

# The Meaning of Life in Woody Allen's movies

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**Master's thesis / Diplomski rad**

**2021**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:162:209036>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2022-06-30**



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Universitas Studiorum  
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Odjel za anglistiku – znanstveni smjer: prevoditeljski modul

**Ana Majčica**

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Diplomski rad

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Zadar, 2021.



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## 1. Introduction

The theme of this thesis is the meaning of life and existential crisis as presented throughout the movies of the director and screenwriter Woody Allen. The aim of this work is to illustrate how cinema can be used as a media for analyzing and finding an answer to various philosophical questions. Although he is not an educated philosopher, philosophy is Woody Allen's passion. By reading works of well-known philosophers, such as Hegel or Sartre, and doing researches of his own, Allen developed an open mind as well as ability of profound thinking. The fact that he is well read compensates his lack of education in philosophy. Throughout his movies, one can see a few themes that are reoccurring over and over again. Those themes are love and death, morality, God, and the meaning of life.

Although there will be mention of the analysis of love, morality, death and God, the focus will be on the search for meaning of life. This is one of the central questions that philosophy, as a science, deals with. However, in the history of philosophy, the search for meaning was not one of the big questions until recently. Even though the records of problematizing meaning of life can be found as far as in Ancient Greece, it was not until the existentialist movement that it came to center. Today, it is one of the most used topics in philosophy as well as in pop culture. In fact, it is so widespread, that even people without any philosophy knowledge can discuss it. However, if one wants to come closer to the answer, one must have a philosophical background on the subject.

As I mentioned above, all of Woody Allen's movies have a philosophical theme to a certain degree. Considering that the opus of his movies is rather big, this paper work will focus on four movies of my choice. The selected movies are *Annie Hall*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* and *Irrational Man*. The criteria for choosing were that the movies have the theme of meaning of life and existence as its central theme, not just as a dialogue device to get the movie going. However, there are still at least ten Allen's movies that meet these criteria, so the narrowing down process included researching and reviewing those movies until I chose the final four. *Annie Hall* is the first movie that has all the elements that will later become his trademarks. *Hannah and Her Sisters* is one of his movies best known for its strong female characters and the many ways that lead them to find their life's purpose. *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is the movie that perfectly combines drama and comedy using morality and

existence. *Irrational Man* is the only movie where the main character is a philosophy professor. Therefore, in this paper I will analyze these movies concerning their problematization of the meaning of life and the existential dilemma.

The method I used mostly consistent of watching selected movies and analyzing scenes that I consider relevant to the theme. Furthermore, in literature, I included reviews of these movies as well as Allen's biography and books written from philosophical point of view. The work itself is organized in a few sections. Firstly, I will give a short introduction about Woody Allen as director and philosopher. Secondly, there will be an analysis of the meaning of life from philosophical point of view, as well as Allen's point of view. Thirdly, as I mentioned above, I will analyze the selected movies in separate sections. And lastly, I will give a conclusion on the matter.

## 1.1 Woody Allen and the search for meaning

Woody Allen invented a little guy tormented by the big questions about life issues and bad luck with women (Meade 84). This character became his trademark which he uses to present his personal ongoing existential crisis. His movie can be interpreted as a therapy session that he has with the audience. Most of the replica that his characters utter, are his personal thoughts and opinions. However, the opinion that most stands out is that life is meaningless. Allen stated this opinion many times in several interviews. For example:

"I firmly believe, and I don't say this as a criticism, that life is meaningless," he began. "I'm not alone in thinking this — there have been many great minds far, far superior to mine, that have come to that conclusion. And unless somebody can come up with some proof or some example where it's not, I think it is. I think it's a lot of sound and fury signifying nothing, and that's just the way I feel about it." (Althouse <https://althouse.blogspot.com/2014/07/i-firmly-believe-and-i-dont-say-this-as.html>).

Although, he explores themes of religion, God and morality in most of his movies, those made from 1975 to 1989 are the ones that are the most concentrated on this existential dilemma. He explores these topics through a stereotyped Jewish character with an obsession with death and many neurotic phobias. His personal self-education and self-realization has progressed with each new movie. Therefore, his characters reflect his own fears and hopes to find the meaning of life while at the same time being convinced that there is no meaning at all. Allen's movies have a function of a medium he uses to present his thoughts and the audience needs to find the answers. He is using themes such as relationships and sexuality to further examine existence (Helderman 7). His characters are often facing moral and ethical dilemmas that make them question the meaning of it all. Their actions mirror his personal fears and struggles, as well as hopes of discovering something bigger than his angst. This philosophical journey began with *Annie Hall*, which analysis will be given further in this work.

Woody Allen is seen as a comedic figure and a neurotic man, however behind that persona is someone who seeks the answer to the eternal question of the purpose of existence, just like the rest of us (Helderman 7). It gives us some comfort to think that, if we made something that



will outlive us, we made it in life and marked our place in history. Even though this gives us some comfort and positive outlook on finding life's meaning, Allen has different opinion:

“You're just a human being on the face of the earth, and you're an insignificant agglomeration of cells and neurons and eventually that expires ... and it's terrifying and so unpleasant that we dress it up in any possible way we can, from the church to making a billion dollars to being an alcoholic to painting pictures and thinking,

“Well, I have a legacy and my paintings are going to live on after me,” which gives you some sense that you're going to live on, but you're NOT going to live on — you're going to be dead, and the paintings are just decayable objects that will eventually be gone, and so the message is an extremely grim one” (Novack <https://www.presstelegram.com/2014/07/26/woody-allen-back-in-spotlight-promoting-new-film/?fbclid=IwAR04ApAS4AOCCdiXjjToDBJ3bo65v2g1CSn-pyVmUHZvGxaY7ShYoW27F-8>).

Human life, in general, is perplexed. The search for one's life purpose just adds more burden to it. On one hand, something positive can come out of it. Many people, unexpectedly, find their purpose or *raison d'être*, which leads to happily fulfilled life. On the other hand, however, inability to find some bigger meaning to one's life can lead to depression, anxiety and ongoing existential crisis. When someone falls under this pessimist view, there is always hope that, over time, things will get some meaning. However, Allen states that, even in his old age, he is still unable to find his purpose. For example, he shared these pessimistic words:

“I'm spiritually empty and never found any consolation in life. Success didn't do anything for me. I live a lonely life but you learn nothing about the important things in life, like why I'm here. No real wisdom comes from age. Age is a bad thing – it's all negative” (Witts <https://hope1032.com.au/stories/faith/2016/woody-allen-meaning-life/>).

