

The Absurdity of Absurdism (?)

Post by "Little Rocker" of July 4, 2024 at 7:49 PM

Admin Note:

This post has been copied and moved from the Welcome Thread of Unpaid_Landlord, whose personal introduction stated:

"...have explored many philosophies starting from advaita vedanta /Non-dualism (Hinduism), then Buddhism and zen Buddhism, then taoism (china) then to western philosophy, from stocism to now finally Epicureanism and Absurdism.

It has been quite a fascinating journey but I feel like settling down with Epicureanism and Absurdism for now at least

Skepticism is on the list to explore for the future

My current philosophical inclinations :-

Epicureanism and Absurdism"

Welcome, Unpaid_Landlord! You'll find you're in very good company. I'll be curious at some point to find out what you take Absurdism to be and why it intrigues you because I've been thinking about it some in the Epicurean context. As I understand it, some people (generally critics) take Absurdism to result directly from an Epicurean-style purposeless universe. The line of reasoning seems to be that once we're not here *for a reason* and *with a purpose*, we have to manufacture all the meaning out of thin air. And all the effort to manufacture meaning, at least when you take a moment to reflect on it, can feel like an absurd sort of charade, an elaborate game of pretend called 'Meaning.' Is that in the ballpark of your conception? Because I suspect Epicurus is truly concerned to find a response to that particular absurdist worry.

Again, welcome!

Post by "TauPhi" of July 4, 2024 at 9:03 PM

Welcome! [UnPaid_Landlord](#)

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

I'll be curious at some point to find out what you take Absurdism to be and why it intrigues you because I've been thinking about it some in the Epicurean context.

Ha! You're not the only one. Now there are at least three of us here thinking about Absurdism. I don't know exactly what's the link, but I always found Absurdism interesting. Maybe Epicureanism and Absurdism are like moths and fire or peanut butter and jelly or something... probably not.

Anyway, if someone wants 10 mins introduction to Absurdism in humorous yet surprisingly insightful way, follow the link. (warning: Parental Advisory Explicit Content)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jv79l1b-eol>

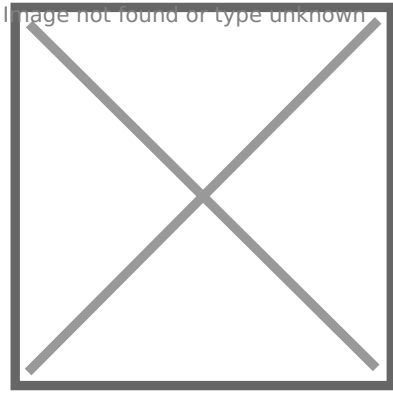
Post by “Don” of July 4, 2024 at 9:48 PM

Oh, [TauPhi](#) , [Little Rocker](#) , and [UnPaid_Landlord](#) ... I am intrigued now! I read one of Camus' works (the Sisyphus one, of course) back in 2016 when I was looking for a philosophical direction (having given up the Buddhist direction... Although still seeing *some* positive notes in that btw) . I didn't *really* get Camus then although it helped me then ...But the video was very intriguing! I can see some Epicurean echoes... "The passion to pursue the joy of being for the sake of it..." And so on.

Well, if the video is accurate... color me absurdly curious.

Post by “Don” of July 4, 2024 at 10:11 PM

FYI



[Camus' Sisyphus Complex: Epicurus, Pindar, Valéry](#)

In this chapter I consider the origins and philosophical significance of Camus's Sisyphus, looking at how the meaning of the 'Sisyphus complex'...
www.academia.edu

Lots of coverage of Epicurus and Lucretius starting on p7 of the paper...

Although having read it...I still can't tell if the author of the paper is saying Camus was or was not feeling positively toward Epicurus. 🤔

Post by "Cassius" of July 5, 2024 at 6:51 AM

I will be very interested to see what else people might come up with in regard to Camus, but these quotes from Don's article indicate to me that Camus was as far from being an Epicurean as one could possibly be. Just based on this I would say that Epicurus's attitude toward Camus might parallel his attitude toward determinism, in that there would be little worse than looking at life with "dreadful sadness," and that it would be better to believe in the untrue myths of the gods than to look at life this way:

Quote

The starting point for Camus' analysis is Epicurus' "dreadful sadness" (85).

