

VEBA VE YABANCI ADLI ESERLERDE AHLAK PROBLEMİNE KANTÇI BİR BAKIŞ¹**A Kantian Perspective on the Problem of Morality in *The Plague* and *The Stranger*****Ayşegül YENİCE AY²**

Öz

Camus *Veba* ve *Yabancı* adlı eserlerinde absürtle karşı karşıya gelen karakterler yaratır. Varoluşsal çabada ve anlam eksikliğinde ahlak her iki eserde de önemli bir problem olarak ortaya çıkar. *Veba* adlı eserde evrensel prensipleri olmayanların yanında kaotik bir ortamda dahi bu prensiplere sahip kişiler vardır. *Yabancı* adlı eserde ana karakter, olağan ve kabul edilebilir hayat şartlarında evrensel prensipleri göz ardı eden bir eyleyen olarak ortaya çıkar. Karakterlerin bir ahlak teorisi bağlamında analizinin gerekliliği ile bu çalışma, eser karakterlerini Kantçı etik bağlamında inceler. Bu amaçla bu çalışma kategorik imperatif formülasyonunu merkeze alarak Kantçı etik teorisini uygular. Bu doğrultuda karakterlerin eylemlerinin ödevden dolayı mı yoksa ödevde uygun olarak mı gerçekleştiğini konu edinir. Araştırma karakterlerin hangi yönden kategorik imperatifi benimsediklerini ve hangi yönden bunu ihlal ettiklerini inceler. Ayrıca insanı bir amaç olarak mı yoksa araç olarak mı hedef aldıklarını ortaya koyar. Bahsi geçen eserler çoğunlukla absürdist ve varoluşsal perspektiflerden açıklanmıştır, fakat bu çalışma karakterlere farklı bir açıdan bakarak yeni bir içgörü sağlayacaktır. Sonuç olarak şu değerlendirmelere ulaşılır. Her iki çalışma da Kant'ın ahlak teorisini benimseyen veya ihlal eden eyleyen örneklemelerine sahiptir. Meursault kişisel eğilimlerini üstün tutar ve özellikle adam öldürme ve istismar konularında kategorik imperatif kuralını ihlal eder. Dr Rieux, Tarrou ve onların grubu incelendiğinde, bu karakterlerin insan onurunu öncelikledikleri ve bu yüzden de kategorik imperatife uygun eylemlerde buldukları gözlemlenir. Diğer yandan Cottard ve Papaz Paneloux ise kendi eğilimlerine yenilir ve kategorik imperatif kuralını ihlal etmiş olurlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Camus, Kategorik İmperatif, Kant, Ahlak Teorisi, Veba, Yabancı.

Abstract

Camus creates characters facing with the absurd in his works *The Plague* and *The Stranger*. In existential struggle, in the absence of meaning, morality arises as a crucial problem in both works. In *The Plague* there are people still having universal principles even in a chaotic atmosphere beside the ones who do not have. In *The Stranger* main character appears as an agent ignoring universal principles in usual and acceptable life conditions. With a necessity of analysis of the characters in the context of morality, this paper analyses the characters in terms of Kantian ethics. For this purpose, it applies Kantian ethical theory centering on categorical imperative formulations. The study explores in what way the characters adopt or ignore the rules of categorical imperative. Accordingly, it discusses whether the acts of the characters are for the sake of duty or in accordance with duty. Additionally, it portrays whether they see humans as an end or as a means. These aforementioned works are mostly explained through absurdist and existential perspectives. However, this study will reflect a different angle on characters by providing a new insight. All in all, this assertion is reached: Both works have samples of agents adopting or violating Kant's moral theory. Meursault gives precedence to his inclinations and violates categorical imperative rule especially regarding his committing a murder and abuse. As for Dr Rieux, Tarrou and their group, they prioritize human dignity; thus, they act according to categorical imperative. On the other hand, Cottard and Father Paneloux violate this rule and they are tempted by their inclinations.

Key words: Camus, Categorical Imperative, Kant, Moral Theory, The Plague, The Stranger.

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Introduction

Camus and Kant come to terms on vitality of human freedom, dignity and justice. Having individual into the centre both of them claim the necessity of overcoming outer restrictions and bindings. For Kant, pre-condition of acting ethically is having moral autonomy. In the same way, freedom is the basis of Camus's existentialist philosophy and forms the kernel of his works. Kant supports the idea of human dignity in his moral theory, and justice emerges as a key part since respect for rights plays a vital role again in the theory. As for Camus, he presents characters fighting for human freedom, dignity and justice in his work *The Plague*. Furthermore, Kant's and Camus's ideas overlap regarding reason in their attempt to interpret human. Camus regards the world absurd as long as it is acted with emotions, therefore he turns to reason. He holds the idea that, human wants to know the world with mind and reason (Yıldıztaş, 2010:133,134). However, while Kant regards rationality of the individual key concept in explaining his thesis including moral theory, Camus finds this notion functional to some extent. According to Camus, reason is not adequate to comprehend the world. Despite this, it takes a considerable part in his novel *The Plague*. There he highly emphasizes the significance of reason as to being aware of reality. As for *The Stranger*, he draws attention to a great problematic distance between rational human being and irrational world around him through the character Meursault. This discrepancy between human conscious and world will always last. For that reason Camus thinks that man should adopt the absurd as a guide and people should turn to an aim contributing value not only themselves but also humanity. As Zaretsky states, "Camus was a moralist who insisted that while the world is absurd and allows for no hope, we are not condemned to despair; a moralist who reminded us that, in the end, all we have is one another in an indifferent and silent World" (Zaretsky, 2014:2). Now that Camus's absurd man need to revolt, create meaning and make choices. Kantian ethical perspective would be proper to analyse Camus's works. In the light of Kant's categorical imperative formulations, this paper will discuss the problem of morality in *The Plague* and *The Stranger* by analysing characters' actions and deeds.