Allen expressed his view creatively throughout his rich movie career. In almost all of his movies, with exception to some degree in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Allen's view is based on nihilism. Despite this, many of the viewers found something that gave their life a meaning after watching his movies. Although, he feels like he is not making anything big with his movies, he

makes people to think about their life decisions. Sometimes, it is necessary to watch a movie or read a book that talks about finding a purpose to help us review our life. In most cases, the moviemaker or the author are unable to find their purpose, but can give the necessary means for others to find it. For example, in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, the premise is that there is no meaning in life without God. The movie's reoccurring phrase "the eyes of God" expresses how He sees everything and, therefore, we should live our lives according to ten commands and moral code. Furthermore, in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, God is again in the center of the meaning of life. However, this time, the emphasis is more on the religion itself. Although Allen is an atheist, he shows religion as something that can give us comfort when we seem to be unable to find any meaning in life. The search for the meaning of life, inevitably leads to philosophy.

Although, there are many definitions of what philosophy is, I define it as the constant search for answers to question on different topics. Therefore, a philosopher is an active seeker of truth and someone who pursuits knowledge through asking questions. Woody Allen's movies represent philosophical wanderings through his thoughts and asking questions while at the same time being afraid of finding them. He began with sarcastic comedy and ended up with existential crisis by using his movies as a means for philosophic discovery. His own identity struggles are shown in most of his movies and by sharing this aspect of him with us, he tries to find an answer or give us answers to our own existential questions. Allen is not a philosopher per se, however, he is someone who is driven by many thoughts that can be answered with philosophy. He delivers his thoughts in his movies, using them as a device which makes a plot to go further on. For example, in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, inner moral dilemmas serve as a plot device.

## 2. The meaning of life from philosophy's perspective

In this modern age one of the most reoccurring questions is the one about the meaning of life. Every why-question followed by another why-question will lead to the question of meaning of life. Considering that every why-question has its because-answer, that means that there is a because-answer to the why-question of meaning of life. If we do not know why we live, does anything have a meaning anymore? However, when we do something, we are either motivation oriented to do it or reason oriented. Ideally, the reason to do something should be motivation enough to do it. Therefore, the meaning of our life could be behind those reasons (Berčić 94). The meaning is the ultimate because-answer that stops all the why-questions. The question "What is the meaning of life?" is one of the inevitable philosophy questions that one eventually asks oneself. Although there is a branch of philosophy dedicated to just this question, called existentialism, there is no one definite answer. Maybe this is because philosophers spend a lot of time on analyzing a question without really giving an answer to it. Then again, it might be because there is no just one answer to this or we are simply blind to the answer. These and many other theories about the answer on life changing, and challenging question, are themes of many Woody Allen movies. Throughout his career, he put his personal existential crisis and search for the meaning of life into the plots of his movies. However, as non-philosopher, his opinions and conclusions are his own entirely and for us to interpret it how we want. Allen's view point might be a philosophical one, but it does not express any official philosophical statement. Nevertheless, his movies are a work of art in terms of screenplay, actors, music and the scene juxtaposition. The existential questions are there to make the viewers think.

Philosophers distinguish between the meaning of life and meaning in life. The term 'the meaning of life' refers to the more cosmic scope, while the term 'meaning in life' refers to the individual form of life. However, many people think that once you find the meaning in life you are close to discovering the meaning of life. While philosophers are divided about the meaning of this question, theologians agree that the answer is God (Eagleton 2). This latter view, Allen embraces in his *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. The plot of this movie is based on the question of morality and the meaning is found in God. Although Allen is an atheist, and he emphasizes this many times throughout his movies such as in *Love and War*, he often claims that there might be something. Therefore, in some of his movies we find God as an answer. An argument for this is the fact that He is the reason why there is something rather than nothing (Eagleton 2).

The focus is not on how we are, but rather on the fact that we are. The first philosopher that began to deeply deal with the question of meaning of life is philosopher Martin Heidegger. He asked why it is something rather than nothing. He based his main work *Being and Time* on this question. In this work, he introduced a term for concrete human existence called *Dasein*. Existentialism is accredited for emphasizing that human being is not just mere being but rather an existence which, in freedom, creates its destiny and fulfills its own being.

Allen's movie *Irrational man* excellently portraits this philosophical thought. We are what we create. Or are we? In later chapters, the main plot of this movie will be analyzed in detail. As for now, I would like to mention one of the ideas presented in the movie, namely the idea that if someone is so blinded by the search for meaning, one will morally justify anything just to fulfil own desire of finding the meaning. Woody Allen has a very strong opinion that life is meaningless. Nevertheless, in his movies he finds a meaning of a kind. Sometimes that meaning is absurd, such as in *Annie Hall*, where we "need the eggs" or spiritual one like in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. This could lead to a theory that there is not just one universal meaning of life, but rather a subjective one. Naturally, what proves to be the meaning of somebody's life will not be the same as somebody else's. Also, this could mean that each individual has a different meaning of life, no two humans having the same. For example, in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* and *Hannah and Her Sisters*, both main male characters, Judah and Mickey, find a meaning in religion but in a completely different way. While one tries to live according the words of God that he was brought up on, the other is going from one religion to another until he reduces it to consumerism. However, there is also an alternative that we will never find out what the meaning is (Eagleton 9).

This supports another theory, supported by philosophers like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, which states that not knowing the meaning of life is the part of the meaning of life. Many psychiatrists, such as Victor Frankl, argue that the human need for meaning is prior to our will power, as well as our greatest need. In order to grasp the meaning of life, one must stand and look at one's life from a far wider standpoint. Although we are self-aware, it is difficult to understand the concept of life when looked upon from subjective standpoint. The objectiveness can only be achieved if we step back from our automatic actions and put us in the perspective of the universe. However, we do not like to think that our actions are automatic, but rather meaningful. Therefore, we look for meaning even in some small things. In Allen's movie

Hannah and Her Sisters, Mickey goes through hypochondria, panic attacks, existential crisis and tries to find meaning of it all in religion. When he finally gives up of finding any meaning, he has an eureka moment while watching an old movie and finds meaning in it. Allen's movies are on thin line between comedy and tragedy because not finding any meaning is tragedy, but he presents it in a funny way. Although existential questions are not an easy subject, Allen succeeds to put those themes in a light dialogue within a movie. Considering that he is not a philosopher, his talent in writing a screenplay is visible in these smooth dialogues.

