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Paper 2 Outline

PHIL 2310 – The Meaning of Life

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EXISTENTIALISM: CHANGING THE FATE OF SISYPHUS

I. Introduction: Existentialism diverts Sisyphus’ life in a positive direction and changes Camus’ character’s fate because the philosophical theory involves being responsible for one’s behavior, searching for meaning in an absurd world, and causing one’s own purpose for existing. Therefore, existentialism is based on value, meaning, and purpose of human existence.

II. Terms: What is “Existentialism”?

a. Existentialism takes a great interest in the individual human existence because it is subjective in its approach, and subjectivity is seen as the truth. For example, Kierkegaard, also called the father of existentialism, expresses it in his philosophical theory about faith and reason that God is subjective, and to find the truth in him is to trust him. This is based on the individual’s feelings and relationship towards God because believing in God is very personal and tailored to the subjective understanding of the individual towards a being which we call God.

III. Body 1 (A): Value is taking responsibility for one’s own actions and behavior which effects an individual’s ethical status in a virtue way.

a. “If one believes Homer Sisyphus was the wisest most prudent of all mortals. According to another tradition, however, he was disposed to practice the profession of highwayman. I see no contradiction in this” (Camus 23). People are measured on their individual behavior and actions which brings out a contradiction between a wise person and a robber. A criminal’s action is never seen as wise and responsible which does not lift up his status in a positive way. Sisyphus did not take responsibility for his actions at first, but afterwards he took his punishment from the Gods and started to live with the consequences.

IV. Body 2 (B): The meaning of absurdity in the world, which Camus believed in, is like a conscious man who tries to search for meaning in a senseless world.

a. “You have already grasped that Sisyphus is that absurd hero. He is, as much through his passions as through his torture” (Camus 23). Camus lets us see how absurd Sisyphus life has become which was done through his punishment. But Sisyphus is not the man who gives up on his life passions, even if that makes no sense and seems totally meaningless. The torture of his punishment is on his consciousness, but he does not give up finding meaning.

V. Body 3 (C): In an absurd situation, creating one’s own purpose in life seems to be the most reasonable thing to do because purpose gives a reason for human existence.

a. “Sisyphus’ silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is a thing Likewise, the absurd man, when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols” (Camus 24). He finally finds purpose in his new life and sees a so-called meaningless task as an opportunity to be happy again. After taking reflection on his situation, he takes charge of his own life which was taken away from him by the gods. This gives him the satisfaction of being the master of his own fate because he changes torture into his purpose.

VI. Conclusion: Since existentialism reflects on human existence, it is related to all aspects of a human life. Those aspects are value, meaning, and purpose which are properties Camus’s hero Sisyphus was capable to acquire during experience with a world full of absurdity. He changed his fate, without blaming anyone else, into a new purpose which gave him meaning in life.