

The Specter of Narration and Hypocrisy in Albert Camus' *The Fall*

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explored what Sartre referred to as Camus' 'most beautiful and least understood novel,' *The Fall*. As a methodology, I applied textual hermeneutics to immerse in the text and got out of it what I deemed as the crux of its existentialism as founded in the two-in-one leitmotif of narration and hypocrisy. In Clamence, there was a profound need – a specter that lingered and haunted – to narrate his life, especially the fall that triggered it and the judgment that allowed him to do it. I argued then that the nature of the text reflected a deep sense of narration that stemmed from hypocrisy, in which Clamence branded himself as 'judge-penitent' – what such a life entails, how it freed him, and how it mirrored life-callings or vocations in all walks of life.

Keywords: Camus, existentialism, hypocrisy, laughter, narration, *The Fall*

INTRODUCTION

Specters, Falling and Hypocrisy

It was a heyday in the time of Marx to broadcast that there was a specter of communism haunting Europe, but the specter that haunted in *the Fall* was another one. It is not simply the opposite or the anti-communism where Camus took an ambivalent association (Judt, 1998). Instead,

it was Camus' stepping aside of this specter as seen in his dislike when he saw the 'mirror of his own discomfort,' a kind of falling short always in confronting what is expected. Camus conceived of a cosmopolitan or rootless existence, seeing life absurdly as an exile and the futility of grounding oneself in a firm position in it (Judt, 1998). In *La Chute* (The Fall), one can reflect the life of Camus in Jean-Baptiste Clamence, the main character:

Camus took his own failings as he saw them, generalized them across the spectrum of Parisian intellectual life, and then subjected them to

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cruel inspection and interrogation in the manner of his own intellectual enemies. By the end of the tale it is no longer easy to distinguish between Camus/Clamence and his/their antagonists, much as Camus himself could no longer always see clearly which was his actual self and which the one with whom he sought a passing identification. (Judt, 1998, p. 104).

Albert Camus' soul-baring character in Clamence represents duplicity in the fate of a successful individual, the spotlight, as it was, projected but not without a shadow. In *The Fall*, Clamence in his zenith in Paris as a lawyer saw individuals as projections of shadowy outlines. He described for example how their lives were described as shadows, or more accurately, silhouettes without a subject and thereby always passing. Clamence analogized that "Paris is a real *trompel'oeil*, a magnificent stage-setting inhabited by four million silhouettes" (Camus, 1991, p. 5). It is noticeable to point that the specter that represents the failures of humanity signifies the inherent essence, or lack thereof, of modern man's inhibitions and irresponsibility. In the novel, Camus spoke as Clamence when he generalized the human condition in modernity. "A single sentence will suffice for modern man: he fornicated and read the papers" (Camus, 1991, p. 6). And this does not exempt Camus when he "reduced himself to silence by his refusal to take sides in the Algerian

imbroglio and thus stood apart from the most divisive and morally wrenching crisis of postwar France" (Judt, 1998, p. 21). This gives an ambivalent account on how Camus in Clamence managed to speak of an existentialism that tried to explore a prosperous life when as he spoke, the specter of his duplicity manifested.

This specter of duplicity roams around the text, a perplexity held at bay in the identity of Clamence. *La Chute* (The Fall) reveals an ironic confession from a man who spoke about justice to a man who prefers something else from it (Foley, 2008; O'Brien, 1970). For Ellison (2007), *La Chute* is an 'enigmatic text' that cannot be condensed to simple representations, a text that requires the reader to work. Maurice Blanchot,

In the course of a highly perceptive essay on *La Chute*, refers to Camus's text as *cette confession dédaigneuse*, a paradoxical designation for a text that pretends to be the disclosure of a single and particular life, but which is in fact an infinitely evasive *alibi* that forever forestalls an identification of its true source. (Blanchot, 1971, p. 231; Newmark, 2008, p. 108, Italics mine).

That is to say, the withholding of identification is terminal as well as opaque. It is no wonder that Sartre himself refers to *La Chute* as "perhaps the most beautiful" but also "the least understood" (Aronson, 2004, p. 5).