Camus believes that "anxious fear of death" is the root of Epicurus' sadness.

It is clear from this interpretive summary that Camus' Epicurus is not a metaphysical rebel. His repressed fear and bitterness lead to ratiocinative defense mechanisms, not open condemnation of the universe and its makers.

His physics and ethics extinguish desire for joy the world cannot provide, while hardening the body against suffering; and his theology eliminates hope.

I find nothing whatsoever "sad" about Epicurus' ultimate viewpoint on life, and I see Epicurus' conclusions as the ultimate rejection of sadness as the proper attitude toward it. Calling something absurd can be very useful, and I can see Epicurus liking that word, but as a weapon against the false philosophies and religions, not as a summary as one's attitude toward life.

Of course the writer of this article could be misinterpreting Camus, so I'll suspend judgment pending more information.

Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2024 at 7:02 AM

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

Because I suspect Epicurus is truly concerned to find a response to that particular absurdist worry.

Having now finished the paper, and not finding more so far on Camus talking about Epicurus directly, I very much agree with this statement. At this point Epicurean philosophy does not appear to me to be in any way *similar* to Absurdism, it is the *cure* for Absurdism.

This article would lead me to believe that Camus has picked up fully on the aged and deteriorated side of Nietzsche's views of Epicurus without any of Nietzsche's appreciation for Epicurus' battle against otherworldism that Nietzsche seemed to appreciate in Epicurus and Lucretius. My assessment of Nietzsche is that N. bought into this same view of Epicurus as someone who was running in fear of pain, which I reject entirely, rather than as a crusading reformer against felonious philosophy in which "absence of pain" is completely synonymous with pleasure, and a recognition that life can be and is and should be viewed as pleasure itself - and the opposite of "absurd."

Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2024 at 7:25 AM

From Wikipedia, I find this to be an interesting and appealingly practical quotation from Camus. This and some of the other material about his later life doesn't sound to me like someone who was totally dedicated to framing life itself as "absurd." I presume like everyone else, Camus was a complicated figure:

Quote

In one, often misquoted incident, Camus confronted an Algerian critic during his 1957 Nobel Prize acceptance speech in Stockholm, rejecting the false equivalence of justice with revolutionary terrorism: "People are now planting bombs in the tramways of Algiers. My mother might be on one of those tramways. If that is justice, then I prefer my mother."

Post by "Don" of July 5, 2024 at 7:28 AM

So, riffing off of [Cassius](#)' posts, do we have a new T-shirt/bumper sticker?

Epicurus: The Antidote to the Absurd



That specific paper annoyed me with using words like "ratiocinative." That is some opaque academic writing! I'm still curious about Camus but that paper didn't really help.

Post by "Cassius" of July 5, 2024 at 8:19 AM

Just to be clear despite my initial negative remarks I do think this thread will be very helpful. It sounds like the questions everyone is asking are very logical and exploring this will lead to identification of why Camus (and maybe Nietzsche too) seemed to drift "away" from Epicurus. So far in my book this issue stems from seeing Epicurus as "sad" and "retreating" (which I would argue is extremely mistaken) and is at the core of many problems.

Both Camus and Nietzsche seem to have some very good points, but my current speculation would be that when they ran into the "absence of pain" problem, rather than rejecting the orthodox academic interpretation of Epicurus, they dropped Epicurus himself. They should have

embraced the interpretation preserved through Torquatus that life in the "absence of pain" IS pleasurable -- and that this position is logical, straightforward, and without any hint of irony or sarcasm or logical double-dealing or word-gaming.

Rather than interpret Epicurus sympathetically, they decided that Epicurus was essentially a deeply sad and fragile "snowflake" (need another synonym there to avoid the current political overtones of that word) who adopted as his primary goal in life that of walling himself up in a garden so as to flee from every drop of pain. That's the problem interpretation we are regularly running into, and for Epicurus to be seen as life-affirming and happy and positive, that interpretation has to be combated and exposed as erroneous.

Post by "Cassius" of July 5, 2024 at 10:31 AM

Here's more commentary on what I perceive to be one of the larger problems this discussion brings up. I'm not criticizing Camus, because I don't know that he himself took these positions. But this is based on what I would expect the word "Absurdism" to convey to the average man-on-the-street in 2024 English.

