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**From Expectations to Disappointments in Absurd Drama:
Existentialism in Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot
as a Case Study**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial
Fulfillment for the Requirement of a Master Degree**

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The struggle itself toward the heights
is enough to fill a man's heart.
One must imagine Sisyphus happy.
---Albert Camus

Existentialist

FROM EXPECTING TO DISAPPOINTING

YOU WILL NEVER BE
HAPPY IF YOU CON-
TINUE TO SEARCH
FOR WHAT HAPPINESS
CONSISTS OF. YOU
WILL NEVER LIVE IF
YOU ARE LOOKING
FOR THE MEANING OF
LIFE.

ALBERT CAMUS

Cosmetics & Friedrich
Fashion Accessories Nietzsche

(1844-1900)

A man is nothing else
but what he
makes of himself.

—Jean-Paul Sartre

He who asks why
to live for can bear
almost any how.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents who have supported me realizing this work. Special thanks to my entire close friends who did not stop from giving me courage.

✓ *Mr. Morsli Lakhdar*

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✓ *Mr. Morsli Lakhdar*

Abstract

Existentialism aims to include those Western philosophers emphasizing on individual existence, freedom and choice in a hostile or an indifferent universe. This ontological philosophy mainly serves to understand the individual as a concrete entity with specific concerns rather than the traditional philosophical approach that had ignored those subjective issues. The development of existential can go back to the mid of the 20th Century exceedingly affecting worldwide literature, including drama where many dramatists particularly Samuel Beckett had recommended the transmission of their existential thoughts to the public audience via a catch-all theatre called 'Theatre of the Absurd' that became an open stage to reveal the absurd conditions of humanity. Similarly, Beckett Theatre is basically a mirror expected up to reflect on the craziness of the modern existence obviously seen in his masterpiece '*Waiting for Godot*' where the researcher emphasizes the existential elements in the play to be the major concern of this study besides exploring how both characters fall into a cycle of expectation and disappointment while waiting for something to happen. Thus, it is recommended to start the research by the profound examination of the philosophical frame of this play (existentialism) with regard to the most significant block of philosophical studies done in existentialist area. Thereafter, it is crucial to give an overall look at the Theatre of Absurd, then moving through the analysis of the main themes and characters in '*Waiting for Godot*'.

Key words: Existentialism, Ontological, Literature, Theatre of the Absurd, drama, Waiting for Godot, Expectation, Disappointment.

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General Introduction

General introduction

As time went by, Existentialism had appropriately emerged after the First World War to become one of the major influential approaches in literature by the end of World War II, when the terrible traumas, uncertainties, and enigmas of the two wars led the human community to serious suffering like depression, anxiety, and hopelessness. The two World Wars contribute to lose hope and confidence in men and God, meanwhile, giving birth to a new philosophy era. In fact, the prime interest of existentialism is to address all crucial issues related to human beings. Consequently, the world of art had influenced by the existentialist ideas due to glorious epoch marked in term of art and literature. Existential philosophers and writers focused on investigating meaning individuals created for themselves, with no interest in stylistic language, including flowery language that generates a delightful picture of the world; rather, they were willing to bring up pessimistic difficulties that regularly had no access.

“Absurdism”, one of the most spectacular and creative movements in the world of literature and particularly in the modern theatre, which was heavily influenced by Existential philosophy. The term is associated with a specific form of realistic drama which has pulled the attention of the audience and critics for the last half of the Twentieth century. One particular theatre properly named “*Theatre of the Absurd*” in the 1960's by the American critic *Martin Esslin* who introduced to his audience an existentialist perspective of the outside world and constrains them to consider their existence in a world as illogical and meaningless. This thought was a response to the “collapse of moral, religious, political, and social structures” (Abbotson 1) taking after the two World Wars of the Twentieth Century.

The development of absurd drama from Samuel Beckett to Tom Stoppard creates a new center of attention of absurdism that extends the role of philosophy and metaphor in theatrical drama. Among all the absurd plays, the most controversial one is Samuel Beckett’s “*Waiting for Godot*”; it is viewed as one of the most successful plays for its significant theme. The play is exceptionally hostile to customary, it also seems uncomprehended, yet it gained significant gratitude in

General Introduction

the field of drama, implying that the play is just a comic play, but a play with profound thought. The play scenario enrolled in a vacant country road in the evening while two old vagabonds were waiting for a hidden person they call Godot. Samuel Beckett was an existentialist, this is widely obvious in his works that are fundamentally loaded with existentialist thoughts assuming the meaninglessness of things and that human beings have a mistaken belief when they expect significance in everything. The general feeling of isolation in “Waiting for Godot” for instance is existential, whereas, the way that Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot, rather than seeking him out. However, they need to give up waiting, they never do, In other hand the two do nothing with the exception of being and existing which reflects the existential themes that Beckett wants to work out on the stage. Consequently, a paramount question must impose itself as the research’s first objective: how does Waiting for Godot manifest the Existentialist Philosophical Tendency of Samuel Beckett's?

Though the significance of “Godot” differs from one to another according to everyone’s perception of the play. The current study also aims to examine the meaning of the unknown “Godot” from a religious dimension. Particularly, it explains “Waiting for Godot” from the theory of Christian theology regarding that Beckett was received a religious education when he was teen-age.

The issue of waiting in “Waiting for Godot” is a central theme in the play as Vladimir and Estragon are “Waiting” passively for the mysterious Godot, they are “Expecting” salvation behind his presence. Despite the fact that there were no signs of hope for his arrival during the play, the tramps seem to have irrational hopes waiting for the mysterious Godot to come and save them. Therefore, their future depends on the hope that Godot will bring, that is the meaning of their existence as they blindly trust Godot capacity to safeguard them from their hardship and distress. However, “the feeling of uncertainty it produces, the ebb and flow of this uncertainty-from the aspiration of discovering the identity of Godot to its repeated disappointment - are themselves the essence of the play.” (Esslin 45), namely Vladimir and Estragon are caught in the cycle of Expectation and Disappointment

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then. The platform of the thesis is molded with another question that should be answered : To which extent does Samuel Beckett succeed to deal with this contradicting situation in his masterpiece “Waiting for Godot”?



Chapter One

*LITERATURE REVIEW/
PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH*



1.1. Introduction

Existentialism is a philosophy which emphasizes the existence of man and his various conflicts within society. Existentialists explicitly attempt to look for a rational description behind the purpose of human existence in the universe. It also aims to define their perceptions in life. According to them, the human being lost his status in the modern society so that he has to reaffirm it and ponder over the reason of his existence. Unlike other types of philosophy which have common doctrine, Existentialists differ from one to another according to their propensity; being atheists, theists, phenomenologist¹, hermeneuticians², absurdist, etc. Furthermore, each one tries to stress on the individual as an existing subject with his own way. (Nellickappilly 3)

This Chapter focuses the notion of existentialism in its various concerns. It starts with a brief discussion of its early beginning and to embody the most important scholars who successively discussed certain concepts; Freedom, Responsibility, Individuality, and Choice. The chapter also deals with the main philosophical works which marked profound impact upon the advocates of the existentialism. The emphasis of this chapter on existentialism is sustained with examples from the perception of Kierkegaard's "Subjectivity is Truth" as well as the masterpiece of Sartre "Being and Nothingness". Then, we are tackling the integration of Existentialism into the world of literature and the effect it makes on the authors as well as the reader.

1.2. The Origin of Existentialism

Philosophy derives its name from the Greek language. The combining term "Love and Wisdom" is explicitly given by the early Greek thinkers search for truth. Schacht attempted to give an appropriate definition of the philosophy when he claimed: "Rational critical thinking of a more or less systematic kind, about the

¹ From phenomenology; it is a philosophy or method of inquiry based on the premise that reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness and not of anything independent of human consciousness.

² From hermeneutics; which is the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts

conduct of life, the general nature of the world, and the justification of belief” (929).

The common philosophies at the present time can be divided into four; Western philosophy, Eastern philosophy, Abraham philosophy, and African philosophy. However, it is typical to direct rays of light particularly onto the western one since our topic emphasizes on “The Existentialist Philosophy”. The Western philosophy officially derives its principles at the beginning of the sixth century BCE in the pre-Socratic¹ philosophers who were preliminary to or preparatory of Socrates and Plato. This philosophical movement customarily divided into six periods; Ancient philosophy, Medieval philosophy, Renaissance philosophy, early and late modern philosophy and the last period that concern us is the contemporary philosophy. It refers to the current era of philosophy; generally dealing with philosophers from the late nineteenth century through to the twenty-first, this quantum leap in Western philosophy lies in the radical assessment of the nature of human knowledge, philosophy that time gave an extreme prominence for explaining the relation between the theories of the natural sciences and the ideas of the humanities or common sense. This philosophical aspect knew diversities in its schools, initially with the school of “phenomenology” set by Husserl, Peirce and William James launched the school of “pragmatism²”, and the study of social materialist was focused by Karl Marx who holds that what is seen in nature is all that exist. While the most famous school, which left a great impact throughout the World generally and within Europe, particularly was “The Existentialism” laid by its chief exponents Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger; Jean Paul Sartre, Dostoyevsky, Abbagnano, Berdyaev and Albert Camus. (History of Philosophy)

The Existentialism is one of the major western philosophies; it emerged during the contemporary era of the early and mid-twentieth century. The term is explicitly adopted as a self-description by Jean-Paul Sartre. This contemporary movement

¹ Relating to the speculative philosophers active in the ancient Greek world in the 6th and 5th centuries bc (before the time of Socrates), who attempted to find rational explanations for natural phenomena.

² An approach that assesses the truth of meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.

started spearheading during the Post-World War I period, and it became influential after the World War II. People at that time were undergoing a terrible trauma from the War, and thus, the existentialism principles were strongly influenced by the traumatic experience of the two frightening wars, which made human disappointed that all his hopes and confidence in himself and his creator are shattered to pieces, when he realized that God was no more or, never exist. Existentialism as a universal element in all ways of thinking is the attempt of man to describe his existence. S. Samuel Ravie turns to define "The Existentialism" in his book "Education in Emerging India:

Existentialism is a philosophy of reaffirming and regaining the lost status of man in the advanced scientific and technological society. Therefore, this is a theory of individual meaning which asks each man to ponder over the reason for his existence (p.185)

Therefore, it may also be defined as the philosophical theory and literary tendency that typically involves abstract theories that emphasize on subjectivity. The individual's awareness of existence and of being free on which life he/she wants to embrace. Existentialists prefer to understand the concrete man and his problems, without isolating him/her from his social, political and cultural contributions rather than the conventional philosophies which ignore the concrete human being that encounters in his/her life: Secularism, Rationalism and Theologicalism¹. They focused on human nature which was identified with universal rationality. As opposed to what masters like Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel have done, Existentialists attempted to understand human existence not in terms of some fundamental rational concepts. It gives less importance to the impersonal conception of human reality. Karl Jaspers in his book "Philosophy of Existence" says:

Already in the nineteenth century, movements with this turn of mind kept recurring. People wanted "life," wanted "really to live." They demanded "realism." Instead of wanting merely to know, they wanted to experience for themselves. Everywhere, they wanted the "genuine," searched for "origins," and wanted to press on to man himself.

¹ the study of the nature of God and religious belief.

Superior men became more clearly visible; at the same time, it became possible to discover the true and the real in the smallest particle (p. 4)

Why is it called existentialism? A more specialized meaning of existentialism uncovers the explanation behind its name. Existentialism is the investigation of being. Provided that you take being to be everything that exists, for example seats and tables, individuals. All theory, science, and religion might appear to have the same subject. Anyway existentialism isn't the investigation of everything that exists; it's the investigation of being itself the investigation of what it implies for something to exist whatsoever rather than not existing. It is likewise the investigation of what it implies for something, rather than nothing, to exist whatsoever. Obviously, the essential center of existentialism is a specific sort of being, the sort of being that incorporates existing things like you, in light of the fact that you're cognizant of your being and equipped for addressing it. (Panza and Gale 13)

According to the Existentialists, the origin of Existentialism is traced back to the Greek Philosophy, particularly they have considered Socrates (469-399B.C) to be the first Existentialist when he stated: "I am and always have been a man to obey nothing in my nature except the reasoning which upon reflection appears to me to be the best". He was the first who involved in such questions about human existence and his subjectivity. He stressed that man in himself is a problem; he considered that self-inquiry and self-knowledge must make the beginning as well as the end of life and that it is impossible for man to live a genuine and fruitful life on earth unless first fully discovered. However, Socrates' philosophy contains nothing of an existential character and analytically, his method can be existentialists by nature.

Soren Aabye Kierkegaard is considered as the official founder of the Philosophy of The Existentialism. This Danish Christian Philosopher who posed the fundamental existential question "What it means to exist?" referred as the father of existentialism. His philosophy protests The Idealism and its impact on culture. Besides, the subjective value of human was his starting point and one of the major

recurring themes for his view, once he argues that “subjectivity is truth”, and instead of finding death and despair as most of existentialists did, he finds hope. Kierkegaard experienced many philosophical and religious domains in order to carve out for him a real existence and to become a unique individual that exist as “that individual”. First of all he turned to Christianity with a view to find his goal, however, he realized that Christianity served no more the existence of individuality, so he directed towards the Hegelianism thoughts for the purpose of finding solutions to his existence problems, then he became disappointed as Hegel’s philosophy of pure thought offered no scope for a man to exist as an individual. Therefore, he returned to Christianity and protest against the Danish Church because in his view, it was ignoring the subjective element that is fundamental in religious experience, and thus he published a series of works discussing “What it meant to be a Christian”, “Training in Christianity” in 1890.

