The Altar of Truth

We can only lie to ourselves about who we are and what we want for so long. Eventually, failing to come to terms with our true selves will create crippling conflicts. Thus, Existentialists like author Iris Murdoch demand we reconcile our actual existence with our self-image, or “essence.” The fate of Michael Meade, the owner and self-appointed spiritual leader of Imber Court, an Anglican commune described throughout Murdoch’s novel *The Bell*, illustrates how vital self-truth can be. Michael exemplifies the propensity of desire and dishonesty to distort authenticity as his religious doctrine combined with his lack of a coherent philosophy brings his own ruin. Had Michael be existentially authentic, and accepted existing in line with his true desires, his destruction could have been averted.

The primary assertion of Existentialism, according to Jean-Paul Sartre, is that “existence precedes essence,” or alternatively, “subjectivity must be the starting point” (*Existentialism* 34). Only when free from delusions about oneself can one escape from rationalization, find authenticity, and honestly acknowledge ourselves…