

## Suicide Writers, the Literature of Suicide

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### **Abstract:**

Suicide is a global issue that impacts individuals of all backgrounds, regardless of their socioeconomic status, age, or cultural affiliation. While mental health problems are a significant factor, suicidal behavior encompasses a range of actions, including suicide attempts, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. Despite its profound implications for human freedom and the absence of religious imperatives, contemporary philosophy has not extensively debated the topic of suicide. Although some exceptions exist, serious philosophers often do not prioritize suicide as a pressing issue, leaving it primarily explored by literary figures contemplating the meaning of existence. This article examines suicide from two perspectives: (1) writers who have taken their own lives and (2) literary characters who engage in self-inflicted deaths, aiming to uncover the psychological motives underlying their decisions.

**Keywords:** death, life, literature, psychology, suicide

### **Introduction: Philosophical Perspectives**

The limited extent of extensive debate on suicide in contemporary philosophy is intriguing, considering its profound implications for human freedom and its relationship to religious imperatives. While suicide is not completely ignored, it is generally not given high priority among serious philosophers. Instead, it tends to be a subject of interest for literary figures exploring the meaning of existence.

Albert Camus is a notable writer who extensively delved into the topic of suicide. In his essay “The Myth of Sisyphus” (1942), Camus considers suicide as the fundamental problem of philosophy. He concludes that even in the face of life’s apparent meaninglessness, suicide cannot be justified. Camus aligns with Nietzsche’s concept of *amor fati*, which advocates for the acceptance of one’s fate. Camus argues that one must confront the absurdity of existence and find meaning and purpose within it, rather than seeking an escape through suicide.

Emil Cioran, another philosopher, and writer, also pondered extensively on the absurdity of Camus's question and struggled with an obsession with suicide. Despite this preoccupation, Cioran lived until the

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age of 84, passing away from natural causes. His exploration of the topic highlights the complexities and contradictions surrounding the issue of suicide.

This post-World War II resurgence of suicide within modern existentialist thought diverges somewhat from the traditional Western philosophical tradition rooted in the Age of Enlightenment. While Western philosophy often embraces the notion of free will, it treads cautiously when confronting the uncomfortable terrain of absurdity and meaninglessness. Notably, philosopher David Hume defended suicide in his writings, opposing the repressive laws of his time. However, contemporary philosophers, as a collective, tend to be advocates of life, and their pursuit of truth extends beyond the cessation of the thinking subject.

The lack of extensive debate on suicide in contemporary philosophy could be attributed to several factors. One possible reason is that suicide is a deeply personal and sensitive topic that raises ethical and moral concerns. Philosophers may hesitate to delve into such matters without proper sensitivity and consideration for the potential impact on vulnerable individuals. Additionally, contemporary philosophy has expanded its scope to include a wide range of topics and disciplines, which may have diverted attention away from existential questions surrounding suicide.

It is worth noting that while contemporary philosophers may not extensively debate suicide, there are ongoing discussions related to mental health, well-being, and ethical considerations surrounding end-of-life choices. These discussions often intersect with broader philosophical inquiries into the nature of human existence, freedom, and moral responsibility.

In conclusion, while suicide has not been a central focus in contemporary philosophy, certain writers and philosophers have explored the topic extensively, particularly within the context of existentialism. The complexities surrounding suicide, its ethical implications, and the pursuit of meaning and purpose continue to be subjects of interest for both literary figures and philosophers exploring the human condition.

### **Approaches to Suicide**

It is important to highlight the significance of sociology in placing suicide at the center of its concerns. The study of suicide offers valuable insights into social cohesion dynamics and the connections between individuals and groups, bridging the fields of psychology and sociology. Early empirical sociologists recognized the importance of analyzing suicide not only in terms of individual reasons and predispositions but also in relation to social forces and societal deficiencies.