Unlike Kierkegaard, the German philosopher Friedrich William Nietzsche appeared after him as a reactor against the basic character of religion as he said: “God is dead and we have killed him». Obviously, God is dead with the rationalistic philosophies and sciences, as a result, each of us is on our own. Thus Nietzsche thought that the universe was the manifestation of an underlying force which is called “The World Power” this world is “The Will To power” and nothing besides. He characterized the world of power as the basic underlying essence of the universe as “an insatiable desire to manifest power”. According to him the concept “Will to Power” is the absolute reality, when he believed that the higher purpose of human existence was not just to live, but to expand, conquer, grow and gain power which motivates him to grasp more out of life. Nietzsche began his campaign against morality when he harshly attacked Christianity and democracy as moralities for the “Weak Herd” and argued for the natural aristocracy of the “Superman” who according to him driven by “Will to Power” celebrates life on earth. He said:

Custom represents the experiences of men of earlier times as to what they supposed useful and harmful - but the sense for custom (morality) applies, not to these experiences as such, but to the age, the sanctity, the indiscussability of the custom. And so this feeling is a hindrance to the acquisition of new experiences and the correction of

customs: that is to say, morality is a hindrance to the development of new and better customs: it makes stupid (From Nietzsche's *Daybreak*, s. 19, R.J. Hollingdale transl)

Martin Heidegger, another German philosopher who traced the existentialism track of the twentieth century. Although he denied his belonging to the existentialism tendency, the critics have distinguished him as one of the most influent existentialist philosophers, since he shared their ideas, themes, and rather he employed the same style of language the existentialists have used. The basic concern in the philosophy of Heidegger was the question of being, he thought that the nature of human existence involves active participation in the world, he called it “being there” or “Dasein” in his mother tongue, obviously; the human solely can be said he exists through his choice and being, while other things such as plants, animals, angels and God also exist but they are not there. According to Heidegger the individual human would accept his inevitability when he recognized that there is no existence for him before his birth and after his death. This fact would kill the fear of death inside the man; thereby he is able to choose his existence and essence as he proclaimed: “If I take death into my life, acknowledge it, and face it squarely, I will free myself from the anxiety of death and the pettiness of life and only then will I be free to become myself” (Martin Heidegger)

Heidegger interpreted a new meaning of existence in his work “Being and Time” which is considered to be the most original one. His objective sought to define the temporality of existence and to disclose the meaning of being within the transcendental limit of time.

The living philosopher Jean Paul Charles Aymard Sartre was considered as the pioneer of the French existentialism and the personification in the modern existential movement. The French philosopher made thinking and philosophy glamorous, initially by combining both the finer points of his philosophy and aesthetic concerns in plays, short stories, and novels. Sartre’s first Novel “Nausea” published in 1938 which tells the ontological experience of “Roquentin” a thirty year old man who is struggling with a sense of abhorrence at his conscious existence and the existence of people. The protagonist lives without friends and

family and this sensation of loneliness reveals the absurdity of life. Sartre's aim of this novel is to explore fundamental questions and thoughts. Although existentialism proper began with Soren Kierkegaard, he was the French philosopher Sartre, who adopted the use of the term, he thought that human beings live in anguish, not because life is terrible, but rather because human is condemned to be aware of his consciousness and he has to make a choice freely. So the notion of freedom is one of the most significant themes that are examined by Sartre, he thought that the authenticity existence is when the individual does not allow himself to be bound by outside rules and morals and exercise freedom. Sartre holds in his work *Existentialism and Humanism*: "Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does" (p 29)

Sartre distinguishes between human consciousness and everything which is outside human consciousness "being-for-itself" and "being-in-itself". By being-in-itself (*pour moi*), Sartre means the self-contained being of things, a crass example of this would be "a Chair", since the chair is what it is in itself, it can never be anything other than what it is, or in other word, it is full of itself. Sartre said: "The in-itself has nothing secret; it is solid... it can encompass no negations. It is full positivity. It knows no otherness; it never posits itself as other-than-another-being. It can support no connection with the other"(13). Whereas, being-for-itself can be best understood in contrast to the in-itself, since the being of man is always for itself and it can be more than what it is. Sartre famously describes the for-itself as "being what it is not and not being what it is", namely, the individual would become free when he escapes from being, and these distinctions of being are well explained in his masterwork "Being and Nothingness". The heart of Sartre's version of Existentialism was the his dictum, "Existence precedes Essence" that means a human being exists before trying to give meaning to his life, and we will go further with a discussion about this idea later.

1.3. Soren Kierkegaard's "Subjectivity is Truth"

The concept of "Truth" and "subjectivity" are important issues in Soren's philosophy. He frequently states that truth is entirely subjective and there is no truth independent of the subject. By the term "Subject" Kierkegaard means the individual who exists self-consciously. Therefore, this subjective existence is something known as "Subjectivity". Whereas "Truth" in traditional philosophy is the agreement between a judgment and the fact; this definition fits when traditional philosophic truth is treated as something objective, in contrast, Kierkegaard holds the view that truth is always subjective, and there is nothing called objective truth. The time when Kierkegaard uttered this statement was dominated by the Hegelian philosophical system that impacts the intellectual youth of Copenhagen in general and on Kierkegaard's notion of truth and subjectivity in particular. "Truth" from the view of Hegel¹ is:

In common life truth means the agreement of an object with our conception of it. We thus presuppose an object to which our conception must conform. In the philosophical sense of the word, on the other hand, truth may be described, in general abstract terms, as the agreement of a thought content with itself (The Logic of Hegel 51-52)

Kierkegaard philosophy attacks the objectivity and the determinism in the Hegelian idealism. As oppose to that, he emphasizes the freedom of the individual to choose and the necessity of this choice, together with the individual's awareness of his primal subjectivity, so that he may live authentically, without the crutch of antecedent social and intellectual guides. As well he stresses the essentially subjective existence of the individual and his passionate involvement in his existence. This awareness of bearing the sole of responsibility for the human decisions constitutes a part of self-knowledge. Self-knowledge in psychology subjective means the knowledge of inner mental objects which is called introspection like memory images, imagery instruction...etc. However, Kierkegaard ignores this introspection and he considers as an objective attitude, where it

¹ German idealist philosopher who interpreted nature and human history and culture as expressions of a dialectical process in which Spirit, or Mind, realizes its full potentiality. His major works include *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and *The Philosophy of Right* (1821).

perceives internal objects. In the previous definition of “truth”, Hegel means that if the character of being corresponds with its essence, then it is true, citing an example of a soldier who shows a particular feature of a military person in his professional life, then he is a Soldier in the fullest sense. That is to say there must be accorded between that person ‘being’ and the ‘essence’ of that individual who is called a soldier. In the same manner Kierkegaard holds the view that: “truth of the existing individual is in accordance with the notion of subjectivity” (Fernando Molina 6.)

The term “Subjectivity is Truth” was used by Kierkegaard as a context refers only to Christianity. He wanted to transmit the idea that it is futile to find the truth about Christianity (the ultimate truth according to his view) by objective principals such as; historical analysis, scientific myth, and the educated guess. Whereas, it is with subjectivity that Christianity is concerned. For Kierkegaard, Christianity rebels against every form of objectivity which determine the human behaviors which make the individual lose the spontaneity and inwardness of his life.

Man in relation to his destiny and his relationship with God gains an important place in his philosophy. In this connection he talks about three major spheres of existence as an individual can choose to live in; aesthetic, ethical and religious. In the aesthetic sphere, one lives for physical or intellectual pleasure and seeks the most immediately pleasing. In the ethical level, one accepts moral responsibility and leads a life of duty to the moral law. The third stage is the highest one, where one devotes one’s life to God. Here one gives up everything; ethical standards and even the idea of universal good.

Each of these spheres of existence stands for a stage in life, with each containing its own system of values. The evolution from the lower to the higher is not natural or logical. Instead, it is a matter of individual choice. The individual just decides that he has to move to Aspects of Western Philosophy: Dr. Sreekumar Nellickappilly, IIT Madras the next. Hence Kierkegaard emphasizes the role of choice, which nevertheless is always a personal choice which is not guided by any meta-principle. The individual has to make a rational leap of free choice which

cannot be further defended. Kierkegaard narrates an individual who is passionate and discontinuous and is proceeding by sudden leaps and crises.

1.4. Sartre's Being and Nothingness

Considered as the most important philosophical work achieved by Sartre that designed his existentialist brand, trying to figure out the priority of “Existence” over “Essence” and revealing the meaninglessness of life, as well the Godless of this universe which results anxiety and the existential fear within individuals. For Sartre, it is up to human beings to create meaning by detaching themselves from the things around them. Sartre tells us: “What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward he will be something, and he himself will have made what he will be” (03). What Sartre suggests here is that an individual has the ability to decide how he or she stands in relation to his or her own life. This idea underpins his famous dictum ‘existence precedes essence’. (Ibid, 28). In a similar way, Heidegger’s describes Being and Time as an inquiry into the “being that we ourselves are” (26). For existentialists, human beings are conscious, sentient, self-creating individuals. Existence is always in a state of flux, constantly being formed through an individual’s actions and choices.

Existentialists insist on the characterization of a human being, not as an object or thing, but as an event; the unfolding realization of life as a whole. Existentialists suggest that there are two elements of human existence: facticity and transcendence. Aspects of facticity - race, class, age, past, body, beliefs, desires, personality traits - are the given, factual dimensions of human existence. They are aspects of a human being that can be viewed from a third-person perspective. Human beings, existentialists claim, have a special, complex relationship to these aspects of their existence. Although an individual can try to adopt an objective stance towards them, that perspective will remain largely subjective, because an individual will always interpret these facts in terms of what they mean to him. He cannot truly view himself as others do, as if he were an object.

In Sartrean terminology, human consciousness exists ‘in-itself’ “en soi” and ‘for-itself’ “pour soi”. In a fundamental sense, consciousness exists: this is what Sartre calls “being-in-itself”. But a distinctive feature of consciousness is its capacity to separate itself from its determining factors: this is what Sartre calls “being-for-itself”. In other words, for Sartre, there are two “regions” or types of existing realities: the “screen” and the “rays”. The screen is what Sartre calls “being-in-itself” which refers to all things non-humans; plants and animals, even the deceased human body that do not have the ability to reflect upon and be aware of oneself as well as one’s own identity. It is mentioned in the last section of the introduction to “Being and Nothingness”, whereas the rays are what he calls “being-for-itself” which refers to the being of mankind who is conscious about his identity. Initially, these two realities are an obvious allusion to Kant’s notion of the “thing-in-itself”. Moreover, Kant calls the “thing-in-itself” is not the movie-screen, but rather something hidden behind the screen. For Kant, the human mind structures the universe it perceives, we can never perceive the raw data of experience, then we can know the phenomenal world as it appears to us, thereby its appearance is based upon a “thing in itself”, though we know not this thing as it is in itself, but only know its appearances. While in Sartre’s notion of ‘being-in-itself’ the movie lights up the screen, it doesn’t make it invisible. This means that the appearance of a phenomenon is pure and absolute, and it is the only reality where the world can be seen as an infinite series of finite appearances.

At the end of the introduction of “Being and Nothingness”, Sartre explains to us ‘being-in-itself’ in three major characteristics; “Being is in itself”, “Being is what it is”, and “Being is”, let us discuss it successively. The first characteristic ‘being-in-itself’, that is to say ‘being-in-itself is in itself’. Sartre claims that being-in-itself would not be ‘in itself’, if it did have a cause, otherwise it would be ‘in its cause’. In *Existentialism is Humanism’s* essay, Sartre wants to prove the freedom of human beings on the basis of atheism, he goes on the argue that if God does exist, then the human beings are not free, conversely if they are free, God does not exist. If this latter probability takes place, then nothing created “being-in-itself”. The term “in

itself” refers to “self-contained”, this doesn’t mean it produces itself. It means it wasn’t produced at all. That is what Sartre defines as “being is in itself”. (Sartre)

The second characteristic “being is”, namely “being in itself is”. This is closely related to the previous characteristic “being is in-itself”, wherein the first claims that being in itself does not have a cause, while the second says that “being in itself” has no explanation. Sartre is stating that things exist without sufficient reasons or justification for everything so that the existence of being-in-itself is not necessary, it is absurd and without ultimate explanation. With regard to the third characteristic “being is what it is”, to be specific; this means being-in itself is what it is and nothing else, Sartre says that ‘being in fact is opaque to itself precisely because it is filled with itself. This can better be expressed by saying that “being is what it is” (28). Namely, to illustrate that the being of “in-itself” is not a “self”, as the “itself” implies. For instance; an apple is an apple; it is not a “self”, neither does it have the task of becoming what it should be, there is no selfhood, simply what they are.

Let us move to the second region, which is the “consciousness”, or to the “being-for-itself” which refers to the being of mankind. For Sartre consciousness is not what a human being has, consciousness is what they are, the distinction that Sartre makes concerning the “in-itself” and the “for-itself” is essentially a distinction between mind and body, consciousness and things. So that he employs different words to avoid the impression of dualism. Historically, most of dualists¹ start off from the principal that human beings are souls and bodies and extrapolate it about their ontology². A human being, as a being-for-itself, is the only being that can detach itself from the rest of the world and thereby cause “Nothingness” to emerge. (20th-Century-Philosophy)

As a consequence, consciousness is irreparably divided. Consciousness is not the property of an individual; likewise, there is no inhabitant of consciousness. Instead, it acts as a mental framework that structures our apprehensions of the

¹ From Dualism; The view that the world consists of or is explicable as two fundamental entities, such as mind and matter.