Categorical Imperative

Claiming that people get knowledge from their senses and via their rational capacities Kant puts forward categorical imperative as the moral law in his ethical theory. He clarifies this view in his work *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Moral*, and from *Section II Transition from popular moral philosophy to metaphysics of moral*, three formulations of categorical imperative can be summarized as follows:

First principle is "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (Kant, 1785/1997: 31). Second formulation is: "act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (Kant, 1785/1997: 38), and third command is: "A rational being must always regard himself as lawgiving in a kingdom of ends" (Kant,1785/1997: 41) so "act in accordance with maxims that can at the same time have as their object themselves as universal laws of nature" (Kant,1785/1997: 44).

In order to comprehend this ethical theory it would be wise to clarify primarily the notions of maxim, duty and categorical imperative. A maxim is defined by Kant as "the subjective principle of volition" (Bielefeldt, 1997: 534). Maxims move the people and initiate them to act. "A subject intends an action on the bases of a nested set of principles" and these maxims should be tested by the categorical imperative (Kitcher, 2004: 559). Kitcher (2004: 563) quotes Kant's remark "every practical law represents a possible action as good" and adds categorical imperative can be seen as "the only possible foundation of morality. As Bielefeldt (1997:534) manifests: categorical imperative furnishes the criterion by which people actually judge the moral worth of their various maxims. Dimmock and Fisher (2017:35), in the chapter of *Kantian Ethics* in the book of *Ethics for A-Level*, explain categorical and imperative notably in a lucid way: "An imperative is a command" and if people see a command as a must and act according to it irrespective of their feelings, other's pressure and results of the action, then that command becomes categorical. Categorical imperatives are commands which should be derivable from universal principles. These are moral obligations people ought to adopt. While adopting the maxims available in categorical imperatives, duties are of concern. "Kant referred to all the actions, the maxims of actions, and the ends commanded by Categorical Imperative as our "duties"" (Sullivan, 1994:43). In this regard, Kant brings about the ultimate duty of humanity

that is “good will”. Korsgaard elaborates on this duty in the introduction part of the book *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Moral*: “a good will is the only thing to which we attribute “unconditional worth.” The good will is good “through its willing” (Kant, 1785/1997:11), this is the biggest motivation of acting morally. For Kant morally good actions are performed from duty. Even if that is not desired by the performer, “the thought of duty alone has been sufficient to produce the action” (Kant, 1785/1997:13); therefore, he is supposed to actualize that duty. There are times when an agent feels to act the duty voluntarily; in that case, the desired action equates with the duty which requires good will. At that point Kant judges that the agent act in accordance with duty. Consequently, two cases emerges in relation to the actions of people: acting from duty or for the sake of duty and acting in accordance with duty. What Kant wants is the choice of “acting from duty” because at that point, you set aside your inclinations and desires to put it with Kant’s term: your interests. And the latter one is what is morally preferred. Acting for the sake of duty is the only way that an action can have moral worth (Dimmock and Fisher, 2017: 33); concerning this, Kant categorizes duties into “perfect duty” and “imperfect duty”. “Perfect duties are actions we ought to perform or omit no matter what” implying absolute commands; whereas “imperfect duties are exercised depending on circumstances” that means they are not necessarily obligatory (Ackeren and Sticker, 2015: 78). Detailed explanations and examples of these duties will be portrayed in the following section of the article while attempting to interpret the actions of the characters of *The Plague* and *The Stranger*.

If we turn back to categorical imperative formulation of which principles will function as a guideline for this study, Kant suggests this moral law to enable people to reach choices which can be universalizable and thus morally good. People can ask question in decision making process and choose right actions. They can apply universalisation test by asking themselves “would I actually be content that my maxim [...] should hold as a universal law” (Ackeren and Sticker, 2015:79). At this point, whether the action they prefer would be proper for all conditions and all people is notable; in that when the same case arises as a subject matter again, any person would be behaving in the same manner. Thus, it sheds light on their moral evaluations. Kant believes that every rational human being can apply this test and it produces correct consequence. Besides universalizability, another criteria for the right behaviour is whether our action aims human dignity or not. This aspect comprises second formulation of the categorical imperative. Kant prescribes that people shouldn’t adopt maxims regarding people as a means rather as an end itself.

In this study, decisions and actions will be analysed with Kantian moral theory Categorical Imperative. For this purpose, the maxims of the characters will be evaluated sophisticatedly due to the nature of the theory. With this aim; whether the characters conform to or violate the principles of Categorical Imperative will be explored, and while doing that their performed actions are analysed in terms of Kantian duties.

Analysis of the character Meursault in *The Stranger* in terms of Categorical Imperative

Camus’s much debated character Meursault’s actions do not overlap the moral law Kant claims. Meursault performs duties for oneself. He respects and cares himself which is necessary to preserves one’s rational capacity. However, he does not carry out duties for others especially duties of respect. He is extremely honest and obeys rules when the subject matter is himself. However; he ignores being honest for others’ matters. Since, he cannot adopt a certain universalisable maxim about being honest, it can be said that he violates categorical imperative regarding first formulation which commands acting in such a manner that the actions will be universal law. There is a violation too in second formulation which commands acting using humanity as an end; in that he does not act regarding human dignity. Kant underlines honesty, bringing lying to the fore as an action against categorical imperatives. Lying cannot be a maxim that can be universalized as people will not choose a life with fraud. Since nobody wants to be deceived, it is possible to reach a judgement that you ought not to lie. Additionally, for Kant “acts are wrong and right universally, irrespective of consequences. If lying is wrong then it is wrong in all instances” (Dimmock and Fisher, 2017:11).