METHOD

Although *The Fall* (Camus, 1991) took its cue from a Christian terminology following the Genesis account, as in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, it also pinpointed to the moment that a literal specter, a woman dressed in black in the railings of a bridge at midnight, fell in the water. This happened ironically when rain was also falling. The scene was vividly narrated by Clamence when after valorizing himself as a successful man, he finally took courage in expressing his very own specter: the hypocrisy he could not withstand but narrated. To quote at length the *fall*:

It was an hour past midnight, a fine rain was falling, a drizzle rather, that scattered the few people on the streets. I had just left a mistress, who was surely already asleep. I was enjoying that walk, a little numbed, my body calmed and irrigated by a flow of blood gentle as the falling rain. On the bridge I passed behind a figure leaning over the railing and seeming to stare at the river. On closer view, I made out a slim young woman dressed in black. The back of her neck, cool and damp between her dark hair and coat collar, stirred me. But I went on after a moment's hesitation. At the end of the bridge I followed the guys toward Saint-Michel, where I lived. I had already gone some fifty yards when I heard the sound—which, despite the distance, seemed dreadfully loud in the midnight

silence—of a body striking the water. I stopped short, but without turning around. Almost at once I heard a cry, repeated several times, which was going downstream; then it suddenly ceased. The silence that followed, as the night suddenly stood still, seemed interminable. I wanted to run and yet didn't stir. I was trembling, I believe from cold and shock. I told myself that I had to be quick and I felt an irresistible weakness steal over me. I have forgotten what I thought then. "Too late, too far ..." or something of the sort. I was still listening as I stood motionless. Then, slowly under the rain, I went away. I informed no one. (Camus, 1991, p. 23).

This scene disturbed Clamence and imbalanced the equilibrium of his affluent life. For the methodology of this paper, I exposed this specter as the two-in-one leitmotif of narration and hypocrisy. To do that, I employed textual hermeneutics to immerse in the text and got out of it what I deemed as the crux of its existentialism as found in the two-in-one leitmotif of narration and hypocrisy. Underlying the presupposition of this leitmotif was the epitome of laughter as the in-built two-facedness stemming from one's existence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are several vantage points from which the story can be positioned. The existing literature on the novel explored

the concept of innocence (Viggiani, 1960), guilt (Demeterio, 2008; Royce, 1966), and despair (Wheeler, 1982). All of which are clear pathways by which one can immerse well in the text. The theme of innocence dispels the enduring dignity of man whence after the fall, he can no longer view himself as the immaculate image out of the blissful state from which he derived his honor. Clamence said, “Tell me, *mon cher compatriote*, doesn’t shame sting a little? It does? Well, it’s probably shame, then, or one of those silly emotions that have to do with honor” (Camus, 1991, p. 22). The exposition of guilt suggests a very important distinction in the acts that warrant such honor, seeing the crucial element when after spending enough time recovering from a mistake, it still resonates in the entirety of one’s life. Clamence says that “we cannot assert the innocence of anyone, whereas we can state with certainty the guilt of all” (Camus, 1991, p. 34). Despair too, the cessation of hope, seems to be a viable disposition in the idea that it would always be too late to do anything over one’s guilt and lost innocence.

The initial characteristic of this hypocrisy was pictured by Ellison (2007, p. 180) that “in the universe of *La Chute* a mask seems merely to hide more masks.” The paradox is precisely when in the supposed revelation of identity, there is still another façade standing in the way. And this occurs almost in a way as if hypocrisy begets itself. Clamence pointed this out when he said in his introductory conversation with the reader that his “profession is double...

like the human being” (Camus, 1991, p. 6), implying that the nature of man was a two-sided face. He said, “that’s the way man is, *cher monsieur*. He has two faces: he can’t love without self-love” (Camus, 1991, p. 13). The deeper level here is that it is not just about the physiognomy but also about being forever split in life that is at work. In this sense, men are living in a double – or in Clamence’s words: “they are here and elsewhere” (Camus, 1991, p. 7). Clamence’s existence finds a closer description of an unquenchable status: “I was at ease in everything, to be sure, but at the same time satisfied with nothing” (Camus, 1991, p. 12).