The meaning I get from the term "absurdism" is:

"When I look at the world I see horror and injustice and sadness all around, sprinkled with a few dots of pleasure that are ridiculously insignificant in comparison with the pain. I don't think it's worth worrying about whether I can explore nature and understand the way the world works so as to reduce the pain and increase the pleasure. The horror and sadness are so overwhelming that there is no alternative but wall it off from my mind and paper over the wall with an attitude of considering everything to be "Absurd." That way I don't have to think about taking responsibility for my role in the problem, or for the fact that it is **my** assessment that the world is such a horrible place. I will just occupy my mind with thinking how useless and absurd the universe is and how insignificant I am and just do the best I can to survive."

If I were to rewrite that from what I would expect Epicurus to say, it would be something like:

"When I look at the world I see both terrible and beautiful things. I also see Nature as the originator of everything, and I see that nature has no intention to create things that I think are horrible. I see that Nature works through regular and understandable means, and that tells me that I can work **with** nature to increase the number of things that I see that are pleasing, and to reduce the number of things that I find to be sad. I do that because I see that the pleasing things in life are far more significant and important to me than the painful things, and I see that I can have an effect upon my world and that I have a limited time within which to experience and increase pleasure and minimize those parts that painful. The pleasure I get from the

pleasing aspects of life so far outweighs the painful that I am more than happy to choose the painful, at time, so that my overall life contains more pleasure. I will therefore explore nature and work to understand the way the world works so as to reduce the pain and increase the pleasure that I find in it. The last thing I will do is close my mind to facts and laugh at the seriousness of my desire to obtain pleasure or eliminate pain. And since nature is what it is, and I have the power to assess it pleasurable, even though some who call themselves "absurdists" assess it negatively, I will take responsibility for seeing that so long as I am alive and can experience life with more pleasure than pain, then I will see life as pleasurable to me, and do everything I can to stay alive to enjoy it as long as I can. I will do the best I can, not resigning that I have no hope to succeed, but confident that I do have the free will and ability to live happily even though I know I will encounter pain along the way. And I will hold in contempt those who are so "otherworldly" minded that they rebel against the way things are and label it "absurd."

Post by "Cassius" of July 5, 2024 at 10:35 AM

If someone were to ask me: "Give me a cite to an Epicurean or someone writing about Epicurus who says something like the rant you just wrote" my first response would be [Frances Wright in Chapter 10 of A Few Days In Athens](#). I think this section does a great job of capturing the flavor of what is explicit and implicit in the surviving texts, and which rejects the nihilism and absurdism and similar modern "isms":

A reasonable-length excerpt from that to quote here would be:

Quote from Frances Wright - A Few Days in Athens

Should we, then, to avoid the evil, forego the good? Shall we shut love from our hearts, that we may not feel the pain of his departure? No; happiness forbids it. Experience forbids it. Let him who hath laid on the pyre the dearest of his soul, who hath washed the urn with the bitterest tears of grief — let him say if his heart hath ever formed the wish that it had never shrined within it him whom he now deplores. Let him say if the pleasures of the sweet communion of his former days doth not still live in his remembrance. If he love not to recall the image of the departed, the tones of his voice, the words of his discourse, the deeds of his kindness, the amiable virtues of his life. If, while he weeps the loss of his friend, he smiles not to think that he once possessed him. He who knows not friendship, knows not the purest pleasure of earth. Yet if fate deprive us of it, though we grieve, we do not sink; Philosophy is still at hand, and she

upholds us with fortitude. And think, my sons, perhaps in the very evil we dread, there is a good; perhaps the very uncertainty of the tenure gives it value in our eyes; perhaps all our pleasures take their zest from the known possibility of their interruption. What were the glories of the sun, if we knew not the gloom of darkness? What the refreshing breezes of morning and evening, if we felt not the fervors of noon? Should we value the lovely-flower, if it bloomed eternally; or the luscious fruit, if it hung always on the bough? Are not the smiles of the heavens more beautiful in contrast with their frowns, and the delights of the seasons more grateful from their vicissitudes? Let us then be slow to blame nature, for perhaps in her apparent errors there is hidden a wisdom. Let us not quarrel with fate, for perhaps in our evils lie the seeds of our good. Were our body never subject to sickness, we might be insensible to the joy of health. Were our life eternal, our tranquillity might sink into inaction. Were our friendship not threatened with interruption, it might want much of its tenderness. This, then, my sons, is our duty, for this is our interest and our happiness; to seek our pleasures from the hands of the virtues, and for the pain which may befall us, to submit to it with patience, or bear up against it with fortitude. *To walk, in short, through life innocently and tranquilly; and to look on death as its gentle termination, which it becomes us to meet with ready minds, neither regretting the past, nor anxious for the future.*"