² The branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.

world. It is the ability of consciousness to reflect on itself that makes choice, decision, action and agency possible.

Although existentialists insist that human beings have the ability to transcend the givens of their existence, they also insist that human lives are always enmeshed in social, historical and cultural situations. There is no sharp, definitive distinction between self and world: they form a tightly woven whole, which Heidegger terms 'Being-in-the-world'. Transcendence allows an individual to formulate projects or position themselves in the world, but these projects are also situated and circumscribed.

1.5. Existentialism as a Literary Movement

The world of art has been exceedingly affected by the development of existential thought, even from its extraordinary beginnings in the nineteenth century. Starting with the novel, and later the silver screen. Various existential masterminds have recommended that literature is particularly well positioned to convey the messages of their logic. From this perception, art has a tendency to act as a lens which either centers or diffuses certain modes of thought which pass through it. In that sense, an existential author absorbs the ideas then and imitates them inside written works. In the same way it is troublesome to fit existentialism perfectly into a container, one can't essentially bubble the written works of existentialism down to a basic formula. There are different strains and varieties from one author to the following, yet still simply enough commons to see the imparted underlying standards. It is perhaps more advantageous to talk over the work of various unique writers than to give a clearer abstract of the whole development.

In the world of literature, few have been well appreciated as Fyodor Dostoyevsky. He has been grouped with a few diverse artistic developments in light of the fact that his books introduced such a large number of existential characteristics so well. While his work is uniquely, unmistakably Russian, his characters and their particular difficulties transcend social limits and identify with

the imparted issues of all people living in modern times. *Crime and Punishment* (1866) a significant sample of how a portion of the standards of existentialist thinking could be debased, prompting moral rot and individual demolition. (Existentialism)

The writings of Franz Kafka have long been connected with twentieth century existentialism. Destined to Jewish folks in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Kafka survived the turmoil of the First World War. The death and destruction which desolated Central and Western Europe without a doubt had an effect on Kafka's feelings. He truly never finished a full-length novel, and is generally extremely popular for his novella *The Metamorphosis* 1913, in which a man stirs to end up changed into something terrible. Critics have pointed out that in the interpretation from German to English; a big part of the wit of Kafka's composing is lost. Nonetheless, the essential topics which Kafka wished to pass on are reasonable in any language. Like numerous existential journalists, Franz Kafka saw the individual as a being caught up in systems and bureaucracies that were beyond comprehension. Indeed, being turns into a sort of control over individual self-governance. The common reaction to this is to leave life, yet Kafka presents the scenario with dry humor. He approaches the terrors of being with a wink and a nod, and grips the craziness of everything. (Existentialism)

The name generally synonymous with existential literature is Albert Camus¹ although he himself dismissed the label. His books regularly talk about characters caught up to situations and scenarios well beyond their ability to control, and the courses in which they adapt to such situations are pointless. In *The Stranger*, the hero Meursault essentially randomly commits a homicide on the sunny shore, yet appears to lack profound human emotions. He in every way feels no regret for his enactment, nor bitterness for the later passing of his mother. The predominant subjects of the novel are isolation and segregation, and the feeling of being unimportant inside the bigger frameworks of social order. In the jail anticipating execution, Meursault is incapable of any kind of epiphany regarding his actions or

¹ French writer who portrayed the human condition as isolated in an absurd world (1913-1960)

place in the world, all that he grasps is an absurdity. The absurd and the isolated nature of human beings is without a doubt a repeating subject for Camus. A sort of additional positivist illustration of Camus's outlook might be discovered in 'The Plague', a novel relating a flare-up of the bubonic plague in a little port city. Those trapped inside the city walls with the illness are constrained to summon internal holds of strength and determination despite a definitive negative power of demise.

The twentieth century's most fabulous existential scholar was undoubtedly Jean Paul Sartre. Remarkably, Sartre was the only person to decline the Nobel Prize in Literature award. His literary contributions were moderately few, yet significant. In *The Nausea*, Sartre recounts the story of an academic who comes to be conscious of the compelling peculiarity of his own being. Objects and even other individuals are totally outside of his encounter, regardless of what steps he takes to give his own particular implications onto them. In the novel, this freedom is alarming. The title illustrates perfectly the feelings of the hero when confronted with his own essential Being. In real life, Sartre saw this complete freedom as an imperative towards action. Given ultimate freedom, humans had ultimate responsibility for their own actions. In this way, Sartre took existentialism in a very positive direction. He advocated for the downtrodden, and continually struggled for a more egalitarian society based on the worth of each person. (Existentialism)

The theatre of Samuel Beckett unites topics and ideas common to several times of literary and intellectual history. His dramatization is generally as often as possible described by extra, moderate settings, inhabited by creatures that appear deficient and strange. There is a distinct dismissal of customary stage play structures and expectations. The clashes which Beckett exhibits to the gathering of people for all drama must have some clash, are now and again so muddling as to disappoint and distort meaning entirely. Characters do not know where they are or what their purpose is or their reason needs perceptible importance. Audiences regularly find Beckett to a great degree disappointing and difficult to reach, yet one could contend that distance is the point. Existence itself is troublesome, befuddling, disappointing and even at its extremely close declines to unveil any significance

other than what the individual has made for him or herself. Because of that, the theater of Beckett is sincerely a mirror expected up to remember the craziness of the modern existence. Obviously fantastic and insignificant settings impersonate those same settings, which individuals occupy every day, from the workplace to the shopping center to the tram train. Any individual who has stopped amidst their everyday routine and understood, "This is insane," is a co-conspirator with Samuel Beckett.

It is then standard to define the modern literary works as a response against its Victorian forerunner. Victorian scholars utilized their works to moralize or romanticize, when their necessities should have been stylish or all the more positively realistic. Their storytellers were unrealistically omniscient, their depictions too dull, and their concerns excessively customary. Their plots started and finished too basically and too flawlessly foreseeable emergencies, giving path to a simple conclusion, normally in marriage or in passing. Such impediments, inherited by the moderns, discovered them with no manner by which to reflect current times. Modernity had updated everything, carrying worldwide war, urban mayhem, revolutionary technology, sexual freedom; the novel inherited by the moderns, however, appeared to be basically traditional, moderate, staid, set, and unable to match the flux, the bewilderment, the energy that now outlined modern life. Therefore the moderns tried to "make it new" by trading the novel's regular forms for experimental forms of flux, perplexity, openness, skepticism, freedom, and horror. They replaced omniscience with fixed or fallible perspectives, broke their chapters into fragments, made sex explicit, and dissolved their sentences into the streams and flows of interior psychic life. Time and space dissolved as well, as did any faith that the world's appearances could reflect its realities, or that "objective" truths existed. Indeed, the moderns went as far as to question reality itself. Whereas the novels of the past had taken too much for granted, the fiction of the future would question all forms of belief, perception, and judgment. It would open itself always to new ways of seeing and representing the world (Bradshaw and Dettmar 215).

1.6. Conclusion


Thinkers and philosophers of the Existential field focus on the importance of individuality and subjectivity. According to Kierkegaard, a person cannot realize the true religion through an objective cognitive process, but only through a pure subjective passion that generate joy. Otherwise, their faith became meaningless. While Sartre assumes the priority of “Existence” over the “Essence” in his ontological essay “Being and Nothingness”.

Then he makes a distinction between unconsciousness being “being in itself” and the conscious being “being for itself”. Correspondingly, there is an important amount of works in the western literature in which philosophical perspectives are advanced, inferred, entertained, or generally play a central part.



Chapter Two

The Notion of “Theatre of the Absurd”



2.1. Introduction

The theatre of the Absurd is one of the most important movements in the history of dramatic literature for its non-conventional form and content. Dissimilar to the customary dramatists, playwrights of this theatre invert the conventions of the old theatre by delivering a new form of drama that sheds the light on the conditions of human beings' existence in the modern society. Consequently, the theatre of the absurd has had great impact on the whole world since its appearance since the World War II, which was the occasion that offers life to this class of theatre. Further, Absurd drama takes the premise of existential philosophy and consolidates it with dramatic elements to create a style of theatre, which exhibits a nonsensical world which cannot be sensibly explained.

This chapter is set to speak initially about the seed of the modern drama with respect to its development from a movement to another. Next, it is prescribed to shed the light carefully on absurdism in term, trend, its inception, and its attributes. Thus, this section is reinforced by an analytical view about the Martin Esslin's book "The Theatre of the Absurd" with regard to his definitions, descriptions, and classifications of the playwrights.

2.2. Modernism and the Evolution of Modern Drama

At first the term "Modern" appeared nearly in the fifth century A.D. It was used to identify the Christian era from antiquity. However, in the seventeenth century, this term turned to designate certain novel tendencies in art and literature. Hans Robert Jauss, in his book "the modernity in the literary tradition" attempts to point out the seed of "modern" and give two distinctive senses

Modernus comes from modo, which, at that time [in the fifth century] did not mean only "just," "momentarily," "precisely," but perhaps already "now," "at the moment" also which meaning became perpetuated in the Latin languages. Modernus not only means "new" but it also means "actual."] (179)

That is to say, the word “modern” has twain of meaning “new” and “actual”. In the sense of “new” would still allow the survival of and coexistence with the old along the lines of the cohabitation of different generations. Whereas, modern signifies “actual” implies that the old is eliminated, that does no longer exist, or that it has become invalid. What is referred to as “modern” is always opposed to a past, which it was commonly used to refer to antiquity, until the nineteenth century, when the spread of the positive idea of the modern gave way to the birth of other variations of this concept, such as “modernity,” “modernism,” or “modernist.” (Kovács, András Bálint, 8)

The notion of modernism is set to describe certain trends in art, writing, criticism and philosophy that followed the Industrial Revolution Era in the late 1800’s. As consequence, City life grew exponentially and with this, populations around the world were in need of theatre. This movement became powerful and widely influenced the development of the history of literature and art of which it flourished in the first decade of the 20th century. Precisely, the modernist trend arose in France from the last quarter of the 19th century and from 1890 in Britain and Germany to the beginning of the world war in 1939. It appeared in a period when there was a need to renew the spirit of the modern world in various fields. For instance; modern scientific methods of analysis have been established, such as linguistics, philosophy, sociology, Marxism¹ and Feminism, and Structuralism².

Regarding the field of literature, modernism aspects take a shape. It rejects all traditional techniques of the old forms of arts, and reacts against the conventional realistic orientation. Pioneers of this movement, especially in Great Britain and the USA, focus on the subjective experience rather on belief in a possibility of literary work to reveal the objective sense and truth, that is to say, they proclaim a new "subject matter" for literature and they realize that their new way of looking at life

¹ The political and economic philosophy of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in which the concept of class struggle plays a central role in understanding society's allegedly inevitable development from bourgeois oppression under capitalism to a socialist and ultimately classless society.

² A method of analyzing phenomena, as in anthropology, linguistics, psychology, or literature, chiefly characterized by contrasting the elemental components of the phenomena in a system of binary opposition and examining how the elemental components are combined to make larger units.

requires to pursue more experimental and usually more highly individualistic forms of writing. Modernists aimed to find new ways of making art by rejecting the obsolescent tradition. (Best, Steven, and Douglas Kellner. 126-127)

There were many different movements arose within the modern theatre such as Realism and Naturalism, which are considered as the most popular and longest standing movements of modern theatre. Although it is difficult to make the distinction between the two schools, but they hold separate thoughts and demands on the actor with characterization, designers with sets, properties and costumes, and the subject matter often differs too. Realism, which date back to the late 1800's is characterized by the figurative drama "likeness to life". It was as a reaction against the abstract Romanticism. Everything that performed in front of the audience reflects the real life and relationships within the society, that is to say, everything is set to be as real as possible. Whereas, Naturalism is a heightened form of realism. Like the realism school, Naturalism exposes only the real facts on the stage, and often its plays is performed by working/lower class. In contrast to the realistic dramas which relies on middle class's characters. Naturalistic plays which remove all theatrical conventions are characterized by its sordid subject matter previously considered taboo on the stage in any serious manner for instance suicide, poverty, prostitution, and Emile Zola is considered as its spiritual father. Besides, the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen is famously considered as the founder of the modern realistic theater, who took drama from Realistic plays to Naturalistic and Symbolistic plays. Henrik Ibsen shaped modern theatre by producing plays that baffled his audiences with unaddressed societal issues resulting in the revolution of previously accepted social roles and values, and his plays most importantly centered on the conflict of social roles, the human condition, and the improvement of the society as a whole. (The Father of Realism by Tyler Hall)

Symbolism that has come to play an important part in the modern drama was considered as the first major modernist movement that led the Anti-realistic movement between 1880 and 1910. It is provided by the "Théâtre de l'Oeuvre" in France 1893. (Surrealism And The Absurd) What about Eugene Scribe (1791-1861)

one of the best exponent of Symbolism drama, he designed his plays around the revelation of secret, Maeterlinck and Ibsen were the main dramatist leaders of the symbolist trend. Besides, In fact, it initiated as a drive to highlight a different actuality from that of naturalism and realism, producing an influence on modernist literature, moreover, this movement extended in Russia (although the Moscow Art Theatre was determined only for Realism), Belgium and later in other countries too. Increasingly, the Expressionism was another major modernist movement in the theatre that gained an international importance after the Symbolism movement ,though it was influenced by the emotional style of the Symbolism. This genre of theatre appeared during the second and third decades of the century and it is associated with the German Drama. Expressionism began as a form of windy neo-romanticism and grew to be a rigorous, dialectical kind of realism; its plays share a common characteristic which is the desire display strong emotion, a hard-headed anti-realism, and often it focused on subjective perceptions of reality over such devices as exaggerated speech. Needless to say the most famous expressionist playwrights were Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller was the most famous playwrights. In addition to other notable expressionist dramatists included Reinhard Sorge, Walter Hasenclever, Hans Henny Jahnn, and Arnolt Bronnen. (Styan, 56)

Later, Surrealism School began in France in 1924. Guillaume Apollinaire used the term Surrealism to describe his own play *The Mammaries/Breasts of Tiresias*. Thereafter, Andres Breton became the spokesman of the surrealist movement in 1924. Surrealist artists were inspired by Sigmund Freud's study of the unconscious mind, and they argued that the subconscious is the highest plane of reality. Their plays seem to be performed in a dream world “we don’t usually expect to see in our real life” . The Theatre of Cruelty was a product of the surrealism theory which was created by the French dramatist and actor Antonin Artaud. This form of theatre depicts the subconscious experience of spectators, and bombards their senses in an attempt to release the viewers’ instinctual feelings through psychological shock. Eventhough Artaud died in 1948, his ideas continued to influence playwrights well into the 1960s.