The most explicit formulation of Camus regarding hypocrisy finds exposition in Clamence’s assertion that “No man is a hypocrite in his pleasures” (Camus, 1991, p. 22). Although Clamence asked whether the words were his or borrowed from someone else, the formulation still struck through the essence of what he was trying to say. The same formulation however is, to consider his borrowing, a phrase originally found in Samuel Johnson. It is explained in James Boswell’s biography of Johnson that “the real character of a man was found out by his amusements” (Boswell, 1833, p. 392). Therein lies an entry into the enigma that hypocrisy holds. Hypocrisy touches the psychoanalytical nature of desire and paradoxically reveals man’s vocation. Such a paradox of vocation, however, necessitates its comical calling – the calling of judgment *as the specter that laughs.*

**'Let Them be a Fan of Laughter':
Judgment as the Specter of Narration**

Plato wrote that in the training of the guardians, Socrates ironically avered of a serious subjunctive: "let them not be a fan of laughter" (Plato, 1968/1991, p. 66). Bolaños (2017) expounded on the responsible use of poetry and fiction in Plato's *The Republic* and *The Laws* and argued on a critical assessment of the roles narratives played in the education of rulers. This seriousness is, however, a spot for a joke when Clamence noticed that the reader laughed at the subjunctive (Camus, 1991, p. 5). Laughter in *La Chute* is Clamence's constant reminder that not only is his disposition a joke after the fall on that night, but that it is also the specter of hypocrisy, the principal calling of something that he cannot escape. The calling is ultimately the judgment of his life that befalls on him. In the novel, laughter is becoming the inevitable consequence of his doing or undoing of his life, forever seated at the trial of judgment. It reverses Clamence's perspective of his successful life and brings into it a crisis from the fall of the woman – the suicide he neglected. Quite evidently, "in Clamence's case, falling relates to the important and pervasive theme of laughter in the novel" (Ellison, 2007, p. 186). His pristine state inexorably faces demise and puts himself at the verdict of his life.

During his Parisian *Eden* state, Clamence's life reflects a lifestyle of evading any form of sentencing: "it's a matter of dodging judgment, of avoiding being forever judged without ever having a sentence pronounced" (Camus, 1991, p.

25). This practice of avoiding judgment is done swiftly. It can be described as a way of drawing attention to oneself in the high ground to belittle or assume the character of a magistrate, playing judge and jury over others. Clamence noticed this lifestyle when he said that "people hasten to judge in order not to be judged themselves" (Camus, 1991, p. 26). Incidentally, this makes a lot of room for the laughter that the nature of judgment propounds. The status of judgment as a *conditio sine qua non* hits everyone and without escape the whole notion of integrity and authenticity. In the text, the spectrality of narration finds haunting expression in the laughter of judgment that has followed Clamence.

I straightened up and was about to light a cigarette, the cigarette of satisfaction, when, at that very moment, a laugh burst out behind me. Taken by surprise, I suddenly wheeled around; there was no one there. I stepped to the railing; no barge or boat. I turned back toward the island and, again, heard the laughter behind me, a little farther off as if it were going downstream. I stood there motionless. The sound of the laughter was decreasing, but I could still hear it distinctly behind me, come from nowhere unless from the water. (Camus, 1991, p. 14).

Here, judgment has the final laugh not because it takes form in legalities and normative rulings in society, but because

it torments like a specter those who have committed their favorite sin, their Achilles' heel. In short, judgment targets those who also experienced personal falls, which is quite interestingly a laughable thing. Ellison writes that "to fall in front of one's fellow humans is to lose face, to cease being superior and to become the mere object of someone else's amusement" (Ellison, 2007, p. 186). Clamence realized that the true spectral nature of judgment did not reside in law courts but in existence itself. As he said, "the keenest of human torments is to be judged without law. Yet we *are* in that torment" (Camus, 1991, p. 36; *Italics mine*). The very immanence of the life that one lives is the very locus where judgment takes place. The conscious reality here is that judgment is neither a thing of the past, a specter of yesterday nor of the future, when it signals some enigma befalling one's fate. If Camus noted that in Nietzsche nihilism became conscious (Camus, 1951/1992, p. 65), in *La Chute*, the existentialism of judgment that forever traps the subject into hypocrisy becomes fully alive in the present and is becoming conscious. It is to this definitive frame that Clamence exhorted: "don't wait for the Last Judgment. It takes place every day" (Camus, 1991, p. 34).