Allen's philosophical thought in movies is mostly based on books on existentialism, which often stress certain themes that are shared by a variety of philosophers who are called "existentialists." One common theme is the emphasis on human freedom and the related Sartrean slogan that "existence precedes essence," meaning that we have no prepackaged essence or nature, but that what we are is what we choose to be. In contradiction with existentialism is Martin Heidegger who put focus on "that world is", rather than why or how it is (Eagleton 12). The best example of this is the movie *Irrational Man*, which is one of a few movies that have a philosophy professor as a main character. In dialogues throughout the movie, there are thoughts of Kant, Heidegger and Kierkegaard which are used as a device to both make a point and to make the plot go on. Most of these themes are presented in a form of inner dialogue, thoughts and moral dilemma that is carried out through the narration of the main characters. Many would argue that this search for the meaning of life is the meaning of life (Eagleton 29). If this belief is projected onto Woody Allen's movies, we can see that the absurdity of his movies lies in the fact that he is happier while he is searching for the meaning than when he finds it.

As was mentioned, in the movie *Irrational Man* one of the central philosophical themes are those from Immanuel Kant. The one that stands out the most is the thought that body does not have a purpose, but its parts do. This is called "purposiveness without purpose" (Eagleton 45). As well as in *Irrational Man*, Kant had a big impact on Allen because in *Hannah and Her Sisters* there is also this "purposiveness". All the women in the movie lead life without any purpose, just existing in their own individual reality. However, unlike *Irrational Man*, where you fail if you do not find your life's meaning during college years, this one shows that it is never too late to choose a different path in one's life. Furthermore, Allen's movies show life as it is, unpredictable and absurd. His movie *Shadows and Fog*, which will not be analyzed in this

thesis, gives an impression that it was made based on the old joke “My life is full of fascinating characters, but I do not seem to be able to work out the plot” (Eagleton 46). The main plot line is that all the characters know what is going on because they have the script, except the Woody Allen’s character. In reality, it just seems that we are the one without a script while everyone else has it. The truth is that no body has the script, but act like they have one.

### 3. Woody Allen and the meaning of life

Although, religious themes, death and the moral problems are reoccurring themes in majority of Allen's movies he explored them the most during period from 1975 to 1989. Although, philosophical themes can be found in his earlier movies as well, they are mostly used to provoke a laughter rather than to initiate a deep thought. His movies got more philosophical in tone and themes parallel with his own development. His personal interest in Sartre, Kant and Kierkegaard can be seen throughout his movies from the 1970s onward. The first serious movie in which he approaches philosophical questions using serious jokes is *Annie Hall* (1977). The philosophy elements no longer serve as comedic element, but as the underlying plot that follows the main story until it becomes the main plot. His questions about existence and his journey towards God and finding answers is in direct conflict with his emotional need for meaning. Especially when one considers that he is very keen to atheism.

More than once he states that life has no meaning if there is no God (Petsche 27). For example, in this scene from *Love and Death*:

BORIS: What if we're just a bunch of absurd people, who are running around with no rhyme or reason?

SONJA: But if there is no God, then life has no meaning. Why go on living, why not just kill yourself?

BORIS: Well, let's not get hysterical; I could be wrong. I'd hate to blow my brains out and then read in the papers they found something.

Although it is implied that there is no meaning without God, he still thinks that that is no valid reason for suicide because he does not explicitly state that there is no God but rather just speculates about that possibility.

Allen holds a very strong opinion that life is meaningless. Nevertheless, he still searches for the meaning and teaches us to deceive ourselves from the meaningless and anticipation of our own death. He concludes on meaningless because there is no objective meaning in the universe as a whole (Skoble 25). Considering that we are mortal and will eventually die, if there

is some meaning to life it is pointless because there is no ultimate meaning. Whatever we choose to do in our life loses its meaning when we die. As he says in September:

“... the knowledge that it doesn't matter one way or other, that it's all random, radiating aimlessly out of nothing, and eventually vanishing forever. I'm not talking about the world. I'm talking about the universe. All space, all time, just a temporary convulsion.”

However, in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, he identifies the meaning of life with the existence or nonexistence of God. He wants to commit suicide because there is no meaning in life, but at the same time does not want to do it if there is a God. For most people, it is difficult to accept some events of life without belief in God. In times such as the death of loved one we turn to religion for hope and comfort. Ultimately, we think of events as “God's will” and religion helps us to go through them, therefore, gives life a meaning. The belief in afterlife gives hope that there is meaning in this life. The directors of the fictional movie in *The Purple Rose of Cairo* have the role of a creators of the world in which Tom lives. Therefore, for him, they are the ones that give a meaning to his life (Skoble 34).

TOM: It's beautiful. I'm not sure exactly what it is.

CECILIA: This is a church. You do believe in God, don't you?

TOM: Meaning?

CECILIA: That there's a reason for everything, for our world, for the universe.

TOM: Oh, I think I know what you mean: the two men who wrote *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, Irving Sachs and R. H. Levine. They're writers who collaborate on films.

CECILIA: No, no, I'm talking about something much bigger than that. No, think for a minute. A reason for everything. Otherwise, it would be like a movie with no point, and no happy ending.

In *Hannah and Her Sisters*, it is implied that the reason behind meaningless is that nothing is permanent. However, if God does exist, then we have something eternal and absolute that gives meaning to everything (Skoble 37). In any case, we need distractions to stop us thinking about the truth of death and meaning. But because nothing is permanent, these distractions are meaningless. Allen often compares his life to the life of other characters in hope to find some meaning. In one of his early movies, for example, *Play It Again, Sam* he compares



his life to the fictional life of his movie idols. His work is a product of all philosophers and directors that influenced him.

### 3.1. Woody Allen and religion

Allen tries to separate himself from the Jewish religion and tradition, but those have influenced his work so much that it is impossible to think about not Jewish Allen. Despite his aversion towards God, “I never thought about [God] seriously until I was a teenager, and then all feelings were negative from the start.”, religion continues to be a central theme of his movies. However, to Allen, the existence of God is directly connected to the meaning of life. The consequence of this belief is that, him being an atheist, there is no meaning in life. With life being meaningless, all our actions are useless in the long term. The meaninglessness of life and religion are closely connected and make an ongoing theme in his movies (Petsche 25). The best representation of Allen’s theological thought is his *Love and Death*. He repeatedly mentions how people do not pay attention to morality. When he talks about God, he very often puts death in perspective. Death is one of the main motifs in all his movies. His constant thoughts about death and search for the meaning is what led him to philosophy and away from religion. Although, he was brought up very religiously, that religion was forced upon on him.