The philosophy of existentialism takes the modern theatre into another shape. It is based on the belief that the universe is irrational and meaningless, it is centered upon the analyses of existence and that the individual is caught in a constant conflict with the rest of the world. This philosophy trend was born during the 1950's post war Europe even though the term was coined by the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel around 1943, and later adopted by his compatriot Jean Paul Sartre (Existentialism). In other hand, "the Theatre of the Absurd" or in other word the "New Theatre" is a term of a particular movement began in the late of 1950's which commonly associated with "Existentialism". It was Martin Esslin who invents this term to bring attention to several Europeans and Americans playwrights. Their plays share a common feature which is to give dramatic expressions to the concept of the "Absurd", a famous literary and artistic concept that was introduced by the French philosopher Albert Camus after the publication of "The Myth of Sisyphus". The absurdist playwright believe that our existence is futile and nonsensical and their plays rely on the non-realistic characters who fail to communicate effectively and the inadequate language, even the episodic plot is not connected orderly. Whereas this is exactly what the absurdist writers want from the audience, they present for them a world which cannot be rationally explained.

2-3. Absurdism as a Trend and as Term

The word 'Absurd' has divergent meanings according to the several points of view of many writers and experts. Among these we have been going to reveal the indispensable definitions that have a close relation with this term. For instance, Martin Esslin reports in his book that the word "Absurd" primarily means "out of harmony" in musical context:

Absurd originally means 'out of harmony', in a musical context. Hence its dictionary definition: 'out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, and illogical'. In common usage, 'Absurd' may simply mean 'ridiculous' but this is not the sense in which Camus uses the word, and in which it is used when we speak of the Theatre of the Absurd. In an essay on Kafka, Ionesco defined his understanding of the term as follows: « Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... cut off from his religious, metaphysical; and

transcendental roots, man is lost all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless. (23)

Absurdism as a wide range tendency refers to the consequence of the twain great wars in both philosophical and literary scenes, the term “Absurd” is originated from Albert Camus’s essay “The Myth of Sisyphus” in which he talks about the Absurd Man, an Absurd Creation, an Absurd Reasoning. This idea of Absurdity is inspired by the Existentialism, which holds the view that each individual have the responsibility to give meaning to his own life, however absurdism goes beyond this saying that the world itself is meaningless, which make hopelessness the major theme that dominates the human life and create the an atmosphere of despair within the individual. According to Camus, here is the point, life is Absurd, which is to say it is meaningless, his philosophy of the absurd has left us with a striking image of the human fate, he said:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty is a familiar world. But in a universe suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. He is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity (The Myth of Sisyphus, 1942.)

The word “Absurd” in the Oxford dictionary is defined as: very unsuitable, ridiculous, and foolish. But in Webster’s “Absurd” is ridiculous, unreasonable, unsound, or incongruous or having no rational or orderly relationship to human life, meaninglessness also lacking order or value.

The theatre of the absurd as a term is devised by the Hungarian-born critic Martin Esslin, who uses this code as the title of his famous book that he wrote in 1962 to bring attention to certain forms of plays written by European playwrights in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The major characteristic playwrights of the movement, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Harold Pinter are regarded as creating theatrical work in a new style characterizing an absurd feature with ambiguous background by Esslin. For him, their plays broke down all the standards of conventional dramas, such as; plot, classical

characterization, and all the things performed on stage are illogical and inexplicable. Moreover, all communication breaks down and eventually man fades in obscurity.

Eventhough Martin Esslin attempts to gather these playwrights under the so-called “Theatre of the Absurd”, most of them were not always satisfied with the label and sometimes preferred to use terms such as "Anti-Theater" or "New Theater.”

The impact of the traumatic involvement in World War II contributed deeply in the foundation of “Theatre of the Absurd”. The horrors that are firmly related to World War II produced a widespread sense of the absolute meaninglessness of human existence which reflected in a body of plays by ignoring conventional standards of drama; the plot (deviated from the more traditional episodic structure, it seems to be caught in a circle, and it ends the same manner it began), dialogue (never seemed to make any sense) and characters who stand alone in an alien society. The absurdist playwrights were seeking to communicate their view of the pointlessness of man’s life and the insufficiency of the rational approach through the open rejection of lucid devices and logical thoughts.

2.4. The Seed of Absurdity in Dramatic Writings: History and Origin

Although the Theater of the Absurd is often related to the avant-garde¹ experiments of the 1920s and 1930s, its seeds, in fact, date back much further. Absurd elements first appeared shortly after the rise of Greek drama, with the Old Comedy and the plays of Aristophanes in particular. Later, these Absurd elements were developed in the late classical period by Lucian, Petronius, and Apuleius. Besides, the Morality Plays of the Middle Ages may be considered a precursor of the Theater of the Absurd, describing everyman-type characters dealing with metaphorical and sometimes existential points. During the nineteenth century, absurd elements may be noted in certain plays, but the predecessor of what would come to be called the Theater of the Absurd is Alfred Jarry's “Ubu Roi” (1896), (Theatre of the Absurd) who is a caricature, a terrifying image of the animal nature

¹ refers to people or works that are experimental or innovative, particularly with respect to art, culture, and politics.

of man, and his cruelty. The Theater of the Absurd was also anticipated in the novels of James Joyce and Franz Kafka, who created archetypes by looking into their subconscious and exploring the universal, collective significance of their own private obsessions. But World War II was the event that finally brought the Theater of the Absurd to life. The horrors associated with World War II produced a widespread sense of the absolute meaninglessness of human existence. This sense was later expressed in the body of plays that have come to be known as the "Theater of the Absurd." By abandoning conventional devices of the drama, including the development rational plot, meaningful dialogue, and comprehensible characters, absurdist playwrights tried to reveal modern humanity's feelings of confusion, alienation, and despair; the feeling that reality in itself unreal. Within their plays, human beings are often characterized as fools, clowns who, although not without dignity, are at the mercy of forces that are inscrutable. At that time, a "prophet" of the absurd appeared, Antonin Artaud (1896-1948). He refused realism in the theater, calling for a return to myth and magic and to the exposure of the deepest conflicts within the human mind. Although he would not live to see its development, The Theater of the Absurd was the new theater that he expected. It openly rebelled against conventional theater. It was, as Ionesco called it, "anti-theater". It was surreal, illogical, and lacking in conflict and plot. The dialogue often seemed to be complete nonsense. And, not surprisingly, as a reaction, the public at first reject this new theatre and consider it as an incomprehensible one (Theatre of the Absurd)

Among all the absurd plays, the most famous and most controversial is Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot." It is considered as one of the most successful plays for its profound impress and theme, and the form that matches it. On the surface, the play is very unconventional, and it seems unfamiliar and difficult to understand it; still, it gains appreciation in the field of drama, namely; the play is not simply a humorous play, but a play with deep thought. The characters of the play are strange caricatures that have difficulty in exchanging conversation with easiest concepts to one another as they spend their time awaiting the arrival of a mysterious personality named "Godot". The language they use is often ridiculous. The play seems to end in

the same condition it began. In fact, “Waiting for Godot” is sometimes referred to as “the play where nothing happens.”

2-5. Theatre of the Absurd as a Coined Term by Martin Esslin: Analytical View

As it has been mentioned above, The theatre of the absurd is a term which usually refers to a type of drama which dominated West-European literature between the years 1940-1960 and it is often associated with the names of famous writers, such as: Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Eugène Ionesco, Tom Stoppard, Harold Pinter, Fernando Arrabal, Vaclav Havel, Arthur Adamov, Witold Gombrowicz, Friedrich Durrenmatt. And it was introduced by the dramatist, critic and scholar, Martin Esslin, in his book titled *Theatre of the Absurd*, which in the 1960's became an influential dramatic critic. In this book, the author sets out a re-framing in light of misconceptions and confusions connected with the new type of theatre.

A public conditioned to an accepted convention tends to receive the impact of artistic experience through a filter of critical standards, of predetermined expectations and terms of reference, which is the natural result of the schooling of its taste and faculty of perception. This framework of values, admirably efficient in itself, produces only bewildering results when it is faced with a completely new and revolutionary convention a tug of war ensues between impressions that have undoubtedly been received and critical preconceptions that clearly exclude the possibility that any such impressions could have been felt. Hence the storms of frustration and indignation always caused by works in a new convention. (Esslin 28)

The purpose of his book as he puts is “to provide a framework of reference that will show the works of the Theatre of the Absurd within their own convention” (Ibid.). To give a framework of reference, Esslin first explains what the difference between traditional theatre and the theatre of the absurd is:

The Theatre of the Absurd... tends toward a radical devaluation of language, toward a poetry that is to emerge from the concrete and objectified images of the stage itself. The element of language still plays an important part in this conception, but what happens on the stage transcends, and often contradicts, the words spoken by the characters (26)

The role of language in this theatre, due to its incapability of illustrating reality, is reduced to a minimum and devalued of its traditionally preconceived weight. "On the stage, language can be put into a contrapuntal relationship with action, the facts behind the language can be revealed. Hence the importance of mime, knockabout comedy and silence..." (Esslin 85). Therefore, according to the author some functions of language are transferred to other dramatic tools. Esslin cites Ionesco: "Just as words are continued by gesture, action, mime, which at the moment when words become inadequate, take their place, the material elements of the stage can in turn further intensify these" (186).

Humor is one of the tools, which compensates for the limited language of the drama of the absurd. It serves both to release the tension of and to balance the tragic part of such plays:

Humor makes us conscious, with a free lucidity, of the tragic or desultory condition of man... It is not only the critical spirit itself... but... humor is the only possibility we possess of detaching ourselves – yet only after we have surmounted, assimilated, taken cognizance of it – from our tragicomic human condition, the malaise of being. (Ionesco, cited by Esslin 186)

In the theatre of the absurd humor is not applied for the sake of fun, as in traditional theatre. Here it serves another purpose: "To become conscious of what is horrifying and to laugh at it is to become master of that which is horrifying..." (Ionesco, cited by Esslin 186). Laughter has a revealing and strengthening the function against unbearable misery and despair. It saves the character of the drama of the absurd from craziness and self-annihilation.

Also connected with illogical communication and incomprehensible language is the lack of a linear plot. Again, this absence is compensated for with the circularity of actions and dialogues. "Many of the plays of the Theatre of the

Absurd have a circular structure, ending exactly as they began; others progress merely by a growing intensification of the initial situation” (Esslin 405, 406). Since, the linear development is absent; there is also no typical resolution, or culmination in a classical meaning of these words.

Still another feature is the absence of Aristotle’s unities of place, time, and action. The theatre of the absurd usually distorts all the dramatic rules described in Poetics. Absurdist drama does not need to be attached to one realistic scene, often does not need any stage props at all; the actions become distorted, and time changes its primarily function.

While the play with a linear plot describes a development in time, in a dramatic form that presents a concretized poetic image the play’s extension in time is purely incidental. Expressing an intuition in depth, it should ideally be apprehended in a single moment, and only because it is physically impossible to present so complex an image in an instant does it have to be spread over a period of time. The formal structure of such a play is, therefore, merely a device to express a complex total image by unfolding it in a sequence of interacting elements. (Esslin 394)

Hence, as time depends on unreal images it becomes deformed and is often marked by its absence. For the characters of this theatre, time is not to be counted or referred as to some reality, but simply to pass or fill with irrelevant actions. As the author admits his term does not refer to those contributing, in his view, to the theatre of the absurd, but rather to a common basis for their works, which is illustrative of “the preoccupations and anxieties, the emotions and thinking of many of their contemporaries in the Western world” (Esslin 22). He also acknowledges that such an illustration is always relative:

It is an oversimplification to assume that any age presents a homogenous pattern. Ours being, more than most others, and age of transition, it displays a bewilderingly stratified picture... The Theatre of the Absurd, however, can be seen as the reflection of what seems to be the attitude most genuinely representative of our own time.” (22-23)

Therefore, in his book, Esslin does not seem to aspire to giving an exclusive and homogenous name to the group of writers, as if placing them in the same school or convention. On the contrary, he is rather describing the receptions of such dramatic pieces, which, according to classical conventions, are deemed absurd in their nature. Instead of saying what the aesthetics of the theatre of the absurd are, assuming that such aesthetics exist at all, he is rather saying what they are not, in contrast to the aesthetics of a “well-made drama”¹ in the conventional meaning. Although, Esslin introduces a series of characteristics which, in his opinion define the essence of the drama of the absurd, they are always discussed in the terms of absence or contradiction to traditional ones, rather than possessing the sustainable quality of their own (Lachman, Marvin, 139).