Viewing from this aspect, Meursault is said to have perform duties for himself about rejecting lying and having self-respect. This case is fairly observable in his relationship with Marie and in his answers in court. Mary who has intimate relationship with Meursault asks him whether he loves her. He answers without hesitation that such kinds of questions do not have meaning and adds he supposes he doesn’t love. How-

ever, he agrees to marry Marie. At another time, wondering what kind of love Meursault has Mary asks him another question: "Suppose another girl had asked you to marry her. Would you have said 'Yes' to her, too?" Meursault answers frankly: "Naturally" (Camus, 1946/1942:29). Even though he doesn't feel much love for Marie, he is happy whenever she is by her side. Therefore, he could have reacted in a different way to this question not to lose her. Instead, without attempting to deceive, he chooses to stick to what he believes.

He tries to maintain being honest for other conditions too. In fact, we do not see Meursault lying about his beliefs even though it costs his life. Meursault is put on trial and answers all the questions truthfully. Court board investigates into his private life since he is charged with callousness he showed at his mother's funeral. He and his lawyer have a conversation about this case. Confessing his emotional shortcoming Meursault explains that his physical conditions often influence his feelings, and he mentions he was half awake at the funeral and hardly remembers what happened. Thereupon, his lawyer advises him to testify differently and requests him to tell that "on that day I had kept my feelings under control", but Meursault does not accept: "That wouldn't be true" (Camus, 1946/1942:41). As Kant puts forward, if a person decreases his self-esteem, by degrading his personality he also damages "the subjective basis of his ability to act purely for the sake of duty" (Formosa, 2014:10). Meursault has prior condition for acting for the sake of duty.

In the same way, acting truly he does not change his ideas and feelings during examination before the magistrate in the court. Holding a crucifix in his hand the magistrate suggests Meursault to repent what he had done and pray for forgiveness from God. Not having faith in God, Meursault does not obey this command and finds this case really odd. However, if he had wept before crucifix and pretended to repent, he would have a chance of getting rid of the punishment. Despite this, he speaks frankly: "what I felt was less regret than a kind of vexation" (Camus, 1946/1942:44). In his actions, it can be seen that he performs perfect duty of not lying by applying his maxim almost all conditions related to himself.

Though Meursault is honest about his ideas and feelings. He cannot wholly fulfil categorical imperative. This can be clearly observable in his relationship with his neighbour. Although Meursault knows that his neighbour Reymond beats woman, he does not find this notorious man odd and does not bother to ponder on his friendship. He supports him in spite of his torturing manner towards women. On Reymond's request, he testifies in the police station in the way Reymond wants. Moreover, he accepts to help him abuse a woman by writing a letter in the name of Reymond. "For no discernible reason other than to share a meal with a neighbour, Meursault acts as accomplice in Raymond's violent sexual affair with a woman" (Bowker, 2009:14). In both cases there is a condition of deceiving. Although he does not aim himself, but through his friend, he deceives people indirectly. For these reasons, Meursault's maxim of being honest is not internalized and adopted completely leading to the violation of categorical imperative.

He violates categorical imperative not only by lying, but also by not concerning human dignity. Kant's formula of humanity is associated with his second formulation of categorical imperative. It orders to treat people with respect and dignity. These duties are the perfect duties in the process of constituting people's maxims. However Meursault fails to fulfil these perfect duties. He underestimates human rights. It is clear in his relationship with Reymond. Ignoring freedom of the woman with whom Reymond has relation, Meursault facilitates Reymond's taking revenge of her. If he had asked the question himself: would I be content to be treated in such abusive way as woman went through, he would have possibly responded no. Thus, the right maxim must have been just the opposite of what he did. From this, he stands against universalizability principle the basis of the second formulation of categorical imperative. As for Reymond, he uses human as a means not as an end, thus he violates moral law too in terms of second formulation. Due to this, Meursault indirectly causes a threat for human dignity. For all these reasons, it can be concluded that Mersault does not act from duty and fails to comply with categorical imperative.

Another manifestation of Meursault's violating categorical imperative is his fondness of his own inclinations. He does not respect for dignity of the woman with whom Reymond has trouble since he prioritizes his friend and his own comfort. Meursault hangs out with him, eats and drinks in his house which can be thought as personal benefit. What is more, he does not bother to call a policeman when he witnesses

Reymond beating the woman in the street. “The woman was still screaming and Raymond still knocking her about” (Camus, 1946/1942: 25). At the time of the event, Mary, the girlfriend of Meursault, wants him to find a policeman but he says to her that he does not like policemen. What is observed in this case is Meursault’s lack of good will. Kant suggests limitation and moderation for emotions, passions, self-respect and calm reflection, “without the basic principles of a good will they can become extremely evil, and the coolness of a scoundrel makes him not only far more dangerous but also immediately more abominable in our eyes” (Kant, 1997/1785:8). Fulfilling his needs is always an indispensable necessity for Meursault. After the row, while Mary loses her appetite, he eats up the meal without feeling any disturbance. Within this context, Bowker, discussing moral freedom in his paper, (2009:9, 10) asserts that Meursault does not conform to society norms yet he is lack of moral freedom as he does not have free will. “Kantian subjects presuppose their freedom in order to defend against anxieties about domination and dependence from both within and without” (Bowker, 2009:9). Alluding to inner enemy of freedom, Bowker portrays Meursault’s failure in avoiding the dominance of his own inclination. Indeed, he is often after sensual pleasure: he enjoys swimming, beach, and beautiful things: “it was pleasant to feel the cool night air flowing over our sunburned bodies” (Camus, 1946/1942:24). Considering all of these, it is not wrong to claim that Meursault does not have the ability putting aside his inclinations. He has a limitation as a human being. This is what Camus wants to show at bottom: “there are limits to what we can know, Camus believes” (Sharpe, 2017:684).