Émile Durkheim's book "Suicide" (1897) is considered a foundational work in empirical sociology. While suicide had been previously examined within sociology, Durkheim's work challenged its exclusive categorization as a subject within the domain of psychiatry. Durkheim argued that suicide is a social fact influenced by social forces that extend beyond the individual. His analysis, based on European statistics from his time, focused on the mechanisms that explain the distribution of suicide and emphasized social factors while relegating psychological factors to a secondary role. Durkheim's thesis remains influential even today, as subsequent endeavors have not matched its breadth.

In contrast to sociology, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic work relatively neglected the theme of suicide, despite its prevalence during his time. Notable analysts of the era even died by suicide. Freud himself, as revealed in his personal confidences, requested a lethal dose of morphine from his doctor when he was suffering from severe cancer-related pain. However, Freud did address the topic of suicide indirectly in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917). Drawing from his analysis of melancholic states following the loss of a loved one, Freud explored the internalization of the image of the lost object and the identification individuals develop with that object. In cases of extreme melancholy, sadistic tendencies may manifest towards this internalized object, leading to self-directed aggression and, in some cases, suicide. Freud's analysis emphasizes that suicide is not a direct act of self-destruction but an attempt to annihilate the features of the internalized other, where the grieving individual treats themselves as an object, withdrawing narcissistic investments and directing sadistic rage inward.

In summary, sociology has placed suicide at the forefront of its concerns, recognizing its significance in understanding social dynamics and the influence of social forces on individual behavior. Durkheim's seminal work established the sociological perspective on suicide, while Freud's psychoanalytic approach indirectly addressed the topic through the lens of melancholia and the internalization of lost objects. Both disciplines offer valuable insights into the complex nature of suicide and its interplay with broader social and psychological factors.

Expanding on the topic of suicide, theorists have explored various aspects of this complex phenomenon, particularly through the lens of personality traits. A dedicated section on research related to personality traits and suicide risk factors has shed light on the underlying motivations that drive individuals to take their own lives. One significant approach in this domain revolves around the concept of moral suffering or "psychache," as elucidated by Shneidman in his seminal work "Suicide as Psychache: A Clinical Approach to Self-Destructive

Behavior” (1993). This approach emphasizes a mentalist perspective, aiming to understand the deep-seated anguish and psychological distress that lead to suicidal tendencies.

From this perspective, human beings possess a spectrum of needs, some essential for survival, while others facilitate self-actualization. When one or more of these needs, such as the need for self-image protection or the need for love, become severely frustrated to the extent that satisfaction appears unattainable, individuals endure indescribable and unbearable suffering. This suffering becomes intolerable, transforming swiftly into a state of despair wherein death seems to be the only respite. To illustrate this model, Shneidman proposes a three-dimensional framework for analyzing an individual’s psychological state. According to his theory, three conditions must converge to give rise to suicide: deep moral pain, pronounced psychological disturbance, and overwhelming pressures stemming from life circumstances. By successfully mitigating the level of risk in any of these dimensions, a therapist can potentially avert the occurrence of a fatal act.

At an individual level, suicide can also be viewed as a gesture that gradually gains varying degrees of legitimacy in individuals who exhibit inclinations toward such behavior. The studies conducted by American sociologist Richard Jessor (2016) have helped raise awareness that deviant acts, including suicide, often arise from personal reasons. This process unfolds over several months and represents the culmination of a prolonged interaction with individuals who have already contemplated or engaged in self-destructive behaviors. This understanding is reinforced by the observation that the most significant risk factor for dying by suicide is having previously attempted suicide. Contrary to an outdated prejudice still prevalent in some circles, surviving a suicide attempt does not render a person immune to suicide. While it is true that many individuals may envision a brighter future following their unsuccessful attempt, the stark reality remains that the act of attempting suicide currently stands as the most reliable predictor of future suicide.

Psychologist Thomas Joiner (2005) posits that a first suicide attempt serves as a crucial turning point, enabling individuals to become familiar with the act and subsequently making it more accessible within their cognitive framework. Paradoxically, after an initial attempt, individuals may experience reduced fear associated with death. Joiner further expresses concern that individuals with a history of suicide attempts may find temporary solace and relief from their anxiety through such actions. Consequently, they may be inclined to resort to this method again when confronted with negative emotions.