2.5. Characteristics and Conventions of Absurd Drama

Every form of theatre has its own characteristics which make it unique and different from other kinds of theaters with regard to its special background and social needs. As we have learned above, features of the Theatre of the Absurd are used to deliver tragic subjects with humor form. These characters are covered by three components: character, language, and plot.

2-6-1. Anti-character

The personification of the characters in the theatre of the absurd is characterized with curious and grotesque personalities from the beginning of the performance on the stages until the end. The characters of this genre of plays are apparently normal people. However, they undergo hopeless and meaningless abnormal situations. It seems that they reflect the whole world in a big stage, that is to say; the people were just actors in the Theater of the Absurd. They are forced to do insignificant things, and life seems to have no meaning. We know that in a conventional drama that most of the characters are normal, they use reasonable behavior and understandable language, instead, characters of the absurd plays are

¹ Well-made play, French *pièce bien faite*, a type of play, constructed according to certain strict technical principles, that dominated the stages of Europe and the United States for most of the 19th century and continued to exert influence into the 20th.

shaped by the absurdist playwright as the personality who abandons the normal sense of a normal play in an abnormal performance of the stage. Namely, one of the features that make this new theatre differs from the other kinds is the repeated dialogue between the characters. There are not any regular rules to follow in their words, whereas they exchange an interrupted sentence and disordered words; this is why it makes the common spectators confused, they find themselves disable to grasp the character's words and behaviors. For instance, let's take a look at the characters of one of the most famous and controversial plays, Samuel Becket's "Waiting for Godot." The characters here are strange caricatures that have difficulty communicating the simplest of concepts to one another as they await the arrival of Godot. This play does not tell a story. It explores a static situation: basically nothing happens, nobody comes, and nobody goes. Vladimir and Estragon (characters of this play) have complementary personalities. Vladimir is the more practical of the two, and Estragon thinks he is a poet. Estragon often dreams, whereas Vladimir hates hearing about dreams. In an analytical view, it is hard to make a distinction between the two characters since they share the same personalities and peculiarities. We do not know other information about them; the only thing that we know is that they are two boys. They are extraordinary in term of personification in compare to others personalities of traditional dramas. The absurd plays don't have the characterization and motivation found in standard theater; instead, they present unrecognizable characters, who act as puppets (Analysis on the Artistic Features and Themes of the Theater of the Absurd).

2.6.2. Anti-language

Another important aspect of the absurd drama as well in all literary works is the use of language. Language in an absurdist drama goes nowhere, according to the Absurdist; the language had evolved into nothing more than nonsense exchanges. For them, Words are not enough to convey the essence of human experience because it is an unreliable function of communication.

In conventional dramas, language is usually used in a rational order. During the conversation between the characters the logical order must be respected, that is

to say, when a personality asks a question, the others have to answer alternately, whether the answer is negative or positive. However, in the absurd drama the protagonists usually speak in disorder, they don't care about the form and the regularities of successive conversation infer or to obey. Sometimes a character asks his partner something, but the partner says a contradicted thing that is completely irrelevant to what they are talking about. That is to say, language has no regularity to infer or obey. What they have said cannot be understood by the audience. Just several minutes ago, the characters argued on the question of who will come. A moment later, they change to another irrelative subject, and finally you cannot follow their thoughts, which will lead you misunderstand their mind. This special feature has caused people to understand the Theater of the Absurd with many difficulties.

We can say that the language in the theater of the absurd is different from that found in other types of theater. Sometimes the dialogues seem to be nonsense. One would think that the people in these plays are crazy or something, but that is one of the main characteristics of this kind of theater: "weird language." Whereas, normal plays consist of pointed dialogue, these often contain incoherent babblings (Analysis on the Artistic Features and Themes of the Theater of the Absurd).

2-6-1. Anti-plot

Without Plot, drama cannot be called a drama, because it is an important element of the drama's constitution. Unlike conventional theatre where the audience can easily guess how the plot would develop, the absurdist plays don't have the usual beginning and end that other plays do. So that most of the time events rise and collapse obscurely and surprisingly. For instance, in the play of *Waiting for Godot*, the audience cannot guess the result of the play, whereas the author of the play kills all the expectations to the extent that the audience do not know what the protagonists are waiting for and what they are talking about. The only thing the spectators know is that the characters are caught in an endless waiting for somebody and an endless talking. Wherein the absurdity of life and living is brought out in these plays, Emptiness in the character's hearts and Nothingness are the major

theme and essence which take a shape the play. And people are searching for the purpose of their existence in the society but in vain. Therefore, anti-plot is an important feature of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Basically the plots of the Theatre of the Absurd revolve around nonsense dialogues, repetitive or meaningless actions, and non-realistic or impossible stories, which often have neither a beginning nor an end (Analysis on the Artistic Features and Themes of the Theater of the Absurd).

2.6. Conclusion

The theatre of the absurd had a great influence on modern theatre and was a defining moment in western theatre during the decades in which it was conceived the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Despite the fact that there was never a school or official movement of this theatre, it was a major success in those years. Likewise, it changed the way we look at the theatre now, notwithstanding what its critics may think. Playwrights such as Samuel Becket, Eugene Ionesco, Fernando Arrabal, Arthur Adamov, and Jean Genet had had diverse perspectives on numerous things; some didn't even want people to say that they belonged to the absurd theatre. However, most of their works had several things in common, which was viewed as a response against the conventional concepts of western theatre.

These authors attempt to make individuals mindful of his mysterious position in a universe based on illusions. Moreover, they denied realistic theater and its psychological characterization, coherent structure, (normal) plot and conventional dialogues as a viable method of communication. That is to say, this new way of creating theatre has had an impact, especially on three "areas": the character, plot, and language.

Chapter Three

*Samuel Beckett's
'Waiting for Godot'
(Thematic Analysis)*

3.1. Introduction

Samuel Beckett is one of the most outstanding philosophical writers of the twentieth-century. He had a distinctive style of writing that includes philosophical ideas sustained with an existential touch which is much clarified in his previous plays and other literary pieces. Beckett was crucial concerning the emergence of the Theatre of the Absurd when he contributed with such absurdist plays.

In this chapter, our concern is with his play of “Waiting for Godot”, the play as was mentioned previously was the starting point “Theatre of the Absurd”. This chapter is set to give a precise analysis to this masterpiece, starting with Beckett’s philosophical view of the world, moving through the dramatic techniques that he uses in this play that includes; type of work, language, setting, characters and themes

3.2. Beckett's Literary Approach to Modern Drama and his Philosophical Writing

Samuel Beckett, the most famous author of the Theatre of the Absurd, was an Irishman whose plays influenced a stunning new stride in the dramatic movement of modern drama. Beckett depicted the modern man in an alienated world with no rules to continue or any plan to pass by. According to him the modern man is left in this world with no sign to certify the sanity of what he does and what he achieves. His thinking is constantly involved with the subjects like alienation, identity, mystery of the self and loneliness. To reflect this, another sort of theatre was required. Prior to the modern period, dramatists and theatre goers were taking a gander at the plays entirely as a type of literature following Aristotle's conventions of playwriting and its performance. However, as a result of World War I, every certain part of life was addressed and man has been subjected to look internally for a superior understanding. Consequently, of almost all Aristotelian custom in drama, modern drama set on the subject of man in his society and man in his private world.

Consistent with the spirit of a restless age, the majority of the notable playwrights of the modern era like Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg, Chekhov, Pirandello

Chapter Three: Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' (Thematic chapter)

and Beckett have been defiant artists. Chekhov, Pirandello and Beckett have been defiant craftsmen. Each in his own exceptional way discovered his approach to God, society, life, world and existence itself. For the dramatists themselves have little enthusiasm for telling such stories that one may find. This is not to say that they are not profoundly felt, but rather that this feeling is a reaction to a state of human experience, not to the events of the story. The modern dramatists have a profound acquaintance with Christian custom or of Western philosophy and literature; yet these references are a method for communicating a typical human suffering, and not for giving a specific historical referent.

It would not be wrong to take Samuel Beckett as the last modernist when we see *Waiting for Godot* with no plot, no climax, no denouement, no beginning, no middle and no end. If modernism liberated the writer from conventional storytelling and ordinary psychology, Beckett's play took modernism just as far as it could go. In modern literature, Beckett is well known for his "the Theatre of the Absurd" tendency.

Beckett's plays highlights irrational and purposeless actions in the plot, and perpetual inconsistency of language and activity and dialogue on stage. Making such inventive dramatization, completely not quite the same as the traditional drama of representing the characters in defining regulation and frame, Beckett's objective was to find the limits of drama and to challenge audiences to move away from their complacent and comfortable roles of being as spectators in the theatre.

Beckett was feeling like an outcast in his own life, he was confined by the sense of estrangement in his own world as if he lost his identity. Moreover, Beckett was Feeling like an outsider in his own life, Beckett was captivated by the notion of never having been born. Right from the beginning, as evident in his drama, he saw birth and death as parts of a single band, with life as a long day's dying. "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it is night once more," (*Waiting for Godot* 82). Through both prior and later plays of Beckett, the characters constantly noiseless, surprised or startled and their sense of hush

Chapter Three: Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' (Thematic chapter)

attractively conveyed, through the setting of play, to the spectators. In *Waiting for Godot*, in the second dialog about sand, Estragon ends the silence first and says:

ESTRAGON: In the meantime nothing happens.

POZZO: You find it tedious?

ESTRAGON: Somewhat.

POZZO: (to Vladimir). And you, Sir?

VLADIMIR: I've been better entertained. (Silence) (Becket, 38)

Beckett's dramatization known as a standout amongst the most controversial works of the twentieth-century drama is known for its insignificant way to deal with dramatic form, for its intense symbolism, and for its concise, fragmented, and repetitive dialogue. “*Waiting for Godot*” and “*Endgame*” for example, start with no planned development and both of them fall back on their memories to justify their existence.

Beckett was capable to compose everything during the years of his stay in Paris in order to reach the fame, in such productive period of writing, he understood that he must be a subjective producer, in a way being gotten entirely from his own particular inward world. He gave a large part of his time to write about his experience of inward searching, in which he is most likely best remembered today. Beckett's plays sequent the war are considered to have their roots in the Theatre of the Absurd, deal in an extremely a dark humorous way with subjects such as; despair, the will to survive and the incomprehensible world like those of the contemporary existentialist philosophers, even though Beckett denied this existentialist label. Beckett gathers his characters in sets; for instance, we have Vladimir and Estragon, or Didi and Gogo, Hamm and Clov, Pozzo and Lucky, Nagg and Nell, and Krapp's present voice and past voice. Basically, in any case, Beckett's characters remain a riddle which every individual viewer must explain. He clarifies the existentialist theory in his oeuvre through his peculiar theatre and his particularly created characters to handle with one of the immense fixations of

modern man that is his alienated, separated, and dispossessed self. He presented this through progressions of characters of one single character or couple characters, and he introduced a dynamic existential obsession of modern man with respect to his self and philosophy of existence. The fundamental explanation behind the displacement and alienation of self in his plays begins from the absurdity which overwhelmed man in the postmodern era that Beckett solidified it in his existential thoughts by means of his particular theatre of Absurd. In other word, Beckett attempted to clarify the uncertainty of the post-World War II through the philosophical questioning and unclear dialogue between Beckett's characters, which mirror the societal anxiety of Beckett's context through their conversation. Thus he gave attention to the positive idea of existence for his audience without "saying" anything as he did so in "Waiting for Godot", when he presented a sort of logic, stunning the Theatre lovers by the integration between the play real life. The world had changed, and would never be the same again after the huge number of victims and the dropping of the bomb. Consequently, philosophical questions about the true meaning of existence appeared and led Beckett to a specific view toward new theatre full of existentialist ideas. (Waiting For Godot, How It Mirrors Cold War Anxiety)

3.3. An Analytical View about the Play: Waiting for Godot

Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" (1952) came to be considered an essential example of theatre of the Absurd. Initially, written in French in 1948 as "En Attendant Godot." Beckett himself translated it into English. Although it is difficult to read and understand, it is one of the most important works of our time. It revolutionized theater in the twentieth century and had a great influence on generations of succeeding dramatists, such as Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard. Consequently, after the appearance of "Waiting for Godot", the theatre was opened in a range of possibilities that playwrights and audiences had never imagined before.