Another excellent representation of religion can be seen in *Hanna and Her Sisters*. In this movie, the main character Mickey, a television producer, tries to find a meaning through a religion and a cult. In the end, he did not find meaning but reduced religion down on consumerism. However, a life outside of a religion and without faith can become a life with faith only through “big leap of faith”. This comes from Kierkegaard’s philosophy in which life is divided in three stages and through “leap of faith” one can get from one stage to the next one. The first one is aesthetic stage and its characterization is hedonism, satisfaction and pleasure. Most people live in this stage in their twenties, but it can continue later on. The second stage is ethical because we rise above just mere pleasures and are ready to make commitments, as well as work on ourselves. Most people who enter in this stage stay within it, only a small number of people goes on the next stage. The final stage is religious one, where one experiences profound state. Although, it is called religious, it is not connected to one’s religious beliefs. Woody Allen as Mickey goes through all three stages during the movie, but at the end finds the meaning he was looking for in an unexpected place.

At the beginning of the movie, Mickey thinks that he has a brain tumor and becomes neurotic about that. However, when he finds out that he is healthy, he begins to reflect on morality and the meaning of life. Even though he is healthy, he is confronted to the inevitability of death (Petsche 25). Him being an atheist, death represent the finite end, because there is no after life, making everyday actions meaningless. Therefore, he turns to Christianity and Hare Krishna, both of which teach the existence of an afterlife unlike Judaism, in hope that he will find a meaning. Mickey deduces that the only reason that life could be meaningful, and thus worth living, is if God exists: "I've got to have something to believe in, otherwise life is just meaningless." (Petsche 26).

#### 4. Meaning of life and existential dilemma throughout the selected movies

##### 4.1. Crimes and Misdemeanors (1989)

Crimes and Misdemeanors is a 1989 movie which follows Allen's critical, as well as commercial success, that began with Annie Hall. Bringing him Academy Award nominations for directing and writing, this movie is a perfect balance between drama and comedy, because it has elements of both. One of the reasons of why this movie intertwines comedy and drama is because during the 1980s TV movies that had both elements were extremely popular. Allen, with experience of working on television, made a movie that perfectly juxtaposed comedy scenes against scenes of drama as his response to the comedy – drama evolution. This is one of his philosophically most direct movies and the title is inspired by Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment. As such, the central themes of the movie are moral dilemma, religion and adultery.

This movie has two parallel plots. The first plot is about Judah, a successful ophthalmologist with a family. He has an affair with Delores, that he is trying to end, but she is threatening to reveal the affair. Judah seeks advice from a rabbi, and his brother with criminal connections. Rejecting the rabbi's advice to confess the affair to his wife, Judah decides to ask his brother to help him get rid of her. The motif that stands out throughout his story is the phrase "the eyes of God". The first time this phrase is used in the first scenes of the movie during Judah's speech. The next time, when there is again a scene about Judah's story, a flashback is used to show that he got that phrase from his very religious father who always said that "the eyes of God see everything". This phrase was used as a moral alignment. Due to his religious upbringing, Judah's conscious is restless and he can not stop thinking about what his father said. However, when he is cornered and has to make a decision on his problem with Delores, he decides that "God is a luxury [ I ] can not afford", ignores his moral alignment and orders her murder. Although he thought that he can handle his decision, his consciousness is still restless and, again, he is back to the phrase "the eyes of God". When confronted with her dead body, he looks at her eyes and thinks how eyes are a window to the soul. Driven by guilt, Judah wants to confess everything, but when he sees that he got away with it, he continues to live like nothing has happened.

In the second plot we find Woody Allen's trademark neurotic character as an unsuccessful documentary director in a marriage that is falling apart. He is making a

documentary about an egoistic and famous television producer. While filming, he meets Haley and falls in love with her. With Haley, he shares his new personal project, a documentary about a philosopher Louis Levy. Levy, a Holocaust survivor, suggests that the universe is without moral structure and that humans are left to create their own morality. Therefore, we define ourselves by our choices and actions. However, he fails to win Haley and Levy commits suicide leaving him without his project (Garns). Only at the very end of the movie are these two plotlines intertwined when Judah retells his story of a perfect murder as a new idea for Allen's project.

This movie suggests two contrary views on human behavior as well as on the general meaning of it. On one hand there is supernaturalism, a belief that there is a greater divine being which is perfect in any way, and which punishes evil and rewards good. One of the scenes that support this idea is:

“I couldn't go on living if I did not feel it with all my heart a moral structure with real meaning and forgiveness and some kind of higher power. Otherwise, there is no basis to know how to live.”

This is a statement which shows Allen personal philosophy on how there is no meaning without God. On the other hand, if there is no morality imposed on us by a divine being, then we are in a state of nihilism. In nihilism, life has no meaning, no purpose and no intrinsic value. If this is the case, we have no base on which we could judge the characters actions. However, the philosophical character, Levy, stands for Sartre's beliefs. Sartre teaches that we create our own essence by the choices we make in life. We create our moral structure by expressing our values and making certain choices (Garns). This implies that there is nothing external that dictated moral values, and, therefore, concludes on nonexistence of God.

“We are all faced throughout our lives with agonizing decisions—moral choices. Some are on a grand scale; most of these choices are on lesser points. But we define ourselves by the choices we have made. We are in fact, the sum total of our choices.” (Garns).

This implies that we do not need to seek moral structure from divine being or live immorally in nihilism, but rather to take responsibility on our actions. To portray this, the

characters are divided into two groups according to their morality beliefs. The first group believes that there is a moral structure regardless of God's existence, while the second group rejects the responsibility. It is easy to tell to which group a character belongs, because the first group wears glasses (Lapidos). There are two character that portray this, rabbi and Haley. Rabbi wears glasses at the beginning of the movie, but by its end he is blind. Haley also wears glasses at the beginning of the movie, but by the movie's end she does not wear them anymore.

In a world where moral structure does not exist, we have to create a moral alignment. In most cases, the moral alignment comes from the word of God or from fear of God. In the society without moral guidelines, such as in this movie, people will divide into two groups: those that create moral rules for themselves and those that enjoy a life without boundaries. In almost all of Allen's movies, it is implied that he equalizes the meaning of life with the existence of God. If there is no moral structure and no God to judge us, life loses its meaning. In one occasion, Allen said that the aim of this movie was to illustrate that there is no God and he did it in an entertaining way. In some of his movies he provides the answer to whether there is God or not, but it must be read between the lines (Petsche 28). In *Manhattan* he states that it is naïve to believe in God, while in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* he implies that there is no one. Throughout Allen's movies, it is visible that the only meaning he can find is through romantic relationships and creativity. It is emphasized, especially in *Annie Hall*, that the essence of a purpose is in the other person (Skoble 43). Our lives are based on everyday distractions that put the question of meaning in the back of our mind. The premise is that this is the only way in which we can function, otherwise we would be on the verge of self-destruction.