Note: As per earlier commentary on Wright by me and others here on the forum, it is questionable whether it is necessary to go down the road of arguing philosophically that the "good would not exist but for the bad." However as a practical argument to focus the mind that we have to make choices and set our own attitudes, and that we might not understand the pleasure so well without the experience of pain, I think this argument in Chapter 10 works extremely well.

Post by "UnPaid_Landlord" of July 5, 2024 at 11:13 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

.And I will hold in contempt those who are so "otherworldly" minded that they rebel against the way things are and label it "absurd."

Post by "UnPaid_Landlord" of July 5, 2024 at 11:33 AM

"According to Camus, one's freedom—and the opportunity to give life meaning—lies in the recognition of absurdity. If the absurd experience is truly the realization that the universe is fundamentally devoid of absolutes, then we as individuals are truly free. "To live without appeal,"[60] as he puts it, is a philosophical move to define absolutes and universals subjectively, rather than objectively. The freedom of man is thus established in one's natural ability and opportunity to create their own meaning and purpose; to decide (or think) for oneself. The individual becomes the most precious unit of existence, representing a set of unique ideals that can be characterized as an entire universe in its own right. In acknowledging the absurdity of seeking any inherent meaning, but continuing this search regardless, one can be happy, gradually developing meaning from the search alone.

Camus states in The Myth of Sisyphus: "Thus I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death, and I refuse suicide."[61] "Revolt" here refers to the refusal of suicide and search for meaning despite the revelation of the Absurd; "Freedom" refers to the lack of imprisonment by religious devotion or others' moral codes; "Passion" refers to the most wholehearted experiencing of life, since hope has been rejected, and so he concludes that every moment must be lived fully."

As I understand it, it's more about accepting the reality with it's absurd nature and still living passionately, full of life despite knowing the ultimate meaninglessness of it all, camus didn't think there was any ultimate or objective meaning, he thought we exist because we exist, as simple as that, The absurdity comes when we as rational and curious beings try to make rational sense of a ultimately irrational universe, when we try to find some deeper or ultimate meaning in a ultimately meaningless universe with no objective and absolute standards,

existentialism recognises that objective meaning, which is common to all human beings may not exist, so they think that an individual should find their own subjective meaning instead, Absurdism doesn't do that, they don't try to find meaning in a meaningless universe, reason in a irrational universe, they just accept the reality as it is, and still live in defiance of it, with freedom and passion, despite knowing the ultimate meaninglessness of it all,

it's a life affirming philosophy which is pretty vast and can mean many different things, I am only scratching the surface now, absurdity can mean the search of a grand reason in a ultimately meaningless world, or it can also mean signify the human limitation which constraints us from ever truly grasping the world, it means the rejection of absolute standards or values, because they change with time and circumstances and a lot more,

there a lot of definitions of what the word 'absurdity ' in absurdism actually means, but I am pretty sure it doesn't mean denying the world by calling it absurd and escaping into your little hole, instead it means recognising and making peace with the absurdity of it all and still living defiantly,

I am currently reading "the stranger" by Albert camus, I hope it will give me more Clarity on his philosophy.

Of course, I may be totally wrong about this, so take it with a grain of salt ☹️♂️

Post by “UnPaid_Landlord” of July 5, 2024 at 11:49 AM

One good example is this :-

In "The Myth of Sisyphus," Albert Camus explores the concept of the absurd and uses the story of Sisyphus as a powerful metaphor. According to Camus, Sisyphus's eternal struggle can be seen as a symbol of the human condition: repetitive and seemingly meaningless labor. However, Camus concludes that Sisyphus can find happiness in this eternal task.