When *The Stranger* is analysed throughout, Meursault can be said to be overwhelmed by his interests and physical conditions. He trusts much his own ideas and feeling rather than reason. As a sample of an absurd character, Meursault does not contemplate the event around him in detail. He seems to take everything for granted. (Sharpe, 2017:690). He is more into his desires, happiness and comfort rather than human dignity. As it is seen in the novel “will to happiness shows up as an elevated virtue by Camus” In fact, happiness and self-care of a person are imperfect duties for Kant and are supportive in being moral. Happiness is an indirect duty, because in the absence of fulfilment of one’s satisfaction with his own needs, many pressures shows up and thus that person can easily be tempted to disregard his duties (Kant,1997/1785:12). However, indirect duties with the other words imperfect duties are not the ultimate duties to be performed. For Kant, priority must always be on perfect duties in life such as good will or human dignity. As Kant emphasizes “an action from duty is to put aside entirely the influence of inclination” (Kant, 1997/1785:13) and he draws attention to the certainty of respecting for moral law and adopting the right maxim “even if it infringes upon all inclinations” (Kant, 1997/1785: 14). As Thompson asserts “to avoid any personal inclination to act in a way favorable to the actor, a maxim is needed by which one may find the most consistency in an inconstant world. (Thompson, 1999: 10). Meursault has been under the effect of his personal tendency and it is difficult for him to behave morally without getting rid of dense efficiency of his interests and inclinations.

Meursault fails to have necessary maxims with respect to human dignity which forms a discrepancy with categorical imperative. The case of his killing an Arab can be shown as another evidence of this judgement. In Kant’s theory, people should be regarded as an end as it is stated in second formulation of categorical imperative. It means “people should be regarded as having worth” (Sullivan, 1994:68). In this regard, ignoring life of a person is not an acceptable attitude in Kant’s theory which emphasizes humanity. Meursault shoots at a person four times resulting in the death of that person. Although his explanation implies that his action is due to a defence, the case is highly complicated. “The Arab let himself sink back again, but without taking his hand from his pocket. . . .the Arab drew his knife and held it up toward me, athwart the sunlight (Camus, 1946/1942:38). Rather than himself, Meursault finds external circumstances responsible for the act such as unbearable heat and disturbing reflection of the man’s blade as a light. Furthermore, he states that he is not exactly conscious of the incident: “I was conscious only of the cymbals of the sun clashing on my skull, and, less distinctly, of the keen blade of light flashing up from the knife” (Camus, 1946/1942:38). Camus leaves this scene very disputable as there might be a possibility of deterioration in physical conditions of his character: “a fiery gust came from the sea, while the sky cracked in two, from end to end, and a great sheet of flame poured down through the rift. Every nerve in my body was a steel spring, and my grip closed on the revolver” (Camus, 1946/1942:38, 39). He does not nevertheless feel faint

completely and he is aware of impropriety of the situation. "I knew I'd shattered the balance of the day, the spacious calm of this beach" (Camus, 1946/1942:39). Even if he had acted owing to the pressure of his physical disturbance, he would have regretted from disrespecting human worth. However, minimizing the death of a person, he calls this event merely an accident. In fact, it is a crime against humanity. Wish of preserving one's life is a duty but concerning others' is an obligatory perfect duty with regards to morality. Kant believes the capacity of each individual to think and choose not only to shape his or her own life but also to protect and promote reciprocal respect (Sullivan, 1994:15). Contrary to moral law in this murder case, instead of referring to his rationality Meursault succumbs to his physical drives, disregards human dignity thus violates categorical imperative.

Analyses of the Characters in *The Plague* in terms of Categorical Imperative

The Plague mostly harbours traces of Kantian ethics in terms of its characters' accordance with categorical imperative. It also carries examples of characters diverging from perfect duties with less emphasis. In *The Plague*, Camus attempts to present absurd morality to a large extent which parallels with Kantian ethics. According to this philosophy, in the face of the absurd people need to create meaning and hold onto life. Thus, human being revolt and rejects the limitations first. Yıldıztaş's theses discussing absurd morality includes Camus's ideas: revolt is saving life which is a value against death and every action of revolt requires value indirectly (Yıldıztaş, 2010:164). Since human cannot comprehend the world, he revolts against unpleasant circumstances, troubles and evils around him. In the same way, human rises against a situation that threatens his value, existence or life conditions (Yıldıztaş, 2010:165). Camus incorporates this idea truly into his work *The Plague* through his characters. At this point, aiming good will for humanity embedded in the novel overlaps Kantian ethics considerably. Kant takes good will as the prior condition of behaving morally good. Good will corrects the influences of arrogance resulting from well-being and satisfaction, thus "it corrects the whole principle of action and brings it into conformity with universal ends" (Kant, 1997/1785:7). In the novel, Dr Rieux and his group show an example of solidarity and striving in one body against a plague which devastates humanity all around. Within this regard, Dr Rieux and his voluntary group have proper maxims complying with categorical imperative. Along with this finding, it can be observed that some of the townsfolk and characters such as Cottard and Father Paneloux cannot have right maxims complying with categorical imperative as they think of their interests and stand far away from rationality and humanity. From this aspect, this study in this section aims to present whether actions of the characters are irrelevant or accordant with the moral theory thus, categorical imperative. To show the accordance and irrelevance with Kant's moral theory, the characters along with their features, backgrounds and roles in *The Plague* will be demonstrated. While doing these, disengagement with the reality and comprehending the plague will be discussed via the characters in relation to moral theory.

Dr Bernard Rieux is a doctor minding and taking his profession seriously. He represents rationality on which the core of Kant's moral theory depends. Although he is apart from his wife due to the outbreak, he does not succumb to his inclination and he abides by the reason of his mind. Doing his best during the plague in Oran, Dr Rieux informs administrators of the state and the public. He struggles with the disease adopting scientific methods and approaches. Tarron who is another remarkable contributor to the struggle with the disease keeps diary during the days of the plague allowing the reader to learn much from his papers about the details. He is the one who initiates the mobilization for improvement of sanitary conditions by offering to form a group. Raymond Rambert is a journalist who comes to Oran before the outbreak. At first he wants to escape from Oran but later, in spite of an opportunity for leaving, he decides to stay and fight with the plague. As for Grand, he works as a clerk in municipal office. He sometimes works in statistical department there for compilation about birth death and marriages. As he already does, he undertakes the duty of adding up the number of deaths during the plague. He shares updated data with Dr Rieux and helps revealing the case in terms of its magnitude. These people take human rights into consideration and have universal maxims, thus act compatible with categorical imperative. On the other side of the coin, there are two characters Father Paneloux and Cottard violating principles of categorical imperative by caring their interests and disregarding reason due to their personal beliefs. Father Paneloux is a preacher whose interpretation of the plague as a punishment from God is out of rationality; thus, amoral being against moral law. Because he clarifies the case under the strong effect of his personal and religious ideas. Cottard who

attempted suicide joins the group after his being saved. When the plague is over he is proved to have been involved in a murder and his struggling against the plague turns out to be out of his own interest.

