How to Rrespond to Society?
Public Legitimation Strategies in Postmodern German Pop Song Lyrics and in French Existentialist Philosophy

Comment répondre à la société? Stratégies de légitimation publique dans les paroles des chansons pop postmodernes allemandes et dans la philosophie existentialiste française

Reacţii la societate. Strategii de legitimare publică în versurile cântecelor pop postmoderne germane şi în filozofia existenţialistă franceză

Hans W: GIESSEN
Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany
E-Mail: h.giessen@gmx.net

Abstract

Popsongs should not contradict their consumer's general opinions as they are commercial products that ought to be bought; therefore, their texts, too, give us hints on the assumed consumer's opinions. So an empirical analysis of German popsong lyrics since the late Seventies allows us to describe the development of public opinion, that leads from a diagnosis of society in political terms to unpolitical individual reactions. The basis as well as the cause of this development is the feeling of a loss of utopias. This, to some degree, corresponds with the existentialist's impression of absurdity. However, existentialist philosophers (as is shown with Albert Camus) develop from an individual diagnosis to a reaction concerning society. The article discusses the differences as well as the common positions of both developments.

Résumé

Les chansons pop ne devront pas contredire l'opinion générale du consommateur parce qu'étant des produits commerciaux elles devraient être achetées. Par conséquent, leurs textes aussi nous offrent des indices concernant les opinions présupposées du consommateur. Donc une analyse empirique des vers des chansons allemandes pop de la fin des années '70 nous permet décrire le développement de l'opinion publique qui conduit à un diagnostique de la société dans des termes politiques à des réaction individuelles apolitiques. La base, comme la cause de ce développement est le sentiment de la perte de quelques utopies. Cette chose correspond, dans une certaine mesure, à l'impression existentialiste face à l'absurdité. Pourtant, les philosophes existentialistes (comme on peut observer à Albert Camus) se développent d'un diagnostique individuel à une réaction concernant la société. L'article analyse les différences mais aussi les similitudes des deux directions.

Rezumat

Cantecele pop nu ar trebui sa contrazica parerea generala a consumatorului deoarece fiind produse comerciale ar trebui cumparate; in consecinta, textele lor de asemenea, ne ofera indicii referitoare la parerile presupuse ale consumatorului. Deci o analiza empirica a versurilor cantecelor Germane pop de la sfarsitul anilor '70 ne permite sa descriem dezvoltarea opiniei publice care conduce de la o diagnosticare a societatii in termini politici la reactii individuale

nepolitice. Baza, la fel ca si cauza acestei dezvoltari este sentimentul pierderii unor utopii. Aceasta, intr-o oarecare masura, corespunde impresiei existentialiste fata de absurditate. Totusi, filozofii existentialisti (asa cum se poate observa la Albert Camus) se dezvolta de la o diagnosticare individuala la o reactie referitoare la societate. Articolul analizeaza diferentele dar si asemanarile ambelor directii.

Key Words: *Camus, Existentialism, Individualist Anarchism, Marxism, Pop Song Lyrics, Postmodernism*
Mots - clé: *Camus, Existentialisme, Anarchisme, Individualiste, Marxisme, vers des chansons pop, Postmodernisme.*
Cuvinte cheie: *Camus, Existentialism, Anarhism Individualist, Marxism, versuri ale cantecelor pop, Postmodernism.*

I.

Because pop music is a commercial product and has to earn profits, it pursues one of the following strategies: either concentrate on a special segment or – what of course seems to be what interests most producers – focus on as many people as possible. The term 'pop music' – which derives from 'popular music', that is, according to Webster's definition, "suitable or intended for the people at large" – suggests that the second strategy is the one which is usually followed.

A consequence of this fact is that pop music can be used as an indicator of general developments in public taste and public opinion, not only with regard to musical tastes, but also style, and text patterns. While the text is not to be characterized as the central element of pop songs as a product, it should at least not contradict the potential consumer's attitudes and general beliefs.

Whereas the Webster definition of pop music appears to hold true in the Anglo-Saxon sphere, the term "*Popmusik*" in German is used in a more narrow sense. Indeed, it comes close in its meaning to the Anglo-Saxon term "rock music" whereas the Anglo-Saxon "pop music" can be compared to what is called "*Unterhaltungsmusik*" ("light music") in German - and what then almost seems to represent society as a whole. As with rock, the audience of "*Popmusik*" is somewhat different than the average consumers of popular music. In general, it is younger (Wicke 2011) and the more *avantgarde* the music style, the younger its consumers are. However, there are counter effects, for example a general shift in values (Klages 2001) which enables Simon Frith to assume an ideology of youth not necessarily linked to age (Frith 2007). All in all, therefore, it can be accepted that German pop songs reach an important sector of society and can be used to point to shifts in public opinion.

