



## EXISTENTIALISM: ABOUT "THE TRIAL OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE"

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| <p><b>Received:</b> October 21<sup>th</sup> 2023<br/><b>Accepted:</b> November 20<sup>th</sup> 2023<br/><b>Published:</b> December 26<sup>th</sup> 2023</p> | <p>During the life of Kafka, only few of his stories were published in magazines and published in separate editions ("Observation", 1913; "The judgment", "Stoker", 1913; "Metamorphosis", 1916; "A Country Doctor", 1919; "A Hunger Artist", 1924). Kafka is a poet of sympathy and compassion. The writer's best novel is "The Trial", which describes the persecution of a person by the state machine for slander, in this "Kafka" absurdity, like in his other novel, "The Castle", one sees a prediction of totalitarianism, which ultimately leads humanity to collapse. In the middle of twentieth century, existentialist philosophers appear on the scene of French literature, among which Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus are recognized as the brightest representatives, writers who become the favorite objects of literary and historical-philosophical scientific research. The goal of Kafka, Sartre and Camus, the masters of the pen was one – the search for the meaning of life, the search for what contains the basic values and ideals of life: beauty, goodness, truth, justice, freedom.</p> |
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One of the most important authors of the XX century, Franz Kafka (1883 - 1924), whose work is still controversial today, remains one of the most studied in the world. Kafka's work dates back to the 1920s, when the works of the brightest representatives of modernism appeared: Marcel Proust's novel "In search of Lost Time", James Joyce's "Willis" and Franz Kafka's trilogy "The Castle", "The Trial", and "America". It is this literary direction – modernism (from french "moderne", which means the newest, modern) – becomes the aesthetic system that managed to penetrate into the private life of a person, to display the experiences of a person of a psychological nature. During the years of his active performance (the first decade of the XX century), the whole of Europe was fascinated by the new philosophical trend, which later took shape as existentialism, and this author did not stay away. That is why, all of his works can be interpreted as some attempt to realize their existence in this world and beyond. What are the common features of modernism? Firstly, there is a conscious attempt to distance or even break with the historical experience of previous artistic creation, hence, the desire to establish new beginnings of art. Secondly, there is a clear conditionality of style and continuous search and experiments with updating of artistic forms, which is why eclecticism is caused (mixing, combining dissimilar styles, ideas, and views from others – Greek. ἐκλεκτικός "eclectic", "chosen") literature of this period. This property of modernism explains its multisided manifestation in the form of Dadaism, surrealism, futurism, expressionism, cubism and Fauvism. Modernists seek to synthesize efforts to understand the general principles of artistic reflection of the world in order to stop the collapse of values and the destruction of tradition, so as not to interrupt the connection of times, focusing on the process of "moments of being", anticipating the idea that was later put forward by existentialists (J.-P. Sartre, A. Camus) about subject-object relations with the world.

Thus, in a study devoted to the ambiguous work of Franz Kafka, whose art "forces us to re-read his works again and again [Camus, 1990, 93]", Camus analyzes and discusses his works such as "The Castle" (1926), "The Trial" (1925), "Metamorphosis" (1916). The author shows the greatest interest in "The Trial": in the "The Trial" someone by name Joseph K. is accused – he does not know of what... Sometimes he even has doubts whether he is actually convicted. He continues to live as before [3, 93]." Kafka describes an extremely absurd character, which attracted the attention of Camus. The novel "The Castle" opens a wide scope to subjectivism of assessments: "The Castle" is a complete theological system, but first of all it is an individual adventure of the soul seeking grace; the story of a man who finds out from the objects of this world their Royal secrets, and from women-the signs of deity that are dormant in them [3, 94]." In Kafka's work there is isolation, strangeness, a tendency to the absurd, a special approach to the image of reality (transition to fiction), rapid flights of imagination combined with brevity and simplicity. To express the absurd, F. Kafka uses a logical relationship in the novel "The Trial": "...I recognize here an absurd work..., I can say