In an interview, Allen said: "I just wanted to illustrate, in an entertaining way, that there is no God, that we're alone in the universe, and that there is nobody out there to punish you, that there's not going to be any kind of Hollywood ending to your life in any way, that your morality is strictly up to you." (Schickel, 149) (Garns). He illustrated this via a documentary within the movie. The documentary is based on the work of Levy, a philosopher that Allen's character admires, who believes that we define ourselves by the choices we make. Furthermore, it is our own ability to love that gives the meaning to the universe. This can be interpreted as the using of law of the attraction to give meaning to the life. If it is our love that gives the meaning to the universe then it is because if someone gives away love, it attracts even more

love. Therefore, by thinking positive, one is able to clear its mind and realize what it is that is truly important.

The main philosophical point of all of his movies can be summarized in this quote from the movie:

BEN: Yes, I know. It's a fundamental difference in the way we view the world. You see it as harsh and empty of values and pitiless, and I couldn't go on living if I didn't feel it with all my heart a moral structure, with real meaning, and forgiveness, and some kind of higher power, otherwise there's no basis to know how to live! And I know you well enough to know that a spark of that notion is inside you somewhere too.

The world is harsh and empty until we give it meaning. The answer to the question about meaning of life lies within us.

#### 4.2. Hannah and Her Sisters (1986)

Hannah and Her Sisters might be the only Allen's movie that is entirely concentrated on its female characters. Although, he had female characters that lead the movie in *Annie Hall* and *Purple Rose of Cairo*, this is the first time that a movie is strictly about them. The central theme of this movie, as the title suggests, is the relationship between three sisters. Each one of them has her own problems and is in search for answers. As a counterpart, there are three main male characters as well. Structurally, the movie is divided in twelve chapters and an epilogue. The beginning of a new chapter is marked by a black screen and a title in bold white letters. Chapters six and seven, which are named *The Abyss* and *The Only Absolute Knowledge Attainable by Man is that Life is Meaningless – Tolstoy*, respectively, are the ones that introduce the theme of meaning of life.

Woody Allen usually plays the main role in his movies, however, in *Hannah and Her Sisters* female characters carry the main role. Nevertheless, there is still the character of neurotic little man Woody is famous for. This time, his existential crisis revolves around an imaginative illness of a brain tumor. During the time he thinks that he is sick, he wishes to turn back time to before he went to the doctor because he was happy then. However, it is obvious that he was not happy, he was miserable but now he is even more miserable than he was before, which makes him think that he was happy but did not realize it. He is afraid that his hypochondria might be right this time.

After undergoing examinations, we see Mickey waiting for the results. A doctor comes and informs him that he has a tumor. Mickey falls into despair and angst. However, a moment after, a doctor comes in and tells Mickey that there is nothing wrong with him, indicating that the first scene was just a fantasy. For a brief moment, we were faced with the inevitability of death, which made us feel angst and dreads. These feelings of angst and dread necessarily come before the feeling of the nothingness. According to Heidegger, this dread comes before the sense of nothingness, after we look at our existence in its totality toward death. The inevitability of death shapes our life and the feeling of dread helps us to reflect on our life as a whole, as well as its meaning (Mambrol). The realization of non-existence brings up the question of the meaning of life.

“GAIL: Well, now eventually, it is going to happen to all of us...

MICKEY: Yes, but doesn't that ruin everything for you? That makes everything, you know, it just takes the pleasure out of everything! I mean, you're going to die, I'm going to die, the audience is going to die, the network, the sponsor...”

He realizes that nothing has sense anymore because everything will disappear eventually. Therefore, he is unable find any meaning in his life. Although the illness Mickey is confronted with turns out to be imaginative, that good news leads him to questions on mortality. During Mickey's inner monologue, he thinks about all the books that were written about big life question. All those works have one thing in common, the do not provide an answer. The closest thing to an answer is Nietzsche's theory of return which states that we are doomed to repeat our lives over and over again until we regret nothing. However, it is in human nature to always think about other possibilities that might have been and so, one always has a regret of a kind. But what if we are searching for an answer in the wrong place? Poets are always saying how love is the answer for everything. Mickey dwells on that idea, but is not so sure because it did not work out for him. Therefore, he turned to religion.

He cannot bear the thought of inevitability of death in a meaningless world without God. He is scared because if there is no God then there is no afterlife and death is the ultimate end. This would imply that all our actions are irrelevant. Unable to live with that, Mickey decides to commit suicide. However, he changes his mind because he comes to conclusion that despite of the fact that life is absurd, he needs to live in the spite of it. As in the most of Allen's movie, there is a connection between God and meaningful life.

“MICKEY: Well, because, you know, I've got to have something to believe in. otherwise, life is just meaningless. I need to have some evidence. I've got to have some proof. You know if... if I can't believe in God, then I don't think life is worth living.”

In his search for God, Mickey turns to two very different religions, namely, Christianity and Hare Krishna. While talking to Catholic priest, he mentions the structure of religion as his motive for conversion. However, he also, subtly, criticizes the conservative archaic believes and, although he states that he is willing to do anything, he trivializes the religion by reducing it to the tradition of coloring Easter eggs. His Jewish parents are so blinded by the faith that



they show no concern for his existential questions but rather are worried about his lack of belief. In order to devote himself to his new Christian faith, Mickey buys the New testament, crucifix and a picture of Jesus. This reduces religion to consumerism, especially when he put bread and mayonnaise on the top of that pile. All these items are, in the end, reduced to the everyday supermarket goods. He is not satisfied with that and, while walking in the park, encounters Hare Krishna bhakti. Mickey becomes interested in their beliefs because the idea of reincarnation. He knows that going from one religion to the another is absurd, but he is depressed and sees no way out other than seeking new religion.

However, none of that gives him the answer he is looking for. In a state of ultimate despair, he decides to take his own life. He survives his suicide attempt because he was so tense that when he pulled the trigger, the rifle fell and missed him. Now even more depressed, he went out for a walk and ended in a cinema. After seeing a Marx brothers' movie, he comes to a realization that life is worth living with or without God because of its absurdness. Existence of God implies that something permanent exists in this universe where the only constant thing is change. He realizes how committing suicide is a stupid thing to do because what if we really only live once. The meaning of life can not and should not be based or measured by a probability that there is or that there is no God. We need to learn to enjoy while we can, because this might be the only thing that we have. It seems that the message of this movie is that the existential quest for meaning is doomed to fail (Patsche 27). It ends sentimentally, proving that we should just find meaning in enjoying family and love.