II.

This paper is a result of several studies on German pop lyrics (for example: Giessen 1992, 1994, 1995, 2002, 2006). Thus, I have been able to follow the development, shifts, and continuity in public opinion as reflected by pop lyrics from the late Seventies until today without any interruptions.

The 'starting point' of these studies (late Seventies onward) was chosen as this period seemed to be the time when a post-modern value system began to dominate German pop lyrics (Giessen 1992). One question of this study was whether, to what extent, and according to what priorities a postmodern 'frame of reference' is to be found within the texts. Thus, I shall use methods of content analysis for examination, focusing on six main themes that are central to discussions on post-modernity (Welsch 2008).

The first theme deals with the impression that no single 'absolute' system exists (anymore) with which it might be possible to explain and describe 'the world.' (Jean-François Lyotard defines

the 'Postmodern Condition' with skepticism in regard to meta-tales; Lyotard 1979. 7). Welsch concludes that relativism leads to what he calls 'radical plurality' (the second point; Welsch 2008. 4) that, again, results in a 'anti-totalitarian option' (being the third theme; Welsch 2008. 5). Two other major themes are also interrelated with 'plurality' and 'relativity,' but describe aspects that are felt as to be negative: senselessness and the loss of utopia; and a third one consists of an active reaction to those general developments: a personal, individual search for one's personal identity.

It can be shown (Giessen 1992, 1994, 2002) that West German pop lyrics from the period examined confirm those tendencies (they therefore differ from pop lyrics from the Sixties and Seventies that almost always are ideological and utopist). Moreover, as they describe only one main theme each – as songs typically are monothematical and express just one short story, thought, or metaphor –, they allow the themes to filter that are important at one very point in time by examining what themes, stories or thoughts dominate that specific point of time. Thus, they enable the analysis of developments and shifts within the general frame of reference hard to examine by other means.

Therefore, the pop song's themes are categorized within a coordination system whose one criterion distinguishes between diagnosis, or analysis, and reaction, thus referring simultaneously to content and time. The other criterion seems to be necessarily connected to the question of post-modernism: it focuses on the difference between the individual and society.

The coordination system thus postulates a development from collective or political diagnoses, or analysis, to individual and apolitical reactions. That development of course has to be proven. This can be done quantitatively as well as by means of a content analysis.
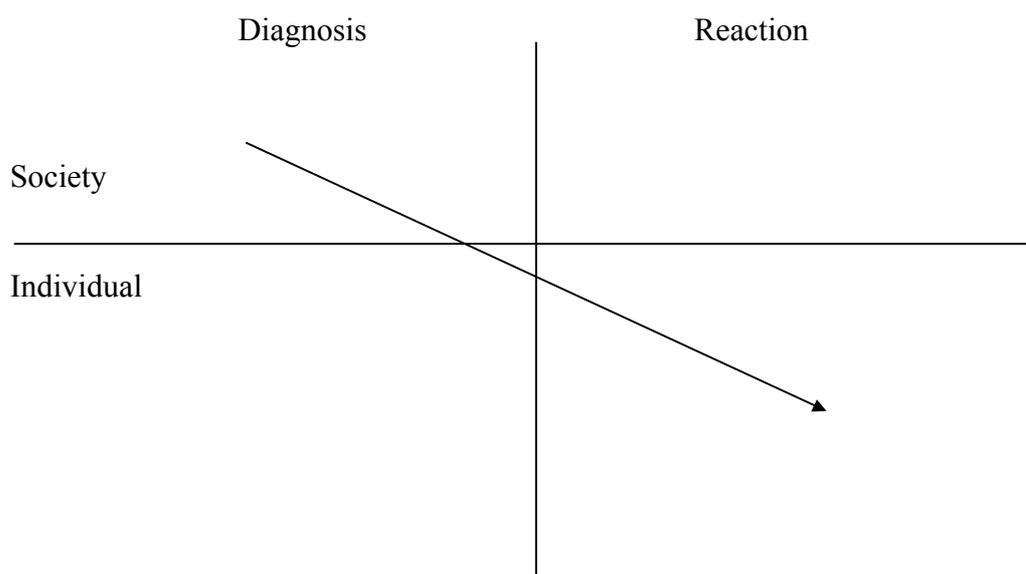
III.

