



RESEARCH ARTICLE

BECKETT'S ABSURDIST PERSPECTIVE ON EXISTENCE: A CLOSER LOOK AT "ENDGAME"

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ABSTRACT

Endgame by Samuel Beckett is a perplexing piece of theatre by any standard. Because the entire production is confined to a single room in which a blind and wheelchair-bound man named Hamm has abstract, strange dialogue with his caretaker, Clov, the actual events in the play are very limited. Because there isn't much else going on, audience members are left looking for meaning in Hamm and Clov's rambling conversations, which frequently allude to the fact that the world outside Hamm's room has ended or turned to nothing. Despite this, the stories and asides offered by each of these characters never lead to a greater sense of meaning. In this regard, Beckett challenges audience members to piece together an overarching narrative that simply does not exist in the world of the play, because neither Hamm's nor Clov's stories cohere in meaningful, cogent ways. As a result, audience members are left with nothing but the simple—but strange—interactions that occur onstage. Samuel Beckett's absurdist view of existence is the subject of this article, which focuses on his play "Endgame." By employing the perspectives of distinguished critics along with the authors' own analysis of Beckett's literary heritage, it is hoped that this will clarify how his works—with "Endgame" serving as a case study—represent absurdity, human misery, and the meaninglessness of life.

INTRODUCTION

Given how weird and surprising Beckett's works are for a reader of the 20th century, it is completely impossible to relate to him in an unequivocal way—to love or not love, to admire or dismiss. A few of the early critics of philosophy, including Sartre and Theodor Adorno, were admirers of Samuel Beckett. Adorno praised Beckett's refusal to oversimplify concepts in his works, while Sartre praised his ability to show the absurdities of existence. However, certain critics, like as Georg Lukács, had a different opinion, calling Beckett's work "decadent" and criticizing him for what they saw as a lack of realism. A sizable corpus of writing devoted to Beckett continues to shed light on various aspects of his life and work in spite of the differing viewpoints. He has had a tremendous influence on theater, bringing a unique viewpoint to the field, and his plays are regarded as groundbreaking in the field of absurd theater. Analysis of Beckett's work has been done from formal, philosophical, structural, and theoretical angles. As a result, the analysis of Beckett's writings has developed into a rich and varied conversation in conversations about the writers of the twentieth century. Even though it may seem overwhelming to go through more than fifty years of criticism in-depth, the academic literature on Beckett offers insightful information on how the criticism has evolved over time, combining contributions from other languages and critique traditions.

Main Body: It can be difficult to comprehend Samuel Beckett's plays, who is considered as one of the most mysterious absurdist of the 20th century. Notably, prominent critics like Hugh Kenner, John Fletcher, and Ruby Cohn have recognized Beckett's interest in Cartesian duality, his formal experimentation, and his ties to the writings of Dante Alighieri and Arnold Geulincx. Cohn's "The Comic Gamut" and Kenner's "Flaubert, Joyce, and Beckett: The Stoic Comedians" (1) are especially important to our theory. These works of literature have contributed significant contributions to delving into Beckett's sense of humor, maintaining that this essential facet of his writings receives adequate scrutiny rather than being overlooked by interpretations that primarily highlight his viewed nihilism or esotericism (2); (1). Furthermore, Samuel Beckett was positioned alongside his contemporaries by Martin Esslin's seminal work, "The Theatre of the Absurd" (3), which also significantly contributed to the popularization of Beckett's viewpoint on the human condition and the significant formal influence of "absurd" drama (3). However, Beckett offered an insightful response when asked if artistic pursuits could thrive without strict ethical guidelines: "Moral values are elusive and defy precise definition. To define them necessitates making value judgments, which is an impossibility. This is why I've never subscribed to the notion of the 'theatre of the absurd.' Such a label implies the imposition of evaluative judgments, a task that cannot even be applied to discussions of truth. This quandary is part of the overall existential anguish"

(4). When the dramatist first started his work, he began to explore themes of poverty, failure, exile, and loss. He explored the extremes of hopelessness in his plays and showed how the human spirit can persevere in the face of enormous adversity. Beckett's characters personify this attitude, and his words clearly convey it: "There's nothing funnier than unhappiness, I'll grant you that... Yes, yes, it's the most comical thing in the world. And we laugh, we laugh heartily at first. But it's always the same thing. Yes, it's akin to that humorous tale we've heard too many times, still amusing, yet no longer evoking laughter" (5). It is realistic to describe all of Beckett's plays as having a deeply melancholic psychological tone. After this, Beckett gradually changed the way he wrote, making all of the parts simpler to the point where his plays became more unique and minimalist. Works like "Eh Joe" and "Footfalls", both of which are simple yet they capture important facets of the human experience, are good examples of this progression.

In his prose works, including "Fizzles," "Company," "Ill Seen Ill Said," and "Worstward Ho," Beckett continued to explore into the issue of memory and its impact on the confined self. In his final verse, in "What is the Word," he wrestled with the difficulty of locating the right words to convey one's innermost sentiments and thoughts. Samuel Beckett's literary contributions extend beyond the realm of plays, encompassing novels of considerable significance. Works such as "Malone", "Malone Dies" and "The Unnamable" stand as exemplars of literary excellence. In parallel with his dramatic pieces, these novels convey a prevailing sense of pessimism; however, amidst their narratives, a resolute will to persist ultimately emerges. This essence is encapsulated succinctly in the closing line of "The Unnamable," which encapsulates the enduring human spirit, stating, "I cannot continue; I will continue." (The Unnamable). Rarely providing insight on the relationship between his writing and the spirit of the times, Beckett described "My characters appear to be disintegrating... I believe that anyone who currently pays even the slightest attention to their own experiences perceives it as the experience of a non-knower, a non-doer" (6). We argue that these lines could very well be the compass that drives Beckett's writing. The idea of "falling to bits" seems to capture the central idea of the absurdist view of life in its entirety. In the same way that his protagonists represent this idea of dissolution, Beckett immerses himself in a world where unrelenting acts gradually chip away at life.