#### 4.3. Annie Hall (1977)

Allen's first serious movie is *Annie Hall* made in 1977. It still carries the elements of his philosophy, but they no longer have a comedic purpose (Sander 20). Humor is used to deliver existential dilemma rather than just being humorous. Furthermore, it used as a commentary to the various situations in the movie, which enables him to distance himself from everything and become a commentator for the audience. The philosophical themes are presented through his destructive relationship with Annie, an attempt to find the meaning of life, and the portrayal of mortality in his fictional play which is the only place where he fulfills his desires. This movie is important for Allen's career and later filmography because it is the first serious one where philosophical questions are the main theme rather than just something for the laughs. The themes that are presented here are preoccupation with existential issues of freedom, the role of outsider, faith; obsession with our own morality; cultural gender roles; and Freudian psychoanalysis (Sander 61).

He begins the movie with the statement that life is "full of loneliness, suffering and misery". Speaking directly to the audience, although we are not yet sure if he does that as himself or as Alvy, he goes on to tell that he is going through a life crisis but not because he is getting old, but because his breakup with Annie which is a hint that he speaks in character. He introduces the main character right away by suggesting that she carries a great meaning in his life. A brief rewind to his childhood shows how he was anxious about life since early age:

"Well, the universe is everything, and if it's expanding then someday it will break apart and that will be the end of everything."

In the first few minutes of the movie all of the central themes are introduced, such as existential anxiety, romance and low self-esteem (Sander 64). The first encounter with a psychiatrist, to which his mother brought him, shows how he was preoccupied with bigger things and great questions from an early age. This, in combination with family that does not understand him, resulted in existential anxieties. His childhood depression evolved in his adulthood as now he is obsessed with death and meaningless of life. Alvy can not be bothered with everyday trivial things while there are big life questions that need to be answered. Unfortunately for him, later on, he says how he has been seeing a psychiatrist for 15 years but

still does not have the answers he is looking for. Alvy continues to speak to the audience throughout the movie, as well as he engages strangers on the street, minor characters, in his life dilemmas. Although he can not find a meaning in his life, that does not stop him from making his life center to everybody else's. By constantly commenting it with strangers, his life is not private any more but public. However, being in the center of others' lives just adds to the meaninglessness of his. The first scene where he discusses his private matters with minor characters is in a flashback scene of his childhood when he kissed a girl during school class. From that moment on, everything that he considers to be a big moment or a problem in his life is discussed with minor characters. However, this happens to be a good coping mechanism that helps him after the breakup with Annie. Although, he never got over her, it helped him to work on his character and resolve some of his issues. One of those issues is the pessimistic and depressive view that he has on life.

Alvy believes that there are only two kinds of people: horrible and miserable. The horrible are seriously ill people, while everyone else is miserable:

You know, I'm obsessed with death, a big subject with me, yeah. I have a very pessimistic view of life. You should know about this if we are going to go out. You know, I feel that life is divided up into the horrible and the miserable. Those are the two categories. The horrible would be like, um, I don't know, terminal cases, you know, and blind people, cripples. I don't know how they get through life. It's amazing to me, you know. And the miserable is everyone else. So, so, when you go through life, you should be thankful that you are miserable because you are very lucky to be miserable.

Furthermore, besides the horrible and the miserable, there are two other words that also reoccur throughout the movie, the sorrow and the pity. Alvy is miserable, sorrowful as well as full of pity. This can be seen from the life he is having, his daily decisions that he is unable to make on his own, his depressing view on life and inability to see beyond that. Existential anxieties consume his essence to the point where he is not able to find any happiness without questioning it. Although he is looking for happiness and meaning, he will not be able to find any as long as he continues to allow his existential crisis to have control over him. When consumed in the center of dread and sorrow, one can not see beyond that. The answers to Alvy's, and our, questions about meaning can be found beyond that. The final breakup with

Annie was a wake-up call to put his anxieties in order. However, he still has some anxiety issues, but at the end of the movie it is visible that he made a progress. The realization that Annie was the best thing that happened to him, the breakup because they were not made to have a lasting relationship, pushed him to start noticing things that are worthwhile. Because of that, he was able to make bigger progress than 15 years of therapy ever did. He finally understood all those philosophy books that he read over the years.

On one hand, Allen wrote another neurotic New York obsessed character, but on the other hand, Annie has her own crisis. The movie does not have a traditional timeline, the story about Annie is told from retrospective and even the scenes about their relationship are not chronological. The first time when we see her, they are already dating and she is seeing a psychiatrist. There is a flashback scene, later on, where we see how they met. Annie is easily distracted, a free spirit, talented singer who is not confident enough to pursue her dreams. Her biggest problem is that she is absent minded most of the time. Therefore, she often smokes marijuana which causes conflict between her and Alvy. New York does not suit her because it is too gloomy and depressed, and that is the reason why Alvy likes it. However, everything changes when she moves to Los Angeles to pursue her singing career. While there, she can be free and happy because there is always sun and people are not depressed, all the reasons why Alvy dislikes Los Angeles. In order to find her inner peace and become present in the moment, she needed to leave New York. The existential crisis that New York loves, was something that she could not handle. Los Angeles offered the best of the 1970s and in those parties, between hippies, she found herself.

Every Allen's movie carries a philosophical thought of one of the big philosophers. In *Annie Hall*, philosophical thought comes from Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's main philosophical thought in ontology is the difference between beings of phenomena, which he calls in-self, and beings of consciousness, which he calls for-self. In-self means simply what it is in its essence, while for-self represents everything that is in relation with consciousness. According to him, there is free will because there is no such thing as human nature, only an endless act of doing. A choice or an act is free only if it could have been different (D'amico 144). Only what is not able to understand what it is, meaning only for-self, which has no essence, can understand in-self. However, the most important claim, which is central for existential philosophy, is that existence precedes essence. As an atheist, he believes that it is entirely up to us what we will

become and what meaning we shall give to our lives. Therefore, implying, that our choices are ours entirely and that only we are responsible for what happens.

