

# From Engagement To Absurdity

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**Abstract:** In the 20th century, existentialist philosophers appear on the stage of French literature, among them Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, writers who became a favorite object of literary and historical and philosophical scientific research. The search for the meaning of life, the search for something that contains the basic values and ideals: beauty, kindness, truth, justice, freedom. These values and ideals have always formed the basis, the goal of life and the goal of the creative activity of these masters of the pen and word.

**Keywords:** Second world war, cold war, existential philosophy, philosophy of the absurd, engagement.

**Introduction:** The years of World War II (1939-1944), and in particular the occupation of France by the German occupiers, left an indelible mark on the consciousness of the entire world community, which is reflected in literature. In light of the events surrounding France's defeat and the occupation period, the horrors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Cold War in the postwar years – this entire chain of tragic events for all of humanity ultimately led to the emergence of the philosophy of the absurd. This existential philosophy essentially expresses the lack of meaning in human life and the search for a solution to the hopelessness and despair of the human condition. It was this idea that would dominate the minds of the progressive French intelligentsia for the next several decades, and it was this idea that would be the subject of numerous novels and plays, not without success. This philosophy also touches upon the political sphere, sometimes finding common ground, sometimes clashing with Marxist ideology. According to the absurd, man is a priori "condemned to be free" and should not be confined to false values that contradict human freedom. At the same time, he must be able to assign meaning to the situation he confronts. From this it follows that man is responsible for what happens, and the awareness of responsibility for the outcome of a situation pushes him to a "natural" course or action, through which he controls reality and, ultimately, rises above the situation. This sense of responsibility necessitates political engagement. The most prominent representatives of French prose, expressing ideas of engagement, existentialism, and the absurd,

are undoubtedly and universally recognized as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Jean-Paul Sartre's novel "Nausea" (*La Nausée*), published in 1938, essentially opens a new era in the history of the novel, announcing the so-called hopeless "new disease of the century" ("le mal du siècle").

The author expresses the absurd through the protagonist, Antoine Roquentin, who feels a constant nausea. This nausea is a kind of moral revulsion he begins to experience from contemplating and comprehending the grotesque world of "vile people" ("salauds"); it is reality, perceived by him as a weight that squeezes his head and chest, fills his lungs, presses on his stomach like a heavy slab, and blocks his throat. And no one can accurately define this strange malaise that torments Antoine

Roquentin, the same incomprehensible condition that plagues another character, Meursault, in Camus's "The Stranger." Essentially, this condition is a manifestation of the absurd world. Thus, in the essay "What is Literature?" ("What does literature do?") Sartre writes: "We would like to contribute to changes in society;... we would like literature to possess novelty and to continue to possess this quality: a social function." [4,110] Thus, according to Sartre, literature is transformed into a weapon for the struggle against bourgeois society. While Sartre increasingly plunges into a state of irreconcilable struggle, ever closer to the ideology of Marxism, Camus rebels against Stalinism and any manifestation of political dogma and violence, no matter how great the goals pursued. Thus, Sartre tries with all his might to change the world through

revolutionary means, Camus, on the contrary, is inclined toward rebellion, which he views as a sudden impulse born in the depths of the human soul. It's time to turn to the plot of Sartre's philosophical novel *Nausea*, which garnered him great fame and, according to literary critics, is the most successful of all the existentialist works. Antoine Roquentin, a wealthy young man of about thirty who has traveled many countries, lives in Bouville and is writing a book about the life of the Marquis de Rollebon. Suddenly, he feels a change within himself: he experiences a sense of alienation and a certain disgust. Moreover, this disgust begins to manifest itself physically: he is constantly tormented by a feeling of nausea. The nausea, which intensifies with each passing day, first manifests itself when encountering ordinary objects in everyday life, gradually extending to encounters with other people, and then, inevitably and inexorably, spreading to the entire world.

The overwhelming feeling of nausea leaves him only when he listens to an excerpt from the jazz composition "Some of These Days": "You are a living dead. You walk, you talk, you eat, you sleep, but you've been dead for a long time, and once you realize it, the Nausea will come. What good is freedom if you're completely alone? Why do anything, creating an existence that's already too much? All that's left is to keep a diary, sitting aimlessly in cafes, listening to a broken record, and fighting the Nausea" [3,110]. Gradually, he comes to the understanding that the only way out and salvation for himself in this situation, he sees, is to write his book: "A book must be beautiful and hard as steel, such that people are ashamed of their existence" [3,112].

Meursault is a magnificent portrait of an unfeeling man, created by Camus. The story begins with an episode in which we learn of the death of the protagonist's mother. He attends the funeral of his mother in Marengo, who had been in an almshouse until her death, and attends the mourning ceremony as an observer, not as a grief-stricken only son. Upon his return, he meets Raymond (a neighbor on the landing), who invites him to spend the weekend with him at the beach.

Raymond, a hardened pimp, has treated his Arab mistress very rudely and dishonestly and lives in anticipation of punishment for his indiscretion: he fears being persecuted by his former lover's brothers. One day, while strolling along the beach, they encounter two Arabs, one of whom is the young woman's brother. A fight suddenly ensues, resulting in Raymond being stabbed. Later, when Meursault goes to the beach alone, he sees one of the Arabs. Weary and sun-dazzled, he suddenly imagines the man is about to kill

him. He pulls out the revolver Raymond lent him, shoots, and kills the Arab. The first part of the story ends, so to speak, with this tragic event. Thus, by the will of fate, Meursault finds himself in prison: he is tried and sentenced to death. The people around him, whom he considered his friends just yesterday, one after another become informers and accusers...

Like a distorted mirror, the second part of the story reflects the essence of things and the essence of people: the slightest, insignificant event of his life is presented in a distorted light, which gradually leads him to an ever-increasing and strengthening sense of the absurdity of the world. In the face of death, Meursault regrets nothing. In fact, Meursault is guilty without guilt, a victim of the "silent indifference of the world." Thus, according to Sartre, a person must feel responsible, for a person is realized only through action: "And one must act as if the eyes of all humanity were upon oneself." Capturing the nuances between the concepts of "responsibility" and "freedom" is quite problematic. All this is undoubtedly present in the work of Albert Camus: the hero's actions are directed at others, at the external, but they are actions without hope of success. The only important thing is that one exists; the outcome is unimportant.

Thus, each author addresses the problem of human existence in an absurd world in their own way. It is precisely absurdity and absurdity that are the fundamental characteristics of the situation in which a person exists. Each of these content determined the distinctive artistic world of each.

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