I. Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd"
   A. A question of justifications
      1. "If nothing can justify unless it is justified in terms of something outside itself, which is also justified, then an infinite regress results, and no chain of justifications can be complete." (87)
      2. A misrepresentation of the process of justification
         a. a vacuous demand: demand for "complete" justification
   B. Philosophical absurdity: "it must be something universal..." (88)
      1. collision between two inescapable viewpoints:
         a. the seriousness with which we take our projects
         b. the sense of utter arbitrariness of everything
   C. The transcendental (or "external") perspective
      1. Humans do not act merely on impulse
         a. prudence
      2. The form of our life is motivated by a general system of habits to which we adhere, p.89
         a. "What sustains us, in belief as in action, is not reason or justification but something more basic than these--for we go on in the same way even after we are convinced that the reason have given out [ftn3, cf. famous passage of Hume's Treatise]. If we tried to rely entirely on reason, and pressed it hard, our lives and beliefs would collapse--a form of madness that may actually occur if the inertial force of taking the world and life for granted is somehow lost. If we lose our grip on that, reason will not give it back to us." (95)
      3. Humans have a special ability
         a. they can view life sub specie aeternitatis (from the vantage point of eternity, outside the standpoint of our momentary impulses and decisions)
         b. "we step back"
            (1) we can recognize our actions/motivations as arbitrary
            (2) we can put into question the ordinary standards that guide our lives
   D. Camus (according to Nagel)
      1. Myth: "the absurd arises because the world fails to meet our demands for meaning. This suggests that the world might satisfy those demands if it were different." (92)
      2. Nagel: the collision actually rests on a collision within ourselves
         a. Elements of this collision?
            (1) the form of our life adhering to the general system of habits
               (a) "What sustains us, in belief as in action, is not reason or justification but something more basic than these--for we go on in the same way even after we are convinced that the reason have given out [ftn3, cf. famous passage of Hume's Treatise]. If we tried to rely entirely on reason, and pressed it hard, our lives and beliefs would collapse--a form of madness that may actually occur if the inertial force of taking the world and life for granted is somehow lost. If we lose our grip on that, reason will not give it back to us." (95)
            (2) vacuous demand for complete (rational) justification
   E. Camus, again (according to Nagel)
      1. "We can salvage dignity, he (Camus) appears to believe, by shaking a fist at the world which is deaf to our pleas, and continuing to live in spite of it. This will not make our lives un-
absurd, but it will lend them a certain nobility." (97)

2. Nagel: irony over scorn; sang-froid (ataraxia)
   a. Why irony? Westphal/Cherry: "Nor is it all clear why irony is the overall best response to absurdity." (102)

II. Westphal/Cherry, "Is Life Absurd"
   A. They assert there is at least "one kind of 'pretension' which is immune to the value doubt" (99)
      1. Disabling the external perspective: the devoted musician
         a. "His absorption destroys the skeptical or external perspective, and renders it flimsy, or meaningless, or absurd." (99)
      2. Disabling the external perspective: the life of any very gifted man
         a. "We may find in it nothing on which images of gratuitous and meaninglessness, or doubt, can get a purchase." (100)
           (1) narrow focus of concern: huge individual is located within a smaller scheme
   B. The idea that live's of the kind of life that necessarily requires defense is "colorful rubbish"

III. Hare, "Nothing Matters"
   A. Story of the young Swiss man who reads Camus' L'Etranger
      1. Rien, rien n'avait d'importance (nothing matters)
         a. leads to an unusual behavior response
   B. What does it mean to say that something matters, or does not matter? (105)
      1. to say something "matters" expresses concern (about something)
         a. whose concern?
            (1) the character in the novel
               (a) "There is something of a contradiction in being so violently concerned to express unconcern; if nothing really mattered to him, one feels, he would have been too bored to make this rather dramatic scene." (108)
            (2) the writer of the novel
               (a) the novel, itself, suggests something mattered to Camus
               (3) its reader (the young Swiss man)
                  (a) "His problem was ... to reduce to some sort of order those things that were matters of concern to him...." (108)
            b. logical character of the word
               (1) mattering is not an activity or process
               (a) "Matters ... isn't intended to describe something that things do ... so of course we can't observe things mattering; but that doesn't mean that they don't matter."
   C. Values, two main sources having a "common head"
      1. our own wants
      2. our imitation of other people (pretending, mauvaise foi - bad faith)
         a. "to imitate other people is, especially in the young, one of the strongest desires" (108)
            (1) initial dishonesty
   D. The philosophical problem
      1. issue is not a real moral problem
      2. "we are creatures who feel concern for things" (110)
         a. cannot annihilate values as a whole
      3. effects of the philosophical problem
         a. direct us to "scrutinize more closely values to which we have given habitual allegiance, and decide whether we really prize them..." (110)
         b. make us apathetic and shallow thinking about values