



## A STUDY OF ABSURDISM IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S *WAITING FOR GODOT*

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### Abstract

Samuel Beckett was born in the year 1906, Dublin, Ireland in a Catholic society. He reformed the entire idea of dramatization. *Waiting for Godot* is an incredible landmark throughout the entire existence of English theater. First written in the year 1953 it is a drama in two acts by Irish author Samuel Beckett. It was a genuine development in dramatization and the first dramatic achievement of Theater of the Absurd. Beckett's commitment to this genre permits us to call him an expert and the father of this genre. The aim of this study is to trace out the elements of absurdism in Beckett's masterpiece *Waiting for Godot* (tragicomedy). While different playwrights have also contributed enough but still Samuel Beckett remains its most transcending figure. The entire play comprises of many discussions between Vladimir and Estragon, who kept on waiting for the appearance of Godot, who constantly sends word that he will show up soon though not at all does.

**Keywords:** absurdity, existentialism, nihilism, confusion, Godot,

Absurd plays attacks the very existence of man where he feels himself in tatters stuck between infinities and odds. The plays by the absurdist dramatists regularly start at a subjective focus and end similarly as discretionarily. Such plays mirror the discretionary and nonsensical nature of life. In an absurd play, there is no start, no center, no closure, and no proof of any contention and disagreement at all. Also, there are hardly any demonstrations of valor, determination and the magnificence of human instinct. Dramatists of Absurdism manage the life of human beings which they discover of incongruity and inappropriateness with its environmental factors. Such plays depict human life as meaningless, repetitive and futile.

In this play nothing is happening, both the characters Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo) are perpetually waiting for Godot.

Vladimir: He said Saturday. (Pause.) I think.

Estragon: You think.

Vladimir: I must have made a note of it. (He fumbles in his pockets, bursting with miscellaneous rubbish.)

Estragon: (very insidious). But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? (Pause.) Or Monday?

(Pause.) Or Friday?

Vladimir: (looking wildly about him, as though the date was inscribed in the landscape). It's not possible!

Estragon: Or Thursday? (p. 8)

In the play we are not told who Godot is and what Vladimir and Estragon truly anticipate from him, for what purpose they are waiting and whether Godot will ever turn up to them or not. The whole play revolves around waiting for Godot only and the repetitive mind-numbing routine of both the characters with a fresh hope every morning. In this play, the author talks about the emptiness of the modern world. The characters like Estragon, Vladimir, Lucky, and Pozzo are seen battling with the madness and absurdity of involvement. As Nealon says that, "*Waiting for Godot* is an attack on modernism with its ideological and Grand Narrative that claims to interpret the world. Estragon and Vladimir are trapped by their modernist nostalgia for legitimation in Godot" (1992, p. 51).

The Absurd play as a type depends on the fundamentals summed up by Albert Camus in his 1942 essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" in which he says that there is a deep conflict between what we want from our life and what we receive. The pathetic predicament of Sisyphus (an absurd hero) always rolling a stone up a slope, is the representative of our everyday repetitive routine. Although, he is fully mindful of the fact that it will never arrive at the top of the hill, is the perfect and an ideal illustration for the play *Waiting for Godot* as well.

Existentialism according to Sartre emphasizes more on man's existence and all other label comes after. He says that man cannot be confined by the so called societal principles but rather he should find his own meaning after interpreting his life which differs from person to person. Because the very idea of Existentialism begins from the view that in our period, man no longer realize his self-importance. As Hutchings declares, "the epistemological principle of uncertainty and the inability in the modern age to find a coherent system of meaning, order, or purpose by which to understand our existence and by which to live" (1991, p. 28). Vladimir and Estragon are characterized not corresponding to time or social conditions, but to human desires for a feeling of

direction. An individual is not "free in order to die" (Blackham, 136) and like everyman they are caught in the process of birth and death. It was another sort of play entirely unpredictable in regard of its portrayal and the development of its plot. We have no anecdotal information regarding the personality and character of Vladimir and Estragon. Their manner is sign of weariness and shows irrelevance of human existence. In this way, in *Waiting for Godot* everything can be gazed upward as a similitude for the human circumstance at its generally stupid and silly. There is nothing else than absurdity all over the play.

Estragon: why don't we hang ourselves?

Vladimir: with what?

Estragon: you haven't got a bit of rope?

Vladimir: no

Estragon: then we can't

Vladimir: let's go

Estragon: oh, wait, there is my belt

Vladimir: it's too short

Estragon: you could hang on to my legs

Vladimir: and who would hang onto mine?

Estragon: true (Becket, p. 42)

What is befalling them doesn't appear to be ensuing either on a particular situation or on their standards of conduct. An Absurd play presents such a world that has lost both its reason and significance. The term applies to the existence of man and his pathetic predicament. The very demonstration of expounding on depression or the wreck of life is an endeavor by the absurdist author to have a sort of order on confusion and perplexity.

Estragon: Let's hang ourselves immediately!

Vladimir: From a bough? (They go towards the tree.) I wouldn't trust it.

Estragon: We can always try.

Vladimir: Go ahead.

Estragon: After you.

Vladimir: No no, you first.

Estragon: Why me?

Vladimir: You're lighter than I am. (p.10)

The possibility of the crazy state of man has emerged mostly from the need to give a clarification of man's purposeless presence in the world which is by all accounts without any importance and meaning. Absence of direction in everything is the main topic of scholars in the Theater of the Absurd which symbolizes all pointless human exertion on earth and shapes the plot of the plays. The writer of the ludicrous perspective sees life existentially and communicates the pointlessness of the human condition by surrendering normal things. Vladimir and Estragon are heroes of the tenet that life should have significance even in a clearly unimportant circumstance. To state that they signify "nihilists" is absolutely wrong and in complete contrast of what Beckett needs to show in reality. Beckett isn't presents any form agnosticism, however the powerlessness of man to be a skeptic even in a circumstance of absolute sadness. Friedrich Nietzsche puts it even better when he says that: "suicide is the deed of nihilism" (1968, p. 143). The majority of the dramas articulate a feeling of miracle and lack of understanding at the worthlessness of human life. Thus, they don't believe in the chance of any goal of the issues they present.

According to Danish theologian and thinker Soren Kierkegaard Existentialism "is a rejection of all purely abstract thinking, of a purely logical or scientific philosophy; in short, a rejection of the absoluteness of reason" (Roubiczek, 10). According to existentialism enduring pain is an indivisible piece of human state. Jean Existentialism is subsequent aimlessness and vanity of human existence and activity which might be characterized as a way of thinking dependent on the absurdity and foolishness of the universe.

The entire similarity to consistent development and connecting of thoughts in a mentally reasonable contention is deserted and rather the illogicality and ludicrousness of involvement is changed to the stage. Paul Sartre was of the vision that all human exercises are alike and foreordained to crush. Both the characters namely Vladimir and Estragon are moving ahead in spite of

their inaction and futility of their reality in light of the fact that their life has gotten inconsequential, demolished by their propensity for inaction or of acting without their own drive, they have lost their self discipline to choose not to go on, their opportunity to end it all. Whatever the case may be but they don't have a place with the sad category of the individuals who think about self destruction.

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