that here is a complete success. The flesh triumphs. There is no lack of anything: there is also an inexpressible revolt (he leads the writer's hand), and despair clear in its dumbness (it creates this), and this surprisingly free step with which the characters of the novel live until their death in the final [3, 96]". For Kafka's work, the actions and replicas of the character, the situation and details of daily life, as well as the soul's wanderings in search of salvation are important: "Hope is spoken without any irony at this point...The more tragic the human destiny depicted by Kafka, the more inflexible and challenging hope becomes. The more authentic the absurdity of "The Trial" looks, the more touching, in all its unreasonableness, the exalted "leap" in "The Castle" seems. We find here, in all its purity, the paradox of existential thinking... Kierkegaard: "you need to beat to death the earthly hope, only then will you be saved in the true hope", which can be interpreted as: "It was necessary to write "The Trial" to take up the "The Castle". Camus is quite sure that"... Kafka's work is universal, because it is inspired by religion [3, 94].

But Camus himself is attracted not by universality, but by truth, in this the opinions of the author and Kafka differ. The novel "The Trial" begins with the unexpected arrest of a certain Joseph K., in his own room on the morning of his birthday. Two police officers announce his arrest, without giving any explanation about the reason for the detention. Despite the arrest, K. is still in the freedom, and he returns to work to the Bank with his coworkers who were present at the time of his arrest, whom K. did not immediately notice. Soon K. appears at the tribunal, trying to prove his innocence, accusing the bailiffs of corruption. But the judge tells him that there is a preliminary investigation, that he can lead a completely normal life. K. is called again for further trial next week, to his surprise; the hall was empty, since no other proceedings were scheduled for that day. Concerned, uncle of K. advises him to hire a lawyer, but since the lawyer is ill, he is taken care of by nurse Leni. While the uncle and the old lawyer are having a monotonous, boring conversation about the situation, K. leaves the room and, faced with Leni, seduces the girl. If it wasn't for the process, K. would never have allowed himself to behave this way. From a successful, completely happy person, K. over time, becomes distracted, more and more immersed in himself, he is deprived of peace, gloomy, and does the things that are completely out of his character.

Once K. was assigned to meet a certain visiting foreigner near the Central Cathedral. Arriving at the appointed time to the Cathedral, and not finding a guest anywhere, K. enters the Cathedral to shelter from the rain. Suddenly he hears the voice of the priest, who, oddly enough, is also aware of the process of K. The voice notifies him that things are very bad, concerning which, of course, K. himself is already well aware of. Exactly a year passes. On the eve of K.'s birthday, two men in black came to his house in the evening. After leaving the house, the three of them came across the city to a vacant lot. Subconsciously, K. knew that he must resist, or at the very least, snatch the knife from the hands of one of the murderers and plunge it into himself. As one held him, the other plunged a knife into his heart, he uttered the last words, "Like a dog," as if this disgrace were destined to overcome him, "while thoughts of justice, of the judge, of arguments and facts that he might have used to justify himself and remain alive were still running through his mind. Summarizing the arguments about Kafka's work, Camus uses an unsurpassed metaphor: "If the meaning of art is to see the general in the particular, the transitory eternity of a drop of water in the play of its reflections, then it is even more correct to assess the greatness of the absurd writer by the gap that he establishes between these two worlds. Its secret lies in the ability to pinpoint the exact place where two worlds meet in all their disproportion... In truth, the pure in heart are able to find everywhere this geometric location of the human and the inhuman...I find it where Kafka's excited process ends in the case of the entire universe. The incredible sentence he passed justifies this ugly and at the same time stunning world in which even moles are obsessed with hope [3,100].

