

Absurdism: a focus on the incomprehensibility of the disorderly world

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“Nothing to be done”, “Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful!”

Beckett.

Abstract

The first and foremost which is necessary to understand what Absurd' means. Ionesco, one of the Absurd Dramatists, defined the Absurd in the following way: 'Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man's lost, all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless'. Dictionary defines 'Absurd' as 'out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, illogical. All these meanings applied to the Absurd Drama may be disputable. But it certainly is out of harmony with the human condition. In this paper, the main goal is to reflect the incomprehensibility of the world that is full of chaos and disorder , from the ancient to the present day . Man is always struggling to find his existence, he only takes the needs for himself while forgetting the world how it is without any meaning, without any proper answer. The dramatist who are regarded as belonging to the theatre of the absurd were not the conscious members of any group or literary movement. They only shared certain common attitudes and a similar interpretation of the human predicament.

Keywords : Absurdism, Existentialism, meaninglessness, chaos, Nothingness, modern man.

The Absurd Drama in England is more or less imported from European countries, particularly from France. The Theatre of the Absurd is generally represented by playwrights Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter. The American Playwright Edward Albee is also supposed to be one of this group. Albert Camus's novel, *The Outsider*, illustrates his philosophy in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which underlies the conflict generated by Absurdity. Some critics believe Camus to be the philosopher of the Absurd, though Camus himself has denied it. But his *The Myth of Sisyphus* describes the condition of Absurdity.

Sisyphus in Hell, is rolling a huge stone up the hill, as it comes down again and again. Camus uses the analogy of the Greek myth to demonstrate the futility of existence. He saw Sisyphus as an “absurd” hero with a pointless existence. Camus defines the absurd as the tension that comes from man's determination to discover purpose and order in a world which state firstly refuses to provide evidence of either. The hero in Camus's novel *The Outsider*, is a typical example of the "Absurd", neither good nor evil, moral or immoral. **Like the hero of *The Outsider*, *Caligula* in the play of the same name written by Camus, is the forerunner of the Absurd character. For *Caligula*, the world is full of lies and self-deception. He realizes that life has no meaning. For him good and evil are the same. Though Camus and Sartre talked about the meaninglessness of the world and expressed their disillusionment with it, they put this in their fiction in a very logical and lucid manner.** But, the Absurd Drama proper was involved in presenting absurdity itself rather than explaining it or talking about it.

It was Martin Esslin who popularized the term in his famous book *Theater of Absurd* where the term is applied to a group of dramatist whose work emerged into prominence in the early 1950s. The movement of absurdism however emerged in France after the World war II as a rebellion against the traditional values and beliefs of Western cultures and literature. It Began with the existentialist writers like Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus and eventually included other writers such as Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet ,Edward Albee and Harold Pinter.The Post-World War II Absurdist movement centered on the idea that life is irrational, illogical, incongruous, and without reason (Esslin xix). Political turmoil, scientific breakthrough and social upheaval shaped the cultural context of their work The genre constitutes that there is often no real storyline; instead there is a series of free floating images which influences the way.

The historical context in which ‘Theater of the Absurd’ sprung from the social, political and economic changes and issues of the World War II era. The rise of fascism, the horrors of WWII and the Holocaust inspired the philosophical concept of existentialism by highlighting the insignificance of an individual’s actions. Concurrently, the philosophical movement of existentialism, which questioned the meaning attributed to human action in relation to interaction within society, religion and politics became relevant in the discussion of Absurdist Theater in the post- World War II period.in which an audience interprets a play. There is a focus on incomprehensibility of the world or attempt to rationalize an irrational ,disorderly world. Language acts as a barrier to communication which in turn isolates the individual even more, making speech almost futile. In other words, absurdist drama create an environment where people are isolated clown-like characters blundering their way through life because they don't know what else to do. Oftentimes characters stay together simply because they are afraid to be alone in Such an incomprehensible world.

When **Freiderich Nietzsche** pronounced, **“God is Dead,”** he meant **“the time has come to overcome man (Appignanesi146).”** Nietzsche criticized how the modern world, and modern man, no longer held the need for a God. Together, the ideas of Camus and Nietzsche suggest that the concept of ‘God’ cannot be significant in a world in which the absurd is embraced; a belief in a God requires submission to the idea that there is a way of rationalizing existence. We find that Absurdism rejects this idea and because the concept of ‘God’ cannot be negotiated with Absurdism religion can no longer have a place in society.

This newly godless society defined by absurd qualities and existentialist tendencies was popularized by the works of Samuel Beckett, who addresses the global existential crisis set in place by World War II. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for nothing in particular, Godot, being a convenient excuse for their purposeless existence under a bare tree. Beckett inherently critiques Aristotle’s poetics in his distorted use of character, degradation of language (diction) and lack of plot. The main characters, Vladimir and Estragon talk in circles for the entirety of the play discussing how they are awaiting the arrival of ‘Godot’ and are unsure if they are in the right place at the right time. **The sense of time in the play is absent. They continually resign themselves to the futility of their situation, reiterating** the lines- “Nothing to be done”, **“Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful!”** This corroborates (proves as true) the existentialist view that human beings exist in an indifferent and “absurd” universe in which meaning is not generated by the natural order, but an unstable, provisional meaning to life is provided by human beings’ actions and interpretations.

