

Jan 5 2016

"There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide."

Camus

In our January 2016 Philo Cafe we discussed Camus's essay entitled

"There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide."

With the help of Spark Notes we methodically discussed his essay.

1. "Camus suggests that suicide amounts to a confession that life is not worth living. He links this confession to what he calls the "feeling of absurdity". The feeling of absurdity is the feeling of meaningless connection with life, that life is meaningless, without a bigger picture of something profoundly loving. Instead life with its daily habitual demands and habits is more robotic – less meaningless. When we feel life is meaningless and do not believe in a bigger picture, that life is absurd, we can have a feeling of exile.
2. We then addressed the thought that the feeling of absurdity is linked to the idea that life is meaningless, and the act of suicide is linked to the idea that life is not worth living. The pressing question of Camus's essay then is whether the idea that life is meaningless necessarily means that life is not worth living. He notes that for some people this is the case and so choose suicide and notes that others decide to live despite believing life is meaningless. He believes the fact that we learn to live before we start thinking contributes to this course of action – to live.
3. Camus encourages us to start looking at this looking at this question from the starting point of absurdity – that life is meaningless and to stay with this feeling of the consequences of this belief. Not to elude or deny but to face the consequences of the thought that life is meaningless is very challenging for us as we can more readily either go towards suicide or hope but Camus encourages is to stay with the feeling.

4. We then asked ourselves would we be prepared to relive our lives an infinite amount of times? Marlene offered, at some point we have to choose between love and power.
5. We acknowledged that the use of the word suicide is not necessarily meant at taking our lives literally but as a metaphor about choosing to live or to die in spirit. We acknowledged that so many people who choose to commit suicide are in such emotional, mental and spiritual pain.
6. Coming from a point of absurdity, that life is meaningless, **Camus's essay is ultimately asking us how should we live our lives** given that we have a choice. As we don't know for absolute certainty what the meaning of life is, and we are given life, we can choose what to do with our life, how we live it.

Amongst us, we contributed points as follows:

- We considered our own morality, ethical stance on this question;
- That we have choices and decisions and we are free to make these choices/decisions as to how to live our lives;
- Do we choose to be happy and to choose love or power;
- Satisfaction is in the ACT ITSELF – in living Life;
- Decisions are confessions of our choices;
- We considered our meaning to connection/spiritual existence and how that can have an influence on how we choose to live our lives;
- Little meanings give us joy which contribute a long way towards our experience of life and what we choose to value and thrive from;
- The Grey Zone – a movie that includes aspects of this essay
- V for Vendita – a movie that includes aspects of this essay
- Have to have it in you to live

End