

# Existentialist Philosophy and Theology - Reconciling Absurdity

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What is the goal of living? What is life's meaning for man? ... That we want to live, that we like to live, are facts that require no explanation. But if we ask *how* we want to live—what we seek from life, what makes it meaningful for us—then indeed we deal with questions to which people will give many different answers. - Erich Fromm, *The Art of Being*

The question of *how* we want to live is a question which is unique and essential to the human experience. So much of the time, we live under society imposed goals such as monetary and reputed success, or even simply a larger contented happiness. However, each of these seems to fall short in answering the larger question of what meaning there is to life. Indeed, even when they are obtained, we seem to be left wanting more and at the same time we feel utterly empty inside.

In this paper, I wish to address the root cause of this problem—existential absurdity—and explore a theological solution. In order to do this, I will first present and analyze Nagel, Camus, Taylor, and Wolf's arguments on absurdity, looking specifically at why absurdity to them is unavoidable and then also looking at their methods of reconciliation. Following this, I will explore further the idea of this insatiable hunger we have for meaning. I will then use this idea to lead into

Paul Tillich's view of ultimate concern, faith, and idolatry as a more concrete structure on which to build my arguments. Using these concepts, I will break down and attempt to better understand existential belief and absurdity. In doing so, I will argue that the secular existentialist philosophers' mistake is that their scope of possible solutions is too narrow. After further thinking on the nature of ultimate concern and faith, I will argue that absurdity is not an unavoidable aspect of human existence, but rather a side effect of a larger existential decision which is often ignored. Finally, in order to further support this argument, I will address and respond to the problem of existential doubt and its relation to absurdity. In doing so, I will argue that the solution regarding faith and the infinite is ultimately more satisfactory and will lead to a truly fulfilling life.

## **Existentialist Philosophy - Unavoidable Absurdity**

Nagel is perhaps one of the most prominent philosophers, and certainly the most famous for his argument on existential absurdity. In the corresponding work, "The Absurd," he argues for two things: first that there is a concept of the absurd which is unavoidable, and second that we should respond to it with humor. He begins in this work by stating that many people "feel on occasion that life is absurd, and some feel it vividly and continually" (Nagel, 813). As such, he aims to explore why this is so by first challenging three common explanations for absurdity: the million year difference, the vastness of space and time, and chains of justification. The first objection says that nothing we do now will matter in a million years. Nagel tackles this argument by asserting that the million year difference is only relevant if anything can be proved to matter now. As such, it is not a satisfying explanation to this feeling absurdity. The second objection states that our feeling of absurdity comes from our being a speck in the vastness of space and time. However, Nagel argues that even if our existence was infinite and our size was our choice, our existence would still be absurd. Finally, the chains of justification argument states that we have certain motivations for our actions, and when we question those motivations, we find that it leads to one ultimate question: "but to

what final end?” (Nagel, 813). For this argument, Nagel states that “since justifications must come to an end somewhere, nothing is gained by denying that they end where they appear to, within life” (Nagel, 814). He further asserts that if this argument is to be taken to heart, then “this makes it impossible to supply any reasons at all” (Nagel, 814). Having thus explored these common arguments for absurdity, I now move to explore Nagel’s own justification for the problem of the absurd.

Nagel argues that every person approaches their life with a seriousness. He invokes the example of how an “ordinary individual sweats over his appearance, his health, his sex life, his emotional honesty, his social utility, his self-knowledge, the quality of his ties with family, colleagues, and friends, how well he does his job, whether he understands the world and what is going on with it” (Nagel, 814). As such, even if not all of these attributes apply to everyone, Nagel argues that this seriousness is indeed universal and unavoidable among humans. It takes energy and attention (Nagel, 814) to live at all. However, in addition to this energy and attention, we also have a unique capacity as humans to “step back and survey...the lives to which [we] are committed” (Nagel, 815). It is easy at this point to jump to the conclusion that absurdity arises from the ability to step back and see the endless chains of justification or the fact that we are a speck in the massive universe. because this only loops back to the first three common explanations for absurdity. Instead, the absurdity arises from the fact that when we step back, we see “ourselves from outside, and all the contingency and specificity of our aims and pursuits become clear. Yet when we take this view and recognize what we do as arbitrary, it does not disengage us from life” (Nagel, 815). Thus, Nagel’s argument for absurdity is based on the discontinuity between the seriousness with which we approach life and the larger perspective which we are capable of taking.

