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1950s Japanese Existentialist Cinema

Abstract:

The 1950s was a pivotal decade in Japanese cinema, particularly in the development of existentialist themes. Against the backdrop of post-war reconstruction, social uncertainty, and shifting cultural identity, Japanese filmmakers explored the struggles of the individual in an absurd, indifferent world. Influenced by Western existentialist thought and traditional Japanese philosophy, directors such as Akira Kurosawa, Kenji Mizoguchi, and Yasujiro Ozu created films that questioned the nature of existence, freedom, morality, and fate. This essay explores the origins of 1950s Japanese existentialist cinema, its thematic and stylistic elements, and its lasting significance in global film history.