It is this idea that will dominate in the minds of the progressive French intelligentsia for the next few decades, and it is this idea that many novels and plays will be devoted to, and not without success. This philosophy will also touch the political sphere, sometimes finding common ground, sometimes being in confrontation with the ideology of Marxism. The years of the Second World War and, in particular, the occupation of France by the German occupiers left an indelible imprint on the consciousness of the entire world community, which is reflected in the literature. In the light of the events related to the defeat of France and the period of occupation, the horror experienced as a result of the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the cold war in the post-war years – all this chain of unfortunate events for all mankind leads to the revival of the philosophy of the absurd. This existential philosophy expresses, in fact, the lack of meaning in human life and the search for a solution to the hopelessness and desperateness of human destiny. According to the absurd, a person, a priori, is "condemned to be free" and should not be driven into a framework with false values that contradict human freedom, and at the same time, he should be able to give meaning to the situation that he opposes. From the above, it follows that a person is responsible for what is happening and the awareness of responsibility for the outcome of the situation pushes him to a "natural" move or action, performing which, he controls the reality and, as a result, rises above the situation. This sense of responsibility leads to the need for political engagement. The brightest representatives of French prose, which expressed the ideas of engagement, existentialism and absurdity are undoubtedly and universally recognized, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

J.-P. Sartre's novel "Nausea" (*La Nausée*), released in 1938, in fact, opens a new milestone in the history of the novel, announcing the so-called hopeless "new disease of the century" ("le mal du siècle"). Absurd the author expresses a feeling of constant nausea, the main character of the work – Antoine Rocantin; the nausea experienced by Antoine is a kind of moral revulsion

that he begins to experience from the contemplation and awareness of the grotesque world of "vile people" ("salauds"); it is a reality perceived by him as a kind of heaviness that squeezes the head, chest, fills the lungs, presses on the stomach like a heavy slab and closes the throat. And no one can determine exactly this strange ailment that torments Antoine Rocantin and the same incomprehensible condition that torments another hero – Meursault in Camus's "The Stranger" (*L'Étranger*). In fact, this state, it is a manifestation in relation to the absurd world.

So, in the essay "What is literature?" ("*Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*") Sartre writes: "We would like to promote changes in society; ... we would like literature to have a novelty and not cease to have this quality: a social function" [7,110].

Thus, according to Sartre, literature becomes a weapon for fighting bourgeois society. While Sartre is increasingly plunged into a state of irreconcilable struggle, he is more and more approaching the ideology of Marxism, Camus is rebelling against Stalinism and any manifestation of political dogmas and violence, no matter what great goals are pursued. Thus, Sartre is trying to change the world in a revolutionary way, Camus, on the contrary, is inclined to revolt, which he sees as a sudden impulse that originates in the depths of the human soul. It's time to turn to the plot of the philosophical novel with autobiographical notes, "Nausea" by Sartre, which brought the author great fame and, according to literary critics, the most successful of all the works of the existentialist. Antoine Rocantin, a well-to-do young man of thirty who has visited many countries, lives in the city of Bouville and is writing a book about the life of the Marquis de Rolbon. Suddenly, he feels a certain change in himself: he feels a sense of alienation and a certain disgust. Moreover, the feeling of disgust begins to manifest itself physically: he is constantly tormented by a feeling of nausea. Nausea, which increases every day, first manifests itself when faced with everyday objects in everyday life, gradually it begins to manifest itself when meeting with people around them, then inevitably and inexorably spreading in relation to the whole 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 the living dead. You walk, you talk, you eat, you sleep, but you are long dead, and once you realize this, you will feel Sick. Why do you need freedom if you are absolutely alone? Why do something about creating an existence that is already too much? It remains only to keep a diary, sitting aimless days in a cafe, listen to a broken record and fight Nausea" [6,110]. Gradually, he comes to understand that the only way out and salvation for himself in this situation, he sees that he must write his book: "The book must be beautiful and hard as steel, so that people are ashamed of their existence" [6, 112]. Meursault – a magnificent portrait of an insensitive man, created by Camus. The story begins, as we mentioned above, with the death of the storyteller's mother: the technique of poetry "in medias res" (au milieu des choses) is obvious, for from the first lines it becomes clear to the reader that the main character is already an adult young man, and that he's just lost his mother. Meursault buries his mother, refuses to look at her for the last time, even when he is at the tomb of his mother, he does not grieve and cry, but only watches people who came to the funeral. And this whole process seems to him a scene from the play, in the description of which the author uses all possible means of artistic description to more accurately convey the status of the hero: «D'avoir fermé les yeux, la pièce m'aparut encore plus éclatante de blancheur (hyperbole and metaphor at the same time). - When I closed my eyes, it seemed to me that the room was blind. Devant moi, il n'y avait pas une ombre et chaque objet, chaque angle, toutes les courbes se dessinaient avec une pureté blessante pour les yeux. – There were no shadows in front of me and every object, every corner; all lines loomed with sharpness blinding my eyes (hyperbole). Ils (les amis de maman) étaient en tout une dizaine, et ils glissaient (metaphor) en silence dans cette lumière aveuglante (metaphor). – There were about twelve of them, and they seemed to glide in silence in the blinding light of the eye... J'ai eu un moment l'impression ridicule (contrast) qu'ils étaient là pour me juger. Mais je crois maintenant que c'était une impression fausse ("False feeling" is the confusion of a hero who does not understand how to behave in this situation). – At some point I had a funny feeling that they came to judge me. But now I understand that it was a kind of false feeling... Il y a eu encore l'église et les villageois sur les trottoirs, les géraniums rouges sur les tombes du cimetière..., la terre couleur de sang (land of color of blood – comparison) qui roulait sur la bière de maman,...et ma joie quand l'autobus est entré dans le nid de lumières d'Alger et que j'ai pensé que j'allais me coucher et dormir pendant douze heures.(A. Camus. *L'Étranger*. P.: Les Éditions Gallimard, 1942, 186pp. Folio: 2000. P.p.13-19).

