance, Meursault sitting in the convict's chair, notices: "The only thing is, he did not say anything about the funeral, and I thought that that was a glaring omission in his summation. However, all the long speeches and the interminable days and hours people had spent talking about my soul left me with the impression of a colorless swirling river making me dizzy." (Camus, 1995, p. 104), which proves that Camus' literary-artistic style is not a set of meaningless long sentences, but the sentences are meant to reveal the paradoxical nature of a person lost at the crossroads of civilisations.

In another novel, "The Plague", when the doctor Rieux did everything for the journalist to reach his love when the gates of the city opened, and he could go, the journalist refused, insisting that he could not be happy in isolation, he could not build his happiness in a treacherous and toxic society (Camus, 2021, p. 111). Almost all anthropological analysis ends with the fact that human is mortal, and only in borderline situations does it become clear whether human remains true to themselves or not.

Such borderline situations have the ability to repeat themselves over and over again, for example, covid-19, during which people realise the meaning of Camus' "Plague" written 100 years before (Tuffuor & Payne, 2017, p. 402). Before the plague, patients looked up to Dr Rieux as a saviour. Furthermore, while escorting him down the corridor, he squeezed his arm as a gesture of gratitude. It was flattering, but as the pandemic turned out to be, it was dangerous flattery. Dur-

ing the height of the epidemic, on the contrary, he presented himself, accompanied by soldiers, as empty as these unfortunate patients and as deserving of the shivers of pity (Camus, 2021, p. 93). Imbued with infinite humanism, Dr Rieux, fulfilling his professional duty, takes an anthropological turn towards justice. He sees things as they are, that is, with hateful and shameful justice.

Death sharpens our emotions and, at the same time, awakens a great sense of responsibility. Realising that a person is mortal, people endlessly delay living. "Letters to a German friend" generalise not only the paradoxical positions of the two thinkers but also the independent philosophers pondering the meaning of life, death and immortality, trying to outline the ways out for a person in an existential impasse. Overcoming pessimism, we conclude that the human world does have meaning. Moreover, it is impermissible to define good and evil at will.

At the same time, it must be assumed that the absence of all human and divine morality will bring with it values that rule the animal world: violence and deception. A person must establish justice to face eternal injustice, to create happiness, as a protest against the world of misfortunes (Camus, 1995, p. 29). Humans are always looking for happiness outside of themselves, whether after them or inside them, while with the accelerating pace of time, people are unable to give in to self-recognition. The positive meaning of the pandemic was also that there was a global discharge and humans found time to look inside themselves.

#### Existential Crisis and the Ways to Overcome It

Thus, it can be concluded that despair should not be turned into insanity; instead of destroying human creations, it is necessary to preserve and pass them on to generations. Rejecting the universal despair and despondency of an afflicted world, people must rediscover their solidarity and overcome a passive attitude of fighting

against an unjust fate. Equally intelligent, the two thinkers who are representatives of different nations learned different moral lessons from the same principles. Nevertheless, one common thing is to find ways to overcome the existential crisis; for example, it means not to distort the person and to give him all the possibilities of justice that only humans can understand. That considers treating a human only as an aim but never as a means (Apresyan, 2019, p. 115).

Choosing justice is to be true to the world and yourself. Perhaps the human world does not make sense globally, in which justice also has no place, but it is evident that the truth exists, and our task is to find necessary and sufficient arguments for fighting against fate. A human has no other arguments than his being, and it is the human being who needs to be saved if we want to clarify our ideas about the meaning of life. This is possible if we give humans all the opportunities for justice, which only he is capable of perceiving.

Another way to overcome the existential crisis is to discover new opportunities and prospects for human self-realisation. How much can each finite existence self-realise in a limited period while not violating the ideal of versatile and harmonious human development?

#### Conclusion

Thus, the article's analyses allow us to conclude that the nature of a person is multidimensional, multi-level and multi-structural. Conflicting processes characterise the modern civilised reality. On the one hand, due to the development of economic, political and socio-cultural spheres, the emergence of new types of communication and the expansion of social ties, the social world becomes more complete, unified and homogeneous as a result of which modern challenges also become universal, on the other hand, the decentralisation tendencies of individual and national life, the possibilities of self-sufficient existence and mosaicism of subcultural "worlds" strengthen the processes of confusion and separation of

individual societies. However, the whole development process of civilisation is paradoxical precisely because, as a rule, the principle of the inconsistency of social ideals and their results works. In addition to goals and ideals of obvious social importance, there may also be latent, implicit goals, the analysis of which inconsistency is not only of great cognitive importance but also causes paradoxes that make the social environment alternative.

In order to be oriented in modern society, it is necessary to be able to face possible challenges, which are both materialistic and spiritualistic. Modern human-made civilisation, which has given a paradoxical nature to the autonomous-sovereign essence of a person, is one of the fundamental challenges of our world. It is necessary to keep up with the changes of the digital age, which have made the acquisition, processing, storage and transfer of knowledge and information more accessible. However, as stated by A. Camus, art, literature, and philosophy are like a drug that develops in an individual an intellectual addiction, and modern “spiritual” values play the role of a pain reliever.

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