The futile exercise of evading judgment is an option not unconsidered by Clamence. In fact, it was his reactionary move before. He wants, as it were, to sidestep from the laughter that mocks his existence. He says, "in order to forestall the laughter, I dreamed of hurling myself into the general derision [...] a question of dodging judgment. I

wanted to put the laughters on my side, or at least to put myself on their side" (Camus, 1991, p. 29). Realizing the vanity lying at the kernel of judgment, Clamence finally woke up with the thought that even a God-incarnate – Christ – must have grasped his very own divine hypocrisy. Clamence exposed how Christ knew that under his name, Herod's license to slay innocent children operated and thereby reserved the guilt to his innocence. The remaining option for such interplay was for the incarnate to hasten judgment for himself, that is, to take the crucifixion. Clamence took this role of judging and assigned it to man in existence: "wherefore, since we are all judges, we are all guilty before one another, all Christs in our mean manner, one by one crucified, always without knowing" (Camus, 1991, p. 36).

Confronted perpetually by this specter that laughs within, the enduring judgment that falls to anyone, Clamence reexamined the possible temperament of allowance. One can allow oneself to laugh with one's inner laughter – this calling and mockery of judgment. He ventured on to another antic, which was that "it was better to cover everything, judgment, and esteem, with the cloak of ridicule" (Camus, 1991, p. 29). The next move then was not to succumb to Plato's warning. Ironically, this reverses also the idea that essence precedes existence – that the ideals of a pipedream Republic be set as preconditions to the lives of future rulers. However, it is precisely the opposite that is becoming more vital for Clamence to precede essence with existence. The

contrary is that to exist is to accept the opposite subjunctive – ‘let them *be* a fan of laughter.’

Tragically, this can be viewed in an anxiety of sorts. Clamence’s way of letting himself be a fan of laughter, to live with the specter that laughs with him in sitting on the courts of judgment, is to take judgment in a form of narration. A “ridiculous fear,” he says, “pursued me, in fact: one could not die without having confessed all one’s lies” (Camus, 1991, p. 28). He is not comfortable in dying with his own hypocrisy so he now intends to share it as a felt need in opening himself through others’ gazes. And this addressing of the need is not easy: “oh, I don’t feel any self-satisfaction, believe me, in telling you this” (Camus, 1991, p. 22).

The kind of narration that Clamence does is not that of an old man reveling his experience as a sage advice. Instead, he speaks as a narrator who even though is not accustomed to share everything, accepts the need that it must be the only way of getting that one shot of becoming protagonist again in his own story. Usually, “the narrator has knowledge denied to the protagonist of how the story goes on” (Lloyd, 1993, p. 15) but Clamence in the novel is not only the main character that one can conceive as the protagonist. Clamence is also the narrator who knew exactly everything from the start, and who reserves some information until he dramatically unfolds the details reserved only for heroes that will triumph in the end. Incidentally, this gives him the warrant to give access to the laughing specter and to allow him to laugh with it. Here, narration is

“an important means by which these [images and memories] are rescued from oblivion and from the unconscious” (Harrison, 2004, p. 130). In such a sense, he is becoming the focal character of his story. Currie says that “the fact that the narrator tells us something that a character does know gives us only very weak grounds for concluding that this character *is* the focal character, if there is one” (Currie, 2010, p. 128). But Clamence *does* know his character and narrates it quite eloquently as if he is convinced of his being talkative.

For Ellison (2007, p. 182), the “narrative structure of *La Chute* is circular. Clamence has related a story that can now be repeated by his listener, who, in telling his story, can invite another person to confess, ad infinitum.” In other words, when he accepts the specter to laugh with it, he places his own judgment in a consoling position by possibly eliciting confession to another man who is also caught in this complex arena of spectral judgments. Camus,

recognizes that cruelty is never very far from laughter, since both laughter and cruelty derive from the superiority of one person over another. As Clamence progresses towards his final status as judge-penitent, he understands that he can regain his mastery over others by laughing at himself. (Ellison, 2007, p. 186).