Camus famously states, "One must imagine Sisyphus happy." This happiness arises from Sisyphus's acceptance of his reality and the conscious rebellion against it. By embracing the absurdity of his situation and continuing to push the boulder with full awareness of its futility, Sisyphus defies the gods and asserts his own human dignity and freedom. In this act of rebellion and acceptance, he finds a form of contentment and meaning.

Post by “UnPaid_Landlord” of July 5, 2024 at 12:00 PM

[Little Rocker](#) [TauPhi](#) [Don](#) [Cassius](#) This is what I think about Absurdism with the very limited rudimentary understanding and knowledge I have currently, I will continue to read more on the subject (reading the stranger by Albert camus currently) to further my knowledge and better understand what the heck is absurdism all about,

but I think it need not be a pessimistic philosophy, I don't why some people just misunderstand many things as negative, for example I have personally met some fellows who think Buddhism is really negative and pessimistic, and I can't understand them at all,

Buddhism for me is a very beautiful philosophy, I think it just depends on your way of looking at things ? Or maybe the many misconceptions that are spreading around?,

whatever the case, I am glad to be here in this wonderful community of people and would love to continue discussing similar things with you all in the future, don't hesitate to give constructive criticism if I say something ill informed or illogical, that would help me grow. ☐☐☐

Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2024 at 12:19 PM

Please don't take these or my prior remarks as being unfriendly, because I do not mean them in that way at all. All of us have gone through different philosophies in the past and we would not be here now if we have not.

Having said that, this is an Epicurean forum, and not a generalist philosophy group where all philosophies are equally "respected" and discussed dispassionately. And therefore I would say:

[Quote from UnPaid Landlord](#)

As I understand it, it's more about accepting the reality with it's absurd nature and still living passionately

This is exactly the point in issue --- life does NOT have an absurd nature, from my point of view, and from what I read of Epicurus, he would say the same. Giving in on the question of whether "life is absurd" and not challenging that perspective is to give up the issue at the beginning.

[Quote from UnPaid Landlord](#)

but I think it need not be a pessimistic philosophy, I don't why some people just misunderstand many things as negative, for example I have personally met some fellows who think Buddhism is really negative and pessimistic, and I can't understand what them at all,

Same perspective here, but in the reverse. I DO see Buddhism as essentially negative and pessimistic, and I cannot understand at all why someone would view it otherwise. 😊

To repeat, we have all gone through different phases and perspectives and I don't make these statements to be argumentative. If we didn't have discussions with people who come to Epicurean discussion with different views, then we'd never give anyone the opportunity to

engage with pro-Epicurean positions and potentially change their minds.

But we would not be an Epicurean forum if we did not --- at the same time that we welcome people who are not currently in tune with Epicurean views - state clearly how we see Epicurus' views compare with others, and if we did not advocate for *Epicurus'* position, rather than accept very contradictory positions as if they were equally valid.

In this thread we're focusing on Absurdism and digging directly into the negative aspects, and it is unfortunate that we're doing so without having first engaged with you (talking to Unpaid_Landord) on the commonalities between what you're saying and Epicurus. I hope that you'll not get such an immediate bad impression from this thread that you don't continue to keep an open mind about this forum and Epicurus in general.

I don't think Epicurus would advise starting out tacking divisive subjects immediately, so this turn of discussion is probably unfortunate. But I think Epicurus would say that when clear issues arise, and others are watching (this is a public forum that anyone can read) it's best not to gloss over and defer deep issues for a later time that may never come. That's one reason why so much of the preliminary materials on this website that people go through in the registration process are geared toward putting such issues front and center, so they get discussed early.

Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2024 at 12:49 PM

Lots of good material to discuss coming from this. We need a thread specifically on Sisyphus, so I will set that up.

Thread

[The Meaning Of the Story of Sisyphus](#)

In a companion thread we are mentioning Sisyphus, and this thread will be the place to explore that in more depth so we have a thread to cite in the future.

I know Lucretius mentions him but we need to start earlier to get the back story.



Cassius

July 5, 2024 at 12:52 PM

Post by “Little Rocker” of July 5, 2024 at 3:01 PM

This is a great conversation! So maybe it would help for a moment to take it out of the more modern, Camus context, and put it in the Ancient and Epicurean context. I say that in part because I'm not sure Epicurus and his contemporaries actually thought the central problem to solve was suffering. So in the Ancient context:

First, for reasons that remain somewhat unclear, Democritus claimed to laugh at humanity, and some later texts turned this into a kind of a maniacal laughter at human absurdity. So there was some at least popular understanding that atomism makes it ridiculous to take various human activities seriously. Second, we of course have that Lucretius passage where he's looking down from the enlightened perspective of philosophy on all the idiots living their daily lives.