Nagel’s attempt at resolution thus emphasizes the uniqueness of this problem of absurdity: it can only arise for those beings who are capable of stepping back, and humans fall into this exclusive category. The life of a mouse is not absurd just as the life of a rock is not absurd; both lack ability to step back and observe the arbitrary natures of their existences. As such, he argues that because

absurdity is inescapable, we should not run from it, or shake our fists at it. But instead, we should embrace it as a necessary part of being human, and find the irony in the absurd.

This response to the absurd is quite different from Albert Camus' argument, which he explores through the eyes of Sisyphus. Sisyphus is by definition an "absurd" hero, in that he has been condemned by the gods to the arduous and repetitive task of rolling a stone up a mountain—only to watch it roll back down every time. Camus describes a "man going back down with a heavy yet measured step towards the torment of which he will never know the end. That hour like of breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness" (Camus, 812). In Camus' view, we see a definition of the absurd which is somewhat similar to Nagel's arising from the discrepancy between existing as a human with a personal and seemingly meaningful perspective and dealing with the ultimately meaningless. In order to argue this, Camus uses the myth of Sisyphus as a way to peer into the human soul and attempt to understand what meaning one might be able to find in the story of Sisyphus. In observing the tragic hero that Sisyphus is, Camus argues that absurdity and happiness are intimately related: "One does not discover the absurd without being tempted to write a manual of happiness" (Camus, 812). Continuing charitably on this argument, one might say that when we discover absurdity, we can think of what sorts of activities make our lives meaningful, and from there we find the interaction between happiness and absurdity which Camus is pointing to.

In addition, as a response to this absurdity, Camus invokes the idea of a "metaphysical rebellion," which he defines as a "movement by which man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation" (*The Rebel*, 15). It is this metaphysical rebellion, and the recognition of absurdity which Camus argues can help one find their joy in life. The value contained therein is there because "he knows himself to be the master of his days" (Camus, 812). Thus, the problem of absurdity acts as a way for man to rebel against the gods, the earth, and everything in it. The higher awareness which Sisyphus can gain from considering the absurdity of his situation is his alone to experience and savor, and Camus argues that he can therefore find joy and happiness in it.

His rock is his thing - Camus, Pg. 812

Next, we explore Richard Taylor's *The Meaning of Human Existence*. In this essay, Taylor questions the meaninglessness of life. In doing so, he essentially assumes the problem of absurdity. As Nagel argues in the beginning, a meaningless life itself is not a problem. Thus, Taylor is attempting to solve this question of meaning in order to remove the discrepancy between the seriousness with which we approach our lives and the seeming meaninglessness which feels unavoidable. In order to accomplish this, Taylor explores many avenues of thought, attempting to explore what is contained in a human life and what we might first define as a meaningless life. After considering the myth of Sisyphus and other thought experiments, Taylor concludes that a meaningless life is one that is "divested of all purpose, including even the minimal purpose of somehow avoiding total boredom from one hour to the next" (Taylor, 824). In addition to this, Taylor argues that even satisfaction and contentedness can exist in a meaningless life (Taylor, 826). Furthermore, these seemingly positive things can blind us to what it means to that lack of meaning, and thus solving this problem of absurdity and meaning is more than merely finding pleasure in life.

