Camus' *Stranger* Rendition of Heidegger's *What is Metaphysics?*

Abstract I — The Prosecutor in Camus' novel claims to have peered into Meursault's soul but found nothing human in there. But the nothingness attests to Meursault embodying something like a musical instrument through which the world plays its music. Meursault does not initiate anything that in the presence of standing conditions causes a change in environment—aside from physical needs which are also immensely flexible and dependent on existing circumstances. He himself constitute the standing conditions awaiting external factors to cause any change. Meursault's radical indifference and acceptance towards the world and authenticity (his speech and his deed are perfectly coordinated) (his thought and his speech are the same except situation where out of consideration for others he keeps silent) indicates that he has no sickness unto death undergoing life or in anticipation of his death. What the prosecutor announces amounts to Meursault's existence preceding his essence (given his openness to the world despite his acute rationality and understanding of his environment). But if existence precedes essence, the method precedes existence. He roams the world already equipped with a method.

Abstract II — What is something that it is not a being? The question implicates and necessitates that there be something that it is not a being but that into which beings as a whole in one's existence slipped into in sickness unto death ——— Meursault brings to consciousness (of the chaplain) the sickness unto death separated from absurdity by a transparent sheet. Something to which he himself was not susceptible out of his own life-affirmative reasoning. In the

Disclaimer — This text is awful and a waste of your time. Thank you for your patience though and good luck in making sense of it.

A Reconstruction of Heidegger's *What Is Metaphysics*

1 — One possible gateway to the topic of Metaphysics (as opposed to science) is the question "what is the nothing?". For science wishes to know nothing about the *nothing* but any metaphysical interrogation including the question about the nothing "must be posed as a whole and from the essential position of the existence [Dasein] that questions." "In the altogether unsettling experience of our hovering in anxiety where there is *nothing* to hold onto, pure Dasein is all that is still there."

2 — The question "what is the nothing?" anticipates an answer to the effect that the nothing is such and such and therefore is posited

as a being—making the question and the answer appear inherently absurd.

3 — The question "what is `x`?" seeks or anticipates at least one additional predicate which is true of `x` of which at least one predicate was known pre-inquiry to be true of `x`.

4 — The pre-inquiry nothing of the question "what is the nothing?" is the negation of the totality of beings. The question anticipates an extra predicate by locating it in a realm beyond the realm of logic—the nothing is more original than and the origin of negation (which is a specific act of intellect).

5 — We cannot think of the nothing in the sense that we can never comprehend absolutely the ensemble of beings in themselves non-temporally at once then negate what we have imagined in our thought.

6 — The metaphysical inquiry "Where shall we seek the nothing?" is grammatical normalization of the question "what is the other predicate that could possibly be true of that which is the negation of the totality of beings?" The question is possible only if whereabouts of the nothing is revealed by a temporal unfolding. The possibility is not too far-fetched. Thinking about the nothing is caused by slipping away of beings as a whole. Slipping away is a temporal unfolding.

7 — We do find ourselves stationed in the midst of beings that are revealed as a whole. (I) When we cling to this or that particular being the object of one's thought is the world (beings) and oneself mixed as a whole in a unity. (II) When we are not actually busy with things or ourselves this "as a whole" overcomes us for example in boredom, then the object of one's thought is the world (beings) in unity at a relative distance from oneself. (III) In anxiety where all beings and we ourselves sink into indifference the object of one's thought consists of the venturing of the unity into the nothing—"beings as a whole become superfluous. The nothing makes itself known with beings and in beings expressly as a slipping away of the whole."

8 — We can think of the nothing only in the sense that we can think of things that point to the nothing—anxiety induces the slipping away of beings as a whole (thus not the kind of anxiety in the face of this or that particular thing). The nothing, the negation of the totality of beings, is a being only in the capacity of structuring the totality of beings.

9 — "The nothing reveals itself in anxiety. Anxiety is no kind of grasping of the nothing. No kind of annihilation of the ensemble of beings as such takes place in anxiety." In anxiety occurs a shrinking back before the abyss of nothingness or indeterminateness (sickness unto death). "The nothing is essentially repelling. The repulsion is itself as such a parting gesture toward beings that are submerging as a whole."