He has created a world in which Godot never comes and Mr. Knott lives up to his name in which it is perfectly normal to pass one's time in an urn or a dustbin up to the neck in sand or face down in the mud. This is seen in the skull-like room in 'Endgame suggesting a world that is devastated, post-atomic and so empty that a solitary human being is seen like a monstrous intrusion.

Ionesco does not say that communication by language is impossible, but insists that it is very difficult to make oneself understood. He further argues that society itself is the barrier between the human beings making communication impossible. The language of society, he claims, to be nothing but cliché’s and empty formulas and slogans. His play *Rhinoceros* (1958) had a world premiere, which earned him international fame. *Rhinoceros* exposes the limitations of logic, and absurdity reigns as the dominating force in the universe. The "epidemic" of the rhinoceroses serves as a convenient allegory for the mass uprising of Nazism and fascism before and during World War II. Ionesco's main reason for writing *Rhinoceros* is not simply to criticize the horrors of Nazis, but to explore the mentality of those who so

easily succumbed to Nazism.

If we take the notion of **Heidegger's Nothingness** refers to the troubling concept of nothing we can relate properly about the insignificance of human existence. we can't imagine nothingness. It's somewhat considered to be a concept, but it's a concept with no content, but we can think of nothingness is a black screen. In **Heidegger's magnum opus, he places nothingness as the representative of death.** Because nothingness is something that you can't comprehend anything at all, humans generally shun from thinking about it even though it is apparent that our lives are moving towards this incomprehensible nothingness day by day as the world is totally disorder out of our knowledge.

Here we could have the proper example, from Tom Stoppard's meta theatre, his outstanding efforts in absurd play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* .From the very beginning of the play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are moving towards an inescapable fate. The play begins with Guildenstern and Rosencrantz tossing coins. We quickly learn that every single coin tossed has been coming up heads, and they continue to land on heads every single time (Stoppard 12). In this way, Stoppard establishes right from the start that normal expectations cannot be applied to this world. Normal application of logic and probability would suggest that it would be impossible or at least highly implausible for a succession of flipped coins to land on heads eighty-five times, but the reality of the situation here does not line up with any expected outcome. For most of the play, they wander around the stage utterly confused as to where they are or what they are doing. Their inability to find meaning as they march unknowingly to their final destination becomes increasingly evident through the structure of events within the play. Their actions and ultimate end reflect humankind's struggle to find meaning and rationalize its existence while simultaneously being destined to die, unable to escape mortality by any means.

our freedom as human beings is also a form of nothingness. While death is the representative of nothingness, nothingness is a merely a property of deaths. We can't know who or what will prop up in our way. We can't expect the unexpected, as much as we can plan. We can't rely on probabilities for a certain course of action. All these are premonitions of our progress to death, the ultimate nothingness of being. Human freedom is not of his own .**Nothing in this world is being comprehensively orderly, we are never able to explain the significance of any event or come to any conclusion according to our expectations.we are not free to perform willingly as we are being as predestined to the inevitable end . Our existence is insignificant as nothing.**

The goal of absurdist drama is not solely to depress audience with negativity but an attempt to bring them closer to the reality and help them understand their own meaning in life whatever that may be .Samuel

Beckett's understanding of this philosophy best characterizes how we should perceive our existence as. he says" nothing is more real than nothing".

The Theatre of the Absurd' shows the world as an incomprehensible place. The spectators see the happenings on the stage entirely from the outside, without understanding the meaning of the strange pattern of events. This makes it impossible for the spectator to secure identification of the characters; in place of emotional identification, there is often a puzzled critical attention to the irrational side to human existence revealed through an apparently logical surface. In dialogue, these plays consist of mechanical clichés on a circular mechanical repetition of stereotyped phrases raising questions about the stereotyped emotions that we go through in our life. Naturally we are forced to look at ourselves: how many meaningless clichés do we use in our day-to-day conversations? If **these characters are mere marionettes, helpless puppets without any will of their own, are we not too in our organized world, incapable of** genuine initiative, of exercising power to decide our destiny? The spectators of the Theatre of the Absurd' are, therefore confronted with a grotesquely heightened, but essentially true, picture of this world — a world without faith, without meaning, without genuine freedom of will .“*We’re actors... We pledged our identities, secure in the conventions of our trade, that someone would be watching. And then, gradually, no one was. We were caught, high and dry*” (Stoppard 64). The Absurd theatre is thus the true and representative theater of our time.

Absurd Drama tries to illustrate, and which is the feeling starkly generated by the horror of the two world wars and gross failure of the religion that was supposed to give meaning to human life. Esslin tries to link the post-war Absurd Theatre to what Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll wrote. The Absurd Theatre does not claim to satirize or criticize; it simply presents the meaningless human condition.

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