Continuing his argument, Taylor then moves to consider what can give our lives meaning. After contemplating arguments involving robotic nuns and Sisyphus, he comes to the conclusion that "life is truly meaningful only if it is directed to goals of one's own creation and choice and if those goals are genuinely noble, beautiful, or otherwise lastingly worthwhile and attained" (Taylor, 833). And thus, he settles on this idea of the existence of a "genuine creator" (Taylor, 836). He defines this meaningful life, then, as one which is "directed to goals of one's own creation and choice and if those goals are genuinely noble, beautiful, or otherwise lastingly worthwhile and attained" (Taylor, 833). To illustrate what a genuine creator might be, he refers back to the story of Sisyphus. Instead of rolling the rock up only to have it fall down, Taylor depicts a scenario in which Sisyphus is purposefully rolling the rocks up the hill in order to create a "great and everlasting temple, not

merely beautiful to his eyes, but truly beautiful, in the eyes of every future generation of mortal and, let us suppose, of the gods as well” (Taylor, 835).

The final argument to visit is contained in Wolf’s *The Meanings of Lives*. This argument will help us transition nicely from the concept of absurdity to the inevitable search for meaning. This is particularly true because Wolf differs importantly from the previous three philosophers I have presented. Approaching absurdity from a new direction, Wolf first questions “whether the desire [for meaning] is one that is good that people have” (Wolf 842). In doing so, she explores the intuition we have about what a meaningful life is, and then uses that intuition to argue that “to devote one’s life entirely to activities whose value is merely subjective...is practically solipsistic” (Wolf, 843). As such, a meaningful life becomes one which is not “directed solely to its subject’s own fulfillment” (Wolf, 843), but rather it is a life which can mean something to someone other than the original subjective observer (Wolf, 845). Thus, a life does not exist with some predetermined purpose, direction, or point, but rather Wolf argues that finding and making meaning in life is more than possible for any average person.

All four of the arguments above at their core are addressing the problem of absurdity, and each of them approaches the solution to absurdity in a different way. Nagel argues initially for its existence and unavoidable nature in human life, and then argues that the solution lies in embracing the irony of the claims. Then, Camus argues that the problem of absurdity calls for a metaphysical rebellion and that this leads to further exploration of the self and meaning. Taylor argues that despite the absurdity, we can find meaning in a creative existence. Then, finally, Wolf argues that a life can be objectively meaningful (and thus supposedly not absurd) if one is willing to look for the meaning and not devote life to merely subjective and solipsistic pursuits. Wolf’s argument is particularly helpful, though, because in addition to attempting to find a solution to the absurd, Wolf identifies a fascinating and significant concern: “we seem to think [a person] *should* want meaning in [their] life, even if [they don’t] realize it” (Wolf, 842).

Here, Wolf identifies the crucial fact that all of us are hungry for meaning in our lives. This is inherent in the problem of absurdity because of the concept of the seriousness with which we approach our lives. However, it is not so explicitly stated that we do indeed search for meaning. In bringing up this concern, it seems that Wolf is attempting to question more fundamentally the tendency of humans to yearn for meaning, and this is the idea I wish to explore next.

## **An Unquenchable Thirst**

Human beings have an unquenchable thirst for purpose. Our societies are very often built around artificial (e.g. monetary) goals, and oftentimes we are promised that if we achieve these goals, we will prosper and be truly happy. However, this is rarely if ever the case. Even in analyses of human nature, we see philosophers such as Hobbes and Rousseau who capture this yearning in one way or another. In Hobbes' view, there is a "restless desire of Power" in all men (Hobbes, Ch. 11) in addition to many other lesser but still significant appetites which can only be enumerated over several dense chapters. In Rousseau's state of nature, we see an "inflamed *amour-propre*" or self-love which is again an attempt to find larger meaning or satisfy some existential appetite that we have. Obviously, it is known that these states of nature are not practical or historical in any way. However, I argue that each of these views of the state of nature of man supports the argument that this yearning for meaning is not something which is detachable from the human experience. Instead, this appetite is an essential and important part of life.

This conclusion is importantly different from Nagel's response to the problem of absurdity, however, because Nagel sees this inevitability and embraces absurdity where I have only embraced the concept that we have a desire which seems incredibly difficult to satisfy. This thirst we have is an integral part of the problem of the absurd, however, and as such when considering this yearning,

the problem of absurdity is still a problem to be dealt with. Nagel and Camus both embrace the absurdity and have their attitudes towards it. However, Taylor and Wolf differ in that instead of embracing it, they attempt to find things which will satisfy this unquenchable thirst. In Taylor's case, we supposedly find that a creative existence should provide enough meaning to one's life to do just that. However, we must question whether this is truly the case.

In Taylor's most extreme example of the modified situation of Sisyphus, we see an originally absurd hero tirelessly rolling a rock up a hill become a meaningful hero with a purpose. He is building a beautiful structure which will be admired and loved for generations to come. However, we truly must question the practicality of such a case. The structure, though it may be beautiful, will no doubt have its flaws, and in time it will deteriorate just like every other magnificent build of history has. In addition, even its beauty can be called into question since beauty itself can be considered a subjective quality. We shall suppose for the sake of argument that this is not the case, however, since the philosophy of aesthetics is not a can of worms I wish to open. Even in this charitable case, Nagel's problem of absurdity still arises because the temple which Sisyphus has built is not inherently meaningful. It can be thought of as meaningful, and perhaps he and his future descendants will value it. However, it is also only in Sisyphus' nature as a human to step back and see also the arbitrariness and lack of universal purpose the structure holds. Thus, even in the ideal case the modified myth of Sisyphus still falls victim to Nagel's argument of absurdity.

Wolf argues that our existential journey also does not end at the problem of the absurd, but rather that problem is something which we need to come to terms with, and that we can find other paths to fulfillment. In this line of argument, Wolf purports that "the possibility of living meaningful lives despite the absence of an overall meaning *to* life" is possible because "whether or not God exists, the fact remains that some objects, activities and ideas are better than others" (Wolf, 846). Is this a valid conclusion, though? I would argue that despite providing some examples of activities in life which are more meaningful, we are still stuck in the real of Nagel's problem of the



absurd because our hunger for meaning is inherently a hunger for a larger “meaning *to* life”, and not simply a meaningful life. I admit that some may settle for the latter, but I also insist that such a compromise will never lead to a truly fulfilling life. In order to argue this, I now turn to Tillich’s ideas of ultimate concern and faith.

## **Tillich - Ultimate Concern and Faith**

Paul Tillich’s work strikes a fascinating balance between existentialist philosophy and theology. In this paper, I would like to further explore this relationship. To begin, we first take a look at Tillich’s main arguments in *Dynamics of Faith* and the definitions therein which will be particularly important.

Ultimate concern is a fully centered act which appeals to the spiritual concerns which man has: “cognitive, aesthetic, social, and political” (Tillich, 1). In addition, ultimate concern always has an object and this object of ultimate concern “demands total surrender of him who accepts this claim and it promises total fulfillment” (Tillich, 1). Tillich provides a helpful example to help understand the nature of such an object: “[Success] is the god of many people in the highly competitive Western culture and it does what every ultimate concern must do: it demands unconditional surrender to its laws even if the price is the sacrifice of genuine human relations, personal conviction, and creative *cross*. Its threat is social and economic defeat, and its promise—indefinite as all such promises—the fulfillment of one’s being” (Tillich, 4). There exist other examples too: objects of ultimate concern such as video games, technological progress, and school/grades all govern the way people live their lives in society. However, each of these examples illustrates an example of a finite physical thing which we attempt to put our life’s meaning into. And, as we see from Nagel’s conclusion, any finite material thing which we attempt to make the object of our ultimate concern will be subject to that absurdity. As such, we must look deeper into what Tillich has to say about Faith.

Faith is defined by Tillich as the act of being wholly ultimately concerned. He states that “faith is the most centered act of the human mind” and that it is a “free...centered act of the personality” (Tillich, 6). Therefore, the act of faith is not one which is external and optional to the person, but rather it is an inherent and unavoidable aspect of being. In addition, Tillich states also that “faith is a matter of freedom” (Tillich, 5). As such, it is required that faith be a conscious act, though the unconscious parts also “participate in the creation of faith” (Tillich, 5) only insofar as they support and do not wholly determine the centered act. Tillich argues that as a result, faith and freedom are identical and that one cannot be without the other. Finally, faith is the result of a combination of both the rational and nonrational elements of a person being transcended (Tillich, 7). By this, Tillich means that the act of faith is not an independent choice to believe (Tillich, 8), and nor is it purely an emotional impulse. Rather, a true act of faith is one which transcends these. In order to describe this faith, Tillich induces the word “Ecstasy” which he explains as “standing outside of oneself...without ceasing to be oneself” (Tillich, 8).

At its core, this idea of ultimate concern and faith is a model for a life with value. Ultimate concern represents what it means to direct your life towards something, and faith is the fact of wholly committing to that state of ultimate concern. But, why would we do this? What is the point of being in such a state of ultimate concern, especially when it seems to take so much effort? As the previous “Western culture” example depicts, we already do this with many things in life. And yet, we still have a dilemma of meaninglessness. Taylor attempts to find meaning in existence by looking at the qualities of a meaningless existence. However, the best he can find is for one to live a creative existence. But, why is that existence fundamentally different from any other non-creative existence? Indeed, both existences, no matter how creative, are still subject to a step back in perspective, and are thus meaningless. In the same way, we are quite often ultimately concerned with objects and goals in our practical lives, even to the point of having our Tillichian faith directed towards that thing, and yet we still so often run into this problem of the absurd existence. As such, I

argue that we must reframe the problem of absurdity in a new way by first understanding the source of the unquenchable hunger which was elaborated on earlier.

## **“The Source of Faith”**

“Man is driven toward faith by his awareness of the infinite to which he belongs, but does not own like a possession.” (Tillich, 10)

Tillich states that the object of ultimate concern can truly be about anything. One could have faith in the most trivial of things, and it would still be faith. However, we have found that such materially-based goals which are commonly the objects of our faith are unfortunately unfulfilling. Thus, we turn to concept of the infinite in order to explore all of the possibilities presented to us.

Nagel, Taylor, and all previously-mentioned secular existentialists have previously disregarded this general concept of the infinite and God because they start from a closed-minded perspective of disbelief. As such, if we continue with such a fixed intuition and have it set in our minds that such a solution could not exist, then we will likely end up somewhere they have already been. Thus, if we are to attempt a new solution to the problem of absurdity, then we ought to explore those things which have been cast aside. In addition, while it is true that one can never be sure that there is an infinite or God to which we belong, it is also true that one can never disprove that there is a God either. Thus, I believe that it is essential that we explore this avenue of thinking further.

Using these concepts of ultimate concern and faith which Tillich has provided for us, we now revisit the problem of absurdity with newfound hope. In order to reframe the problem, however, I propose that we take a step back from the problem of absurdity, and consider what objects of faith lead to absurdity. As we have seen previously, Nagel and the others have been unable to find any

pursuit or project which is truly fulfilling or meaningful. They perhaps can find what a meaningful life could be, but they fail to find a meaning *to* life, as Wolf admits. This is because the problem of absurdity assumes a step back in perspective, and this step back always leads to arbitrary meaninglessness. However, Tillich states that “in truth, faith, the ultimate concern, is a concern about the truly ultimate; while in idolatrous faith preliminary, finite realities are elevated to the rank of ultimacy” (Tillich, 13). Up to this point, Nagel and the others have only considered objects of faith which lead inevitably to idolatrous faiths. In contrast, Tillich argues that the nature of the ultimate concern is necessarily infinite, and thus cannot be satiated by “finite realities.” As such, we come to understand that anything *can* be the object to faith. However, only those faiths which are centered around the true infinite will have the potential to provide meaning to our lives.

As a result of this reframing of the problem, we see that the problem of absurdity is no longer an issue. Rather, it is simply the path which one is led to when the object of faith is set to be an idolatrous one. Nagel and other secular philosophers insist that the problem of absurdity is one which is fundamental and unavoidable in the nature of human existence. As such, they attempt to solve the problem from as many different angles as they can, attempting to use many finites to make an infinite. However, I argue that absurdity is not an inevitable challenge, but rather it is a symptom of a larger decision which every person makes, consciously or unconsciously. If they choose to place their faith in something which is not idolatrous, then absurd existence disappears. In order to further my argument, I now move to address the problems which might arise.

## **Hesitations and Existential Doubt**

Taylor argues that putting faith in some ultimate power is meaningless because one can never be sure that the ultimate power exists and is actually valuable. Similarly, the other philosophers argue that this is not a road they wish to travel down because it requires a leap in belief which they are

not comfortable with. However, I question whether settling for the absurdity of life is any more comforting. In order to address this concern, Tillich asserts that faith in the infinite requires courage (Tillich, 16), and courage in this case is required because of the uncertainty. Admittedly, “where there is daring and courage there is the possibility for failure. And in every act of faith this possibility is present” (Tillich, 17). However, this risk also not something which is totally foreign to us. In the example of the nation as one’s ultimate concern, Tillich exclaims that “Whoever makes his nation his ultimate concern needs courage in order to maintain this concern” (Tillich, 17). As a result, we begin to see that this notion of courage and doubt is not such a big leap after all. When we put our faith in a “nation, success, a god, or the God of the Bible: They are all contents without immediate awareness” (Tillich, 17). Furthermore, as we have discovered previously: nation, success, and other finite objects which we might put our faith in are in the end unsatisfying. Thus, we are faced with a decision: do we choose the known but idolatrous faith which will ultimately fail us, or do we choose to take the bigger risk and put our faith in the infinite? The connection I have made here is, I think, a valuable one. However, I still wish to explore further the concept of existential doubt, and I will do so by first analyzing its contrast with skeptical doubt.

Existential doubt stands in stark contrast against that doubt which we might normally think of which Tillich refers to as “skeptical doubt”. Where skeptical doubt might include our questioning of objective sensory information or even our own beliefs, it only forms the basis for an “attitude of actually rejecting any certainty” (Tillich, 19). Skeptical doubt therefore can both be a useful tool and a great hindrance because the development of a full person, where faith is essential, is not possible only with skeptical doubt. As evidenced by the arguments by existential philosophers, man is forever tormented by existential concern about his being. We are uniquely able to question our existence and step back from our perspective in this way. As such, skeptical doubt can only lead down a perilous path of meaninglessness.

Existential doubt is thus not a doubt of the infinite’s existence. Rather, it represents the risk

and courage which are needed to choose to be ultimately concerned about the infinite. One can see that it does not demand courage for a finite being such as us to put our faith in something which we know is finite, because there is no risk. That act is simply one of cowardice and complacency because we know that we will never be fully satisfied, and we will forever deal with the problem of absurdity. A faith is thus only truly legitimate if it “is a risk and demands courage” (Tillich, 18). And this can only be the case if we embrace existential doubt and make it integrated into our belief system. Only then does an object of our faith truly affirm a concrete and ultimate concern.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have presented existential arguments by four philosophers: Thomas Nagel, Albert Camus, Richard Taylor, and Susan Wolf. In each case, I have explored the problems and solutions they have posed to the question of meaning. In doing so I have identified that each of their arguments is based on the idea that life is absurd. I also presented those arguments regarding what might make a life meaningful, including in particular Taylor’s creative existence claim and Wolf’s argument for subjective meaning. After presenting these arguments, I then look closer at the idea of an unquenchable thirst for purpose which seems to be a common theme through each of the secular existentialist philosophies. I then attempt to mark the subtle difference between this seemingly insatiable yearning and Nagel’s concept of the absurd. In order to do so, I invoke arguments on the state of nature by Hobbes and Rousseau as separate non-existentialist arguments which depict the insatiable yearning without the existential argument. I then relate it back to Taylor and Wolf’s arguments for creating a meaningful life through personal projects.

Having established this concept of unquenchable thirst, I introduce Tillich’s philosophy and the concepts of ultimate concern and faith in order to better understand both the yearning and how we might approach absurdity from a different direction. In this section, I explore ultimate concern as

a fully centered act and then argue for its ever-present status in our lives. I also argue with the help of Tillich that to choose your faith consciously is to be truly free, and that such an involved choice requires the whole person, not just the rational or nonrational parts. Relating this back to the problem which the existentialist philosophers are attempting to solve, I propose that the idea of ultimate concern and faith is, at its core, a way to better understand what value a life has—and what that life is directed towards. I then use this as a jumping off point to better understand what further analysis of these two concepts and existentialism might reveal about what we *ought* to put our faith in.

Ultimate concern and faith must have some object, so in order to better understand what objects of faith might be the most satisfying, I increase my scope beyond the secular existentialist philosophers. After doing so, I argue that absurdity is not an unavoidable problem, but rather a side effect of another decision which secular philosophers have not taken into account: that which involves the object of faith. I argue that Nagel, Camus, Taylor, and Wolf have all confined themselves to be stuck with the problem of absurdity when they don't need to be. Instead, if the object of faith is made to be infinite, then absurdity need not be an issue.

Finally, I address what I believe to be the strongest objection to my claim, which involves the skeptical doubt of an ultimate and infinite power. In doing so, I argue that the risk which accompanies any truly ultimate concern is something which is not in fact as foreign to us as it may seem. I argue that we all too often put our trust in material and idolatrous things to satisfy our infinite desires. Since we know these idolatrous things will not satisfy our desires, it is not a courageous act as it should be, but instead it is a cowardly one. In order to further this argument, I introduce Tillich's concept of existential doubt. I argue that existential doubt plays an integral role to leading a fulfilled life by appealing to the same reason which Nagel uses to justify the problem of absurdity. I assert that to have existential doubt is to be truly human, and to only rely on skeptical doubt is to dig oneself into a hole.

This intersection with secular existentialist philosophy and theology which I have explored in this paper is deeply important to me. Tillich states that, “There is truth of faith in philosophical truth. And there is philosophical truth in the truth of faith” (Tillich, 94). Thus, I assert that this argument which I have put forward constitutes a valid intersection of those truths which results in a more full and satisfying understanding and appreciation for the meaning of life.

Neither secular philosophers nor theologians can ultimately prove or disprove God or the infinite’s existence. Thus, I argue that the leap of faith I have implied in my arguments is not one which is as outlandish as it may seem. I also argue that to take the risk and have the courage to believe in this infinite, is far more valuable and fulfilling than to choose the safe path and deal with the seemingly inevitable problem of absurdity and lack of meaning to life.

Having established and restated my argument, I wish finally to implore my reader to see these arguments not as impractical and abstract ideas. But rather, I argue that these are in fact more practical and valuable than most all of those idolatrous faiths of the modern world. Camus and Nagel both conclude that there is a disconnect between living a life and stepping back from it to observe it from an existentialist perspective. However, I argue that the latter existentialist view need not result in conflict with living one’s life. Rather, one can find true and valuable meaning to life which exists as a practical and tangible faith. With this said, I also acknowledge that in this paper I have argued for an abstract “infinite” but have not given an applicable path to finding it. It is, however, by choice that I do so, and I leave the journey of finding what that ultimately fulfilling object of faith should be to the reader.



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