At the beginning, the play was debuted on January 5, 1953, at the Theatre of Babylon in Paris. The English version debuted in August 1955 at the Arts Theatre in London. The first U.S. performance of "Godot" was in January, 1956 at the

Chapter Three: Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' (Thematic chapter)

Coconut Grove Theater in Miami. The first New York performance of the play was on April 19, 1956, at the John Golden Theater. Since then it has been produced worldwide. As we have mentioned above, Beckett's play came to be considered an essential example of what Martin Esslin later called "Theatre of the Absurd," a term that Beckett denied, but which remains a handy description of one of the most important theatre movements of the twentieth century. (Waiting for Godot: Study Guide)

"Waiting for Godot" is a story of two dilapidated bums, Vladimir and Estragon, who fill their days as painlessly as they can, Waiting for someone named Godot, a personage who will explain their interminable insignificance, or put an end to it. This tragicomedy's main action is waiting. Beckett's play is full of unpredictability. The plot structure is perfectly random; there's no certain opening, culmination, and conclusion. In addition, the play is full of unanswered questions of which the most intriguing one is "who is Godot?" The last chapter will cope this problematic.

As an overview about the play, play's characters are only five male characters Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo, Lucky, and the Boy. The play mainly centers on the conflicts between the two protagonists Estragon and Vladimir and their waiting for Godot. They are alike in many ways Vladimir is impatient, and always reluctant to keep still or stay where he is because of boredom or nervousness. He generally walks or stands through the play, While Estragon is mostly motionless, not willing, or not having the strength or power to move. Pozzo and Lucky are the most apparent of slave and master in "Waiting for Godot." They are strongly tied together both physically and metaphysically. The Boy is another character in the play. He is the messenger who arrives near the end of each act to inform Vladimir and Estragon that Mr. Godot will not arrive. The play also includes the issues of absurdity, death, doubt and ambiguity, time, the meaning of life, language and meaning, and the search for self.

In the coming lines, it is suitable to present a brief analysis in which it would be included: the characterization, type of language, setting and the most significant themes.

3-3-1. Characterization

Vladimir, who is one of the two focal characters of the play is apparently more reliable and fully grown. He is nicknamed 'Didi' by Estragon and as Mr. Albert by the boy. Vladimir is a common name of Vladimir I (956-1015) the prince of Kiev, who converted to Christianity from Paganism and introduced Christianity in Russia. Unlike Estragon, he is most effectively recognized by his somewhat more high perception and intellect, willing to display a beautiful social picture. Besides, Vladimir takes the role as though loyal to Godot, who will bring guidance, peace, redemption, salvation. He enjoys and appreciates talk about mental and enthusiastic situations, sometimes alluding to his bounded recollections to understand his life and provide it with sense. He is pragmatic and philosophical in regards to the problems that faced him and his friend Estragon who exercises almost absolute control over him and asserts his supremacy very subtly. Throughout the play, we notice that Vladimir is the most committed the most constant. He reminds Estragon 'Gogo' that they must wait for Godot:

Estragon: Charming spot. (He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.) Inspiring prospects. (He turns to Vladimir.) Let's go.

Vladimir: We can't.

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.

Estragon: (despairingly). Ah! (Pause.) You're sure it was here?

Vladimir: What?

Estragon: That we were to wait. (46-47).

Perhaps this is simply because his memory is sharper. In addition, Vladimir becomes the conscience of mankind, where his friend Estragon is the body (Waiting for Godot Analysis Study Guide).

Chapter Three: Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' (Thematic chapter)

Throughout the play and from the behavior of Vladimir, we can obtain the idea that Vladimir is unable to cope with the suffering of others. For example, the way he flips out when Estragon desires to talk about his “private nightmares”: “don’t tell me!” he yells, followed shortly by “don’t tell me!” and finally by the slightly less emotional “you know I can’t bear that” (17). And this exchange happens three times in *Waiting for Godot*. On the top of that, is when Vladimir explores at Pozzo for mistreating Lucky. “It’s a scandal!” he yells, “flabbergasted”(28). After he is beating Lucky for mistreating Pozzo, which suggests the problem is not so much aversion to slavery as it is an aversion to suffering, of any kind. Vladimir does not want to witness it, hear it or talk about it. Another example in the second act: “was I sleeping,” he asks, “while others suffered?”(84) It shows that Vladimir does not like the suffering of others because he may recognize suffering intellectually; he certainly cannot get a handle on it emotionally, which is probably why hearing the pain of others is so difficult for him (Vladimir and Estragon).

Estragon, his name in French means tarragon that pungent herb use to make pickles and vinegar is the second of the two main characters in the play. He is called Gogo by Vladimir. Estragon seems to be weak and helpless, overly dependent on Vladimir’s protection, security, leadership and rational direction. He is forgetful, forgets their intention with Vladimir because he has a poor memory as he often says in the play: “let’s go,” Vladimir reminds him “we can’t,” Estragon asking “why not,” Vladimir replies “we’re waiting for Godot” (46-47). We observe that they always returned to the same subject because of the weakness of Estragon’s memory and his independent on Vladimir (*Waiting for Godot Characters*).

Estragon is a portrait of physical pain and need. He is first seen complaining of a sore foot. His hunger and thirst is never seen to stop or end. He is physically beaten every night. For instance when ‘Gogo’ is asked by Vladimir: “And they didn’t beat you?” Estragon answers, “Beat me? Certainly they beat me”. (11). His corporeal suffering seems endless and he is trapped in the moment, with no memory of the past and hopes of the future (*Waiting for Godot Study Guide*).

Chapter Three: Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' (Thematic chapter)

In his play, Beckett uses illusions and references to help the reader to understand what each character represents. The two main characters Estragon and Vladimir are represented man as whole and if we separate them, they became two different sides of men. Beckett uses Estragon and Vladimir to represent the physical and mental state of man. On one hand, Estragon represents the physical while Vladimir represents the intellectual side of man because Estragon has his shoes and when he takes off his shoes “he peers inside it, feels about inside it, turn it upside down, shakes it...” (12). This means that Estragon is looking for something from his boot, but he finds difficult to recognize it and this represents man’s side of using physical action to answer question. In the other hand, we observe that Vladimir represents the intellectual side of man because he has his hat and constantly “takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again” (12). We notice that Vladimir’s action of searching for answers in his hat represents his intellectual capability for solving problems. Moreover, both of the trumps are searching for the key to life’s problems.

Throughout the play, it seems that Vladimir is more practical and Estragon is more of a romantic because ‘Gogo’ wants to talk about his dreams, but Vladimir does not want to hear him when he wakes up from falling asleep, he says: “I had a dream.” Vladimir answers with “Don’t tell me” (17).

We observe in the play that Vladimir was more intellect, has the better memory, and is more logical while his friend Estragon depends on him for his life. His insistence that Estragon depends totally on him, probably means that he needs Estragon just as much. The purpose of Beckett about this relationship between the two tramps that he wants for his audiences and readers to understand is that Estragon needs Vladimir to tell him what to do and keep him alive, but Vladimir needs Estragon to need him. In this case it seems that the two trumps need each other, therefore they spend half of their time asking if they should be friends or if they should be better to separate each other. And, as we have come to expect in the play, they never really come to any sort of clear decision. The nature of their relationship is as ambiguous as all else in “Waiting for Godot”. For instance, when

Vladimir wants to hug Estragon, "Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? (He reflects.) Get up till I embrace you," but he cannot get closer to him because Estragon refuses, "(irritably.) Not now, not now"(11). Estragon and Vladimir have a friendship that is bounded by their differences, without one another they would be lost, just like without the intellect side of man, the physical side would be lost, and vice versa (Vladimir in waiting for Godot)

3.3.2. Type of Language

The language in an absurdist drama often goes nowhere. Characters don't understand each other. They usually answer a statement or a question with an absurd comment. The dialogue sometimes seems to be the give-and-take of the classic Abbot and Costello vaudeville routine in which the two comedians are discussing a baseball game. A player named "Who" is on first base. Abbot does not know the name of the player, so he asks Costello, "Who's on first?" Costello says, "That's right, who is on first." Beckett opens "Waiting for Godot" this way. Estragon, who has a sore foot, is attempting to remove his boot. Though he pulls hard, it won't come off. In frustration, he says, "Nothing to be done." (11) Vladimir replies, "I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle." (11) Here is a piece of dialogue of Act II where the two men agree that they are happy in spite of their problems. Estragon asks:

Estragon: What do we do, now that we are happy?

Vladimir: Wait for Godot, [ESTRAGON groans. Silence] Things have changed here since yesterday.

Estragon: And if he doesn't come?

Vladimir: We'll see when the time comes. I was saying that things have changed here since yesterday.

Estragon: Everything oozes.

Vladimir: Look at the tree.

Estragon: It's never the same puss from one moment to the next. (Beckett,56)

The absurdity of the dialogue is the author's way of calling attention to the apparent absurdity of life. For Samuel Beckett, the world moves on its axis, and the people who inhabit it do not always think logically or talk sensibly.

3.3.2. Setting

About the setting, the whole events of the play take shape before the road near a tree, moreover, it starts in one's day evening thereafter it ends in the next one.

3.3.3. Themes

✓ Hope

Vladimir and Estragon are simple tramps. A plant and a carrot are the only materiel they possess. In spite of that, they never give up on life; they do not fall into depression or getting pessimists. Even though they do not know who or where Godot is, however, they wait for him believing that Godot may have an answer to a question that all human beings face: What is the meaning of life?

After the end of each day Godot doesn't appear, Vladimir and Estragon return back to the tree and hoping that Godot would come the next day. That is to say, they don't return frustrated even when does not come. Apparently, because he represents hope. (Waiting for Godot Analysis Study Guide).

✓ Friendship and Dependency

Friendship is hard to be accomplished between the two characters, whereas each one tends to be isolated from the other. Relationships are centered between fear of solitude and an important incapability, this tension is dominant in the play. The problems that keep characters apart differ from physical disgust to ego to a fear of others' pain. (Waiting for Godot Analysis Study Guide).

Despite all of that, Vladimir and Estragon depend on each other to survive. Also, Pozzo is totally dependent on Lucky until the second act when we learn he has gone blind.

✓ **Monotony**

Vladimir and Estragon caught in a circle of repetitive and tedious life. They encounter each other in the first act at a tree to wait for Godot, and then they do the same thing at the second act. Here the boredom would take a shape in the story play. An Irish critic, Vivian Mercer, once wrote in a review of the play, "Nothing happens, twice."

✓ **Humor**

Throughout the play, both tramps are condemned forever to seek a goal that they cannot reach. However, they keep on cheerfulness and humor while trying to reach their goal. They make jokes of their luckless situation.

✓ **The Absurd**

Waiting for Godot is supposed to be the dramatic work that promotes the Theatre of the Absurd. This genre of theatre depicts the existence of man as irrational and meaningless; characters exchange non-sense language that goes nowhere. Therefore, most of the time events rise and collapse obscurely and surprisingly

3.4. The Unknown and Uncertainty in "Waiting for Godot"

The plot of the play based on the theme of unknown and uncertainty because it includes many questions without answers. Esslin sees the play as a production which produces the feelings of uncertainty: "In Waiting for Godot, the feeling of the uncertainty it produces, the ebb and flow of this uncertainty-from the hope of discovering the identity of Godot to its repeated disappointment - are themselves the essence of the play" (45). He means that the hope of meeting Godot by the two tramps makes them disappointed, because they did not meet him before. In other words, Godot is unknown and to meet him is not sure.

The issue of the unknown is appeared clearly in the main character's names. During the play many names are given to Estragon and Vladimir and this makes the audience in the situation of asking many questions about the correct name. The two tramps are not called by the same names. As Estragon is called by Vladimir Gogo but by the others as Adam, and Vladimir is called by Estragon Didi but by the others as Mr. Albert. All of this made the audience situation of nothing can be understood about the names. Thus the issue of the unknown becomes the most important problem in the play (Hansani 20).

The play challenges our consciousness, when uncertainty plays an important role with the memory of the characters. This includes when the tramps meet with the travelers and the messenger, the place, the time and simply everything. In the second act, when Vladimir reminds Pozzo of their meeting yesterday, Pozzo denies it by having no memory of meeting anyone on the previous day: Vladimir asks "And you are Pozzo?" "Certainly I am Pozzo." (82) Pozzo answers, Vladimir asks again "The same as yesterday?" "Yesterday?" Pozzo, Vladimir tells him "We met yesterday. (Silence) Do you not remember?" Pozzo surly "I don't remember having met anyone yesterday. But to-morrow I won't remember having met anyone to-day. So don't count on me to enlighten you." (82). Pozzo's claim, for he has no absolute memory regarding the meeting with the tramps yesterday, makes Vladimir question himself "would that be possible" (39). He is disappointed in the world as it is "The air is full of our crisis" (84), when no one is certain of their memory, tomorrow and life itself. In this manner, everything is uncertain and you cannot believe your own eyes and ears. Vladimir questions himself about his own beliefs because he cannot believe Pozzo's claim for their meeting "That pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be?" (84)

The play also provides the idea that whatever is certain of this moment may turn out to be uncertain in the next moment, and as Estragon insists "No, nothing is certain" (52). In the first act, Pozzo and Lucky were healthy, but in act two, the following day, Pozzo has become blind and Lucky dumb. Pozzo, the master, was "rich, powerful, and certain of himself" (48), the day before, but the following day

he is as deflated as a balloon without air. In only one day both of their lives have changed. Pozzo's dialogue in the second act is an excellent illustration of the uncertainty of life, which is, ironically, one of the few certainties in life.

The ending is not clear in the play, it technically does not end, however, it leaves the reader to wonder about that, because the writer stopped writing. They say they are going to leave, but they do not so.

