

PHILOSOPHY 101

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CAMUS ON THE ABSURD

EXISTENCE AS A PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide.

- Why is the issue of suicide a *philosophical* problem?
 - Fundamental philosophical questions are practical — they concern what we should *do*
- "Is life worth living?" is the most fundamental practical question
- Camus's Question: If life is absurd, then is life worth living?

THE ABSURD

- Why is life absurd?
 - Human beings are driven to ask questions concerning existence for which there are no answers
 - Life is finite
 - The world is not fundamentally rational or intelligible
 - There are no objective values or purposes
- Can life be meaningful if there is no objective point or purpose to it?

CAMUS'S POSITION

- We have two options
 1. Escape
 - Suicide
 - False consciousness ("philosophical suicide")
 2. Defiance

DEFIANCE

Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. 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.

- Conscious affirmation of *both* the absurdity and the value of one's life
 - Is this a psychologically realistic position?