The double nature of man’s duplicity makes it possible for the laughter to emit a sense of cruelty so that the laughter

of judgment is passed to another other than oneself. That is to say, penitence “as practised by Clamence is merely a step towards the attainment of judgmental superiority” (Ellison, 2007, p.186). In the text, Clamence already experiences this superiority during his profession: “My profession satisfied most happily that vocation for summits... It set me above the judge whom I judged in turn... Just weigh this, *cher monsieur*, I lived with impunity” (Camus, 1991, p. 11). However, this kind of superiority slowly descends after it reaches its peak. Clamence understands that his impunity is merely “ephemeral” since the same feeling is also experienced by good criminals who want to kill just to be in the headlines. For Clamence, “to achieve notoriety, it is enough, after all, to kill one’s concierge. Unhappily, this is usually an ephemeral reputation” (Camus, 1991, p. 11). The remaining thing to do is to confront the existential hypocrisy that subsists in the vocation of man.

The Vocation of a Hypocrite

Davidson (2004) noted of the important discussions of hypocrisy in Arendt (1978, 1963/1990), Cavell (1984), Currie (2010), Grant (1997), Harrison (2004), Lloyd (1993), and Shklar (1984). Arendt is worth mentioning here when she took notice of Camus in a letter to her husband: “Yesterday, I saw Camus: he is, undoubtedly, the best man now in France” (as cited in Isaac, 1992, p. 17). The relevance of Camus is also the relevance of Clamence, but as was maintained above, the duality of faces

portrayed by the Camus/Clamence identity is glaring at the direction of duplicity. The fact that it can be applied to anyone makes it a general concern, a human concern. Clamence acknowledged this even in the government of his time in Paris: “Paris was already at dinner ... I was happy. The day had been good: ... a brilliant improvisation in the company of several friends on the hardheartedness of our governing class and the hypocrisy of our leaders” (Camus, 1991, p. 14).

Therein lies the extent to which the scope of hypocrisy reaches: hypocrisy intersects the aspects not just of one individual’s life but also the whole of economic, aesthetic, and socio-political life. The economic aspect is argued in the guise of a proclivity. For Weaver (2008, p. 3), hypocrisy “may be a natural, enduring, and even necessary feature of Bank life,” giving the license to withhold certain information about the operation of the money institution. For Walter Benjamin, religion and its structures are replaced with money and its institutions in capitalism, so that money is the new god and the banks are its new temples. If this is so, then the assertion that religion is ‘hypocritical’ – that it reserves certain absolute truths to itself and its magisterial interpretation of them while at the same time justifying its faulting and erring application to them in real life – is also a viable analogy to pass its feature to banks as hypocritical.

In theatrical performances, one is necessitated to wear a mask to proceed with the acting. This historically puts forward the idea that acting as “hypocrisy was a constant

in moral pamphleteering in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England and France” (Wikander, 2002, p. xi). It goes into the dimension of telegenic or theatrical life and it also incorporates the dimension of socio-political life. Says Clamence,

It's not at all surprising that minds are confused and that one of my friends, an atheist when he was a model husband, got converted when he became an adulterer! Ah, the little sneaks, play actors, hypocrites—and yet so touching! Believe me, they all are, even when they set fire to heaven. Whether they are atheists or churchgoers, Muscovites or Bostonians, all Christians from father to son. (Camus, 1991, p. 41).

That is to say, acting is not only carried out in theatres but also in the roles one plays in society. The understanding is that “there is no way of breaking out from the hypocrisy of political life, and all attempts to find such an escape route are a delusion” (Runciman, 2008 p. 196). In political life, it is not just the masks of comedy or tragedy that one is inclined to wear, but real masks – varied and relative – as if changing and dancing with identities. In this sense, it is keen for Oscar Wilde to write in his letter *De Profundis* that “most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation” (Carabine, 1999, p. 73). The atmosphere of social existence here enables one to put even one's persona in writing in an eccentric

kind of pedestal. Clamence notes that “since, nevertheless, they [writers] cannot keep themselves from judging, they make up for it by moralizing” (Camus, 1991, p. 41). Following this never-ending making up of one's life are the “insights into the intricate dance of hypocrisy and anti-hypocrisy, the constant round of masking and unmasking that makes up our social existence” (Runciman, 2008, p. 4). In the text, this is best illustrated in how Clamence saw his own reflection: “My reflection was smiling in the mirror, but it seemed to me that my smile was double ...” (Camus, 1991, p. 15).

