

Today, as history is continuously being written, no doubt that the Catholicism in Pasig had gone a very long way. The challenges that the early Augustinians faced and the colonizations that threatened the faith of the natives were just among the few of the living proof of how strong the religiosity of the Pasigueños are.

This book is a good source material in understanding that historical facts and oral traditions intertwined with regard to the rich history of Catholicism in Pasig. It is important to note that we cannot simply do away with devotion or belief regardless of whether there is a solid historical framework that backs it up. With this, the book included sources in its footnote section to allow the readers to have access on the source of the claim or any additional information. This time, the discussion transcended not just about the geography or the topography of the location or setting of the story, but it digs deeper on the religiosity of the people. It also provided us information how the early Filipinos adopted Christianity and how the Church has been affected by other societal matters such as government, social condition of the area, and war.

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Albert Camus is considered the most widely-read French writer of the twentieth century; however, he is also commonly misunderstood, resulting in controversies and criticisms surrounding his name. Ramin Jahanbegloo, an Iranian-Canadian philosopher known for his extensive academic work on dialogue and an advocate for non-violence, writes *Albert Camus: The Unheroic Hero of Our Time*. This book corrects usual misconceptions regarding Camus' philosophy, focusing on the "compassionate humanism" that is achievable through the practice of measuredness and thinking at the meridian. With seminal concepts like rebellion, solidarity, and honesty permeating the vast array of Camus' writings, it becomes possible to see a consistent trajectory of his ideas and life as a resistance against violence, suicide, and murder. In merely eighty pages, Ramin Jahanbegloo establishes Camus' sharp analysis of his times' excesses and enchantment toward ideologies. Each chapter deals with specific themes in Camus' philosophy, leading to the following titles: (1) A Meridian philosopher, (2) Thermodynamics of death and solidarity towards life, (3) A soul in rebellion, (4) From solitude to hope, and (5) Camus the outsider: facing the past and the present.

Chapter one grounds the constant dynamics of Camus' philosophy, meridian. This concept is attributed to the Greeks' aspiration toward moderation and measuredness and the distinct Camusian vision of Mediterranean solar thought that dispels the shadows

of excessive civilizations. Jahanbegloo further notes that “Camus’ Meridian philosophy incorporates both intersubjectivity as well as universality. That is to say, for Camus, the Mediterranean civilization establishes its particular identity in a process of self-actualization, but at the same time retains and develops further a universal identity, which is nothing but shared human values.”¹ In other words, shared human values include the particular history and culture of the person, the beauty of the natural world, the dignity of human lives, and the ethical meaning of resisting injustices.

In chapter two, the author continues the discussion on Camus’ resistance against injustices, focusing on the legitimization of the death penalty. In dialogue with his times, Camus’ meridian philosophy reveals a critique of the thermodynamics of violence and death. Thus, Camus unambiguously rejects systematic violence, killings, and oppressive totalizing utopian visions.

His rebellious attitude towards various forms of violence becomes the focal point of chapter three. This chapter vividly depicts Camus as “a restless intellectual who was either constantly unsettled or was unsettling others through his speeches and writings.”² Following Simone Weil’s analysis of force, Camus unravels the blindness of force that both victims and executioners experience its adverse effects.³ Jahanbegloo rehabilitated the often exaggerated, controversial nonviolent stance image of Camus. Being neither victims nor executioners has been greatly misunderstood by Camus’ contemporaries as an oppressive neutral, and pacifist line of thinking. In reality, Camus was not advocating for passivity but rejecting either-or labels (executioners and victims) because both victims and victimizers are rendered as “things” by the indiscriminate nature of force. Acknowledging the world’s complexity contextualizes Camus’ exposition of an artist’s duty to communicate for the rendered mute, suffering humanity. For Camus, the significant role of creation is central to re-humanizing society to overcome meaninglessness. Furthermore, the artistic attitude of reconciliation rather than hegemonic selection is also consistent with the plurality of visions which may demonstrate different paths to achieving the re-humanization process.

Chapter four opens with an examination of Camus’ novels and a novella, revealing the development of outsiderhood (a form of solitude) to a creative rebellion that positively merges solitary and solidarity. Main characters like Mersault, Dr. Rieux, and Clamence demonstrate this solitude’s cyclical or non-linear development. Thus, these characters further reinforce art’s challenging yet significant role in restoring hope rooted in love. The next chapter reveals the political implications of these ideas.

In chapter five, Ramin Jahanbegloo highlights Camus’ project of reviving “citizen ethics” contra ideological party politics. Recovering democracy requires the active

¹ Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Albert Camus: The Unheroic Hero of Our Time* (London: Routledge, 2020), 17.

² *Ibid.*, 44.

³ cf. Simone Weil, “The Iliad or the Poem of Force,” in *Simone Weil: An Anthology*, ed. Sian Miles (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 182-215; Robert Zaretsky, *A Life Worth Living: Albert Camus and the Quest for Meaning* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2013), 103-104.

participation of citizens and rooting morality and politics as mutual critiques of violence. From journalistic, philosophical, and literary writings to speeches and praxis, Camus conveys a call for moderation and a civilian truce. However, his departure from the usual sides of politics made him vulnerable to criticisms coming from several fronts, and his compatriots did not heed his call, leading to an escalation of war and terrorism. These events capitulated to a hostile reception towards his ideas, pushing Camus to work solitarily on recovering the rootedness towards the past.

The conclusion poses the question of whether Camus' philosophy of non-violence is tenable in contemporary society. Although the book does not have a definite answer, the discussions imply the possibility of prudently applying Camusian principles and the consequent beneficial effects it may have. True to the book's title, Jahanbegloo proved how Camus departed from the usual standards of heroism conceived by society and shared his insights on happiness. His words in "Letters to a German Friend" eloquently capture this: "Now that all that is about to end, we can tell you what we have learned—that heroism isn't much and that happiness is more difficult."⁴

Since the book intends to unravel mostly Camus' engagements on ethical and political issues, there is a minor lapse in the historical portrayal, which minimally mars an otherwise excellent study of Camus. The author may have overlooked and missed citing an essential historical instance that even Camus made some mistakes, precisely his stance on the death penalty. In his articles in *Combat*, Camus writes, for a certain period, his support for the death penalty in the context of postwar purgings as inevitable violence.⁵ However, witnessing the purge's horrors and the fallibility of the justice system made him take a firm stance against legitimizing violence and murder, thus leading him to admit that he was wrong publicly.⁶ This admission is considered crucial to capture better Camus' unheroic heroism of advocating compassion and being a receiver of it.

Still, *Albert Camus: The Unheroic Hero of Our Time* is an up-to-date reader-friendly sharp analysis of Camus' philosophy against violence. The book appears to be keeping a general audience from various disciplines in mind without losing the depth of insights Camusian scholars may draw on. The author's writing style and the book's conciseness effectively communicate the continued relevance of Camus' life, works, and ideas to twenty-first-century society. Instead of exhausting the plethora of insights into Camus' philosophy, the readers are given glimpses of what Camus' writings offer— a possibility of a demanding yet harmonious multicultural world.

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⁴ Albert Camus, "Letters to a German Friend," in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 30.

⁵ cf. Albert Camus, *Between Hell and Reason: Essays from the Resistance Newspaper Combat, 1944-1947*, trans. Alexandre de Gramont (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1991), 66-68, 71-73.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 120-121.