For Kant, people act morally as they are rational. Human referring to reason has the ability to act in a right way resulting in action valuable and moral. Reason is provided us “as a practical faculty” and it affects the will, it helps to “produce a will that is good, not perhaps *as a means* to other purposes, but *good in itself*, for which reason was absolutely necessary” (Kant, 1997/1785:10). Dr Rieux amply fulfils the prior condition of morality as he depends on reason. He makes observations, ponders about the rats and people found death, collects data from his surrounding, contemplates type and probable consequences of the illness that invades the city. He examines sick people, asks the opinion of his colleague Richard, and evaluates the cases with their symptoms broadly. After he consults and meditates, he calls the epidemic as a plague. Here we see that how logic plays crucial role in decision making. He uses right methods and objectively reaches a genuine conclusion that extra precaution must be taken officially by the government. As Sullivan states in the section of “the power of moral reason” of his book: a cognitive power, pure practical reason must enable us to identify ends that are objectively good (1994:125). Since Dr Rieux makes right decision for the people, he also behaves morally well. Pure practical reason by itself arouses in us sufficient interest acting morally (Sullivan, 1994:125) as moral law is for the people due to the fact that they are rational.

Depending on his own reason Dr Rieux acts convenient for categorical imperative. He and Castel prioritize human life and minds welfare of humanity. It is easily observable from the discussion they have with Dr Richard and the Prefect. While Castel and Dr Rieux believe that the authorities must declare plague and take action, Dr Richard rejects this proposal: “All that could be said at present was that we had to deal with a special type of fever ... it was unwise to jump to conclusions (Camus, 1948/1947:44). Claiming the disease is not proven to be contagious, he underestimates the matter: “There was no absolute certainty; therefore any hasty action was to be deprecated” (Camus, 45). Feeling uneasy the Prefect of the town states that he finds the argument unsound. Castel explains to him: “The important thing isn’t the soundness or otherwise of the argument, but for it to make you think” (Camus, 44). It can be said that Dr Richard and the Prefect stick in formalities. The Prefect wants to know whether Dr Rieux is sure that it is plague. Dr Rieux thinks about lives of people in the town which is obvious from his answer. “You’re stating the problem wrongly. It’s not a question of the term I use; it’s a question of time... If we don’t make that declaration, there’s a risk that half the population may be wiped out” (Camus, 46); finally, the Prefect consents to the declaration of the plague leading that some precautionary measures are to be put into force. The following days legal arrangements are performed, people are informed about what to do and sick people are isolated in special wards at hospitals. When the discussion and its result are considered, it can be commented that Dr Rieux and Castel take right action and aim good will for the society.

Dr Rieux has maxims of working for the people and sees humanity as an end as second formulation of categorical imperative commands. This is evidently seen from the dialogue with Tarrou. Tarrou wonders Rieux’s motivation behind his dedication: “Why do you yourself show such devotion” (Camus, 1948/1947:107). Reader understands that it is due to the reality and his profession’s requirement from Rieux’s answer: “I have no idea what’s awaiting me, or what will happen when all this ends. For the moment I know this; there are sick people and they need curing” (Camus, 108). As Kant suggests people must use and improve their talents. This is among imperfect duties and it includes good will. Kant gives an example of a person who “finds in himself a talent that by means of some cultivation could make him a human being useful for all sorts of purposes”, he might choose to “let his talents rust and be concerned with devoting his life merely to idleness, amusement” but when he asks himself whether this choice, “his maxim of neglecting his natural gifts” comprises a universal law, he comprehends that he cannot “will that this become a universal law”, as Kant claims “as rational being he necessarily wills that all the capacities in him be developed, since they serve him and are given to him for all sorts of possible purposes” (Kant, 1997/1785:10). As it is seen, Dr Rieux makes use of all of his talents for humanity. His considering human dignity is more obvious from his remarks: “Only, I’ve never managed to get used to seeing people die” (Camus, 109). He thinks that they have to struggle with all their power against death. Even if his endeavours will not be enough, he is determined to do his best. When Tarrou reminds this by saying “your victories will never be lasting”, doctor replies him: “it’s no reason for giving up the struggle” (Camus, 109). As he states he never gives in, he

runs from one patient to another, works hard and sleeps less. His dedication to his job and to save lives of the people are indications of behaving morally good.

Another clue about Dr Rieux's pursuing categorical imperative is manifested in his ideas about benevolence and rationality. At the end of the novel, reader learns that the narrator of the chronicle of the plague is Dr Rieux. While narrating, Dr Rieux have some comments on the sanitary groups Tarrou formed. First, these groups are not intended to be regarded as something extraordinary in the novel. As a narrator, Dr Rieux states many people tend to attribute excessive importance to those voluntary actions. However, he is of the idea that these actions should not be exaggerated. If people have such manners for praiseworthy actions, that means they indirectly "paying potent homage to the worse side of human nature" (Camus, 1948/1947:112). On the contrary, for him, these benevolent actions should be regarded as normal and should naturally be expected for people. In the same way, Dr Rieux evaluates all help of Grand, Dr Castel and Tarrou as ordinary. "The essential thing was to save the greatest possible number of persons from dying and being doomed to unending separation... There was nothing admirable about this attitude; it was merely logical" (Camus, 113). As he states, having maxims for benevolence for human dignity is a categorical imperative rather than a choice. Only if a person holds such maxims universalisable for everyone, his being moral can be a subject matter. Furthermore, he asserts the necessity of the knowledge in addition to being benevolent. For Kantian ethics, good will is not enough for being moral. In order to act according to categorical imperative, right decisions and reality are also crucial as stated before. Believing that "men are more good than bad", Dr Rieux draws attention to the ignorance and understanding in his remarks: "The evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence, if they lack understanding" namely clear sightedness (Camus, 112). From his ideas, it is understood that Dr Rieux adopts the principles of categorical imperative as a life philosophy.

