

in the first. Inexplicably (to the ordinary reader) he never thinks of pleading self-defence when accused of the murder of the Arab, and, refusing to pretend to emotions he does not possess, expresses no remorse or feeling of guilt about his victim. The evidence of his insensitivity at his mother's funeral weighs overwhelmingly against him and he is condemned to death. The passivity with which he has greeted all that has happened suddenly breaks down at a visit of comfort which the prison chaplain makes to him. The chaplain's prayers and the consolation he offers of another life sting Meursault into a violent affirmation that this life alone is certain and that in it the inevitability of death obliterates all significance. The chaplain goes and Meursault is filled for the first time with 'the tender indifference of the world'. He realizes that he had been happy in his life, that he would like to live it all over again, and hopes, in order that all may be fulfilled, that there will be many people at his execution and that they will greet him with cries of hatred.

different to social conventions

Consistent with Absur belief that religion is "philosophical suicide" and does not provide a meaning of

↳ why would this make him feel fulfilled?

At any time the novel would have aroused considerable interest, for Meursault's experiences and his attitude towards them presented fascinating problems. Camus's skill of narration, the ease with which he alternated and contrasted his own personal lyrical style with a deliberate imitation of Hemingway's short, precise sentences, the mixture of annoyance and attraction with which Meursault imposes himself upon the reader's mind, the violent satire of a world of justice in which a man is condemned for murder because he did not weep at his mother's funeral, all announced an author whose complexity demanded a further study in the fresh light provided by a work of exposition. The correspondence between Meursault's apathy and the hopeless atmosphere of 1942, and the explanation of this apathy in terms of the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, made Camus the recognized interpreter of a peculiarly contemporary state of mind.

★ critique of society

Meursault is a man who, apparently quite unconsciously, accepts the premiss on which *The Myth of Sisyphus* is based. He recognizes, by the equivalent importance in his eyes of his mother's death and the annoyance of having to ask for two days' leave, the complete pointlessness of life and the 'deep lack of any reason for living' of which the essay on the absurd speaks. He illustrates, by his want of interest in all that happens, 'the senseless character of this daily agitation'. He believes in none of the things which normally give significance to life. Family affection, love, friendship, ambition, none of these has any meaning for him. Only the sensation of being alive either remains or seems to matter. Why should such a man not commit suicide? Why, above all, does he feel such an intense revolt when he is about to be killed? Why does the last page of the book introduce a theme of almost mystical communion with the world which nothing in Meursault's character had previously announced? These are the questions to which *The Myth of Sisyphus* suggests an answer. The problem of suicide, writes Camus in the opening sentence of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, is the only really serious philosophical problem. Is suicide a necessary consequence of the recognition that life has no meaning? 'Does the absurd demand that I should kill myself?—this problem must be accorded precedence over all others.' Camus's study of the human predicament begins with a *tabula rasa* of all certainties. The basic question of whether we should be alive at all must be answered before any attempt is made to establish value or morality. (pp. 1-3)

↳ Meursault exemplifies Absurdism

↳ Camus' retreat of a universal meaning of life

↳ Suicide is not a solution to the absurdity of life (basic way out)

↳ nothing is certain

↳ 1st question

To say that the world itself is absurd is to anticipate and to affirm something which no argument can as yet justify. In itself, the world can be neither absurd nor reasonable, since it is only man's mind which introduces the concept of reason by which, since it does not conform to it, the world can be judged absurd. The absurd can occur only when two elements are present—the desire of the human mind that the world should be explicable in human terms, and the fact that the world is not thus explicable. 'What is absurd,' writes Camus, 'is the clash between its irrationality and the desperate hunger for clarity which cries out in man's deepest soul. The absurd depends as much upon man as upon the world. For the time being, it is their only link.' The absurd, like the Cartesian *cogito*, is the first result of thinking about the world and about ourselves. It results from the conflict between our awareness of death and our desire for eternity, from the clash between our demand for explanation and the essential mystery of all existence. In the present age, when rationalism has so often been shown to be an inadequate principle of explanation, this experience of the world has been widely shared. What, asks Camus, has been the reaction of thinkers towards it, and how have they replied to the first question which it poses, that of suicide? Have Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Kafka, Chestov, Husserl and Jaspers reached any valid conclusions as

↳ conflicting nature of the 2 causes the absurd

↳ the world is rational, and trying to understand it is absurd