10 — "In the malaise of anxiety we often try to shatter the vacant stillness with compulsive talk which only proves the presence of the nothing. That anxiety reveals the nothing man himself immediately demonstrates when anxiety has dissolved. In the lucid vision sustained by fresh remembrance we must say that ··· the nothing itself—as such—was there. ··· We usually lose ourselves altogether among beings in a certain way. The more we turn toward beings in our preoccupations the less we let beings as a whole slip away as such and the more we turn away from the nothing. ··· Anxiety is there. It is only sleeping. Its breath quivers perpetually through Dasein, only slightly in those who are jittery, imperceptibly in the "Oh, yes" and the "Oh, no" of men of affairs; but most readily in the reserved, and most assuredly in those who are basically daring. But those daring ones are sustained by that on which they expend themselves in order thus to preserve a final greatness in existence. The anxiety of those who are daring cannot be opposed to joy or even to the comfortable enjoyment of tranquilized bustle. It stands outside all such opposition."

11 — Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is a vivid example of the imperceptibility. Meursault in Camus' *Straneger* represents greatness in existence. *Ubermensch* is total immunity to sickness unto death.

Excerpts from Camus' *The Stargner*

> [My boss] was planning to open an office in Paris ··· he wanted to know how I felt about going there ··· I said yes but that really it was all the same to me. Then he asked me if I wasn't interested in a change of life. I said that people never change their lives, that in any case one life was **as good as** another and that I wasn't dissatisfied with mine here at all. He looked upset ··· so I went back to work. I would rather not have upset him, but I couldn't see any reason to change my life.

12 — That one is free from one's preferential predispositions—that in any case one life as good as another—enables one to conform seamlessly to external circumstances and to the world. Even if these external circumstances are primarily pertinent to preferences of others. Total **preferential impartiality** is an extreme measure one takes in order to forgo decisions and shun rationalizations required for them. Decisions implicate agency and therefor are subject to interpretation and evaluation. If one does nothing and gains nothing by doing nothing one is not committing **hermeneutic sacrificial**.

> ··· Marie came by to see me and asked me if I wanted to marry her. I said it didn't make any difference to me and that we could if she wanted to. Then she wanted to know if I loved her. I answered the same way I had the last time, that it didn't mean anything but that I probably didn't love her. "So why

> marry me, then?" she said. I explained to her that it didn't really matter and that if she wanted to, we could get married. Besides, she was the one who was doing the asking and all I was saying was yes. Then she pointed out that marriage was a serious thing. I said, "No." She stopped talking for a minute and looked at me without saying anything. Then she spoke. She just wanted to know if I would have accepted the same proposal from another woman, with whom I was involved in the same way. I said, "Sure." Then she said she wondered if she loved me, and there was no way I could know about that.

13 — It makes no difference. No seriousness in things and conventions in the presence of truly human relations. One defers to the other even on matters appearing critical to others. It only appears critical. One even refuses to probe intentions and emotions of the others.

14 — For Meursault to be Christ $\cdots$ love is to be substituted by its negation in the sense of being purged of all **sentimentality** and in the sense of indifference to the point of constant **deferral** to reasons of others and external factors —— One does not even need to love one's neighbor. What matters is reason in accordance to nature but love does not mean anything:

> $\cdots$ At one time or another all normal people have wished their loved ones were dead. Here the lawyer interrupted me and he seemed very upset. I explained to him, however, that my nature was such that my **physical needs** often got in the way of my feelings.

15 — Even if love ever meant anything and evoked any feeling or bore any significance at all it is only secondary to one's physical needs. sentimental values are utterly futile.

> $\cdots$ The prosecutor said that he had peered into [my soul] and that he had found nothing $\cdots$ that I didn't have a soul and that **nothing** human, not one of the moral principles that govern men's hearts, was within my reach. "Of course," he added, "we cannot blame him for this. We cannot complain that he lacks what it was not in his power to acquire. But here in this court the wholly negative virtue of tolerance must give way to the sterner but loftier virtue of justice. Especially when the **emptiness** of a man's heart becomes, as we find it has in this man, an abyss threatening to swallow up society.