Alvy understands that he carries the responsibility of his choices, even when he chooses not to act upon something, it is also an act. However, he is afraid of losing himself and his freedom so he is trying to transfer that responsibility to others by asking them advice on his life. He falls into, what Sartre calls, bad faith. It is a state that occurs when person refuses to accept the responsibility of one's actions. Not only that he pushes his life into the center of others' lives, but he wants to control their reactions as well. He tries to mold everyone, especially Annie, into personas he thinks they should be. The best example for this is a rehearsing scene where actors are recreating a conversation between Alvy and Annie that we saw a moment ago. However, in this version of his play, she does what he wants. At the end of the movie, Alvy talks to the audience again and in this scene, we see character development. He has overcome his bickering and anger, as well as got a hold on his anxieties:

... what a terrific person she was and how much fun it was just knowing her and I thought of that old joke, you know? This guy goes to a psychiatrist and says, "Doc, my brother's crazy, he thinks he's a chicken. And the doctor says, "Well, why don't you turn him in?" And the guy says, "I would, but I need the eggs!" Well, I guess that's now pretty much how I feel about relationships. You know, they're totally irrational, and crazy, and absurd, but I guess we keep going through it because most of us need the eggs!

#### 4.4. Irrational Man (2015)

Although, as a young man, he wanted to do good, life's harsh reality traumatized professor Abe Lucas and he became nihilist with no purpose in life. However, everything changes after he overhears a conversation of strangers about a corrupted judge. He decides to take upon him the mission to make the world a better place. He begins to see himself as Nietzsche's *Übermensch* who is beyond good and evil. After rationalizing that his evil intention is in fact good, Lucas finds meaning and no longer suffers from existential crisis. Just like in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, Lucas does not feel guilty over the crime he committed. The murder he committed gave him a new purpose, sense of freedom and power, because an act of taking a life is an act of power as no other. It gave him comfort that he left some kind of mark. He was so worn down by the fact that nothing he does is worth of a remark. All the papers he wrote were topics of discussion between his students and colleagues, but nothing more than that. Therefore, he needed to do something more meaningful in order to prove himself.

The movie begins in media res with a quote from Kant:

“Kant said human reason is troubled by questions that it cannot dismiss, but also cannot answer.”

This sets the tone as well as the theme for the rest of the movie. Kant was right in his statement for several reasons. Firstly, it is in human nature to ask the questions about our existence and the universe around us. Even before Thales of Miletus, the first known philosopher, humans were asking questions about meaning of it all. Secondly, despite thousands of years of dwelling on this question, there is not one definite answer. Therefore, the right question might be if there is an answer, rather than what is the answer. One could develop a few theories around this question. For example, the answer about the meaning of life and our existence could be right in front of us, but we do not see it. Moreover, we might not be meant to find the answer. Another theory, could be that we find the answer after we die. However, these are just some of mine theories that are also presented in some of the Allen's movies, and as all theories, they might and might not be true.

Furthermore, there is another thesis that sums up the plot, namely, according to existentialism, nothing meaningful happens in one's life until one reaches rock bottom of its life. Abe Lucas is at the very bottom, quality wise, of his life. Due to his problems with alcohol and writer's block, among other things, he fell under the meaningless state of mind. However, to get out of that state of mind, one has to do something about it. But not Abe, he was just waiting for meaning to come to him on its own. The meaning came in form of a murder, which gave him the energy to fully live life and enjoy it.

In this case, the choice that Joaquin makes is irrational, but it's not so irrational given the choices that we all make in our lives. People need something to believe in. People choose religion — and that's an irrational choice if they think that if they lead a good life they will die and go to heaven. That's no less crazy a thought than Joaquin thinking that if he commits this act, his life will turn around for the better (Novack <https://www.presstelegram.com/2014/07/26/woody-allen-back-in-spotlight-promoting-new-film/?fbclid=IwAR04ApAS4AOCCdiXjjToDBJ3bo65v2g1CSn-pyVmUHZvGxaY7ShYoW27F-8>).

He rationalizes the murder as a moral act of good because it was not done due to the selfish reasons, but rather for the greater good. Moreover, he is determined to do something that will be memorable in order to leave a mark in history. It is in human nature to want to leave a mark and become immortal in that way. However, not many people succeed in doing it. Those people that do, become a role model and motivation for others. Abe wanted to be like philosophers before him, but he knew that he does not have that level of intelligence and profound thinking that is required. This realization drove him into despair. There are a few scenes in the movie where is mentioned that he wrote some essays, but they were only some romanticized ideas that did not have strong enough thesis to become something serious. For example, the scene where Jill is talking to her parents, gives great criticism and shows the truth about Abe's philosophy career:

“He writes very well, very... Lively. But it's a triumph of a style. The substance just doesn't stand up to scrutiny. His ideas are romantic, but so flawed. “

In Woody Allen's search for meaning, we came across many closely related themes, such as morality. Although, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* deals with the issue of morality in great detail, as well as the moral dilemmas over murder, *Irrational Man* goes one step further. Moreover, besides the search for the meaning and existential crisis, this movie also deals with themes such as the freedom of choice and the afterward responsibility and the irrationality of the universe. A parallel can be drawn between *Crimes and Misdemeanors* and *Irrational Man* because they portray the same problems, but on different scale of the moral spectrum. On one hand, Judah committed murder, precisely paid for it, because it was an instant solution to his problems. Although he felt guilty afterwards, that feeling disappeared very soon when he realized that no one can connect him to the victim. Afterwards, his life flourished. On the other hand, Abe lived in a state of permanent chaos with no control over his thoughts and actions which were meaningless to him. Murder proved to be something that put an end to his inner chaos and gave meaning to his life. Although, he had a good intention to help that woman, the way he did it was wrong. However, he justified the murder as something moral because the judge himself was immoral, and to get rid of him was a good thing to do. From his point of view, the murder was an existential act that gave his life a higher purpose.

In this movie, Woody Allen exhibits his philosophical belief that everything that happens is a result of pure coincidence, randomness of existence. As he himself said in an interview:

“I'm a great believer in the utter meaningless randomness of existence,” he says. “I was preaching that in *Match Point* and Abe preaches it in his class. All of existence is just a thing with no rhyme or reason to it. We all live subject to the utter fragile contingency of life. You know, all it takes is a wrong turn on the street...” (Derckson <https://writingstudio.co.za/woody-allen-exposes-his-core-philosophical-beliefs-in-irrational-man/>)

Abe is written as a philosophy professor who is full of wisdom and profound thoughts. However, when put on test, his thesis is debatable. Jill was fascinated by him because he was everything she read about. She wanted to absorb his philosophy in hope that it will help her find her own path in the field. Although she justified some of his actions, such as the roulette scene, by the end of the movie she realized that she was blinded by his words that only sound profound,



but do not mean anything. Most of the time, Abe just quotes other philosophers but at the same time is unable to live according to them. As an example, when he quotes Kierkegaard on how “anxiety is the dizziness of freedom”, he is unable to see that he suffers from same thing. In his life, Abe had many choices but he failed in making a choice. Rather than choosing to work on himself and to seize the opportunity to start anew when he first got the job in a new university, he just continued to make the same mistakes all over again.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up everything that has been stated before, I will give a conclusion about meaning of life that we can get as a message from the selected movies that were analyzed in this work. As stated at the beginning, Woody Allen is not a philosopher. However, in his movies, he deals with the most common philosophical questions, such as existential crisis and the meaning of life. Characters that he personally portrays in his movies serve as a device for him to talk with his audience about his personal dilemmas and problems. This existential journey and his private psychoanalysis have been made public. However, the question is what can we learn from that?