So as I understand it, absurdity depends on two perspectives, the one that inhabits life from the subjective experience and the one that looks down on it from a dispassionate, critical perspective, whether that's 'gods-eye view' or 'the perspective of the universe.' And when you occupy the dispassionate perspective, the upshot is supposedly something like 'all these activities are meaningless,' but then life forces you to return to your subjective experience and treat all those things as if they're meaningful nonetheless. And that can be disorienting.

But I suspect Epicurus is trying to avoid that by showing that the gods-eye perspective and our own lives can mirror one another, or coincide. I was recently reading a James Warren article and marked the following passage, which I think will resonate with [Cassius](#) :

Quote

'It seems quite possible that someone will not laugh constantly at his fellow humans once he has come to the Epicurean godlike view of the universe, nor will he cease to live a life, and take pleasure in living that life. That is not to say, however, that he will be living with an unchanged subjective view of his life and its pleasure, with a new objective view running concurrently. *Physiologia* does not leave intact all previous values....The agent will take pleasure in living a life, in friends, in various pursuits, and is always fully conscious that this finite and particular life takes place within a universe of infinite *kosmoi*, made of infinite atoms infinitely moving in an infinite void. Yet that cosmology does not devalue the life; pleasures are still pleasures and so are still valuable *per se*. It is still possible to attain *ataraxia*, and thus to rival the gods in the matter described in my discussion of Vatican Saying 33. Indeed, an understanding of Epicurean cosmology is an essential part of attaining *ataraxia*' ('Epicurean Immortality,' Warren).

So in other words, as I take it, there's nothing from a cosmic perspective that makes pleasure worthless. But a lot of unpleasant things we pretend are important might very well lose their meaning from a cosmic perspective.

Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2024 at 3:08 PM

Yes that Warren passage does resonate with me, and reminds me of my current favorite David Sedley quote, which also fits the conversation:

34 DAVID SEDLEY - [EPICURUS' REJECTION OF DETERMINISM](#):

Epicurus' response to this is perhaps the least appreciated aspect of his thought. It was to reject reductionist atomism. Almost uniquely among Greek philosophers he arrived at what is nowadays the unreflective assumption of almost anyone with a smattering of science, that there are truths at the microscopic level of elementary particles, and further very different truths at the phenomenal level; that the former must be capable of explaining the latter; but that neither level of description has a monopoly of truth. (The truth that sugar is sweet is not straightforwardly reducible to the truth that it has such and such a molecular structure, even though the latter truth may be required in order to explain the former). By establishing that cognitive scepticism, the direct outcome of reductionist atomism, is self-refuting and untenable in practice, Epicurus justifies his non-reductionist alternative, according to which sensations are true and there are therefore bona fide truths at the phenomenal level accessible through them.

T

Post by “Kalosyni” of July 5, 2024 at 3:37 PM

So it seems to me that Absurdism is very much coming out a feeling of an absence of meaning.

I recall that [Joshua](#) said both on a podcast and somewhere on the forum, that trying to find meaning was actually a very recent occurrence...was it not until sometime in the 1800's ? (I need to find that thread, or Joshua can you remind me what you said about the history of the question of the meaning of life?)

And I wonder if it comes from western civilization's paradigm of passing through Christianity. Christianity has us live this life only as a kind of preparation for an eternity in heaven. But when you question and reject the existence of God and heaven, you can be left with a kind of "now what?" It's like telling someone "Don't think of elephants" and all you can do is think of

elephants. So then we need a new paradigm, and perhaps a modern Epicureanism is exactly what is needed.

Post by “Joshua” of July 5, 2024 at 6:19 PM

Quote

Joshua can you remind me what you said about the history of the question of the meaning of life?

The phrase *meaning of life* first appears in the record of English literature in a work of Thomas Carlyle called *Sartor Resartus*, published in 1833, and in the same text the speaker denounces atheism and hedonism.

Now if we take the *telos* of the greeks to signify 'meaning', the conversation is of course far older. I think this is a mistaken view of telos, but the real problem is that philosophical systems that value meaning are frequently vague about the term.