16 — The prosecutor found *nothing* in Meursault's soul. What about this nothingness? Meursault has desires (physical needs) that shapes his motivations but has no motivations that shapes his desires. For example he does not try to "shatter the vacant stillness with compulsive talk". Most of the time he does not say anything because he does not have anything to add.

17 — Meursault does not initiate anything that in the presence of standing conditions causes a change in environment—-aside from physical needs which are also immensely flexible and dependent on existing circumstances. He himself constitute the standing conditions awaiting external factors to cause any change.

18 — The prosecutor accuses Meursault of not being able to acquire human essence, that the lack of which threatens to swallow up society. For Meursault existence precedes essence by prioritizing tolerance over justice and by acceptance. Unless he has a reason to withdraw, he accepts offers of others be it friendship, romance, intimacy or relocation. "Dasein means being held out into the nothing. " Rational or motivational nothingness or at least light-weightedness: Meursault has no reason beyond physical needs and tolerance towards external circumstances.

> ··· The presiding judge questioned me calmly and even, it seemed to me, with a hint of cordiality. Once again he had me state my name, age, date and place of birth, and although it irritated me, I realized it was only natural, because it would be a very serious thing to try the wrong man.

19 — Even things that irritated him and there were apparently such things, Meursault still easily manages to neutralize them with his reasoning. He does not even find a reason to defend himself to the public. His last words were only extracted from him by the persistent and blind chaplain.

> ··· And I felt ready to live it all again too. As if that blind rage had washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, in that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world. Finding it so much like myself. I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again.

20 — Excursus: [In the film *A Man for All Seasons*, right before the execution scene, nature is depicted at its joyful indifference featuring sunshine, bees and flowers.] ["the Dude" in the film *The Big Lebowski* is reminiscent of Meursault.][Gerasim in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is reminiscent of Meursault or Leon in *Leon* or McMurphy in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* or Benjamin in *Animal Farm*]

21 — Awaiting execution, Meursault finds happiness through reason the same way he had found it in freedom. The piety has descended on Meursault and not vice versa.

"Verily, there are chaste ones from their very nature; they are gentler of heart, and laugh better and more often than you. They laugh also at chastity, and ask: what is chastity? Is chastity not folly? But the folly came to us, and not we to it. We offered that guest harbor and heart: now it dwells with us—let it stay as long as it will!" — Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*

Excursus I — Existence, Essence and Identity

22 — According to Ibn-Sina essence precedes existence. Meursault acquires essence through existence, through roaming in the world. [Mulla Sadra Thesis of *Trans-substantial Motion* may be described the phenomenon of accidental properties morphing into essential only as the outcome of temporal existence]

23 — Arvo Pärt: it is enough when a **single note** is beautifully played. That is my goal. Time and timelessness are connected. I could compare my music to white light which contains all colors.] Not only Meursault is embodiment of essence-acquiring existence but also of **minimal** acquisition of essence by playing a single note, by incorporating the entire spectrum of interpretation into the unity that is reflected by the minimal subjectivity / no preferential tendencies beyond basic physical needs, tolerance, acceptance of and deferral to the blade of external

24 — And most crucially the minimal acquisition of essence is to embrace death.

[Saeb Tabrizi: I sit under the blade with such fearlessness that the executioner forgets about the thought of asking for money demanded for the sake of quick relief].

25 — Given the sanctity of physical and body and nature, one unites with the external by perpetually purging oneself of and avoiding essential (historical, political, cultural), by radical historical forgetfulness, by jettisoning historical identity but forgoing new identities. Meursault does not care about adopting this or that identity. He floats in the external existing natural structure. Since life is too short, since everybody tastes death anyways then who cares anyways:

—— Sohrab Sepehri: My lineage perhaps reaches to a prostitute in the city of Bukhara.

Excursus II — Moral Luck = Moral Simplicity

26 — According to Matthew Ward: "Despite appearances, though, neither Camus nor Meursault ever tried to make things simple for themselves. Indeed, in the mind of a moralist, simplification is tantamount to immorality, and Meursault and Camus are each moralists in their own way."—Meursault is the sacrificial before hegemony of moral simplification for the sake of manufacturing cultural consent.