There was also a church and villagers on the sidewalks, red geraniums on the graves [...], blood-colored earth sticking to my mother's tomb, and my joy when the bus drove into the depths of Algeria and my thought that I would sleep for twelve hours. What can be said about the person who buries his mother, but at the same time he does not feel any sorrow, no loss, no regret. Regrets that he brought his mother to an almshouse several years ago and rarely visited her. Amazingly, Meursault did not utter a tear. Maybe this is not hypocrisy? The author uses the lexical field related to death and the description of the funeral process ("morte" – deceased, "décédée" – deceased, "enterrement" – funeral, "veiller" – on duty, "condoléances" – condolences, and "deuil" – mourning and etc.), but not a single word for expressing sorrow, sadness and inner experiences of Meursault himself. And further – Meursault's everyday day stretch is similar one to the next; every day he goes to work, sometimes meets a girl, a former typist from his office, Marie Cardona. Meursault sometimes visits the idea that, in fact, in his life, even after the death of his mother,

nothing has changed. But was it really so? For Meursault, all life trials began precisely after the death of her mother. Meanwhile, he was offered a new appointment to Paris, which he refused: after all, life could not be changed. Marriage does not interest him either. Once Raymond, his friend and neighbor, asked Meursault to write a letter to lure his Arabian mistress, and then teach her a lesson for treason. Meursault strongly supports his friend in his vile deed.