Dr Rieux's having universalisable maxims regarding ethical conduct is observable in his ability of controlling his personal emotions and in his being objective. His remaining objective is discernible from his conversation with Rambert. Dr Rieux rejects giving a certificate that Rambert does not have the disease. Requesting privilege for himself, Rambert rises against Dr Rieux: "can't you see it's a matter of common human feeling?" (Camus, 1948/1947:74) implying the impatience of separation for the people who are obliged to fall apart from each other. Furthermore he adds "no, you can't understand, you're using the language of reason, not of the heart; you live in a world of abstractions." (Camus, 75). From these statements it is concluded that Rieux does not discriminate against people, and trusts on his own reason and logic, and thus fulfils the conditions of behaving in the light of categorical imperative.

Dr Rieux's conversation with Rambert also carries traces of his adopting morally desired maxim. In this dialogue Rambert associates devotion of helping people with heroism and claims human consists of an idea. Dr Rieux disagrees and links the devotion with morality: It's a matter of common decency... the only means of righting a plague is common decency (Camus, 1948/1947:142). When Rambert wants further explanation he bases this decency upon doing his job. As Thody asserts "in simply doing his job well, Rieux is being faithful to the injunction always to serve men" (Thody, 1957:31). It is clearly seen that Camus features solidarity among men with his character Dr Rieux representing a person revolts in an absurd world. As Hanna clarifies in her book *The Thought and Art of Albert Camus* in revolt there is a value for others, it is beyond the person's own individuality "revolt affirms the complicity of all men around a common value and a common oppression" it carries men towards all men showing that the solidarity of men is transcendent of the individual" (Hanna, 1958:98). Camus's philosophy leads human being to keep themselves away from being selfish which is compatible with Kant's categorical imperative. Dr Rieux considers human dignity, sees humanity as an end never as a means, from this aspect he complies with second formulation of categorical imperative. As he is objective and rational, these features can be universalisable maxims for the people, his actions are compatible with first formulation of categorical imperative too.

Tarrou is among the characters following ethical theory of Kant with his acts of minding human dignity. Tarrou suggests forming sanitary groups in the times of the plague. His sensibility for humanity is clear from his feeling, he hates "men's being condemned to death" (Camus, 1948/1947:105). It is seen in the novel that Tarrou participates in the fight for the plague directly and sacrifices his own well-being for the

sake of others. In those chaotic days the authorities are said to not have done their share completely. The sanitary department is not effective. Additionally, there is not much enough contribution to voluntary help. The Prefect cannot dare compulsion for support. Due to such reasons, thinking measures are not enough, Tarrou draws up a plan for voluntary groups and wants help from Dr Rieux for authorization to put his plan into practice. Furthermore, he mentions having a lot of friends in many walks of life who could help them. His sacrifice for others is manifested in the conversation with Dr Rieux. Doctor warns him: “that work of this kind may prove fatal to the worker”... (Camus, 1948/1947:106) and he wants to know if he weighed the consequences. Tarrou seems rather determined. Thereupon, doctor wants to know what motivates him for the help. When Tarrou replies: “I don’t know. My code of morals, perhaps” (Camus, 111), Dr Rieux asks him: “What code?” and the answer is “Comprehension” (Camus, 111). It can be interpreted Tarrou’s moral principles stems from his making out the reality and what is more others’ reality. We can consider here Tarrou as a Kantian agent. His acts are moved by reasons. “Kantian agents are always and only moved to action insofar as they see something as good, that is insofar as they take something to be a reason for action”(Camus, 49). Tarrou detects the shortcoming of the measures against the plague and tries to come up with practical solutions.

It is clear that Tarrou contributes much to the fight against plague. Indeed the newly made groups make people in the city more conscious about the case. They enable townspeople to understand the reality of plague by making them aware of the fact that the plague must be concern of all. As stated in the book *An Introduction to Kant’s Moral Philosophy* of Uleman, Kant asserts that categorical imperative intends to help others preserve and promote their freedom, rationality or power, what is demanded is to “help them attain their ends”. (Uleman, 2010:133). Tarrou draws his last breath due to the plague towards the last days of it. Despite costing his life, he strives for human dignity and reality. He sees humanity as an end which parallels to second formulation of Kantian law. As a result, all his maxims seeing humanity as an end and acting rational matches with categorical imperative.

Rambert has a different position from Dr Rieux and Tarrou in terms of having maxims suitable with moral theory of Kant. His maxims turn to compatible with categorical imperative during the beginning of the plague. Rambert is a journalist who comes to Oran before the disease. The gates of the town are shut down within the scope of security; therefore, he has to stay in the city. At the beginning, he wants to leave Oran and go to the woman he loves. For this purpose, he tries every sort of ways to escape. After confronting the helplessness of the people in the city, he changes his mind. Despite having chance to leave the city, he decides to stay and fight for the plague together with Dr Rieux and other volunteers. He is seen to have changed his maxims in a moral way. At first, he takes his inclinations before everything and wants to break the rule. In this respect, his maxim is not universalisable, in that it is not an approved action expected from everybody during the plague. If everybody behaved like him, the plague would spread around much more and the chaos would be out of control. From his action, it can be asserted that at first he does not act according to categorical imperative; however, the following days he changes his mind totally and his new maxims turn out to be accordant with categorical imperative.

