

ARTISTIC PERCEPTION OF THE CONTENT OF LIFE

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Abstract: This article examines the influence of existentialist philosophy on fiction and its place in understanding the meaning of life. Existentialism, which developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, examines such issues as human existence, freedom, responsibility, and meaninglessness. This philosophy has emerged as an important tool in literature, particularly through novels, dramas, poetry, and short stories, to describe the inner world of man. The works of writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Franz Kafka, as well as some examples from Uzbek literature, analyze the artistic interpretation of existentialism. The article discusses the role of literature in human self-awareness, freedom, and the struggle against the absurd.

Keywords: Existentialism, fiction, meaning of life, existence, freedom, responsibility, absurd, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, Uzbek literature, inner world, self-awareness.

Existentialism, a philosophical movement that developed in the late 19th and 20th centuries, explores questions concerning the meaning of human life, freedom, responsibility, and self-realization. This philosophy found profound expression in artistic literature, enabling writers and poets to artistically interpret the human inner world, the search for life’s meaning, and existential problems. Particularly in the 20th century, existentialism served as a vital tool in literature for depicting the human psyche. Through artistic works, writers portrayed humanity’s place in existence, the process of self-discovery, and the struggle to find meaning in life. These themes were reflected across various genres—novels, dramas, poetry, and short stories. This article broadly examines the influence of existentialism on artistic literature, its role in comprehending the meaning of life, and its manifestations in literary works.

Existentialist philosophy focuses on fundamental questions of human existence: “Who am I?”, “What is the meaning of life?”, “What is the relationship between freedom and responsibility?”. Philosophers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus are recognized as the primary theorists of this movement. According to their views, life’s meaning is not given externally but is independently created by individuals through their actions, choices, and self-awareness.

In literature, particularly in the 20th century, existentialism served as a crucial tool for depicting the human inner world. Writers portrayed humanity’s place in existence, the process of self-discovery, and the struggle to find life’s meaning through artistic works. In this process, existentialism’s core ideas were reflected in various genres—novels, dramas, poetry, and short stories. Literature not only reflected existential philosophy but also made it accessible and emotionally impactful for readers. Writers expressed feelings such as loneliness, fear, despair, and hope through artistic imagery, transforming philosophical ideas into vivid and relatable experiences.

Sartre’s novel *Nausea* (*La Nausée*) is one of the most significant examples of existentialism in literature. The protagonist, Antoine Roquentin, experiences the meaninglessness of life and struggles to understand his own existence. Sartre depicts human loneliness in the universe and the process of self-realization in this novel. Roquentin attempts to find meaning in life, but this pursuit leads him to “nausea”—an uncomfortable feeling arising from the perceived meaninglessness of existence. Through his diary, Roquentin views the world anew, and ordinary

things—such as a tree root or a street scene—trigger profound existential questions. Through this, Sartre emphasizes existentialism's core idea: that individuals must create their own meaning. Albert Camus' *The Stranger* (*L'Étranger*) vividly reflects the concept of the absurd in existentialist philosophy. The protagonist, Meursault, lives with indifference to life, acting in opposition to society's moral norms. His indifference embodies the existential notion of absurdity—humans seek meaning in life, but the universe offers no answers. Meursault's apathy toward his mother's death, his lack of responsibility for his actions, and his refusal to defend himself during his trial all indicate his acceptance of life's meaninglessness. Through this work, Camus illustrates humanity's struggle against absurdity and the possibility of giving life meaning through personal choices. Meursault's story underscores the importance of finding meaning within one's inner world rather than seeking it externally.

Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (*Die Verwandlung*) is one of the most significant artistic interpretations of existentialism. The protagonist, Gregor Samsa, wakes one morning to find himself transformed into an insect. Through this surreal event, Kafka explores themes of humanity's place in society, loneliness, and self-loss. Gregor's transformation symbolizes the meaninglessness of his life and his alienation from society. Once he loses his role as the family's financial provider, he becomes irrelevant and feels utterly alone. Kafka depicts the challenges of understanding one's existence and the pressure society exerts on individual identity. The *Metamorphosis* artistically expresses existentialism's core ideas—loneliness, loss of self, and meaninglessness.

Existentialism found expression not only in prose but also in poetry. For instance, T.S. Eliot's poem *The Hollow Men* portrays the spiritual emptiness and meaninglessness of 20th-century humanity. The poem's depiction of purposelessness and inner void aligns with existential philosophy's core ideas. Similarly, Rainer Maria Rilke's poetry explores humanity's search for self and the deeper questions of existence. Poetry provides an emotional and vivid expression of existentialism, allowing readers to engage with philosophical ideas on a deeper level.

In Uzbek literature, traces of existentialism became particularly evident in the second half of the 20th century and during the independence period. Although Uzbek writers and poets may not have directly relied on existentialist philosophy, they reflected some of its ideas by depicting the human inner world, the search for life's meaning, and humanity's place in society. For example, O'tkir Hoshimov's *The Affairs of the World* (*Dunyoning ishlari*) explores themes of humanity's place in life, self-realization, and relationships with society. The characters' inner struggles and their search for life's meaning resonate with existentialist ideas. Likewise, Erkin Vohidov's poems, such as *Uzbekistan* or *Human*, reflect existential sentiments through the exploration of humanity's place in their homeland and the search for life's meaning.

During the independence period, the influence of existentialism became even more pronounced in the works of Uzbek writers and poets. For instance, Shukur Kholmiraev's stories and novels address inner conflicts, relationships with society, and the process of self-realization, themes closely aligned with existential philosophy. These works depict humanity's striving to give life meaning through personal choices and the effort to preserve individuality under societal pressure. Artistic literature uses existentialist ideas as a vital tool for understanding and depicting the human inner world. Writers express humanity's place in life, freedom, responsibility, and the struggle against meaninglessness through various images and narratives. In this process, literature not only raises philosophical questions but also provides readers with the opportunity to reflect on their own lives and create their own meaning.

In conclusion, Existentialism and artistic literature are complementary fields. While philosophy raises profound questions about human existence, literature expresses these questions through artistic imagery and narratives. The works of Sartre, Camus, Kafka, and certain examples in

Uzbek literature demonstrate the significant role of existentialism in comprehending the meaning of life. Through artistic literature, individuals not only strive to understand themselves and their lives but also find the opportunity to give life new meaning through their choices. This power of literature ensures that existentialist philosophy becomes more impactful and accessible to readers.

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