

## Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre: Philosophical Parallels, Divergences, And their Legacy in Modern Literature

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**Abstract:** This article explores the similarities and differences in the literary and philosophical approaches of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, two prominent intellectuals of the 20th century who profoundly influenced modern literature and philosophy. Both writers addressed existential themes such as freedom, responsibility, absurdity, and the search for meaning, often using literature as a medium to express their philosophical ideas. While Camus emphasized acceptance of absurdity and ethical nonviolence, Sartre focused on the active creation of meaning and political engagement. The article also examines their impact on existentialism, ethics, and the evolution of 20th-century literary genres. By comparing their views, the study reveals key aspects of existentialism and the philosophy of the absurd, highlighting their enduring relevance in addressing contemporary issues of identity, alienation, and personal responsibility.

**Keywords:** Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, existentialism, absurdity, freedom, responsibility, philosophy of the absurd, modern literature, ethical nonviolence, political engagement, 20th-century philosophy, existential themes, literary philosophy.



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### Introduction

French literature and philosophy of the 20th century are inextricably linked with the names of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, two outstanding intellectuals whose works have profoundly influenced global culture. Their writings and philosophical views reflect essential questions of human existence, such as freedom, responsibility, the absurdity of life, and the search for meaning in the world. Although Camus and Sartre began their journey as close associates, their views gradually diverged, leading to both creative and philosophical debates between them.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the similarities and differences in the literary and philosophical approaches of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as to examine their contribution to the development of modern literature. Particular attention is paid to their interactions and disagreements, which reveal key aspects of existentialism and the philosophy of the absurd.

The works of Camus and Sartre continue to captivate not only literary scholars and philosophers but also a broad audience of readers seeking to comprehend the complex realities of the modern

world. Their works serve as powerful tools for studying the existential questions humanity faces, from the search for the meaning of life to the struggle for freedom in the face of absurdity.

Modern challenges, such as the crisis of identity, growing alienation, and the need for personal responsibility, make their ideas especially relevant today. Comparing the philosophical and literary concepts of Camus and Sartre allows for a deeper understanding of the universal problems of human existence and their influence on the development of literary genres and philosophical traditions of the 20th century.

Thus, analyzing their similarities and differences is not only of historical interest but also of practical value for addressing contemporary issues related to individual freedom and collective responsibility.

## Main Text

### Similarities in Literature and Philosophy of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre

Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, despite differences in their approaches, began as intellectual allies. They shared a passion for exploring questions of freedom, responsibility, and the meaning of life. Their literary creativity is deeply intertwined with philosophy: both Camus and Sartre used artistic forms to illustrate their philosophical ideas.

1. **Existential Themes:** Both writers focused on issues of absurdity, freedom, and choice. In Camus' novel *"The Stranger,"* the protagonist confronts the senselessness of life, echoing Sartre's concept of the "nausea" of existence in his novel *"Nausea."* These works illustrate the central idea of existentialism — the necessity of accepting responsibility for one's actions, despite the apparent meaninglessness of the world.
2. **Connection Between Literature and Philosophy:** Camus and Sartre used literature as a tool for expressing their philosophical ideas. In Sartre's play *"No Exit,"* the idea of hell is explored as a condition created by human interactions. Meanwhile, Camus' novel *"The Plague"* addresses collective responsibility and solidarity in the face of absurdity.
3. **Resistance to Absurdity:** Both authors emphasized the necessity of combating the meaninglessness of existence. However, Sartre saw this struggle in active choice and the creation of meaning through actions, while Camus focused on accepting absurdity as an inevitable condition of life.

## Differences in Approach

Despite similar themes, Camus and Sartre diverged in their philosophical interpretations and methods of understanding life.

1. **Attitude Toward Absurdity:** Camus developed the concept of absurdity, asserting that humans must accept the meaninglessness of life and find joy in the very process of existence. In his essay *"The Myth of Sisyphus,"* he compares human life to Sisyphus' labor, where, despite the endless and meaningless effort, the act itself becomes meaningful. Sartre, in contrast, claimed that humans are condemned to be free and must create the meaning of their lives independently.
2. **Political Position:** Their political views also differed significantly. Sartre actively supported Marxism and was an advocate of revolutionary change, while Camus criticized any form of violence, considering it unethical. These differences led to their public conflict, reflected in philosophical debates and critical articles.
3. **Writing Style:** Camus' literary style is characterized by conciseness and clarity, whereas Sartre preferred a more complex and philosophical language. Camus sought universality in his

works, making them accessible to a broad audience, while Sartre's writings were often more theoretical and required a deep understanding of philosophical concepts.

### **Influence on Literature and Philosophy**

1. **Role in the Development of Existentialism:** Jean-Paul Sartre became a founder of existentialist philosophy, significantly influencing the development of modern philosophy. His ideas of freedom and responsibility formed the foundation of numerous discussions in ethics, politics, and art. Although Camus rejected the label of "existentialist," he made a significant contribution to popularizing the ideas of absurdity.
2. **Ethical Legacy:** Camus and Sartre approached ethical issues differently, but both raised themes relevant to the modern era: personal responsibility, social interaction, and the meaning of life. Their works remain significant, inspiring new generations of writers and philosophers.
3. **Literary Legacy:** Camus and Sartre created unique works that continue to be studied in the context of 20th-century literature. Their novels and plays are seen as vivid examples of the integration of artistic form and philosophical content.

### **Conclusion**

Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre were not merely outstanding representatives of French intellectual tradition but also symbols of an era filled with the search for meaning and attempts to respond to existential challenges. Their works reveal complex aspects of human life — from absurdity and freedom to responsibility and the search for values in the face of meaninglessness. Camus and Sartre used literature as a tool for philosophical reflection, raising questions that remain relevant today. Studying the similarities and differences in their philosophical and literary views provides not only a deeper understanding of their era but also universal principles that continue to inspire and guide humanity. Their creativity serves as an eternal reminder that the meaning of life can only be found in life itself and that freedom is not a gift but a responsibility that every person must accept. Despite their differences, the works of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre represent a vivid example of how literature and philosophy can interact, helping people comprehend the complex aspects of human existence. Their works remain relevant, serving as a source of inspiration for addressing existential questions and finding meaning in an absurd world.

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