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The Myth of Sisyphus is one of the profound philosophical texts written in the 20th century. The book was originally published in French as *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* in 1942. Albert Camus' philosophy of absurdity is most apparent in *Le Etranger* (The Stranger). Camus' third novel *La Chute* (The Fall) is a passionate denunciation of all-or-nothing approach to human problems which Camus describes in *The Myth of Sisyphus* as a form of consciousness of absurdity. Martin Esslin says, " In one of the most seminal heart-searching of our time, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus tried to diagnose the human situation in a world of shattered beliefs." The symbolic marriage of natural and social evils, of metaphysical problems, creates a certain element of ambiguity in Camus' novels. Both nature and society as seen by Camus are evil; both certainly are powerful; and both exact the same sort of sinister idolatry from their victims. It is against this spiritual sanctification of material force and the ignorance and illusions on which it thrives, that Camus speaks. Camus' sense of absurdity of human existence and his ethics are founded on an identical act of revolt against the existing structure of the universe. For the self-styled agnostic as he was, the one seems as arbitrary as the other. Were Camus merely telling us that moral values cannot be grounded on pragmatic facts, nor political right upon political might, it would be easy to accept his point of view. He seems rather to be telling us that moral values are incompatible with pragmatism facts, that political morality is incompatible with political efficacy. In other words, he must suppose not only an a-moral but a directly anti-moral universe—a highly anthropomorphic pagan deity of some sort—as fitting object of revolt. There would be little point in shaking our fists at blind, insistent matter. Camus divides *The Myth of Sisyphus* into three sections and each section into several chapters. In the <https://assignbuster.com/placing-camus-the-myth-of-sisyphus-in-the-philosophical-structure-of-existentialism/>

first section Camus says that life becomes meaningless to most of the human beings in the absurd world. This leads to the serious philosophical problem 'suicide'. Many people die of this, realizing that life is not worth-living. It is very difficult to define life. Some nightmarish experience might undermine oneself and lead him to death. There is a relationship between individual thought and suicide. Too get prepared to think is beginning to be undermined. Society has very little to do in it; the culprit lies in man's heart. Living is never easy, so to speak. Dying vulnerably implies that one has lost faith in life and recognizes the ridiculous character of life. So, utter meaninglessness of life leads one to commit suicide. The alienation between man and his life is properly the feeling of absurdity. Belief in the absurdity of existence must dictate one's conduct. It differs from man to man whether a man compromises with the absurdity or confronts it. Most of the time, we realize a yawning gap between one's thought and one's action. We can say that those commit suicide, were assured of the meaning of life. The relationship between human thought and suicide is infected by contradictions and obscurities. The reasoning about the point of death is absurd, that is why the section is called "An Absurd Reasoning". There is hope between absurdity of life and death. Deep feelings always mean more than the actual emotional outburst. Everything of a man can not be known and there is in him irreducible that escapes us. Complete self-knowledge is impossible. The climate of absurdity is in the beginning. The end is the absurd universe and the attitude of the mind towards it. The absurd is essentially the divorce. It lies neither in the comparison of fact and reality, rather it is born of their confrontation. We find a fissure between actual knowledge and simulated knowledge. Absurdity has no aura. It creates

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lucidity in the person's mind to be conscious of his absurdity. Irrational feelings are created for this. Suicide settles the absurd. It engulfs the absurd in the same death. Suicide is a repudiation. The absurd man can drain everything to the bitter end deplete himself. If the absurd cancels an individual's chances of eternal freedom, it restores and magnifies on the other hand the individual's freedom of action. Death and the absurd are the principles of the only reasonable freedom—that which a human heart can experience and live. The absurd man catches sight of a burning and frigid, transparent and limited universe in which nothing is possible but everything is given, and beyond which all is collapse and nothingness. He can then decide to accept such a universe and draw from it his strength, hope and unyielding evidence of a life without consolation. While describing the general ideas of absurdity Camus presents some existential philosophers' view on it. Mere 'anxiety' as Heidegger says, is at the source of everything. Usually time carries us but occasion comes when we have to carry it. He does not separate consciousness from the absurd. Jespers says that we have lost naiveté in life. He knows that the end of the mind is failure. Chestov demonstrates that the most universal rationalism always stumbles eventually on the irrationally constructed human thought. To Chestov, reason is useless and there is something beyond reason. To an absurd mind reason is useless and there is nothing beyond reason. He says, "The only true solution is precisely where human judgement sees no solution...we turn towards God only to obtain the impossible." For Kierkegaard, Antinomy and paradox become criteria of the religious. He says, Christianity is a scandal. To him despair is not a fact but a state—the very state of sin. Sin alienates oneself from God. The absurd which is the metaphysical state of the

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conscious man, does not lead to God. Husserl and other phenomenologists, by their very extravagances, reinstate the world in its diversity and deny the transcendent power of the reason. Although Camus' symbols are equivalent to all the age-old images of divine injustice, they are no less painfully recognizable as human events. If we go back to the myth of Sisyphus itself, we find that the gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a stone to the top of a cliff, but the stone would fall back again and again. Gods thought that there could be no more deadlier punishment than futile and hopeless labour. Sisyphus is to be seen as hopeless as an absurd hero. He is as much through his passions as through his torture. A face that toils so close to stones is already stone itself. His moment of suffering is his moment of consciousness. Happiness and the absurd are the two sons of the same mother earth. Camus believes that men who are fighting together against a common evil, even though they are fighting a losing battle, can give some meaning to their lives and achieve a sense of solidarity. Camus does not suggest that this intellectual and moral struggle against the existing structure of the universe is Man's primary goal on earth. The affirmative side of Camus' thinking rather in the positive side and quality of life itself, in the occasional moments of earthly happiness which, however, ephemeral, however gravely menaced, are as real and as important an aspect of human existence as the symbolic plague. The intimate understanding of the underlying tragedy of human existence brings an acute and painful awareness of man's temporal bond with the world he lives in. This is what Camus calls "the other side of the coin". The special resonance of Camus' writing lies neither in its stern lucidity nor in its latent sensuality but in the equilibrium maintained between the two. Bleak and barren, mediocre and

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uninteresting, these modern metropolitan deserts, so utterly devoid of man-made beauty, of nature and of history, seem to symbolize the stifling prison of the 20th century mind itself. Herein perhaps lies the secret of their special attraction for Camus. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus had already described the 'incalculable fall from the image we have of ourselves', as a form of the consciousness of absurdity. Camus says, "Man, at bottom, is not entirely guilty, since he did not begin history, nor altogether innocent, since he continues it. Those who go beyond this limit and affirm their total innocence, end in the fury of definitive guilt". At the conclusion of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he writes: "The struggle toward the summits is enough to fill the heart of man. One must imagine that Sisyphus is happy". If Camus has been able to revitalize the theme of individual happiness, to snatch it from the jaws of habit and convention and make us fill its insistent pull on the human heart, it is not because he has any illusions on the subject. It is perhaps because Camus—one of the few French novelists of any stature have known the real meaning of the word 'poverty'—has had an especially intimate experience of the obstacles standing in the way. Nietzsche often identified life itself with the will to power. Camus considers the ability to contradict in this world as an important spiritual force. We can draw a conclusion to this by a remark about *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Camus himself: "Although *The Myth of Sisyphus* poses moral problems, it sums itself for me as a lucid invitation to live and to create, in the very midst of the desert."