There is quantitative evidence that social themes become less and less important. Some 7,000 pop lyrics from the late Seventies until German re-unification (1989) were examined by the means of content analysis within the framework of the coordination system (Giessen 1992). It was found that some 480 texts deal with social diagnosis or analysis whereas 510 texts deal with what was labeled individual diagnosis or analysis. 2,220 texts expressed reactions towards society, whereas 3,700 texts concerned themselves with what can be called 'individual reactions.' The dominance of individual reactions' might be explained as immanent to pop songs. However, looking at the time frame in which the songs appeared suggests that social trends were at least partly responsible. The dividing line which is also the turning point of the coordination system is the end

of the year of 1982. The result of a content analysis is that most texts that had to be attributed to 'diagnosis' (990 texts) appeared before 1982 (650 texts; thereafter: 340 texts). In contrast, the majority of texts that had to be attributed as 'reactions' (5,920 texts) appeared in 1983 and later (2,190 to 3,730 texts). Thus, the dividing between 'diagnosis' and 'reaction' is also a dividing line on the time axis.

'Diagnoses' that deal with society seem to be rather balanced before and after 1982; the relation is 5 to 4 (270 texts to 210 texts). For 'individual diagnoses', the relation is 3 to 1 (380 vs. 130 texts). Regarding 'social reactions', we find an even more balanced relationship of 5 to 7 (920 vs. 1,300). In contrast, individual reactions have increased dramatically from 1,270 to 2,430, that is, they have almost doubled since 1983. All in all, we have indicated a clear increase in the individual sector, whereas social themes did not rise - and were presented in a less theoretical, more personalized manner, as can be illustrated as we continue with the content analysis.

IV.

There are lots of cases that confirm this development had been taking place since the late Seventies/early Eighties, even when looking at single bands or singers.

One example is an author, composer, and performer named Ina Deter whose early records are almost solely dedicated to political feminism – they are very theoretical, more like pamphlets than like 'real' song lyrics (Deter 1977, 1978, 1979). In the Eighties, however, her albums presented mainly love songs – at least beginning with her 1984 record and almost exclusively since Deter 1987. Her love song lyrics still dealt with gender problems and were less committed to *cliché* than the texts of other singers. Still, the question remains whether Deter continued to hold on to her political claims. Maybe she did not see another chance to make her audience sensitive but to capture it with individual love songs. Those songs indeed express a deep seriousness in her efforts to live an authentic life thus relating to a main theme of theoretical post-modernism – but her former strong political criticism has almost totally vanished. So there is no hint that this aspect is still as important to Deter as before.

Another example: the texts of a band called "Die Crackers." Their first record from 1981 is (still) very political and aggressive which is obvious looking at its title, „BRDigung". „BRDigung" is a play on words. The capital letters refer to the abbreviation of *Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, which means *Federal Republic of Germany*. However, the spelling of „BRDigung" is the same as *Beerdigung* which means funeral. The record's lyrics refer to the political situation of the early Eighties which was associated with the plans of Nato armament. Political culture was dominated by this conflict and "Die Crackers" suggest quite concretely that the German government had threatened to put an end to life. Other songs refer to the same political situation but are more metaphorical, indicating that the political culture, as a result of these conflicts, does not enable one to live freely. Finally, „BRDigung" also seems to be a threat to the government: if it continues its politics it might be buried itself by its people. However, the situation obviously did not improve. So the next record of "Die Crackers" (1983) expresses a feeling of senselessness. The reaction to this observation is a reference to an action destructive to society as well to the individual. The album is called „Kamikaze." What a strong contrast to the title of the band's following album from 1985 which is called „besser küssen" ("to kiss better")! The reference to the final deed of self-destruction and senselessness is thus followed by a turn-around to an apolitical, cozy, private life – which seems to be the obvious alternative as there is no hope left to influence politics or society. This new album's songs are love songs, sometimes cynical, but without reference to the political diagnosis that led to the new value system.
V.

Also, a comparison between typical texts from both sides of the coordination system can be chosen to demonstrate the development. Those texts have to be representative of the period from

which they were derived. Aside from all phenomenological assumptions, the fact that they were on the top of the charts at those times proves their representative character. The first example is a song from Nena that gives one the impression that it is a children's song, „99 Luftballons" ("99 Red Balloons" from 1983) - a number one hit in 1983:

„Hast du etwas Zeit für mich?
Dann singe ich ein Lied für dich
von 99 Luftballons
auf ihrem Weg zum Horizont.
Denkst du vielleicht grad' an mich?
Dann singe ich ein Lied für dich
von 99 Luftballons
und daß so was von so was kommt.