Once Meursault decided to spend a Sunday afternoon on the seashore in company with Marie and Raymond. Walking along the beach, they notice two Arabs, and it seems to them that they have tracked them down. A fight ensued, as a result of which Raymond was wounded. After some time, Meursault again comes with friends to the beach and see the same Arabs. Raymond gives Meursault a revolver. Having committed the murder, he cannot justify a single good reason, explaining this act by unbearable heat and the fact that the sun blinded him (the same "unpleasant" sensations that he experienced during the burial of his mother: "La brûlure du soleil gagnait mes joues et j'ai senti des gouttes de sueur s'amasser dans mes sourcils. C'était le même soleil que le jour où j'avais enterré maman et, comme alors, le front surtout me faisait mal et toutes ses veines battaient ensemble sous la peau. A cause de cette brûlure que je ne pouvais plus supporter, j'ai fait un mouvement en avant [...]. – "The sun burned my face and I felt drops of sweat accumulate on my eyebrows. The sun was burning in the same way as on the day of mother's funeral and, as it was then tormented by pain in the forehead, and veins were pounding in unison under the skin. Because of this heat, which I could no longer bear, I lunged forward [...]. Left alone in the scorching sun, Meursault notices an Arab who injured his friend, takes out a revolver, kills an Arab: "Je ne sentais plus que les cymbales du soleil sur mon front [...]. La mer a charrié un souffle épais et ardent (personification). Il m'a semblé que le ciel s'ouvrait sur toute son étendue pour laisser pleuvoir le feu (hyperbole). Tout mon être s'est tendu et j'ai crispé ma main sur le révolver. La gâchette a cédé, j'ai touché le ventre poli de la crosse et, c'est là, dans le bruit à la fois sec et assourdissant que tout a commencé [...]. Alors, j'ai tiré encore quatre fois sur un corps inerte où les balles s'enfonçaient sans qu'il y parût. Et c'était comme quatre coups brefs que je frappais sur la porte du malheur" (metaphor) [A. Camus L'Étranger. Paris: Les Éditions Gallimard, 1942, 186pp. Folio: 2000. P.95]. – "I just felt the sun hit my forehead, like metal plates [...]. – The sea shined heavily and hotly. It seemed to me that the sky opened and a fiery rain began. I tensed all over, my hand gripped the revolver. The mechanism succumbed, I touched the smooth surface of the handle and it was with this dry and deafening sound that it all started... I shot four more times in a motionless body that absorbed the bullets. It was as if I knocked with four short strokes at the door of misfortune ..."

So ends the first part of the story.

Meursault is arrested, the priest tries to figure out the cause of the crime and starts a conversation about God, to which Meursault replies that he does not believe in him. What can explain the act of Meursault? Is it possible to justify the person who committed the murder? How does Meursault explain his terrible deed? Try to find the answers to these questions. He spends 11 months in prison: gradually he loses touch with time, memories begin to torment him. The trial began, during which, the judge and those present cannot decide on the accusation, Meursault himself is at a loss for everything that happens, because in fact the whole process is like a farce, comedy, the main characters are the prosecutor and the lawyer: «...Le procureur s'est alors retourné vers le jury et a déclaré: «Le même homme qui au lendemain de la mort de sa mère se livrait à la débauche la plus honteuse a tué pour des raisons futiles et pour liquider une affaire de mœurs inqualifiable»...Mais mon avocat ...s'est écrié... : «Enfin, est-il accusé d'avoir enterré sa mère ou d'avoir tué un homme ? » Le public a ri...Mais le procureur s'est redressé encore, s'est drapé dans sa robe et a déclaré qu'il fallait avoir l'ingénuité de l'honorable défenseur pour ne pas sentir qu'il y avait entre ces deux ordres de faits une relation profonde, pathétique, essentielle : « Oui, s'est-il écrié avec force, j'accuse cet homme d'avoir enterré une mère avec un cœur de criminel ». – Then the prosecutor turned to the jury and announced: "A man who indulges in vile debauchery the next day after his mother's funeral and the same person commits murder in order to complete the heinous business. My lawyer ... exclaimed: "What are you blaming him for: having buried his mother or for killing a man?" Those present laughed. But the prosecutor, straightening up to his full height, snapped into his robes and announced that he had to be as naive as a respected lawyer so as not to reveal the deep, amazing, important connection between these two facts: "Yes! He cried out. "I blame him for burying his mother, already preserving crime in his heart". The same words of the prosecutor, expressed differently, moreover, confirming his unwavering rightness: "...Sous l'aveuglante clarté des faits d'abord et ensuite dans l'éclairage sombre (antithesis) que me fournira la psychologie de cette âme criminel (hyperbole)". - ... he (the prosecutor) himself said: "... At first, in the blinding light of facts, and then in the sinister light this criminal soul appears". The day of the last jury session is set: the prosecutor, accusing Meursault of heartlessness, makes an angry speech, demanding the death penalty. Before the death, a priest comes to Meursault again, but for Meursault there is no God and instead of repenting, he pours out all his indignation at the priest: "Comme si cette grande colère m'avait purgé du mal, vidé d'espoir, devant cette nuit chargée de signes et d'étoiles, je m'ouvrais pour la première fois à la tendre indifférence du monde... il me restait à souhaiter qu'il y ait beaucoup de spectateurs le jour de mon exécution et qu'ils m'accueillent avec de cris de haine ». – The feeling that with this fit of anger I cleared of pain, lost hope, before this night, full of inexplicable signs and stars, I first opened up to the quiet indifference of the world ... I could only wish that a lot of spectators gathered on the day of my execution, and they met me with cries of hatred" [A. Camus L'Étranger. Paris: Les Éditions Gallimard, 1942,

