

## REVERBERATION OF EXISTENTIALISM IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S PLAY "WAITING FOR GODOT"

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### Abstract:

What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of it? Why human being born and die? The play "*Waiting for Godot*" asks numerous questions like these but answers none. Through the play "*Waiting for Godot*"; the playwright Samuel Beckett tries to limn human being's afloat life through two characters "Vladimir" (Didi) and "Estragon" (Gogo). In the play; two men, Vladimir and Estragon met each other near a leafless tree. Estragon had spent the previous night lying in a ditch and receiving a beating from some unnamed assailants. Both discussed numerous issues; and they were eagerly waiting for a man, called "Godot". They were in utter confusion and dilemma, because they never met him before and even, they had no idea whether he would show up or not. Was "Godot" a God in the play? Or he was just a common man.

**Keywords:** Playwright, assailants, Godot, Confusion, dilemma, common man, leafless.

### Discussion:

Existentialism is a tradition of philosophical enquiry which explores the nature of existence or being through emphasizing experience of the human subject. It does not merely the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling, living human being. It portrays how individual's starting point is characterized by a sense of disorientation, confusion, anxiety before an apparently meaningless life or absurd realm. Broadly speaking; there is no meaning in the world beyond what we give to it. In the play, two central characters, Vladimir and Estragon were waiting for someone called "Godot". Despite uncertainty and bewilderment they chose adamantly for Godot's arrival. It can be seen in the following quote:

"Estragon: ...Let's go

Vladimir: We can't.

Estragon: Why don't?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot"

Above quote and circumstance displayed how human beings too wait for something they have never seen to arrive in the form of hope and miracle. In existentialism; it is considered that existence precedes essence; it meant that all individuals are individuals-independently acting and responsible, conscious beings or existence; rather than what labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or any other preconceived categories the individuals fit. Thus, human beings, with their own consciousness, create their own values and determine a meaning to their life respectively. It can be diametrically felt in the play "*Waiting for Godot*";

"Estragon: Suppose we repented.

Vladimir: Repented what?

Estragon: Oh... (He reflects.) We wouldn't have to go into details.

Vladimir: Our being born?"

Sometimes when people unable to find their worth or meaning of their life and existence, people become restless, it has been reflected in the below quote of the play:

"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!

Vladimir: With all that follows.

Where it falls mandrakes grow.

That's why they shriek when you pull them up.

Did you know that?

Estragon: Let's hang ourselves immediately!"

One of the elements of existentialism is “the notion of absurd”, and it means that there is no meaning in the world beyond what meaning we render it. In philosophy, “the Absurd” refers to the conflict between the human tendency to seek inherent value as well as meaning in life, and the human inability to find any in a purposeless, meaningless or chaotic and irrational universe. Estragon and Vladimir’s absurd conversation proves it:

“Estragon: What am I to say?”

Vladimir: Say, I am happy.

Estragon: I am happy.

Vladimir: So am I.

Estragon: So am I.

Vladimir: We are happy.

Estragon: We are happy. (Silence) What do we do now, now that we are happy?”

In existentialism, despair is more inevitable; more specifically a loss of hope in reaction to a breakdown in one or more of the defining qualities of one’s self or identity. For instance: an athletic who losses ability to run may despair if they have nothing else to fall back on—nothing to rely on for their identity. In nutshell, they find themselves unable to be what defined their being. To be more precise, existentialist concept of despair is apart from the conventional definition of existentialist notion. The existentialist despair is a state one is in even when they are not overtly in despair. So long as a person’s identity depends on qualities that can crumble, they are incessant despair. In Sartrean terms, no human essence is found in conventional reality on which to constitute the individual’s sense of identity, despair is a universal human condition. This is vividly echoed in “*Waiting for Godot*”:

“The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh. Let us not then speak ill our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. Let us not speak of it all. It is true the population has increased.”

And,

“There’s man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet.”

Facticity is another ingredient of existentialism. It means as defined by Jean-Paul Sartre in “Being and Nothingness” (1943) as the in-itself. It delineates for humans the modalities of being and not being. For example: one’s past is what one is, in the sense that it co-constitutes oneself. Nevertheless; to accept that one’s past is only what one was, would utterly detach it from oneself now. As an instance, if we consider two men, one of whom has no memory of his past and the other who remembers everything. They have committed heinous crimes, but the first man, has no idea about it, leads a normal life. On the other hand, second man is feeling trapped by his own past, continues a life of crime, blaming his own past for “trapping” him in this life. Though, there is nothing essential about his committing crimes, but he ascribes this meaning to his past. The reflection of facticity is portrayed through the following quote of the play:

“VLADIMIR: *(after a moment of bewilderment)*. We’ll see when the time comes. (Pause.) I was saying that things have changed here since yesterday.

ESTRAGON: Everything oozes.

VLADIMIR: Look at the tree.

ESTRAGON: It’s never the same pus from one second to the next.

VLADIMIR: The tree, look at the tree.

*Estragon looks at the tree.*

ESTRAGON: Was it not there yesterday?

VLADIMIR: Yes of course it was there. Do you not remember? We nearly hanged ourselves from it. But you wouldn’t. Do you remember?

ESTRAGON: You dreamt it.

VLADIMIR: Is it possible you’re forgotten already?

ESTRAGON: That’s the way I am. Either I forget immediately or I never forget.”

**Conclusion:**

Through the play “*Waiting for Godot*”, playwright Samuel Beckett left no stone unturned to depict the basic human circumstance from believe, hope, miracle, angst, regret, anger, despair to absurdist human existence, purpose of human life. The play ends with when the boy reappeared to report that Godot would not be coming. It led Vladimir and Estragon to suicide but absence of rope made them stay where they were. It shows how human beings’ wait for numerous others things to arrive but it never does. But still life goes on with another new hope like “Godot”. The following quote from the play sums up the existentialism’s reverberance:

“VLADIMIR: What do they say?

ESTRAGON: They talk about their lives.

VLADIMIR: To have lived is not enough for them.

ESTRAGON: They have to talk about it.”

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