99 Luftballons
auf ihrem Weg zum Horizont
hielt man für Ufos aus dem All.
Drum schickte ein General
'ne Fliegerstaffel hinterher:
Alarm zu geben, wenn's so wär.
Dabei war'n da am Horizont
nur 99 Luftballons.

99 Düsenjäger,
jeder war ein großer Krieger,
hielten sich für Captain Kirk.
Das gab ein großes Feuerwerk.
Die Nachbarn haben nichts gerafft
und fühlten sich gleich angemacht -
dabei schoß man am Horizont
auf 99 Luftballons.

99 Kriegsminister,
Streichholz und Benzinkanister,
hielten sich für schlaue Leute,
witterten schon fette Beute,
riefen Krieg und wollten Macht.
Mann, wer hätte das gedacht,
daß es einmal soweit kommt
wegen 99 Luftballons?

99 Jahre Krieg
ließen keinen Platz für Sieger.
Kriegsminister gibt's nicht mehr
und auch keine Düsenflieger.
Heute zieh' ich meine Runden,
seh' die Welt in Trümmern liegen,
hab' 'nen Luftballon gefunden,
denk' an dich und laß ihn fliegen."

99 red balloons

``You and I in a little toy shop
Buy a bag of balloons with the money we've got
Set them free at the break of dawn
'till one by one they were gone
Back at base, bugs in the software
Flash the message something's out there
But floating in the summer sky
Ninety nine red balloons go by

Ninety nine red balloons
Floating in the summer sky
Panic bells, it's red alert
There's something here from somewhere else
The war machine springs to life
Opens up one eager eye
And focusing it on the sky
Where ninety nine red balloons go by

Ninety nine decision street
Ninety nine ministers meet
To worry, worry, super scurry
Call the troops out in a hurry
This is what we've waited for
This is it boys, this is war
The President is on the line
As Ninety nine red balloons go by

Ninety nine knights of the air
Ride super high tech jet fighters
Ev'ry one's a silver hero
Ev'ry one's a Captain Kirk
With orders to identify
To clarify and classify
Scramble in the summer sky
Ninety nine red balloons go by

Ninety nine dreams I have had
In ev'ry one a red balloon
It's all over and I'm standing pretty
In this dust that was a city
If could find a souvenir
Just the prove the world was here
And here is a red balloon
I think of you and let it go

(Translation: Nena 1984, from Nena's International Album of 1984. However, "[t]he English version [...] was less a direct translation of the original than an attempt to appeal to the vast English speaking audience", according to Ron Parodi on his WWW-Page on "Early '80s Songs of the Week"; http://www.sirius.com/~parodi/newwave/96-05-18/nena.html).

The song's analysis is frustrating indeed. In spite of the fact that seemingly intelligent people like ministers or presidents act, maybe even because of that fact, the result is disastrous. A simple event may get out of control; this process with modern technology may become so dangerous that total destruction could be the result.

This is the analysis of many post-modern songs at the time referred to. Seemingly lacking concrete political (or anthropological?) experience, they feel there is no meaning in human society and history.

What is the reaction to that analysis? At least it does not seem to be meaningful to hang on to traditional values or 'morale', as they seemed to justify a society that is quite meaningless. In 1984, Hubert Kemmler alias Hubert Kah was successful with a song called „Goldene Zeiten" ("Golden Times") that discusses the loss of political and social questions on a meta level. Therefore, it is something of a departure from those questions.

> „Wir sehen besser aus.
> Wir sind der Zeit voraus.
> Wir fahren weiter fort.
> Wir werden schneller braun.
> Wir müssen kaum noch kauen.
> Wir treiben viel mehr Sport.
>
> Wir brauchen keine Sonne mehr.
>
> Wir sind so souverän.
> Wir kaufen teurer ein.
> Wir sind nicht mehr so fein.
> Wir denken nicht mehr nach.
> Wir sehen bunter fern,
> haben uns selber gern
> und bleiben länger auf.
>
> Wir brauchen keine Sterne mehr.
> Es geht uns jeden Tag besser.
>
> Goldene Zeiten:
> Das Paradies ist Wirklichkeit,
> oh wie schön.
> Goldene Zeiten:
> Ja, es ist soweit.
>
> Goldene Zeiten:
> Die neue Welt ist endlich da,
> oh wie schön.
> Goldene Zeiten:
> Ja, es ist soweit.
>
> Wir sagen lauter *nein*,
> richten uns schöner ein
> und machen leichter Geld.
> Wir hören mehr Radio
> und sehen per Video
> Gewalt, die uns gefällt.

