

Readings for 13 April 2017

PHIL242L111 Existentialism

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1. *In the 2nd half of the Myth of Sisyphus, Camus describes the "absurd man." He maintains that figures such as Don Juan, the actor and the conqueror embody this notion. Explain what Camus means by the absurd man and how these figures represent him.*

The absurd man is someone who recognizes the uselessness and futility of life and finds happiness in it. Sisyphus is the perfect example of an absurd hero because he knows that his life is absurd and pointless, but despite this finds happiness in it. However, this is not fit the typical definition of “happiness” — rather, one could call it “acceptance”.

2. *Some critics maintain that the main character in Camus' The Stranger, Mersault also represents the absurd hero. Explain how Mersault embodies this figure (the Sartre essay may help you answer this question).*

Mersault exemplifies the absurd hero with revolt, passion, and freedom — he does not place any restrictions on his life, and will live life like he'd like to. He is literally living a futile existence, because he is condemned to death. He also believes that we live in a futile existence — we all live, and we all die, and what we do before we die does not matter, because we all die in the end.