Rambert’s acting in line with categorical imperative is seen in his preferences. When Rambert learns Dr Rieux’s wife is in a sanatorium far away from him, he wants permission from Dr Rieux to work with them until he leaves the city. He takes on a task of quarantine station then. He has worked day and night for two weeks resting little. Those are the most destructive days of the plague with many rises of deaths. When the time of his leaving comes, he visits Dr Rieux who is at the hospital, in the ward for an operation of a patient. Rambert tells him his decision of staying with them. On doctor’s wonder about the choice, he mentions the shame he will feel if he leaves. Moreover he believes, when he is ashamed, it will reflect on the relationship with the woman he loves. At this case, it is clear he rejects happiness. On doctor’s reassurance about normality of choosing happiness, he replies “it may be shameful to be happy by oneself” (Camus, 1948/1947: 175). Kant claims “happiness fails to meet common sense criteria for being a supreme moral good” and “happiness cannot ground a categorical imperative” (Uleman, 2010:105). In Kant’s theory, as Uleman states, there is not universality in happiness. “The pursue of happiness is arbitrary and senseless for Kant” (107), by rejecting his own happiness Rambert rejects his own sensuous side and turns to moral deeds. His choice illustrates his regarding human life, the idea of human dignity. In the course of

his working, he gets really into the case and feels humanity deep inside, confronts the very reality of the plague. He criticizes his former attitude not concerning about the matter. The manifestation of categorical imperative is available in his saying: I know that I belong here whether I want it or not. This business is everybody's business (Camus, 1948/1947:175). He respects others and embraces the issue. So he continues to deal with the district he is responsible with. As Sullivan states, morality necessitates "adopting a maxim of benevolence or well wishing" and this prevents us from being "completely indifferent to others' desires and needs" (1994:78). Adopting a maxim for human dignity, Rambert sets asides his personal interest and decides to act for humanity and this is what Kant's ethical theory commands: aiming humanity as an end.

Dr Castel is another character who plays a significant role during the plague. Minding human value, he takes his place among the people working for humanity. He is the one who claims the disease is a plague. Even if he does not have enough equipment, he tries to invent an anti-plague serum without minding his weariness. When the serum is ready, he really seems tired. Dr Rieux realizes his deteriorating case and how he is getting old. "His sensibility was getting out of hand..... His exhaustion was a blessing in disguise" (Camus, 1948/1947:160). Dr Castel stops curing due to his situation but still diagnoses the illness. Therefore, he has to cope with his emotions. People cry for help and want him to save their lives. Seeing their agony hurts him, but he cannot able to do anything. He makes his heart cold not to succumb to his feeling. He sleeps less and works like a robot but does not lose his motivation. Unfortunately, hourly he watches and observes men who are about to die. He has to start with another patient despite those painful experiences. Narrator emphasizes on his presence of mind drawing attention to his having a little rest. "All-pervading odour of death might have made him sentimental. But when a man has had only four hours' sleep, he isn't sentimental. He sees things as they are; (1948/1947:161). Dr Castel follows his practical principles, obeys his own rules without giving in. "The good person must have the moral strength and courage to constrain himself to act dutifully" (Sullivan, 1994:74). Like others he is not only faced with a remediless plague but also a psychological war. As it can be derived from his struggle for his patients, he has a maxim for human dignity. His intelligence is used by a good will, and the good will arises as a virtue. Doing his job properly no matter how challenging it is leads him to moral good. As a result, as a rational and sensible doctor, Dr Castel's actions comply with categorical imperative.

Grand is another person among the people who support for the struggle against the plague holding maxim of human dignity. He is stated by the narrator as "the true embodiment of the quiet courage that inspired the sanitary groups" (Camus, 1948/1947:114). He works as a clerk in municipal office. Additionally, he sometimes works in statistical department there regarding to compilation about birth, death and marriages. He becomes volunteer without any hesitation despite his old age. As he already does, he undertakes the duty of adding up the number of deaths. He spends his all evenings for the calculation, afterwards he shares the data he gets and helps revealing the case day by day in terms of its magnitude. His adopting categorical imperative is clearly seen from his reaction to Dr Rieux who thanks to Grand for the help. "Why, that's not difficult! Plague is here and we've got to make a stand, that's obvious" (Camus, 1948/1947:114). From his saying it is understood that he acts from the duty in. In fact, he was given a word of position in municipality, he was temporarily doing his job, and he is paid not much. In spite of this, he is unwilling to talk about his rights and scales down his need according to his salary. He is portrayed as a humble man. Narrator shows his life as an exemplary one. He is illustrated as a person wishing a good will for others. "He is one of those rare people, who have the courage of their good feelings. What little he told of his personal life vouched for acts of kindness and a capacity for affection that no one in our times dares own to" (Camus, 1948/1947:42). In the light of Kant's idea, as Sullivan (1994) points out in his book, "our main positive duty to ourselves is to enhance our own moral integrity and the principal benevolence" (67). Grand can be said to have moral integrity and principle of benevolence, and positive duties he follows contribute others' welfare. For all those reasons, Grand holds maxims compatible with Categorical Imperative.