Wir brauchen keine Phantasie.
Es geht uns jeden Tag besser."

„We look better.
We are ahead of time.
We travel further.
We get a tan faster.
We hardly have to chew.
We do more sports.

We don't need the sun anymore.

We are so superior.
We buy more expensive things.
We are not so distinguished anymore.
We don't reflect anymore.
We watch more colorful TV,
do like ourselves
and stay up longer at night.

We don't need the stars anymore.
We are doing better with each day.

Golden Times:
Paradise is reality,
oh how beautiful.
Golden Times:
Yes, it's time.

Golden Times:
The new world has finally arrived,
oh how beautiful.
Golden Times:
Yes, it's time.

We say *no* more emphatically,
furnish (our flats) more beautifully
and make money much easier.
We listen more to the radio
and watch on videos
the violence that we enjoy.

We don't need an imagination.
We are doing better with each day."

(Translation by author, H.G.)

The constant change between seemingly positive and seemingly negative behavior, between seemingly meaningful and seemingly senseless deeds or actions demonstrates that the consensual importance of values is lost. Some lines even contradict each other: "We hardly have to chew"

seems to express passivity, but the following line hints to the opposite direction: "We do more sports." However, 'sportivity' seems to be one-sided and without consequences. For example, it does not correspond to eating healthy food. Even seemingly active pastimes belong to the same mentality. Hubert Kah accepts and consumes everything just as it appears. This seems to be a real description of modern reality, as is shown by authors such as Marshal McLuhan (1964) or Neil Postman (1985). The lyrics do not even hide aspects that were formerly taboo-ridden, like 'watching and enjoying violence on videos', nor does it conceal self-critical aspects such as 'not reflecting anymore'. Yet it does not judge it but places it next to all other experiences.

Therefore 'saying *no* more emphatically' seems to have the same importance as 'watching more colorful TV'. In the modern world, the lyrics suggests, courage is as important and as meaningful as watching TV and may be necessary in some situations, but that (as a value) it is not more important than others.

The refrain does not put contradicting deeds, actions, and behavioral patterns next to each other but describes this 'new world' as positive, as a form of liberation that enables one to consume without social constraints. On the one hand, this seems to be a somewhat healthy reaction to the fact that such values have no authority anymore. On the other hand, the song is appealing as it flirts with taboos thus making the traditional importance of values acceptable.

The third set of lyrics is by writer and singer Sabrina Setlur which was number one on the hit charts late in 1997. It is called „Du liebst mich nicht" ("You don't love me"). This song focuses solely on the personality of the author and an unlucky love affair. Social values are in fact ignored:

> „Es könnt' mich nicht weniger interessieren
> ob du tot bist oder lebst, ob du gesund bist oder krank
> ob du Krebs hast oder Aids: Mir geht's am Arsch vorbei.
> Du Wichser reißt mein Herz
> in zwei Millionen Teile aus Schmerz
> und die sind schwer wie Blei.
> Meine Gedanken kreisen wie'n Adler immer wieder um die selbe Kacke
> Wie geht's ihm, wo is' er, wo war er, hat er an mich gedacht
> wie ich an ihn denk'?
> Merkt er nicht wie er mich kränkt?
> [...]
> Macht dir das Spaß? Ich scheiß auf dich! Das war's!
> Du liebst mich nicht."

> „I couldn't be more interested
> whether you are dead or alive, whether you are healthy or sick
> whether you have got cancer or aids: I could care fucking less.
> Hey you jerk - tear my heart
> in two million parts of pain
> that are as heavy as lead.
> My thoughts are like an eagle always flying around the same shit
> How is he, where is he, did he think about me
> like I think about him?
> Can't he see how sick he makes me?
> [...]
> Do you like that? Piss on you! Its over!
> You don't love me."

(Translation by author, H.G.)

Of course the singer - who claims the song's background is real (Giessen 2007) - feels hurt because her love was rejected. However, the manner with which she expresses her distress seems to be free from social sympathy, claiming not to be interested in whether or not her former lover is dead or alive, healthy or sick, has got cancer or aids. The lack of sympathy towards other people obviously did not hinder the song's economic success.