The web interlocking the spaces that speak of hypocrisy is then layered, mask after mask, that in reality, it is already embedded in the fabric of existence. Placed in the seat of judgment, it becomes more complicated. “That the hypocrite wishes to avoid detection and punishment,” Naso (2010) opined, “is only the beginning of a complex story” (p. 36). Even in confronting judgment, Clamence sought particular advice on his narration of himself when he laid down the nuances of his hypocrisy:

You see, a person I knew used to divide human beings into three categories: those who prefer having nothing to hide rather than being obliged to lie, those who prefer lying to having nothing to hide, and finally those who like both lying and the hidden. I'll let you choose the pigeonhole that suits me. (Camus, 1991, p. 37).

The reason for this intricacy is traced in the face of hypocrisy. Its nature seems to be tied to that of truth, freedom, and authenticity – but always in the bifurcating surface of a paradoxical appearance bearing at the same time the look of truth and falsehood. Clamence said that “truth, like light, blinds. Falsehood, on the contrary, is a beautiful twilight that enhances every object” (Camus, 1991, p. 37). Putting it in the light of the postmodern setting where perspectives are relatively reviewed, one can note ostensibly that there is a simultaneous revealing of one’s face of sincerity and deception in hypocrisy. Hypocrisy, in this sense, becomes the only viable narration to transgress the remorsefulness born out of one’s original and unforgivable sin.

One is likely to regard transgressions less harshly when the agent acts on the basis of mistaken beliefs; he may sincerely believe that he acts virtuously, utterly self-deceived about his deeper motivations. This is the paradox Camus’ portrayal of Clamence throws into relief. It can be formulated affirmatively by the assertion that deception (or self-deception) is a frequent, if regrettable, means for achieving worthy goals. Hypocrisy coexists with the virtues of authenticity and truthfulness. In the end, neither the consequences of actions nor their felt sincerity are determinative. This is the key insight of the postmodern perspective. (Naso, 2010, x-xi).

The impulse that the subject must go on caters for him the need to narrate his story by reflecting his hypocritical life to others. Clamence exposed this early in the novel. In the text, he says, “after all, I know of others who have appearances on their side and are no more faithful or sincere” (Camus, 1991, p. 14). Thus, by confronting the hypocrisy of man, one is once again caught in the general ordinariness of its ordeal. Shklar’s *Ordinary Vices* (1984), for instance, analyzes hierarchically the vices of man according to the hazard they pose to liberal societies. She found out that cruelty was the worst vice and that the vice of hypocrisy as a practice should not be a big deal since it thrived in the category of “ordinary vices,” so that one must “stop minding about it so much” (Runciman, 2008, p. 196).

But the principle that Clamence stands for is not a general predisposition from passive hypocrisy. He rather engaged hypocrisy not as an ordinary letting be but as an active characterization that concerns all. He says:

Is not the great thing that stands in the way of our escaping it the fact that we are the first to condemn ourselves? Therefore it is essential to begin by extending the condemnation to all, without distinction, in order to thin it out at the start. No excuses ever, for anyone; that’s my principle at the outset. (Camus, 1991, p. 40).

In other words, the leveling of hypocrisy to the baseline proclivity or ordinariness

of human affairs is strictly not a kind of surrender to the structure. In which case, his existentialism would not be different from the herd mentality that Nietzsche critiques. What this further reflects is the formula of *ressentiment* in Nietzsche's (1887/1966) *Genealogy of Morals*: they are the birds of prey, therefore we are the good lambs. In *The Fall*, the version can be explicated as this: 'My life is imperfect, which gives me the warrant to pass this judgment to others.' In Clamence's words, he used the term *accusation*: "the more I accuse myself, the more I have a right to judge you" (Camus, 1991, p. 42).

Clamence's life accepts hypocrisy not as deplorable duplicity but as a face that is forever haunted by the specter of judgment. Thus his narration of himself in relation to penitence: "in as much as every judge someday ends up as a penitent, one had to travel the road in the opposite direction and practice the profession of penitent to be able to end up" (Camus, 1991, p. 41). In finding a way to embrace his own hypocrisy by practicing penitence, hence the double profession of 'judge-penitent,' he devised a way to free himself from solely claiming responsibility into a collective disposition that entails and concerns the lives or vocations of any man. By claiming the judgment, he also claimed a newly found freedom that even ran counter to his previous claims. He said, "I was wrong, after all, to tell you that the essential was to avoid judgment. The essential is being able to permit oneself everything, even if, from time to time, one has to profess vociferously

one's own infamy" (Camus, 1991, p. 42). In Clamence's role of judge-penitent, Johnson's words 'no man is a hypocrite in his pleasures,' become conscious for the first time, when it makes room for a vocation that is rooted in an existentialism of freedom.