Apart from the characters in harmony with Kant's moral theory, there are also two conflicting characters in *The Plague*. Father Paneloux who is a priest is one of them. At the first month of the plague, he preaches a sermon in an organization called week of prayer to which many people attend. He addresses the people first by saying they deserve the calamity. Next, he gives examples from the history and means that the plague is a kind of punishment for the ones who forget God. He asserts that the plague comes out to make evil-

doers think. While emphasizing repentance, he mentions God's forgiveness too. He likens plague to evil and talks its destructiveness. At the end of his speech, he advises people to visit God on Sundays. Father Paneloux blames them for having criminal indifference. To him, they should learn their lesson from the calamity. By warning the congregation he comments the plague as a message from God. However, it is his personal and religious perspective and really far away from a realistic point of view. It is completely out of logic. Although there is not a cure for the disease, to his thought the calamity would disappear if the people pray, repent and turn to God. For Dr Rieux, Father Paneloux speaks without thinking like Christians do. He says that he doesn't contact with the death. He is of the idea that he does not understand the excellence of it. Dr Rieux and others revolt and struggle against death in the novel and this battle is nothing to do with sainthood as Hanna (1958) indicates: "in Camus's terms sainthood would mean the denial of reality" (203). In the forthcoming days, on Tarrou's request Father Paneloux joins their voluntary working. While working, he witnesses a sorrowful death of an innocent child which changes his all ideas about the interpretation of the plague. Because there, he feels the death very closely and deeply. For Rieux Father Paneloux's thought is moving down to the "common ground" (Hanna, 200), Paneloux himself realized that in order to give oneself to this common cause he must move away from transcendental certainties and into the uncertainties of human condition (Hanna, 202). After his realization, he gives another sermon, this time he addresses the people as they are valuable. "He seems to mollify the severity of the earlier sermon" (Hanna, 1958:200). He explains there might be some cases they cannot explain and touches on the necessity of being together and struggling against it. Here, he acts according to duty, although he respects for others, it is not because of the fact that people must be respected, it is due to his being under control of his conscience and feeling. Therefore, he does not act for the sake of duty, and does not comply with categorical imperative. While Sullivan is clarifying Kant's ethics in his book, in the section of "respect for others" he finds necessary to include Kant's idea of love: "moral love is not an emotion but a practical attitude about how we should act toward others regardless of whether or not we feel any affection for them" (Sullivan, 1994:78). However, father Paneloux feels pity on the child. Feeling sympathy for others are not regarded as a duty for the people. Moral obligation is a must and mainly stems from the respect that must be given. Consequently, it is concluded that Father Paneloux violates the principals of categorical imperative.

Cottard is the other character who violates the rules of categorical imperative. He is a travelling salesman who eats at a restaurant. With Grand's words, he is an aloof, silent and secretive man. It is known that he commits suicide for feeling guilty. Regarding morality, Kant draws attention to the maxims of committing suicide. For him, a maxim of committing suicide is prohibited. "Because the natural world under a universalised suicide maxim, would somehow convulse" (Uleman, 2010:124). Kant believes that a person who does this action "fails the test for universalizability" when he is judged (Uleman, 5). "Suicide destroys life.... It conflicts with the will's inherent interest in itself" (Uleman, 125). "Suicide deprives us of the very basis free rational willing" (Uleman, 127). A person does not commit suicide if he is guided by the categorical imperative, "if he destroys himself in order to escape from a trying condition, he makes use of a person *merely as a means* to maintain a tolerable condition up to the end of life" (Uleman, 130). After Cottard's being saved, he joins the voluntary group and begins to contribute to the struggle against the plague. To Grand, he changes a lot during the plague and forms close relationship with Dr Rieux and his group. The reason of his change is clearly understood at the end of the novel. The fact that he helps for the people turns out to be a fake behaviour. From his behaviours it is discovered that he does not want the end of the plague. Since he is involved in a murder and the doors of the city is closed during the plague, he is rather safe in Oran. When everything starts to take its previous order in the city, he is estranged. From his ideas it can be concluded that Cottard cares his own interest and disregard others. It means that he uses humanity as a means not as an end. His thinking of himself, being selfish and lacking Kantian freedom are manifestations of the violation of categorical imperative of moral theory.

Conclusion

Kant puts forward a moral theory grounded on three formulations under the title of categorical imperative. Categorical imperatives are duties people should feel responsibility to perform in all conditions. While carrying out these duties people need to be free to choice their actions. They form their own maxims testing their universalisabilities. Kant's moral theory commands to act in the way that action will be a universal

law, a desired action by all people. This universalizability principal belongs to the first formulation of the theory. Second formulation, called also as the formula of humanity is related to the command demanding to act seeing people as an end rather than as a means. Third formulation is only explained in the introduction part and not covered in this study in detail. Rather, former two formulations are discussed in relation to certain characters.

In this respect, Camus's work *The Plague* and *The Stranger* are analysed in guidance of Kant's moral theory. This study portrays whether the actions and intentions of the mentioned characters comply with the principals of Kant's moral theory. Both works include cases necessitating adopting universal laws. While *The Plague* has exemplification of the agents both adopting and violating the moral principles, *The Stranger* presents mostly a sample of incapacity of holding universal maxims. The latter includes negligence of perfect duties, the former has actions both performing perfect and imperfect duties along with ignoring perfect ones.

When two works of Camus are analysed in terms of categorical imperative, the grasp with two ways are reached. Meursault, the character of *The Stranger* does not comply with categorical imperative. Assisting his friend Reymond abusing a woman, being under excessive influence of his inclinations and desires, and the murder of the Arap are manifestation of his acting against moral theory. Meursault does not hold universalisable maxims, seeing humanity as a means rather as an end; thus violates the principals of categorical imperative. While the main characters Dr Rieux, Tarrou, Rambert and their group behave according to the categorical imperative, the characters Cottard and Father Paneloux in *The Plague* do not follow the moral principles. Father Paneloux acts under the effect of his religious beliefs and emotions. Cottard looks after his own interest and sees humanity as a means. However, the group under the head of Rieux adopts universal maxims. Having universal principles requires maxims of respecting for others, concerning for the well-being of others. Dr Rieux's group act benevolently and work in order to contribute to well-being of others. Dr Rieux, Tarrou, Rambert and their friends adopt the right maxims and perform perfect duty, thus follows the principals of Kant's moral theory. Lastly, discussing Kantian duties, this study contributes to the ways of interpreting human actions in terms of morality providing with a philosophical and Kantian perspective, and thus shows the possibility of forming universal laws for human being.

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