This lack of sympathy towards others now cannot be explained any more by the frustration generated by the fear that man will destroy himself. It seems to have become a general attitude. The most important aspect of this song is the serenity with which Setlur sees herself. Her feeling is that she is worthy of respect and this leads her to believe that condemning those who do not accept her is justifiable. That is, in spite of its seemingly negative point of view, this song indeed expresses a clearly positive attitude regarding the post-modern theme of coping with one's personal identity.

All in all it has to be stated that most German post-modern pop song lyrics the mid-Eighties are negative, at least repulsive towards society, politics, and traditional values, and that sympathy is reduced to the individual and his personal concerns.

VI.

The coordination system enables post-modern pop song lyrics to be utilized as a corpus that helps to understand the current 'meta-tale'. The possibilities of this presentation form, as well as its limits can be illustrated by a contrasting example. This will now be done with reference to Albert Camus whose 'meta-tale' generally is labeled as 'existentialist'. In Camus' 'meta-tale', two important 'myths' can be found that will build the corpus with which his 'frame of reference' will be demonstrated. Of course, within this context, I will only be able to present a brief summary of these „myths" which means that many details will be excluded.

VII.

Albert Camus' primary experience was the acceptance that life, his life, seemed 'absurd' to him. That is, an individual realization stands at the beginning of his experience. This is the reason why Camus can only answer the question about the meaning of life in a negative fashion. The world seems to be senseless and does not answer his 'why-questions', but after a question was posed, it simply "becomes itself again"[1]. How can, how should man live in this absurd world? Camus deals with that question in his first 'mythos' named after the classical figure of Sisyphus (Camus 1942). This classical hero is condemned by the Greek Gods to roll a stone up to the top of a mountain. However, he will never reach the mountain, because just as Sisyphus reaches the top, the stone comes thundering down again. Thus, there is no hope for an end to his task. Sisyphus has to repeat this action over and over again. His task to roll the stone up the side of the mountain will never end and cannot be abandoned in spite of its absolute senselessness. Indeed, the condemnation of the gods lies exactly in this senselessness. This myth, according to Camus, represents man's situation, imprisoned in a daily routine of toil and absurdity. However, this becomes a problem only because of man's desire to fulfill "that nostalgia for unity, that appetite for the absolute"[2] which is so strong that it makes "the stage sets collapse" [3]. The consequence is a feeling of "weariness tinged with amazement"[4]. This feeling "comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows. What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definite awakening"[5]. Camus does not believe that once this process has begun, that it is possible for man to return to a daily routine. He says man's consciousness contradicts that. As the problem cannot be solved, nothing seems to change. But the 'mechanical life' that goes on now becomes a conscious one and is not just suffered. Thus, man must resist absurdity. "The absurd has meaning only in so far as it is not agreed to"[6]. This is the concept of "modern heroism"[7]: "Sisyphus is the absurd hero. He *is*, as much through his passion as through his torture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion

for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing [...]. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn"[8].

Likewise, the classical hero Prometheus stands in the very center of a second myth with which Camus eight years later further examines how the conscious human being deals with the problem of destiny and absurdity. More importantly, however, this second myth at least demonstrates a shift, maybe even a contradiction within the same consistent 'frame of reference.' Prometheus does not limit himself to being conscious of his absurd situation but he also revolts. The reason for his revolt seems to be similar to Sisyphus' desire. It seems to be to fulfill that same "nostalgia for unity, that appetite for the absolute"[9], as the revolt is described to be "a complete and spontaneous loyalty [of man] to certain aspects of himself."[10] The Rebel, however, does not accept condemnation but by revolting has to accept other consequences: "He proceeds to put self-respect above everything else and proclaims that it is preferable to life itself [...] At a last resort he is willing to accept the final defeat, which is death, rather than be deprived of the last sacrament which he would call, for example, freedom. Better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees."[11]

Another shift has to be mentioned. For Sisyphus the absurdity experience is still an individual one in which he alone experiences and bears pain. In *L'homme revolté*, Albert Camus sees that other people experience that pain, too. Therefore, the revolt includes his fellow man and is considered an act of solidarity and humanity.

XIII.

