



Man's Endless Pursuit of an Elusive Destination in Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot



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Abstract

Beckett's characters continue onwards the vain pursuit of destination because they have no alternative but to go on. This is the way of life that no one can cure the pains of life, so they must be endured. The man is struggling with the jest of humanity and is constantly trying to make sense of his own existence as a human being. Estragon addresses Vladimir, "we always find something, eh, Didi, to give us the impression that we exist?" (Beckett, 60) It seems as if a human being cannot be beyond this mere impression of existence. It is the winding wheel of time that induces uncontrollable restlessness and anguish in the characters, such that they, without inhibition go on moving directionless and tread the dissolving line between remembering and forgetting, between past and present, between happiness and sorrow. Shorn of vitality, they are constantly haunted by the past and its, present manifestations in the form of reminiscences regrets and yearnings.

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1. Introduction

Beckett's play "Waiting for Godot" deals with the disillusionment and despair of the modern world. He has created a black and formless world. He is ruthless in his insistence on the human facts of loneliness, emptiness, and frustration. The play conveys the author's sense of mystery, bewilderment, and anxiety when confronted with the human condition and his despair at being unable to find a meaning in existence. In the play, discovering the real identity of Godot and Endeavour to arrive at a certain interpretation is as impossible as trying to discover the clear outlines hidden behind the chiaroscuro of a painting by Rembrandt by scraping away the paint.

2. Research Method

This article is applied a qualitative method. It is considered in presenting the analysis of the data descriptively to Man's Endless Pursuit of an Elusive Destination in Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot.

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3. Results and Analysis

"Waiting for Godot" explores a static situation;
Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful. (Beckett,37)

The play opens with two old tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, waiting for some Godot, not knowing exactly if any Godot exists or not, will come or not. Moreover, they are ignorant of the fact that what this Godot is? On a country road, by a tree, where they are waiting, some boy again unknown to them, delivered them the message that Godot can't come today but he will surely come tomorrow. Their endless wait is prolonged with this message. Though they are informed that nobody is going to come to meet them, they keep on waiting and staying at that place. However, they talk to go from there but unable to take action, they do not move from there.

Estragon : Well, shall we go?

Vladimir : Yes, Let's go.

(They don't move) (Beckett,87)

It is mainly Vladimir who voices the hope that Godot will come and that his coming will change their situation, while Estragon remains skeptical throughout and at times even forgets the name of Godot. Vladimir conducts the conversation with the boy who is Godot's messenger. Their waiting for Godot suggests that throughout the ages suffering mankind has waited for a savior to free them from the absurdities and mental pain of the life they are living. Vladimir and Estragon, the representatives of the human race are struggling with life as helpless, disappointed creatures to wait for the unknown. When they fail to relieve their pains, make heads or tails of time or place, they are stagnated.

As the title of the play Waiting for Godot seems to suggest someone's wait for somebody, but from the very beginning to the end of the play this wait continues. The title is within the play quite literally by virtue of its appearance, at the end of Gogo and Didi's oft-repeated verbal routine it is very clear when they discuss.

Gogo : Let's go

Didi : We can't

Gogo : Why not

Didi : We are waiting for Godot! (Beckett,44)

Thus, the apparent ending of the play is merely a state of incompleteness, a still waiting the character in the play do not exhibit the motion of free will, they seem to be confined to waiting, unable to get rid of it ironically they are not sure if the person they are waiting for will turn up or not if they are waiting on the right place, the only thing they know is that they are doomed to wait, waiting from which there is no escape. They are helpless and unable to take any action and fail to determine their fates. They are like surviving pawns on the chessboard who aspire to advance and improve their lot but they know that a heartbreaking defeat is impending. They are lurking in the dark, groping for an evasive Godot, an essence; as the world around continues to blur in all light and dark, famine and feasting.

Gogo and Didi are quite literally on the road, whatever they once were, they are tramps now, which means that like all tramps their lives defined by what they lack-money, clothes, shelter, family, work and security and so on.

A country road, A tree, evening "The road" Pozzo says, is free to all... It's a disgrace. But there you are. (Beckett,23)

According to the myth of tramp-life, tramps move down the road in endless pursuit of an elusive destination. For the tramps traveling in an end in itself unlike any businessman, a means to the destination. The road Gogo and Didi are 'on' does not lead towards a destination, it is their destination.

Pozzo, like a tramp, makes traveling an end in itself. For him traveling is a moving form of waiting for the fair-and as waiting, it is self-nullifying. When he first appears he announces that he is traveling for a purpose; to sell Lucky at the fair.'(Beckett,30) Purely functional a means not an end, such travel is merely a spatial parenthesis between departure and destination, you can never arrive at a destination because you are already there. Philosophically speaking, a journey is a quest for knowledge and wisdom and consequently redemption but here it is inverted, it is only a diversion and evasion of responsibility. It is the phantasmagoria of ropes and

sacks, of chicken bone that greets Lucky and Pozzo at every milestone and hardens them for further experiences and revelations.

Beckett's characters continue onwards the vain pursuit of destination because they have no alternative but to go on. This is the way of life that no one can cure the pains of life, so they must be endured. The man is struggling with the jest of humanity and is constantly trying to make sense of his own existence as a human being. Estragon addresses Vladimir, "we always find something, eh, Didi, to give us the impression that we exist?" (Beckett,60) It seems as if a human being cannot be beyond this mere impression of existence. In the words of Brewer, "We all are like a donkey running after the carrot dangled in front of its nose by its rider..." (Beckett,235)

Beckett's depiction of human beings and their nature shows that they are ignorant, who don't know Godot is generally an expression of the futility of human existence when man pins his hope on a force outside of himself. Estragon and Vladimir are hoping to be saved from the evanescence and instability of the illusion of time and to find peace and permanence outside it, which is their useless pursuit of attaining their destination. The more things change, the more they are the same.

Gogo, Didi, Pozzo and Lucky, all are warped deep into a black night, a night in life impregnated by both an ennui yet a restlessness but the final night of death that takes its hue from the firmament that Pozzo talks about, still evades them. The madness that grips Beckettian characters in this play to wonder thought mentally like Estragon and Vladimir ceaselessly are similar to Ashvathama, the son of Dronacharya in Mahabharata who was cursed by Krishna to wander aimlessly and helplessly in jungles forever. The madness that sets in him to destroy Pandavas and later for having sinned and having failed. Beckettian characters too have understood the essential sterility that characterizes life, the superficial mental and physical restlessness that sets in from birth because one can't escape from the reality of life.

The road Pozzo and Lucky have been traveling and which Godo and Didi have given up on the war trodden road, the instigator as well as the battleground for the conflicts in human ambitions and hopes. Estragon and Vladimir can be called static travelers, having journeyed enough they have realized and reconciled themselves to the essential status of life. Though they have refused to acknowledge the meaninglessness of the journey on the desolate road. Lucky and Pozzo have yet not attained this disconcerting reaction. They lack the will and owing to their consolatory belief in the sustaining productivity of the road, they have taken, they are unable to reach the rear end of the road and to return to the beginning. Their obstinacy would someday perhaps force them to face annihilation.

It is the winding wheel of time that induces uncontrollable restlessness and anguish in the characters, such that they, without inhibition go on moving directionless and tread the dissolving line between remembering and forgetting, between past and present, between happiness and sorrow. