

"Despite so many ordeals, my advanced age and the nobility of my soul make me conclude that all is well." -Sophocles, Oedipus Rex

The above quote by Oedipus is the heart of Albert Camus' philosophical essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus was a French philosopher, author, and journalist. Published in 1942 as *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and dedicated to Pascal Pia, this essay presents the condition of man, in the face of the unavoidable notion of Absurdity, through an allegory of the Greek myth of Sisyphus, an individual doomed to perpetually pushing a boulder up a hill, only to see it roll down again.

The present essay deals with one of the most interesting aspects of the philosophy of Existentialism—the feeling of the Absurd. Once on this earth, one cannot escape the question, "What is the meaning of life". This paradoxical situation, between our impulse to ask ultimate questions and the impossibility of achieving any adequate answer, is what Camus calls the absurd—"This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of Absurdity." The Stranger's Monsieur Mersault characterizes this state of being by saying that "one day free is enough for one hundred days in prison."

For Camus, "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide". He asks whether the realisation that life is meaningless necessarily implies that life is not worth living? For Camus, it's not. He suggests that suicide amounts to a confession that life is too difficult to live or that it is not worth living. For Camus, killing oneself is an "insult to existence". Following the philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard and asking "a leap of faith" in God, by abandoning reason is also not a solution to the Absurd. Camus terms this as "Philosophical suicide".

Rejecting physical and philosophical suicide, Camus reaches the final alternative: One must fully confront the truth of one's existence and accept it. For Camus, "one's revolt, one's freedom," is this awareness, and it is the essence of living "to the maximum". Camus counsels a kind of revolt, which means for him that we must have knowledge of the certainty of our ultimate fate—death—but refuse to be resigned to it. "It is a paradoxical and tricky revolt in the face of acceptance, but one which Camus feels sure we can manage." CC

When a person, like Sisyphus attempts to bear the load of the rock that is life, is when he experiences the "lucidity that was to constitute his torture, at the same time crowns his victory." Instead of saying that death does not matter, Camus addresses the part of us that already believes that death might be preferable to life, and states that once we have understood the absurdity of life and accepted it, we will see that more life is always better" CC

The rock which Sisyphus pushes upwards, represents our tedious, repetitive, life. Still, "this is the rock's victory" that the moment one becomes aware of its entirety, one dismisses its absurdity. Sisyphus demonstrates that we can live with "the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it" Sisyphus perseveres and resists the lure of suicide. Camus holds that suicide tempts us with the illusory promise of freedom, but the only real freedom is to embrace the absurdity. If one exercises one's free will and keep up with the struggle that life is, one would find intrinsic value in life like the absurd hero. That is true freedom.

Camus' writing has captured the internal plight of much of the modern man, with mundane daily jobs and "his fate is no less absurd". He ends the essay with a famous passage that combines all his