The vocation of a hypocrite then, the life of a judge-penitent, is a life that exudes a kind of freedom that sets itself apart from the monotonous events of existence. Clamence says that "real vocations are carried beyond the place of work" (Camus, 1991, p. 40). Life truly happens at the realization of its place at a distance, when one can deal with oneself the question that concerns one's life. He narrated: "I confess I am drawn by such creatures who are all of a piece. Anyone who has considerably meditated on man, by profession or vocation, is led to feel nostalgia for the primates" who "don't have any ulterior motives" (Camus, 1991, p. 5). However, the freedom that Clamence practices in hypocrisy is a paradoxical one. Its fundamental feature is the face of penitence when Clamence said that "in short, you see, the essential is to cease being free and to obey, in repentance, a greater rogue than oneself. When we are all guilty, that will be democracy" (Camus, 1991, p. 41). At the same time, it is also a length that measures to some extent the haven with which one rests one's heart in place, a vocation where one can practice one's unique self. In short, freedom is an existential practice of confronting one's very self in that it makes one evaluate one's life. For Clamence,

freedom is not a reward or a decoration that is celebrated with champagne. Nor yet a gift, a box of dainties designed to make you lick your chops. Oh, no! It's a chore, on the contrary, and a long-distance race, quite solitary and very exhausting. No champagne, no friends raising their glasses as they look at you affectionately. (Camus, 1991, p. 40).

The final point that Camus appealed in the words of Clamence is the further emphasis on the locus of one's freedom. In *La Chute*, there are no other lives that are concerned in the practice of one's freedom except one's vocation. This is clarified in the minor premise of Clamence's words that "when you don't like your own life, when you know that you must change lives, you don't have any choice, do you? What can one do to become another? Impossible" (Camus, 1991, p. 43). What therefore entails in the vocation of a hypocrite, of a judge-penitent, is an existence that mirrors vocation *per se*. Camus' existentialism discloses its substratum in a final appeal for hope, a final shot at salvation, to save himself and the specter that laughs at his judgment. In the final lines of the novel, Clamence appeals of a chance to save once again the lady at the bridge, a reversal of choice had he had the moment to relive it. But this is not the path by which freedom led him. What it leads to is the abyss that bypasses the moment in his famous last words: "It's too late now. It will always be too late. Fortunately" (Camus,

1991, p. 44). If there isn't this paradoxical temptation of vocation, then at best, freedom merely borders on a Kafkaesque postscript: "Oh, plenty of hope, an infinite amount of hope, but not for us!" (Jennings et al., 2005, p. 789).

CONCLUSION

In this paper, one can surmise that the novel *The Fall* is an illustration of a hypocrite's vocation. Jean-Baptiste Clamence, the main character and narrator of the story, exposes himself via the specter of hypocrisy that lingers in his experiences. The literal fall of a woman from his memory haunts and taints the dignity that he accustomed himself in his Parisian days as a practicing lawyer. The nobility that Clamence built for himself in what may be coined as his *Eden* or paradise moments is shattered by the laughter that mocks him. The laughter of judgment then lays the necessary impulse to shift Clamence's perspectives in life and ultimately the perspective of his life. He does this through narration, acknowledging firsthand the hypocritical disposition that his life entails. That is to say, the ivory tower of one who judges that is his life found a viable route in going out in the open as a move for self-judgment: a life that he self-proclaimed as a 'judge-penitent.'

The vocation of a judge-penitent allows Clamence to be free, that is, to have a paradoxical freedom that operates first as a penitent and then as an existence that places one's life at the heart of things, or more accurately, an existence that evaluates

and puts one's heart in place. Clamence is therefore not operating on the general course of things, a defeatist panacea to the seemingly hypocritical trap of false freedom; but he is actualizing himself in the freedom that he has newly found as a hypocrite, a judge-penitent – a vocation that carries with it the profound enigma of choosing, falling, narrating, and ultimately, existing.

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