The process of legitimizing suicide can also be influenced by the examples set by suicide attempts or completed suicides within one's

social circle. Studies have indicated that the relatives of suicide victims face a higher risk of suicide themselves compared to parents in a control group. However, it is challenging to disentangle genetic predispositions from the ripple effect, with the former likely playing a more significant role in this scenario. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of suicide cases, ranging from 15% to 20% of individuals who die by suicide, have experienced the loss of a loved one or an acquaintance to suicide or have witnessed suicidal behaviors within their immediate social environment in the past year. Factors such as a deep desire to join the deceased person or callous indifference towards their suffering or actions can contribute to the propulsion towards suicide.

In summary, the exploration of suicide delves into the multifaceted realm of personality traits, moral suffering, psychological distress, and the influence of social factors. The concept of psychache, as introduced by Shneidman, highlights the immense emotional pain experienced by individuals when their fundamental needs are thwarted to an unbearable extent, ultimately leading to a sense of despair that can only be alleviated through death. Understanding and addressing these dimensions can assist therapists in preventing suicidal behaviors by mitigating the risk factors.

Furthermore, on an individual level, suicide can acquire varying degrees of legitimacy as individuals become more familiar with the idea and their anxiety about death diminishes. The first suicide attempt can serve as a pivotal moment that reduces fear and increases accessibility to the act itself. Additionally, individuals who have made previous suicide attempts may find temporary relief and a sense of well-being, potentially leading them to consider repeating the act if negative emotions resurface.

The legitimization of suicide can also stem from the influence of social factors. Individuals who have been exposed to suicide attempts or completed suicides within their social circle may perceive suicide as a viable option due to the examples set by others. The profound impact of such experiences is evident in the increased risk of suicide among relatives of suicide victims. This risk may stem from a combination of genetic predispositions and the ripple effect of social influence.

Overall, the exploration of suicide involves an intricate interplay of personality traits, moral suffering, psychological distress, and social factors. By comprehending these complex dynamics and addressing them through therapeutic interventions, it becomes possible to mitigate the risk of suicide and provide individuals with alternative paths to healing and well-being.

### **Writers' suicides – literary suicides**

It was Goethe, a German writer, poet, and playwright, who introduced the theme of suicide to Germany in his novel *The Sorrows of*

*Young Werther* (1774). The novel played a significant role in introducing the theme of suicide to Germany. The story revolves around the character Werther, who experiences intense and impulsive emotional pain, ultimately leading him to contemplate ending his own life. Werther's struggles stem from the combination of his deep dedication to his homeland and his unrequited love for a woman named Lotte. These conflicting emotions create a sense of dissonance within Werther as he grapples to reconcile his ideals with the reality of his circumstances.

At the beginning of the novel, Werther is portrayed as a positive and ambitious character, yearning for a better future, and seeking change in a closed and conformist society. However, his love for Lotte becomes a central focus, as he sees her as an embodiment of grace, beauty, and inner harmony. Werther finds solace and purpose in his affection for her. Unfortunately, Lotte chooses to marry another man, shattering Werther's illusions and leaving him adrift in a world that feels devoid of justice and meaning.

Goethe draws inspiration from *The Poems of Ossian* by Scottish writer Macpherson, which explores the notion that love and life, despite bringing joy and happiness, also carry within them pain and suffering. This juxtaposition of contrasting elements intensifies Werther's emotional turmoil and contributes to his tragic fate, which is foreshadowed from the beginning of the story.

The theme of suicide resonates not only in Goethe's novel but also in the lives and works of numerous other literary greats. Suicide often emerges as a common thread among writers, paralleling the presence of drug and alcohol addiction in their lives. Many authors have chosen suicide as an escape from their difficulties when they felt there was no alternative. The causes behind their decisions are diverse, ranging from love-related pain, depression, tormented personalities, and unresolved emotional wounds to an allure for the very concept of death itself.