One could see Beckett's "Endgame" as an embodiment of the idea of disintegration. Understanding the play's importance reflects the search for purpose hidden in the everyday activities depicted in "Endgame." In this context, routine refers to the activities people perform to give oneself a sense of purpose in life and to momentarily ward off the impending threat of death. As M. Worton aptly articulated, "Life unfolds as an endless sequence of beginnings and endings, creating a cyclical human existence characterized by the repetitive nature of daily routines, which ultimately find closure only in death" (7). Statements such as these from Hamm's discourse in the play serve as examples of how this idea is expressed:

"The end is the beginning, yet you persist" (5, p. 12). "Is it not the end of the day like any other day, Clov?" (5, p. 17). "What is this farce, day after day?" (5, p. 26). A purposeful repetition of words and phrases emphasizes the cyclical and recurring nature of existence throughout the play. Among these expressions are:

"Something is taking its course" (5, p. 17). The frequently reiterated phrase: "Ah, yesterday..."

The ritualistic accuracy with which Hamm and Clov perform certain scenes in "Endgame" invites viewers to speculate about the likelihood of the same everyday routine being replayed. Notable behaviors seem to follow a consistent pattern, including Clov pushing Hamm to the window, Clov checking the clock or making telescope observations, and Hamm interacting with his toy dog. At the end of the play, Clov does not leave and instead stays up, listening to Hamm; this suggests that the same scene will eventually be repeated endlessly. As he plays the last part of "Endgame" with Clov, Hamm is unwavering in his conviction that human existence should end, calling for the taking of all lives, including his own. His dread that "...humanity might start from there all over again" is demonstrated when he orders Clov to remove the rat and flea, demonstrating his strong antipathy to reproduction (5). This dislike also extends to Hamm's behavior toward the youngster Clov describes as a "potential procreator" and whom he saw via the telescope (5). With the knowledge that the boy will probably die, Hamm tells Clov to leave him outside. Furthermore, Hamm asks how Clov's seeds are doing, hoping to make sure that no new life has been started.

The character of Nagg also serves as an example of the cyclical nature of human existence. Nagg has become senile and regressed into a childlike state in his old age. When Nell relates her story, he acts like a toddler again, demanding his "pap" (a type of baby food or a sign of a mother's caring), so that he can no longer take center stage. "It wasn't, it wasn't, it was my story and nothing else," he cries in protest (5). Critic Th. Adorno notably says that Endgame "cannot chase the chimera of expressing its meaning with the help of philosophical mediation. Understanding it can mean nothing other than understanding its incomprehensibility" (8). Adorno claims that Beckett's play exposes the faulty premises of conventional ideologies and values, using "Endgame" as a springboard for criticism of contemporary culture and society. The 'truth content' of Beckett's work is intrinsically linked to its artistic arrangement, especially the linguistic and theatrical components that shape its emptiness (ibid). D. Cunningham has observed that the "meaninglessness" of the work is "enunciated" through its realization in "the aesthetic material," so transforming into a form of aesthetic meaning (9). The play "Endgame" conveys a sense of artistic and societal significance through its complicated interplay throughout. It presents itself as a pessimistic revelation through the theatrical portrayal of meaninglessness. In essence, the meaning of Beckett's text comes from its inherently non-conventional nature.

Lukács (10) claims that in this play, Beckett "presents us with an image of utmost human degradation - an idiot's vegetative existence." Lukács opposes modernism's static nature and disengagement from society in a larger sense. He contends that Beckett's emphasis on primitivism and solipsistic psychopathology specifically promote abnormality and glorify isolation. Adorno supports this position by suggesting that "Maybe Beckettian Man is not animalistic per se, but rather the 'image of the last human'; he is the result of historically regarded philosophy and education" (11). According to J. Knowlson, Beckett is a selfless person who shows a great care for the injustices that people encounter, especially showing favoritism for those who are viewed as "underdogs." According to Knowlson, "His reactions often appear to have

been prompted by instantaneous emotions of empathy for the underdog: the individual who has failed, the invalid, the incarcerated (politically or otherwise), the destitute, the vagrant, or even the rogue" (11) and (12). Oscar G. Brockett's observation emphasizes that absurdists, who were frequently in agreement with Sartre's philosophical perspective, often highlighted the irrationality of human life without offering a clear way forward. Instead of following a conventional cause-and-effect structure, they used a series of episodes linked only by thematic or emotional components, adopting a narrative framework that reflected the very disarray inherent in their dramatic subject matter. "The sense of absurdity was heightened by juxtaposing incongruous events, resulting in seriocomic and ironic outcomes" (13). We find ourselves in agreement with this evaluation.

CONCLUSION

After a close examination of Beckett's "Endgame," absurdism is based on the idea that the search for meaning is fundamentally at odds with the stark fact that it doesn't exist. However, by accepting the innate qualities of existence, one should both recognize this absence and rebel against it at the same time. In summary, "Endgame" exhibits a number of elements that highlight the general sense of meaninglessness. It combines parts of ceremonial components, circus, vaudeville, and acrobatics, as well as realism and surrealism. It also unfolds at a purposeful, irrational, and repetitious pace. The play's actions defy common sense by contrasting extremes and veering between dark seriousness and high humor. Through the prism of this play, one can understand Samuel Beckett's absurdist approach to life.

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