In my view, 'meaning' is nothing other than an alleged disease for which one purports to offer a cure. [This](#) blog (which I just discovered 5 seconds ago) is a nearly perfect explanation of my own view. Quote;

Quote

I'd maintain that, based on my casual observation, very few people conceive of a “meaning” to their lives, but simply, when asked the question, confect one post facto. That is, if asked that question, I would blather on about science, my friends, teaching evolution, traveling and seeing the world to enlarge my experience, and so on. But what I am doing is simply articulating the things that I like to do. I never think of these as the “meaning” of my life. In fact, I never think about that at all.

The pursuit of "meaning" is itself meaningless, in exactly the same way that repenting of "sin" is meaningless. Meaning isn't real, sin isn't real, the thetans of Scientology aren't real. Don't allow yourself to be made distressed by things that aren't real!

Post by “TauPhi” of July 5, 2024 at 7:15 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

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Be careful [Joshua](#) . If you add to this: '...and try to live your life in a way that's subjectively worth living, nonetheless.' you might accidentally get yourself invited to the next Annual Absurdism Convention as a panelist taking part in a discussion titled: 'What to do with 42 when you ask about life, the universe and everything'. You may also get a free t-shirt, an instant coffee and a stale doughnutoutttut... eh, donut.

Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2024 at 9:19 PM

I watched a Youtube video on Camus tonight and i get the impression that interpretation of him is all over the board, all the way from existentialism, which he apparently strenuously denied, to there not being a dimes worth of difference between Camus and Nietzsche. It all seems to hinge on exactly who or what is being labeled as "absurd," and why, and that's where the lack of clarity is so glaring, much like the ambiguity of the legacy of Democritus leaves everyone wondering whether he was laughing "with" humanity or "at" humanity. I tend to think after brief exposure that Camus doesn't deserve to be considered to be on the "nihilist" team, but it also does not seem likely to me that his work could be interpreted so broadly if there were not some smoldering coals that create the smoke that surrounds him. I am thinking (so far) that there is probably a lot to learn from taking apart his views, but probably not much to be gained by holding up any system that he created as a model to emulate.

Post by “UnPaid_Landlord” of July 5, 2024 at 9:20 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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[Quote from UnPaid_Landlord](#)

but I think it need not be a pessimistic philosophy, I don't why some people just misunderstand many things as negative, for example I have personally met some fellows who think Buddhism is really negative and pessimistic, and I can't understand what them at all,

Same perspective here, but in the reverse. I DO see Buddhism as essentially negative and pessimistic, and I cannot understand at all why someone would view it otherwise.



To repeat, we have all gone through different phases and perspectives and I don't make these statements to be argumentative. If we didn't have discussions with people who come to Epicurean discussion with different views, then we'd never give anyone the opportunity to engage with pro-Epicurean positions and potentially change their minds.

But we would not be an Epicurean forum if we did not --- at the same time that we welcome people who are not currently in tune with Epicurean views - state clearly how we see Epicurus' views compare with others, and if we did not advocate for *Epicurus'* position, rather than accept very contradictory positions as if they were equally valid.

In *this thread* we're focusing on Absurdism and digging directly into the negative aspects, and it is unfortunate that we're doing so without having first engaged with you (talking to Unpaid_Landlord) on the commonalities between what you're saying and Epicurus. I hope that you'll not get such an immediate bad impression from this thread

that you don't continue to keep an open mind about this forum and Epicurus in general.

I don't think Epicurus would advise starting out tacking divisive subjects immediately, so this turn of discussion is probably unfortunate. But I think Epicurus would say that when clear issues arise, and others are watching (this is a public forum that anyone can read) it's best not to gloss over and defer deep issues for a later time that may never come. That's one reason why so much of the preliminary materials on this website that people go through in the registration process are geared toward putting such issues front and center, so they get discussed early.