These tragic acts of self-destruction are carried out in various ways, with some exhibiting a poetic nuance that appears tailor-made for those who choose them. The prevalence of suicide among writers prompts reflection on why their artistic endeavors often fail to fully anesthetize their harsh realities. It raises questions about what drives an artist, who should find solace and release through their art, to take such a desperate step.

Exploring the reasons and methods behind the tragic endings of famous authors, particularly Italian writers, is a delicate task. By doing so, we aim to understand the complexities of their lives, acknowledging that regardless of their decisions, their talent and work have immortalized them. It is not about passing judgment but about cultivating

sensitivity and respect as we delve into the motivations and circumstances surrounding their fateful choices.

Here are a few examples:

(1) Primo Levi, an Italian writer renowned for his powerful Holocaust memoir *If This Is A Man* (also known as *Survival in Auschwitz*) published in 1959, left an indelible mark on literature and history. His work documents his experiences as a Jewish prisoner in Auschwitz, providing a haunting and firsthand account of the horrors of the concentration camp.

Levi's arrest as an anti-fascist partisan in the Aosta Valley on December 13, 1943, marked the beginning of his harrowing journey through the Nazi machinery of oppression. Initially taken to the Fossoli labor camp in northern Italy, he was later transported to Auschwitz in February 1944. There, he endured unimaginable suffering, witnessing the dehumanization, violence, and death that plagued the camp. Miraculously, Levi managed to survive the Holocaust, emerging as a testament to human resilience and the enduring power of hope.

Following his liberation and return to Italy, Levi dedicated himself to preserving the memory of the Holocaust, ensuring that the atrocities committed would not be forgotten. He became an influential writer and speaker, advocating for remembrance, justice, and understanding. His writing served as a stark reminder of the depths of human cruelty and the importance of preventing such atrocities from recurring.

Tragically, on April 11, 1987, Primo Levi died under circumstances that are believed to be suicide. He jumped from the stairwell of his home in Turin, leaving behind a legacy of literary brilliance and a lingering question about the burdens he carried. While there is a prevailing hypothesis that Levi took his own life, some theories suggest that he may have fallen accidentally due to dizziness. Regardless of the specific circumstances, Levi had openly expressed his struggle with depression and the psychological weight he carried from reliving and recounting his experiences in Auschwitz.

Levi referred to the act of bearing witness to the Holocaust as a "poisoned gift". The responsibility of sharing his story and constantly revisiting the traumatic memories took a toll on his mental well-being. The weight of his past and the immense task of recounting it contributed to his depression, amplifying the difficulties he faced in finding peace within himself.

Primo Levi's life and tragic end serve as a reminder of the profound impact that the Holocaust had not only on the victims but also on those who survived. His work continues to be celebrated for its humanity, honesty, and unwavering commitment to truth. Levi's writings remain essential in preserving the memory of the Holocaust and teaching



future generations about the consequences of hatred, discrimination, and indifference..

(2) Virginia Woolf, a prominent figure in London literature during the early 20th century, made significant contributions to the literary world with her groundbreaking novels and essays. Some of her notable works include *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Orlando*, and *To the Lighthouse*. Woolf's writing style was characterized by its experimental nature, stream-of-consciousness narrative, and exploration of complex themes such as gender, identity, and consciousness.

In addition to her literary achievements, Woolf was a passionate advocate for gender equality and suffrage. She was actively involved in the feminist movement and used her platform to shed light on the social and cultural barriers faced by women in her time. One of her most influential works in this regard is *A Room of One's Own*, an essay that examines the importance of financial independence and creative space for women writers.

However, alongside her literary success and activism, Woolf battled with mental health issues throughout her life. She suffered from depression and experienced severe and dangerous episodes, often triggered by feelings of loneliness and mood swings. The progression of World War II added to her anxiety and worsened her mental state.

Tragically, on March 28, 1941, Woolf's struggles with her mental health reached a devastating climax. Filled with despair, she walked into the River Ouse near her home in Sussex, England, with her pockets filled with stones. The weight of the stones caused her to drown, bringing an end to her life.