3.5. Conclusion

Samuel Beckett's plays are carrying a message of the unpleasant human existence, rift with meaningless of human condition. In "Waiting for Godot" the play is centered on two rascals who born into an illogical world and struggled in finding a meaning for themselves and for their lives. They spend the whole of their lives in vain waiting for somebody that never comes.

What we have concluded from this chapter is that Beckett's drama is based on his perception of the human condition, which is, being born and mostly living in pain, suffering ordeals, and the individual's needs and desires are all reduced.

Chapter Four

*From Expectations to
Disappointments in the
Existentialist play
“Waiting for Godot”*

4.1. Introduction

The play of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* reflects the conflict between living by religious and spiritual beliefs, and living by an existential philosophy, this may affirm human being responsibility to find out the significance of life through personal experience in the earthly world. In another word, it is a reflection of human conditions linked to the theme of survival.

This concluding chapter will tackle the current play from three different concerns, firstly, the use of the existentialist and the absurdist ideas tend to domain the play, which deserves to be analyzed. Next, it is recommended to shed more light on the perception of Godot from the Christian view. Then, the issue of waiting, expecting, hoping, and disappointment that represents the main theme of the study as these subjects are inevitable matters to talk about either in *Waiting for Godot* or in the real life of the human being.

4.2. "Waiting for Godot" in Absurd and Existential Dimension

Despite their heroic accommodations, Vladimir and Estragon have lived in a world they could not cope with as they cannot get away from the turmoil that goes with their feeling of purposelessness. It is just as an incomprehensible chaos that makes them wasted upon their internal world. A large portion of their energies towards filling this void sustains their loss of efforts and hesitation and intensify the disjuncture between their thoughts and actions. In fact, they are able of contributing only in temporary significant actions with fragmented communication. However, they hold on their courage; during their best moments they clarify:

ESTRAGON: I wasn't doing anything.

VLADIMIR: Perhaps you weren't. But it's the way of doing it that counts, the way of doing it, if you want to go on living.

ESTRAGON: I wasn't doing anything.

VLADIMIR: You must be happy too, deep down. . . .

ESTRAGON: Would you say so? . . .

VLADIMIR: Say, I am happy.

ESTRAGON: I am happy.

VLADIMIR: So am I.

ESTRAGON: So am I. . . .

VLADIMIR: Wait. . . we embraced. . . . We were happy . . . happy. What do we do now that we're happy. . . Go on waiting. . . Waiting. (Beckett, 55-56)

During their most noticeably bad moments, boredom and ambivalence, anxiety and mutual intimidation tend to take a place: "There are times when I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part." Having quest the world for role models, for anything that may create a feeling of purpose (and their conversations are filled with the wisdom of the ages), their search still unfulfilled. If their past has provided no codes or figures to respect or emulate, their future is similarly disheartening. They will inspire no disciples, peers, or children, for if they miss a consistent belief structure and one's perception of oneself, what heritage could they offer anyone else? Their frequent disability to move "let's go" (They do not move) mirrors their deepest consciousness of their failed efforts to recognize anything right, or clear purpose in life. One needs a sense of direction, a goal in order to act.

The two major characters, Vladimir and Estragon, spend their days remembering their past seeking to understand their existence. They even intend to commit suicide as a attempt to escape that struggle. Nonetheless, both characters are absurdist figures that stay disconnected from the audience. They basically seek for identities and their humor peculiarities. Especially, when it comes to contemplating their suicides. This has a much more humorous effect on the audience rather than tragic. Supposedly, it can be clearly seen in the initial scene of the play when they contemplate hanging themselves:

VLADIMIR: What do we do now?

ESTRAGON: Wait.

VLADIMIR: Yes, but while waiting.

ESTRAGON: What about hanging ourselves?

VLADIMIR: Hmm. It'd give us an erection.

ESTRAGON: (highly excited). An erection! (Beckett, 18)

What takes place latter is the dispute of who ought to hang themselves first. Vladimir recommends Estragon go first since he is lighter and in this way will not break the branch and let the other one alive. The discussion proceeds:

ESTRAGON: (with effort). Gogo light- bough not break- Gogo dead. Didi heavy- bough break- Didi alone. Whereas-

VLADIMIR: I hadn't thought of that.

ESTRAGON: If it hangs you it'll hang anything.

VLADIMIR: But am I heavier than you?

ESTRAGON: So you tell me. I don't know. There's an even chance. Or nearly.

VLADIMIR: Well? What do we do?

ESTRAGON: Don't let's do anything. It's safer.

VLADIMIR: Let's wait and see what he says.

ESTRAGON: Who?

VLADIMIR: Godot.

ESTRAGON: Good idea. (Beckett, 19)

This humorous scene is loaded with the symbol of death, which makes the audiences laugh rather than take both bums seriously. Therefore, the fact that

Estragon and Vladimir decide not to hang themselves recommends a considerably more existentialist, absurdist perspective of death with less tragic.

The paradox of survival in *Waiting for Godot* reveals a reviewing of Camus' "The Myth of Sisyphus." Sisyphus had the decision of deserting his rock at the bottom of the mountain or of consistently moving it to the uppermost, the main certainty being that after the rock fell, once more time he would do this hard, useless act. For Camus, Sisyphus's persistence, despite the meaninglessness of his task, characterized his superiority. By ignoring the absurdity of his destiny and concentrating on the blue of the sky and the texture of the rock, he could exult in his disobedience of fate.

Beckett's people also lack Sisyphus's most minimal assurances, for example, that the rock or the mountain will be present the next day or that time and space are as they appear. It is not only dubious as to whether Beckett's characters' most modest wishes can be fulfilled, but it is unclear if what they speak or hear is the intended message. They lack the most basic certainties upon which defiance depends, and this, along with their voluntary submersion of individual identity in role playing as a means of survival, makes them aliens in Sisyphus's world. The word happiness, used by Camus to finally describe Sisyphus, is, at best, only occasionally applicable to Beckett's figures.

Vladimir and Estragon are convinced that they live a terrible life in a mysterious world, together with their accompanying need to suppose that by one means or another and some time or another that there must be a Godot, who will provide this is the ultimate focus of their daily actions and their request of this hope lies the paradox of their preoccupation in waiting.

The act of survival or waiting turns into Beckett's exposition of the games and rituals people construct in order to pass the hours and years, the accommodations they make to those closest in their lives, the alternation of hope and despair they endure in these accommodations, and the illusions and rejections of illusion that accompany each of these acts. Vladimir and Estragon's relationship are thus geared

to distract them from boredom, to lift depression, and to fight paralysis. Although there are many other ways of surviving a world bereft of meaning, including work, family life, and social action, they have rejected these alternatives, despite scattered evidence in the play that they were onetime considerations.

Vladimir and Estragon have also rejected the more self-indulgent roles that permit the outlet of anger and frustration, those less salutary emotions that accompany one's experience of the void. Masters like Pozzo and servants like Lucky pursue these less admirable roles, of the dictatorial sadist and a submissive masochist; even for them, as Pozzo admits, "the road seems long when one journeys all alone." But Vladimir and Estragon reveal a much more humane relationship, one in which Vladimir assumes even more rational and philosophical role whereas Estragon reveals emotional and instinctual adds. Thus, they can aspire to some egalitarian stability. They may pursue a relatively peaceful and predictable coexistence, unless, of course, an abnormal action disrupts their equanimity, something such as the intrusion of strangers like Lucky and Pozzo. Should this occur, as it does, their masks will fragment, and their less savory aspects will surface and rupture the equilibrium of their relationship.

Consequently, the existential condition sets up the philosophical background of the play, in spite of the fact that Beckett neither answers nor analytically interrogates hypothetical matters. It is in Beckett's rich portrayal of both conscious and unconscious thought, the subject of future chapters, that Godot achieves its great power. That is, similarly reflected in his characters' survival games is the emotional landscape in which their ploys for survival purpose.

4.2. Godot in the Christian Perception

In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir, Estragon, and Godot endure a particular symbolic indication. The association between them recommends God and man relationship. Obviously, Godot is similar to God in pronunciation, which is sufficient to trigger the audience's relationship with God. Needless to say, different

portrayals of Godot in the play can likewise make the readers consider him to be God of Christianity.

From this point of view, Godot has similarities with God. The boy is the Godot's messenger, that is to say, he is the only one who has seen Godot. Consequently, the two tramps once asked him about the color Godot's beard. In a conversation between them.

Vladimir: Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?

Boy: Yes, sir.

Vladimir: Fair or... or black?

Boy: I think it's white, sir.

Vladimir: Christ has mercy on us! (Beckett, 85-86)

It can be deduced from this dialogue that Godot has a white beard that is exactly the image given in the trinity doctrine in the Bible. John recorded he had seen the revived "Savior in Revelation". He wrote, "He has golden belt in his waist, his hair is as white as snow like wool, his eyes are shining like fire, and his feet are glittering as copper. When he speaks, his voice is like flood roaring." (Zeng, 1994, p.696). As this passage describes the appearance of God, It is obviously that God's beard and hair are white as snow, which is precisely similar to the beard and the hair of Godot.

There are depictions about Godot comparable in God in spirit. In the play, Godot is the Savior, or the Punisher, the two characters believe that Godot who takes care of mankind. The tramps also believe that the appearance of Godot would save them. In the other hand, if they cease waiting for Godot, they would be punished by him. The messenger boy confirms that he works for Mr. Godot as a goatherd. His brother, whom Godot beats, is a shepherd who keeps the sheep and he raises his goats. Godot feeds both of them and lets them live in his hayloft. By that means, there are words like this in the Bible of Matthew "When the Son of Man

comes in his glory, and all the angels with him. He will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on

His left." (Zeng, 1994, p. 624). He would favor his people, allowing them to live in his glory as long as they remember the contract God has with mankind.

According to the Christian's belief, individuals lose the care of God and turn out to be spiritually destitute. They exchange nonsense talking in funny movements. However, they are longing for the salvation of God in their bottom of heart. Though it is difficult to restore the relationship between man and his God, God will put man in a retest assuming that he needs man's loyalty. Therefore, what human beings need to do is to repent and pray.

Estragon: what?

Vladimir: Suppose we repented.

Estragon: repented what?

Vladimir: Oh... We wouldn't have to go into the details.

Estragon: Our being born? (Beckett, 13)

Besides, God inspires man according to what he is like, revealing his love to man. As stated by God in Geniuses, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creep upon the earth." (Zeng, 22). According to the Bible, men turn out to be the favorite creature of God. However, the incident of eating the Forbidden fruits leads to the break of relations between man and the creator. Men even refused to be obedient to God and denied to confess the identity of the creature of God. "This is a reversal against creation. The downfall of man discloses that he longs for self-constructed and isolated existence instead of a limited creature. The most basic

point in the breakdown in relations between men and God is that human beings want to go beyond the boundaries made by God." (Xu, 143). the man had done something that dishonored God and was driven out of the Garden of Eden. In the time when *Waiting for Godot* was portrayed, men had become homeless in an uncontrolled world. Thus, man must repent to gain deliverance, and in contrast, God will exhibit his attitude by the behavior of human beings. These following discussion demonstrate the idea:

Estragon: What exactly did we ask him for?

Vladimir: Were you not there?

Estragon: I can't have been listening.

Vladimir: Oh... nothing very definite.

Estragon: A kind of prayer.

Vladimir: Precisely.

Estragon: A vague supplication.

Vladimir: Exactly

Estragon: And what did he reply?

Vladimir: That he's seen.

Estragon: That he couldn't promise anything.

Vladimir: That he'd have to think it over. (Beckett, 19-20)

God accepted repentance from his votaries who regret depends on their behavior. To fall once again into betrayal means the fall of punishment. Man is forced to wait without an end of time. Consequently, and while the play's plot goes on, men have reached the brink of collapse since Godot delays in his coming. They cried out "Help" (78).

Estragon: We'll soon see. Abel! Abel!

Pozzo: Help!

Estragon: Got it in one!

Estragon: Perhaps the other is called Cain! Cain!

Pozzo: Help!

Estragon: He is all humanity. (Silence) Look at the little cloud. (Beckett, 78).

According to the famous story in the Bible, Abel and Cain are the two sons of Adam and Eve; they are the true progenitors of all human beings. The voice of these characters represents a personification of the whole human race of expecting the coming of their savior once more to rue the humanities who endure the heaviness of the world. (The Stories of Holy Bible. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.)

4.3. "Waiting" between Expectation, Hope, and Disappointment

The matter of waiting in this "Waiting for Godot" is fruitless but unavoidable. Waiting is a fundamental feature of the human condition. The tramps are waiting for Godot, as Vladimir says, "In this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come" (Beckett 74). From a personal view, their waiting stands as an absurd behavior, parallel to our real lives, likewise we wait our entire lives for something that makes us satisfied and happy. From time to time one can marvel if waiting is a habit or not because waiting is attached with optimism, and there is no human existence without hope. Certainly, in life there must be logical and functional expectations which one day may be realized. However, it proves like the tramps, which seem to hold irrational expectations waiting for the obscure Godot to come and save them. Even though there is no hope for his arrival, the 'waiting' represents a common theme both in absurdity as well as in reality. Consequently, Godot looks as if he is the only remaining hope in the lives of the tramps because for them, Godot hides the true interpretation of their existence behind his presence. Thus, the tramps in fact consider that Godot can save them from their suffering and anxiety. Angela Hotaling has the same idea of the tramps hope on Godot, hold to clarify it in these few lines:

The characters Vladimir and Estragon anxiously wait for Godot to come. Their lives are spent waiting. They think that when Godot finally comes, they will be fulfilled or something. By what Godot will bring purpose and meaning to Estragon and Vladimir's life, and nothing else seems to have the ability to do this (11-12).