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It's fine my friend, I am not upset or anything, I don't actually care all that much about this, the simple reason I follow absurdism or anything for that matter is because it helped me or worked for me, that's it, I am not interested in convincing anyone of my philosophical stance, whether it's my absurdism or my Epicureanism, because I am not a propogator, just a follower, I follow it as long as it works and drop it if it doesn't,

The simple reason I commented earlier and gave a reply to your posts was to give my own point of view regarding what I thought of as 'Absurdism' ,

"Same perspective here, but in the reverse. I DO see Buddhism as essentially negative and pessimistic, and I cannot understand at all why someone would view it otherwise. ;)"

Note :- I don't get how to quote more than once so I am just copying pasting,

for me the best philosophy is the one that works for 'You', if it doesn't work for you, even the most beautiful and logical philosophies are useless, so yeah it seems like Buddhism didn't make sense to you but Epicureanism did, so that's good enough

"I hope that you'll not get such an immediate bad impression from this thread that you don't continue to keep an open mind about this forum and Epicurus in general."

Well no ? I didn't really get a bad impression or anything, so yeah, so don't worry about it, (I am just talking not arguing, I wonder if my posts come across like that ?)

Anyways I like Epicurus and his philosophy a lot, because he has worked so far for me, so not gonna stop learning it anytime soon.

The comments by everyone on the topic has been insightful, I am learning a lot, thanks

Post by “UnPaid_Landlord” of July 5, 2024 at 9:25 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I watched a Youtube video on Camus tonight and i get the impression that interpretation of him is all over the board, all the way from existentialism, which he apparently strenuously denied, to there not being a dimes worth of difference between Camus and Nietzsche. It all seems to hinge on exactly who or what is being labeled as "absurd," and why, and that's where the lack of clarity is so glaring, much like the ambiguity of the legacy of Democritus leaves everyone wondering whether he was laughing "with" humanity or "at" humanity. I tend to think after brief exposure that Camus doesn't deserve to be considered to be on the "nihilist" team, but it also does not seem likely to me that his work could be interpreted so broadly if there were not some smoldering coals that create the smoke that surrounds him. I am thinking (so far) that there is probably a lot to learn from taking apart his views, but probably not much to be gained by holding up any system that he created as a model to emulate.

I know right ? It all depends on what he meant by "Absurd" and there are so many different definitions of the same, it can be quite confusing, btw, I would appreciate it if you share the link of the video you watched,

Here is a video from my end, I think he explains it well :-

https://youtu.be/rjx6o7NZOjE?si=9a_mLGuN1nUYsAvt

Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2024 at 10:35 PM

I am pretty sure the video I watched was this one - although for some reason as I listen to it tonight the voice seems a little different than I remember. But the video background appears clearly the same, so this much be it. Seemed pretty evenhanded as best I could tell:

<https://youtu.be/-s2llppyxrg>

Post by “Cassius” of July 5, 2024 at 11:00 PM

That is a good video UnpaidLandlord thank you! The video producer seems to know the topic and I expect he is largely expressing it well. On that basis if we conclude that the essence of Camus' advice is to take a radical "WHO CARES?" position, then I have to affirm my earlier disposition that this Camus is about as much a reverse-Epicurean as you can get.

Sounds like the producer is correct that Camus is more like a "Stoic on Steroids" in expanding "indifference" to a whole new level of nihilistic glory. Camus might object to nihilism, but I hear no praise of pleasure or any other justification for going through what pain does exist in life.

In the apparent emphasis on "freedom" as an end in itself, rather than because freedom brings pleasure, I see nothing good at the end of that tunnel at all. Sounds like just another arbitrary "virtue" being elevated without regard as to its foundation or why we should do so.

This video also does a better job of contrasting Camus against Nietzsche. In my mind the issues the producer brings out are to the credit of Nietzsche and demerit of Camus.

What I am hearing is reminding me also of why i have never been a fan of "modern atheism" for example of the Sam Harris type. Pointing out the erroneous nature of supernatural gods is all well and good, but to live happily we have to replace that void with something to organize our lives. Epicurus shows how pleasure and pain fill that role, but I don't see how Camus is doing anything but destroying, and failing to replace it with anything. As Epicurus said, there are indeed worse things than conventional religion. Epicurus put his finger on hard determinism as an example of something worse, but I would not be surprised if he would put radical "Who cares?-ism" at or near that same rank.

All this is why I see it is as so important to embrace a positive and understandable worldview, like Epicurus taught, rather than just act the bull in a china shop running around destroying without ever providing a reasonable basis for hoping to succeed in living a happy life. No one I am aware of comes close to Epicurus in that regard.