The note Woolf left behind, her farewell message, remains as poignant as her literary works. While the exact contents of the note are not widely known, it is believed to reflect her deep anguish and the internal battles she faced. Her tragic death serves as a reminder of the profound impact that mental health struggles can have on even the most brilliant and accomplished individuals.

Virginia Woolf's literary legacy continues to resonate today, as her works continue to be studied, celebrated, and appreciated for their artistry and insightful exploration of the human condition. Her life and untimely death also shed light on the importance of mental health awareness and support, reminding us of the ongoing need for compassion and understanding for those facing mental health challenges:

Dearest, I feel certain that I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have given me the greatest possible happiness. You have been in every way



all that anyone could be. I don't think two people could have been happier till this terrible disease came. I can't fight it any longer. . .

(3) Cesare Pavese, a prominent figure in Italian literature during the 20th century, left a lasting impact through his writings as a novelist, poet, and critic. Known for his distinctive style and intellectual pursuits, he played a significant role in shaping literary discourse in Italy.

Pavese's contributions extended beyond his own creative works. As a critic, he played a pivotal role in introducing and popularizing the concept of the American dream in Italy during the 1930s. Through his involvement with Einaudi publishing, he had the opportunity to delve into diverse topics that were relatively unexplored in Italian literature at the time, such as Marxism, idealism, religion, psychology, and ethnology.

However, despite his professional successes, Pavese's personal life was marked by profound struggles. Following a series of disappointments and setbacks, including a failed love affair with the American actress Constance Dowling, Pavese found himself grappling with deep emotional turmoil. This romantic disappointment, combined with existing depression, took a heavy toll on his mental well-being.

In a poignant and haunting poem titled "Death will come and he will have your eyes", Pavese expressed his despair and anguish. The poem, a reflection of his emotional state and the intense pain he experienced, captures the themes of mortality and loss.

Tragically, a few months after writing this evocative poem, Pavese succumbed to his inner demons. In September 1950, he ingested ten sachets of sleeping pills while lying on his bed in his room at the Hotel Roma in Turin. The weight of his emotional distress became unbearable, leading to his untimely demise.

Pavese's death was a tremendous loss for Italian literature and intellectual discourse. His works continue to be celebrated and studied for their depth, introspection, and exploration of human emotions. His tragic end serves as a reminder of the profound impact that mental health struggles can have on individuals, regardless of their intellectual prowess or creative achievements.

While Cesare Pavese's life was cut short, his literary legacy endures, leaving behind a body of work that captures the complexities of the human experience and the fragility of the human psyche. His contributions to Italian literature and his exploration of universal themes ensure that his memory lives on, allowing future generations to engage with his profound insights and appreciate his literary craftsmanship.

(4) Yukio Mishima, born Kimitake Hiraoka, was a prolific and influential Japanese writer, poet, essayist, and playwright. Throughout his career, Mishima not only garnered acclaim for his literary works but

also made notable contributions as an actor and film director. His artistic versatility and exploration of traditional Japanese culture and nationalistic themes set him apart as a unique figure in Japanese literature.

Mishima's literary repertoire spanned various genres, from novels to contemporary adaptations of traditional Japanese theater plays. He gained international recognition for his works, making him one of the few Japanese authors to achieve such acclaim on a global scale.

Beyond his artistic endeavors, Mishima was deeply committed to his nationalist ideals and had a strong martial arts background. He sought to combine his personal preoccupation with death and his patriotic sentiments, ultimately shaping the trajectory of his life and work.

On November 25, 1970, Mishima enacted a dramatic and shocking final act that would forever define his legacy. Accompanied by four trusted members of the Tate no Kai, a paramilitary group led by Mishima, he orchestrated the occupation of the office of General Mashita of the self-defense army. From the balcony, Mishima delivered a solemn and impassioned speech on the significance of the Japanese empire, critiquing the perceived subordination of nationalist sentiment to democracy and Westernization.