The two characters' expectations to encounter Godot keep their desire to struggle for their existence as Vladimir says, "Let's wait and see what he (Godot) says...I'm curious to hear what he has to offer" (Beckett 19).

The main preoccupation of the two tramps is passing time waiting as possible as they can mainly up to the sunset then they leave. They perceive the ridiculousness of their daily tasks; they also realize that they are simply filling up hours with a meaningless activity. In this regard, they function mechanically, that is to say, it is a compulsion. They are obliged to remain where they are though they would not want to, and would like to give up. This may be known as moral compulsion, for the reason that it includes the possibilities of punishment and reward. If Godot appears, their existence would encounter a new factor. However, they would surely miss him if they leave. Therefore, their waiting comprises a particular element of hope, but in case they abandon their wait, is there any place they can go to? The answer is absolutely 'NO'. They have no alternative but waiting and keep their hopes up. Consequently, with this infamous refrain "Let's go."--"We can't."--"Why not?"--"We're waiting for Godot."--"Ah."(46-47), Samuel Beckett introduces how a strange world of Waiting for Godot is.

Vladimir and Estragon expect that the appearance of Godot will bring them comfort in their lives because he is supposed to save them. Estragon asks "If he comes?" Vladimir answers "We'll be saved" (88). They put forward to commit suicide, then they abandon and decide to wait. The play sets with Estragon's words "Nothing to be done" (11) and concludes with the idea that the tramps may want to spend their time waiting for nothing. This turns to be clear when Vladimir says "I'm beginning to come round to that opinion" (11), and throughout the play whatever they decide, they come back to the same conclusion, "Nothing to be done" (11).

Angela Hotaling noticed: "Not only is the waiting difficult, but figuring out what to do while waiting is difficult" (4). However, Vladimir's strong desire for hope surfaces in his dialogues, "We wait. We are bored. No, don't protest, we are bored to death" (Beckett 75). For this reason they choose to wait for Godot.

The play suggests that "waiting" is the only choice the tramps have if they want to continue their lives. Likewise, the tramps are inactively waiting. Esslin points out:

Waiting is to experience the action of time, which is constant change. And yet, as nothing real ever happens, that change is in itself an illusion. The ceaseless activity of time is self-defeating, purposeless, and therefore null and voids (52).

It appears to recommend that the circle of coming and going is the only option to the two bums, and "hope" and "waiting" are unavoidable fact of this constant circle. (Waiting for Nothing)

The two tramps frequently have to remind each other of the fact that they are waiting and of what they are waiting for. In fact, they are not waiting for anything. But, exposed as they are to the regular continuation of their existence, they cannot help concluding that they must be waiting, and exposed to their continuous waiting, they cannot help supposing that they are waiting for something. It is pointless to ask who or what the expected Godot is. Godot is nothing but the name for the fact that life which goes on purposelessly as wrongly understood to mean as 'waiting' or as 'waiting for something'. What seems to be a positive attitude of the two tramps amounts to a double negation; their existence is meaningless and they are unable to know the meaninglessness of their existence. Beckett himself confesses that he was concerned with "Waiting" more than "Godot". (Being without Time)

The same critic Angela Hotaling explains the tramp's hope on Godot as: "The characters Vladimir and Estragon anxiously wait for Godot to come. Their lives are spent waiting. They suppose that when Godot will finally come, they will be fulfilled or something. By, what? Godot will bring purpose or meaning to Estragon and Vladimir's life, and nothing else seems to have the ability to do this". (11-12)

she wonders what the two characters really expect him to do for them. They keep on waiting, but for Godot, but Godot never comes to meet them. Godot does not appear

In The play, they make the uncertain assumption that there might be some hope in their existence, which is the reason behind not giving up waiting for him:

Estragon: And If he doesn't come?

Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.

Estragon: And the day after tomorrow.

Vladimir: Possibly.

Estragon: And so on.

Vladimir: The point is.

Estragon: Until he comes (16).

The hope to meet Godot by the two tramps are not waiting to meet him, but waiting to wait for him as their lives will probably not have any meaningful events happening except waiting for him.

The play reveals how man is thrown back into loneliness and inactivity. The two tramps waiting for Godot may be exemplifying human beings who's expecting in vain for the hope of salvation, it is called "hopelessly hoping". The main concern in the play is not Godot, but waiting, since the act of waiting is considered as central and fundamental aspect of the human lives. Human beings always wait for something and Godot merely embodies the objective of their waiting; an event, a thing, a person, death. Critics have suggested that Godot is happiness through the last sixty years, an eternal life, love, death, silence, hope, time, God and many other things.

The tramps seem to be disappointed after they have been manipulated for "Fifty years perhaps" (51). During the play, despite the fact that Vladimir urges Estragon

not to lose hope on Godot, Godot's absence makes Vladimir disappointed, and depressed when they do not get what they are waiting for, he holds:

Or for night to fall. (Pause.) We have kept our appointment and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much? (74).

Since their only hope vanished, they become hopeless. This lead them to came up with the idea of hanging themselves.

Beckett employs the common theme of "human condition, and man's despair at being unable to find a meaning in existence" (Esslin 45) as universal theme, when trying to reflect the men's desire to understand the meaning of life in "Waiting for Godot". Mainly, the tramps attempt to find a meaning for their lives by forming their own pattern depend on their regular routine. Thus, the man will get stray in a world of perplexity if he is unable to find his own pattern, whereas, he is hoping to recognize the meaningful life that he has been expecting. Waiting for Godot tells story of two vagrant men hopelessly expecting to find meaning for their existence, and continuously hoping to encounter a mysterious person called "Godot", who is apparently the only one to instruct them getting out of their actual situation. In order to accomplish this hope, they create the pattern of "Waiting" for the sake of representing the meaning of their lives; since they intensively consider that their lives will find a meaning if they meet Godot. But, they would turn out to be hopelessly disappointed if they meet a bad aspect from Godot. "The real despair underlying Waiting for Godot is the meaninglessness of waiting, especially in the face of a Godot, who may never come" (Rovira 5).

In his play Beckett introduces the words "Nothing to be done" as opening words. These words repeated again and again during the play. Estragon sitting on a low mound tries his best to take off one of his boots that hurts his leg very badly. Exhausted of his failing attempts at taking out his boot he says, "Nothing to be done" pointing to his inability to his boot. Vladimir and his fellow tramps, which come there after his friend takes up the remark of Estragon in a larger context referring to the utter helplessness and hopelessness of human life on earth. "Nothing

to be done" is the prevailing words of the play, which wrings out all the absurd elements of the human existence without any direction or purpose. This also manifests the principle of the "Absurd Drama" which reveals the absurdity and the boredom of life.

Besides, as we have talked about Godot's perception before, the play is inspired by the Myth of Sisyphus. Sisyphus constantly rolling up a rock made by marble block to the top of the hill, though he was mindful that it never reaches the top, which is rather similar to play *Waiting for Godot*. The play is an allegory of one's deplorable consciousness of one's self, the self that is caught up in the unending procedure of decay and destruction.

To conclude, play first of all deals with the theme of hoping against hope which is an inevitable human condition. It delivers a hidden message to those who are torn between their needs and desires: "Blessed are those who do not hope, for they shall not be disappointed" (Alexander Pope). An individual with reasonable expectations rarely turns to be disappointed, and if he has no expectations, he will have no disappointments. The individual is confined in the midst of the absurdity of human being that stems from the huge inconsistency between needs and desires or requirements and hopefulness of individuals.

4.4. Conclusion

Samuel Beckett's play is filled with meaninglessness of human condition. In other words, it centered on absence of meaning, and within this meaninglessness, Beckett's characters struggled to find a meaning for themselves and for their lives. They are born into an irrational world. They live out their lives waiting for an explanation that never comes, and this explanation might be only a product of their imagination.

Beckett's drama is based on the perception of human conditions, that is, being born and mostly living in pain, suffering ordeals, a short rough and unpleasant existence. Man's needs and desires are all reduced.



General Conclusion



General Conclusion

No one can deny that Beckett's master piece *waiting for Godot* is one of the most influential works that enriches modern literature. It is commonly agreed that the theatre of absurd was a pre-made product of the tragedies and values decline western communities suffered from after two world wars, leaving humanity sinking in nowhere, searching for idealism, meaning and existence that sense is the clue to solve the complicated puzzle of life, human position in comparison to both creatures and the creature, which men are supposed to satisfy.

Waiting for Godot is another reflection of human need for a supernatural entity that surpasses his abilities to reveal the unknown or to change the reality. That entity they believe is there well somewhere to take care of their dreams and imaginative future they would like to live in with specific details that may sound perfect.

Another internal disturbance come from one self-esteem and sense of achievement that seems to be dramatically reduced and covered with dust of disappointment and irrationality. This can be seen as a deep desire for peace and self-recognition in a world that is rude following a pure savage instinct that cannot be controlled unless the supreme power would intervene. Indeed the study of the absurd literature is a profound prove of human weakness and dependency to hope of any kind, whether it exists or not and whether it may meet one's expectations or not. The story we have been analysing is merely a story we all experience at some period of time where we keep waiting for the unknown waiting for any kind of help, salvation or a modest attention and appreciation of deeds, so we can spot our existence in the surrounding habitat and even more important to detect the spiritual power we must admit to maintain peace of mind and a sense of belongingness.

The story also portrayed how Searching for self-identity in a controversial world full of challenges and bad people can be a hard task without escape some

General Conclusion

scary details about our daily life, meanwhile getting attached to some childish dreams we sincerely hope to be the vivid present we will be happy living in.

In conclusion, although some critics look at Beckett's work as meaningless, one can still feel how desperate and weak we are, how needy we are for a dream to live for a modest happiness we scarify for in a world that is no more a safe place to live in .

Biography of the Playwright

Samuel Barclay Beckett (13 April 1906 – 22 December 1989) was an Irish avant-garde novelist, playwright, theatre director, and poet, who lived in Paris for most of his adult life and wrote in both English and French. His work offers a bleak, tragicomic outlook on human nature, often coupled with black comedy and gallows humor.

Beckett is widely regarded as among the most influential writers of the 20th century. He is considered one of the last modernists. As an inspiration to many later writers, he is also sometimes considered one of the first postmodernists. He is one of the key writers in what Martin Esslin called the "Theatre of the Absurd". His work became increasingly minimalist in his later career.

Beckett was awarded the 1969 Nobel Prize in Literature "for his writing, which—in new forms for the novel and drama—in the destitution of modern man acquires its elevation". He was elected Saoi of Aosdána in 1984.

Summary of the Play

Waiting for Godot begins with two men on a barren road by a leafless tree. These men, Vladimir and Estragon, are often characterized as "tramps," and soon it is seen that the world of this play is operating on its own set of rules, its own system where nothing happens, nothing is certain, and there's never anything to do. Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for Godot, a man or perhaps a deity. The tramps can't be sure if they've met Godot, if they're waiting in the right place, if this is the right day, or even whether Godot is going to show up at all. While they wait, Vladimir and Estragon fill their time with a series of mundane activities (like taking a boot on and off) and trivial conversations (turnips, carrots) interspersed with more serious reflection (dead voices, suicide, the Bible).

The tramps are soon interrupted by the arrival of Lucky, a man/servant/pet with a rope tied around his neck, and Pozzo, his master, holding the other end of the long rope. The four men proceed to do together what Vladimir and Estragon did earlier by themselves: namely, nothing.

Lucky and Pozzo then leave so that Vladimir and Estragon can go back to doing nothing by themselves. Vladimir suggests that this is not the first time he is met with Lucky and Pozzo, which is surprising, since they acted like strangers upon arrival. Then again, Estragon can't even remember a conversation ten lines after it happens. So the nothing is interrupted by the arrival of the Boy, who reports to Vladimir that Godot isn't coming today, but will be there tomorrow. Except not, since Vladimir's comments suggest the Boy has said this before.

Estragon and Vladimir talk about suicide some more and then resolve to leave the stage, since it's nightfall and they no longer have to wait for Godot. Of course, having resolved to leave, neither man moves, and the curtain closes on Act I.

The curtain opens for Act II which you will soon see is remarkably like Act I. The men still sit around waiting for Godot and try to fill the idle hours in the meantime. Lucky and Pozzo show up, only this time Lucky has gone mute and Pozzo is blind. They putz around the stage for a while, and Pozzo declares that,

having lost his eyes, he now has no sense of time. Lucky declares nothing, because he's mute.

Vladimir gets rather poetic in the meantime, wondering if maybe he's sleeping, agreeing with Pozzo's claim that life is fleeting, and concluding that habit is the great deadener of life. Pozzo and Lucky leave again, just in time for the Boy to show up right on cue and tell Vladimir that Godot isn't coming today, but will be there tomorrow. Vladimir and Estragon contemplate suicide, but have no rope (they have in mind to hang themselves from the barren tree, since it's the only prop around that could lend itself to such an endeavor). The men resolve to leave, since it is nightfall and they no longer have to wait for Godot, but neither man moves and the curtain falls. The play ends.

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