It has become evident that many aspects of the post-modern 'meta-tale' of German pop song lyrics of the late Seventies onward can also be found within the scope of these two Camus myths. Both stress personal identity against the background of a senseless world. The senselessness *here* was explained by the feeling that man, nature, and indeed the world is threatened, for example, by atomic weapons and the dangers of social structures within which these dangerous weapons are exerted. The senselessness *there* was explained by the feeling of life's absurdity. The social consequences correspond, too. Argumentation in both cases leads to the impression that values are relative, not absolute. When Camus says one has to choose a cause for which to risk one's life this is, indeed, a selection; it is, at least, subjective and could also be replaced; moreover Camus points to this fact of selecting his cause by saying his choice is just 'an example'. Pop lyrics, on the other side, also seem to accept the fact that there is no ideology worth defending.

Thus it might be asked what the difference is between Camus and German pop lyrics . If Camus' two 'myths' are regarded as one corpus, a comparison with German pop lyrics as the contrasting corpus becomes possible on that meta-level. Surprisingly, the two coordination systems now show that an important difference exists:
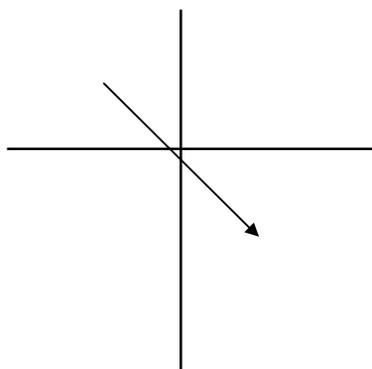
German post-modern pop song lyrics   Albert Camus
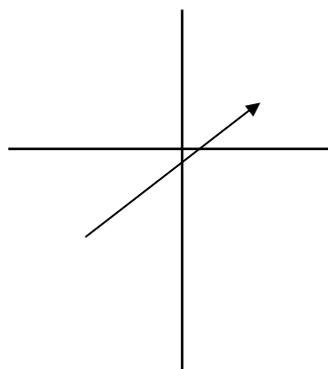
The arrows direction is based on the premise that a temporal development is represented. The coordination system used for German pop lyrics was explained earlier. By analogy, in analyzing Camus' 'myths', we see a development from an individual diagnosis (the individual experience of absurdity) to a social which even leads to a political reaction (the revolt). The second coordination system shows a striking contrast to the first one which is surprising as the main themes and aspects, even both 'meta-tales' at first seemed to be very close, almost identical.

Thus, the fact that a temporal aspect is included leads to a new insight. It now is possible – if the date of several documents that together built the corpus is known – also to analyze how changes within a 'frame of reference' occur and at which point within such a process a text is to be found. Thus, a more precise interpretation of different developments seems to be possible.

Of course, the differentiating criterion also has to be defined and justified. It does not have to be the same criterion chosen in this study. Others are possible and probably make sense, too, for example, the dialectics between life and death, especially in the Eastern hemisphere. However, (at least within the Western hemisphere) when the question of public legitimation strategies on 'How to Respond to Society' is to be discussed, the separation between the individual and his social surroundings seems to be the criterion that is decisive. Thus, the criterion depends on the interest of the analysis conducted.

At least it is necessary that both corpora focus on the same issues (such as the feeling of senselessness or the desire to occupy oneself with one's personal identity). And it is unavoidable that both corpora can be classified within the same criterion (such as the separation between the individual and the social sphere.)

Within the same coordination system and focusing on the same criteria, two other arrow directions are possible. Both would be parallel to the border line between individual and social developments respectively. Both possibilities can be expressed using two other examples (that here, of course, due to limited space cannot be explained further.) On the individual's side, this would be, for example, the model of Max Stirner's subjective anarchism (Stirner 1845); on the social side, of course the concept of socialism or communism respectively are quite famous (for example MEW 4.) Both examples are named here as they, both being in the tradition of Hegel, depend on the same main issues.
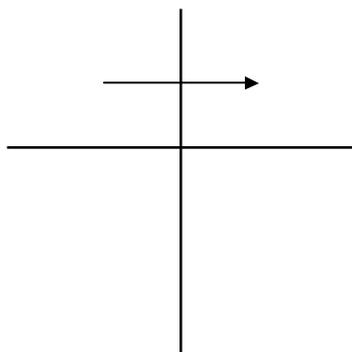
Marxism   Max Stirner
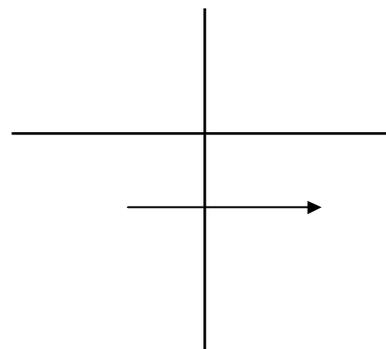
IX.

