I. **Reconstruction/Analysis**

The argument of Nagel's I would like to discuss begins with the premise that it is impossible for us to simply avoid the absurdity of our lives by refusing to take the transcendental step that gives us the outside view or by abandoning our earthly lives (p. 725-726). It's necessary to note that this premise is a conclusion of an argument developed at length in the reading before the argument I am considering, but could not be a part of my discussion for lack of room.

After these options are ruled out, Nagel implies that the only two other choices are to face the absurdity with either agony and contempt or with irony. The option of agony and contempt is one put forth by Camus, who contends that this response will at least allow us to keep our dignity, but it will not result in an escape from absurdity (p. 726). Nagel reasons that agony and contempt actually give credit to the unimportance of our situation, therefore going against the very idea of trying to defy the absurd (p. 727), and the benefit of nobility that Camus suggests they provide is not sufficient to make this a better choice than irony. Although irony does not offer an escape either, Nagel concludes it is the better choice because agony and contempt yield negative attitudes and emotional states that irony does not (p. 727).

Nagel's argument works in the context of the writing taken as a whole. He works through the issue of absurdity earlier in the text, explaining exactly why we find our lives to be philosophically absurd and how we get to that point. He reasons that it is simply our human nature that creates this absurdity, and the last argument gives a possible solution to the problem—
a way to deal with it since it cannot be escaped. The argument compels us to its conclusion by being set in a context that will automatically lead the reader to question what can be done to manage this inevitable absurdity, and then presenting as optimistic an answer as possible given the circumstances.

II. Comment

I think Nagel's argument is a good one, especially in the context it was given. It follows to give a logical solution after discussing such a weighty problem. I also think it has implications that deserve to be further developed, one of which I will argue here.

By approaching with irony the absurdity we unavoidably discover, we are settling in a kind of mid-point between the seriousness with which we lead our mundane lives and the dissociation of the transcendental step. This perspective in the middle produces a balance between the two extremes, and sensing this balance is an opportunity to mentally break away from either extreme.

The feeling humans get when something is humorous to them is generally positive – it just feels good to laugh and smile! When we see the absurdity of life for how ironic it really is, it brings humor into the equation. The ability to find a mental retreat in this irony, not only from the overwhelming realization of the philosophical absurdity of our lives but also from the daily seriousness we cannot renounce, can provide a sense of serenity through this humor.
Nagel's Argument

P1. It is impossible to avoid philosophical absurdity by denying the transcendental step or abandoning our human lives.

P2. The options left are to deal with absurdity with agony and contempt or with irony.

P3. The nobility Camus believes is the benefit of scorn is not a sufficient reason to choose that response.

P4. The agony and contempt approach gives credit to the unimportance of our situation; it does not result in an escape from absurdity. ☹️ How so, exactly?

P5. Irony also provides no escape.

P6. Agony and contempt are unnecessary because they yield negative attitudes and emotional states that irony does not.

C: We should approach our absurd lives with irony instead of despair.

My Argument

P1. Approaching the absurd with irony is a middle point between the seriousness of mundane life and the dissociation of the transcendental step.

P2. This middle point creates a balance between the two extremes.

P3. Feeling this balance gives an opportunity to mentally break away from either extreme, even if only momentarily.

P4. Humor feels good to most (mentally stable) people.

P5. The philosophical absurdity of life can be humorous when regarded ironically.

C: The ability to find a retreat in the irony of our absurd lives can provide a sense of serenity through this humor.