After concluding his speech, Mishima performed the samurai ritual suicide known as seppuku. This ritual involves the act of cutting one's belly and being subsequently beheaded by a trusted assistant. Mishima's final act, executed with a profound sense of commitment and conviction, added an enigmatic and complex dimension to his already intricate persona.

By choosing seppuku as his means of self-inflicted death, Mishima embraced a traditional Japanese method that symbolized honor, loyalty, and sacrifice. This act not only brought attention to his personal obsession with death but also became a deeply symbolic expression of his nationalist ideals and his struggle against the perceived erosion of traditional Japanese values.

Yukio Mishima's life and death continue to fascinate and perplex scholars and admirers alike. His literary contributions and unyielding pursuit of artistic expression intertwined with his nationalist fervor have left an indelible mark on Japanese literature and cultural discourse. Mishima's legacy stands as a testament to the complex interplay between art, ideology, and personal conviction, challenging conventional notions of identity, patriotism, and the role of the artist in society.

(5) Sylvia Plath was a remarkable American writer and poet whose literary contributions and tragic life story continue to captivate readers and scholars alike. Known for her beautiful and evocative poems, as well as her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, Plath left an indelible

mark on the literary world. However, her life was plagued by mental health struggles, particularly severe depression, which ultimately led to her untimely demise.

Plath's poetic style and themes aligned closely with the confessional poetry movement, a genre that delved into deeply personal and often emotionally raw experiences. Alongside fellow poet Anne Sexton, Plath was at the forefront of this confessional movement, fearlessly exploring her own inner turmoil, relationships, and societal pressures through her writing.

Plath's battle with depression and her first suicide attempt during her college years cast a shadow over her life. These experiences informed much of her work, infusing it with a raw intensity and vulnerability that resonated with readers. Despite the darkness that often permeated her poetry, Plath possessed a profound talent for capturing the essence of human emotions, evoking empathy, and introspection in her audience.

Tragically, on February 11, 1963, shortly after the publication of her novel *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath took her own life. She left behind a final poem, which serves as a poignant testament to her state of mind during her last moments. The circumstances surrounding her death remain a subject of intense speculation and interpretation.

According to some scholars, Plath's intention may not have been to end her life definitively but to seek help. It is suggested that she may have wanted to make her plight known by leaving a note with her doctor's number and the desperate plea, "please call the doctor". Additionally, Plath was aware that an Australian girl, who she hoped would provide support, was due to visit her that morning. The act of sealing doors and windows and turning on the gas stove, while tragic and ultimately fatal, could be seen as a cry for help in the depths of her despair.

This interpretation offers a glimmer of hope in the face of such tragedy, suggesting that Plath's actions were not solely driven by a desire to end her life, but rather by a desperate plea for assistance. It highlights the complexities of mental illness and the profound isolation it can create, even for someone as talented and accomplished as Sylvia Plath.

Sylvia Plath's legacy extends far beyond her death. Her poetic and literary contributions continue to be celebrated and studied, revealing the depth of her talent and the enduring power of her words. While her life was marked by personal struggles, Plath's work remains a testament to human experience, inviting readers to confront their own emotions and confront the sometimes-uncomfortable truths of existence.

In the years since her passing, Sylvia Plath's writing has continued to resonate with audiences, providing solace, understanding, and a connection to the struggles and triumphs of the human spirit. Her voice endures, reminding us of the importance of mental health awareness and

the need for compassion and support for those who face the weight of depression and other mental illnesses.

Indeed, the exploration of complex emotions, personal struggles, and the human condition in literature allows us to delve into the depths of human experience and gain a better understanding of our collective mentality. Writers, through their narratives and characters, often provide tangible images and multi-layered meanings that go beyond the abstract. They offer insights into the motivations, desires, and conflicts that drive individuals, highlighting that the reasons behind their actions are not always futile or universally homogenous.

Novels, in particular, offer a platform for characters to grapple with the complexities of life and seek solutions to their problems. Through deep discussions, introspection, and contemplation, characters often attempt to escape the mundane or overwhelming aspects of their existence. They may engage in philosophical debates, question societal norms, or even resort to mathematical calculations as a means to find order and meaning.