Human kind has searched for the meaning of life for many centuries, but we still do not know the answer. Maybe we are not meant to know what the meaning of the life is, but then again, maybe it is right in front of our eyes but we do not realize it. Perhaps it is better if we do not know because what if it is not as optimistic as we think, but rather an unbearable thing. Woody Allen has a rather pessimistic view on life and its meaning. His point of view is presented throughout all of his movies. When one watches his movies, he joins Allen in his journey through self-discovery and existential crisis. In some of his movies his character finds a meaning, in some he does not. In my opinion, *Annie Hall* might lead us to an answer. If we approach the meaning in the same way as Alvy, life is like a game where no body knows the rules but we keep adding new players. With or without meaning, life is absurd. However, no matter how strongly Woody Allen advocates this opinion, he still stops when confronted with the what if question. As it can be seen from previously analyzed movies, although Allen states through his movies and interviews that life is meaningless from his point of view, he still gives his life a meaning. Whether someone agrees with him or not, the fact is every little thing that one does adds to the big picture of meaning. At the same time as we search for the meaning of life, we give it meaning with our actions.

*Irrational Man* questions our moral judgement because the wrong deed has been done in order for something greater to happen. The meaning of the life was found in that wrong deed. Was this man irrational because of his free interpretation of the moral codes or was he the only

rational man who realized that there is no real obstacle between us and something, except for the moral codes that can be questioned? Any wrong deed that hurts someone and is illegal in some way, should not be a way to achieve something. Otherwise, nothing would have meaning anymore. He became irrational because his intellectual abilities were not as great as he thought and he reached rock bottom with alcoholism because of that. He was desperate to find something to give him meaning, but he found the wrong thing because he was not able to think rationally anymore.

The movie that parallels this is *Crimes and Misdemeanors* because it also questions moral codes and even goes one step further and questions God as well. The main premise is that the eyes of God see everything. This is the main moral code that everyone should live by. However, this movie questions the probability that God really sees everything. Moreover, it questions whether a wrong deed can be justified and forgiven in the eyes of God if it is done for the right reasons. Although Allen is an atheist, this movie can bring one closer to God by questioning one's beliefs of the source of moral codes. Is this main character also irrational because he made peace with God after he justified his sin? Or is the one that was not living by this moral code irrational one? One can not live one's life by doing something immoral and then ask for forgiveness. Meaning can not be found behind the wrong beliefs.

The absurdity behind the meaning of the life can be seen throughout *Annie Hall* and *Hannah and Her Sisters*. In both movies, life is portrayed as absurd but at the same time all the characters found the meaning in little things. No matter how much Allen tries to explain that there is no greater meaning in life, these two movies prove the opposite. Both of the movies have a great screenplay that is made of random scenes which are connected to tell a story. Behind those random scenes is the meaning that is discovered only when we look at these movies carefully connecting the dots. In my opinion, this is how we should look for the meaning in real life. Some things might seem random, but we find their meaning only when we see the bigger picture. Woody Allen argues that there is no meaning, however, I think that the answer he is looking for is hidden in his movies. He just needs to connect the dots.

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18.1.2021

## 7. THE MEANING OF LIFE IN WOODY ALLEN'S MOVIES: summary and key words

This thesis focuses on analyzing the issues of the meaning of life as shown through Woody Allen's movies and his existential approach within the film world. The analysis will focus on exploring the theoretical approach to existential issues in the context of Woody Allen's cinematography. By analyzing the selected four films, I show the various views and ways of access to topics such as the issue of meaning of life. Movies made by the director, screenwriter and actor Woody Allen are pervaded with the subject of man's quest not only for the purpose of life, but also with the search for one's own identity that would make sense of our existence. Allen brings different perspectives of existence using the narrative and the elaboration of a monologue. With his technique of expressing thought through narratives and monologues, he develops a certain type of communication with viewers, thus developing a special relationship with them. Exiting through the so-called fourth wall, he makes us reconsider the meaning of our life and the life in general. Retrospectively looking at his own life, Allen introduces autobiographical elements into his films. His works can be seen as reflections of his own psychological analysis and reflection that contain many connections with existential philosophy. Although he is not a philosopher, Allen gives us basis for further philosophical analysis.

Key words: Woody Allen, movies, the meaning of life, philosophy, existential anxiety

## 8. SMISAO ŽIVOTA U FILMOVIMA WOODY ALLENA: sažetak i ključne riječi

Ovaj rad je usmjeren na analizu pitanja smisla života prikazanog kroz filmove Woody Allena i njegov egzistencijalni pristup unutar svijeta filma. Sama analiza je usmjerena na istraživanje teorijskog pristupa egzistencijalnim pitanjima u kontekstu filmografije Woody Allena. Uvidom u odabrana četiri filmova dobio se prikaz raznih stajališta i načina na kojima se može pristupiti temama kao što je pitanje smisla života. Filmografski radovi redatelja, scenarista i glumca Woody Allena prožeti su temom čovjekove potrage, ne samo za smislom života, već i potragom za vlastitim identitetom koji bi dao smisao našoj egzistenciji. Svojim specifičnim pristupom pri snimanju i pisanju Allen nam donosi razne perspektive egzistencije koristeći se naracijom i razradom monologa. Njegovom tehnikom izražavanja misli kroz narativ i monologe, ostvaruje se određena vrsta komunikacije s gledateljima razvijajući pritom poseban odnos s njima. Izlazeći kroz tako-zvani četvrti zid, on nas navodi da preispitamo smisao, kako našeg života tako i života općenito. Retrospektivno gledajući na svoj vlastiti život, Allen unosi autobiografske elemente u svoje filmove. Na njegove radove možemo gledati kao na odraz njegove vlastite psihološke analize i promišljanja koja sadrže brojne povezanosti s egzistencijalnom filozofijom. Premda on nije filozof, Allen nam daje bazu za razvijanje daljnje filozofske analize.

Ključne riječi: Woody Allen, filmovi, smisao života, egzistencijalna anksioznost