

2-20-1998

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Recommended Citation

(1998) "The Psychology of the Outsider: The Problem of Being and Becoming Camus," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 7 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol4/iss7/4>

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International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: The Psychology of the Outsider: The Problem of Being and Becoming Camus

Author: Editor

Volume: 4

Issue: 7

Date: 1998-02-20

Keywords: Camus, Outsider

Abstract. This article describes the essence and statistical rarity of the psychological outsider in political engagement.

In reading the English translation of Olivier Todd's *Albert Camus: A Life* and many reviews of the text, one might be struck with the uniqueness of the Camus political psychology--a psychology of the outsider. This uniqueness needs to be contrasted with the many kinds of outsider that he shared with some other intellectuals: (1) bizarre family history attenuating opportunities for nurturance and belonging; (2) relatively low socioeconomic origins; (3) colonial origins unlike those of many others who achieved national prominence; (4) educational origins deemed lacking by many who experienced the stellar institutions of learning; (5) refusal to blind oneself to ideological contradictions and the disparity between ideology and reality; (6) refusal to place ideology over reality and to force reality into ideology; (7) interpersonal experience of jealousy, ridicule, derision at the hands of sought-for colleagues; (8) interpersonal experience of adulation at the hands of those who didn't understand his work or himself; (9) interpersonal experience of multiple physical intimacies with little experience of psychological and spiritual intimacies.

All the above he shared with at least some intellectuals of his time, of previous times, and, no doubt, of those who came afterwards. What is more remarkable is that he eschewed the self-identity of the outsider as a vehicle to absolve himself of the necessities of ethical and moral choices. He was by no means a cultural relativist, nihilist, anarchist, or premodern postmodernist. He also eschewed the self-identity of the outsider as a vehicle to become the martyr, to be God or the Son of God amongst the Philistines of Earth. It seems that because he did not fit the usual outsider roles with which insiders coopt the outsider--and because he realized that he did not fit these roles regardless of cooption--he seemed to be approaching an experience of life both terrifying and full of meaning. An experience of the life of the outsider that took on experience in a continuous Sisyphean wrestling match, even as the inevitability of Sisyphean failure did not induce masochistic identity, psychotic depression, or existential resignation. It was a hard life really lived. A life outside. A life as an outsider that, perhaps, exemplifies Nietzsche's Overman. Camus would have been the last to admit it. (Balmer, R. (1995). *Defence and coping: The "outsider" in the group*. *Group Analysis*, 28, 473-482; Yoder, J.D., & Aniakudo, P. (1997). "Outsider within" the firehouse: Subordination and difference in the social interactions of African American women firefighters. *Gender and Society*, 11, 324-341; Todd, O. (1997). *Albert Camus: A Life* (Trans. B. Ivry). NY: Knopf.) (Keywords: Camus, Outsider.)