The characters' search for resolution and escape reflects a universal human desire to transcend the difficulties of everyday life. By incorporating these elements into their narratives, writers provide readers with a mirror to reflect upon their own challenges and dilemmas. Through the characters' journeys, readers may find solace, inspiration, or a fresh perspective on their own experiences.

However, it is important to note that literature doesn't offer a definitive solution or a mathematical formula to solve life's problems. Instead, it presents a nuanced portrayal of the human condition, showcasing the complexities and uncertainties that come with it. By exploring the characters' struggles and choices, readers are encouraged to contemplate their own lives and engage in critical thinking, rather than seeking simplistic or formulaic answers.

Literature serves as a powerful medium for introspection and empathy, enabling readers to connect with diverse perspectives and understand the intricacies of the human psyche. It reminds us that life's challenges are multifaceted and that there is rarely a one-size-fits-all solution. The exploration of characters' motivations, their internal conflicts, and their attempts to navigate the complexities of existence invites readers to embrace the nuances and uncertainties that define the human experience.

In conclusion, literature provides tangible images and multi-layered meanings that go beyond abstract perspectives. Through novels and the struggles of their characters, writers offer insights into collective mentality, addressing complex emotions and personal challenges. While characters may attempt to escape or find resolution through deep

discussions and contemplation, literature ultimately invites readers to engage in introspection and critical thinking, acknowledging the intricacies of life and the absence of simplistic solutions.

### **Conclusion**

The mystery of death has long fascinated and captivated the thoughts of both ordinary individuals and philosophers alike. It is an enigma that elicits contemplation and gives rise to various interpretations. The uncertainty of what lies beyond death fuels a range of philosophical and existential musings.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous statement, "death is not lived," suggests that death exists as a separate reality from life and does not concern the living. From this perspective, Tomás Segovia extrapolated the notion that if death is not a part of life, then we are essentially immortal, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. However, this immortality, if it can be called such, is limited until the moment we cease to exist.

Roland Barthes, in contrast, observed that we often feel a sense of immortality until a sudden realization shatters this illusion. Tragically, Barthes himself expressed this sentiment shortly before his untimely death, which occurred when he was struck by a van. The mystery of death seems to be a uniquely human preoccupation. While other living beings may possess their own enigmatic ways of thinking, the contemplation of the threshold of life appears to be a distinctive characteristic of human experience. The monologue of this enigma becomes more pronounced when its proximity becomes evident through terminal illness or physical decline.

Artists frequently explore the dramatic or comedic aspects of life and death, reflecting the hopes and struggles inherent in the human condition. Ingmar Bergman's film "The Seventh Seal" symbolizes life as a game of chess, with the protagonist engaging in a match against death. Death's motive in playing is to prolong the mystery and, perhaps, secure the salvation of humanity. Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* portrays the protagonist's encounter with death, representing the fulfillment of his quest. Death only acquires meaning when intertwined with the significance of life and becomes worthy of being recounted in literature, as suggested by Stéphane Mallarmé.

G.K. Chesterton encapsulates the essence of the quixotic adventure in one of his essays, stating that "Even a bad shooter dignifies himself by accepting a challenge." This implies that Don Quixote's immense dignity stems from his fearless pursuit of a quest for which he was never truly prepared, acknowledging our human weaknesses while bravely accepting the challenge. In Jorge Luis Borges' prologue to a selection of stories by an Irish writer, he writes of the writer crossing

himself before beginning to write, capturing the essence of "dying on a Pacific island and 'singing like a bird sings in the rain'." The act of singing represents our inherent connection to life, which persists despite the inevitability of death. Consequently, some writers have sought to choose their own way of dying, embracing death on their own terms before it chooses them.

In essence, the mystery of death and its interplay with life continues to captivate the human imagination. It is a subject that writers and artists explore, seeking to understand and find meaning within the ultimate unknown. Through literature, film, and artistic expression, we confront our mortality, contemplate the nature of existence, and grapple with the profound questions that arise from our finite time on Earth.

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