The limits of the coordination system lie in the question *why* the developments shown happened the way they did. Why, for example, did Camus call for a revolt that he justified politically and morally – why, against the background of his feeling of absurdity, didn't he come to a position close to Max Stirner? Why, on the other hand, did German post-modern pop song lyrics against the background of the issues that were virulent in the late Seventies and early eighties such as, for example, Nato armament and fear of war, come to a position that avoids general political influence? A generally satisfying explanation does not seem to be possible.

X.

Still, the coordination system offers an opportunity for an interpretation. It is evident that the aspect of senselessness is important in opposite areas within the coordination system. Absurdity of life is the individual *observation* for Albert Camus whereas political and general social problems lead to the position of skepticism towards general meta-tales that is a *reaction* towards society. Maybe it is indeed that position that helps to explain the opposite developments. His *observation*, being an existential moment in which "the stage sets collapse", to Albert Camus is the reason for what follows, "the gradual return into the chain or [...] the definite awakening"[12]. The consequence for Camus is to accept absurdity and thus to find a new 'sense': the revolt in favor of humanity. Thus, the development has a clear direction: from absurdity to revolt; from Camus' experiencing his own solitude and the senselessness of his existence to experiencing *Gemeinschaft* by revolting within a certain set of social surroundings. On the other hand, post-modern *Zeitgeist* begins with the observation of problems that indeed derive from society and it is these problems that cause the authors to experience senselessness. That is, the starting point in both cases is felt negatively, and the reaction in both cases focuses on the other sector that does not seem to be touched by that frustration. Camus suffers from absurdity: he is looking for a personal identity by revolting for humanity. Post-modern authors suffer from their impression that society seems to destroy life itself and that looking for an individual identity is their sector to experience something positive.

This interpretation seems to be consistent. Still, the other two possible variations of the coordination system show that it does not prove anything. At least, however, it enables a new description for different developments that, if it is correct, helps to better understand current and future processes.

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[1] redevient lui-même. Camus 1942. 29. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 11)
[2] Cette nostalgie d'unité, cet appétit d'absolu. Camus 1942. 32. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 13)
[3] les décors s'écroulent. Camus 1942. 27. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 10)
[4] cette lassitude teintée d'étonnement. Camus 1942. 27. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 10)
[5] [La lassitude ...] est à la fin des actes d'une vie machinale, mais elle inaugure en même temps le mouvement de la conscience. Elle l'éveille et elle provoque la suite. La suite, c'est le retour inconscient dans la chaîne, ou c'est l'éveil définitif. Camus 1942. 27. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 10)
[6] L'absurde n'a de sens que dans la mesure où l'on n'y consent pas. Camus 1942. 50. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 24)
[7] l'heroïsme moderne. Camus 1942. 167. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 90).
[8] [On a compris déjà que] Sisyphe est le héros absurde. Il l' est autant par ses passions que par son tourment. Son mépris des dieux, sa haine de la mort et sa passion pour la vie, lui ont valu ce supplice indiciple où tout l'être s'emploie à ne rien achever [...]. La clairvoyance qui devait faire son tourment consomme du même coup sa victoire. Il n'est pas de destin qui ne se surmonte par le mépris. Camus 1942. 164; 166. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 89; 90).
[9] Cette nostalgie d'unité, cet appétit d'absolu. Camus 1942. 32. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 13)
[10] une adhésion entière et instantanée de l'homme à une certaine part de lui-même. Camus 1950. 26. (Translated from the French by Anthony Bower: Camus 1953. 19)

[11] Cette part de lui-même qu'il voulait faire respecter, il la met alors au-dessus du reste, et la proclame préférable à tout, même à la vie. Elle devient pour lui le bien suprême. [...] A la limite, il accepte la déchéance dernière qui est la mort, s'il doit être privé de cette consécration exclusive qu'il appellera, par example, sa liberté. Plutôt mourir debout que de vivre à genoux. Camus 1950. 27. (Translated from the French by Anthony Bower: Camus 1953. 20, 21)

[12] les décors s'écroulent; le retour inconscient dans la chaîne, ou c'est l'éveil définitif. Camus 1942. 27. (Translated from the French by Justin O'Brien: Camus 1955. 10).

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