186 pp. Folio: 2000.R. 147-156]. In the face of death, Meursault feels an approaching abyss, but does not regret anything at all, presumably due to the lack of reflection. Meursault is an absurd man who does not want and even does not even attempt to hide his true feelings, a man who wants only one thing – that the world accepts him as he is – without lies and hypocrisy, but in the end he is rejected, essentially, guilty without guilt, a victim of "quiet indifference of the world" [Camus, Albert. Favorites. Collection: Stranger. Plague. Stories and essays. Moscow, "Rainbow", 1988.464 p.]. In the preface to the American edition of *The Stranger*, Camus writes: "Once, quite a while ago, I defined the essence of the Stranger with a phrase that I myself admit is very paradoxical: "In our society, anyone who does not cry at his mother's funeral risks being sentenced to death" ("Dans notre société tout homme qui ne pleure pas à l'enterrement de sa mère risque d'être condamné à mort "[Albert Camus" Préface à l'édition universitaire américaine", in *Œuvres Complètes I*, op. cit., p. 214]. By this I just wanted to say that the hero of my novel was convicted of not pretending to be" [Camus A. Works. In 5 t. T. 1. Per. with fr. / Entry. Art.M. Popovich - Kharkov: Folio, 1998. - 398 p. Page 319]. This story is very consonant with Kafka's novel "Process": a person is condemned by society. In essence, it was a "trial of the whole universe. "The question arises: is Meursault so inhuman as S.I.Velikovsky - "a villain and a great martyr, a stupid animal and a sage, a bastard and a robot, a hidden racist, the son of the people, subhuman and superman ..." writes S.I. Velikovsky in his article [S.I.Velikovsky. After the "death of God." "New World", 1969,# 9,p.218]. The author himself writes that this involuntary killer is "convicted of not playing the game of others," in the sense that he is alien to the society in which he lives. He wanders away from others on the outskirts of a private, secluded, sensual life. He refuses to lie ... He says what is in reality, he avoids disguise, and now the society already feels threatened" [Camus A. Works. In 5 t. T. 1. Per. with fr. / Entry. Art. M. Popovich - Kharkov: Folio, 1998. -- 398 p. Page 319]. In fact, Meursault is guilty without guilt, a victim of "quiet indifference of the world."

So, according to Sartre, a person must feel responsibility, because a person is realized only in action: "And it is necessary to act as if the eyes of all mankind are turned on you." Catching the nuances between the concept of "responsibility" and "freedom" is quite problematic. All this is undoubtedly present in the work of Albert Camus: the actions of the hero are activities aimed at others, outside, but activities without hope of success. The only thing that matters is that you exist like this; the result is not important. Thus, each of the authors in their own way solves the problem of human existence in an absurd world. It is the absurdity and preposterousness that are the main characteristics of the situation in which a person exists. Each of the authors undoubtedly put their own vision of the concept and situation into the concept of absurdity, and only a certain content determined the difference in the artistic world of each of them.

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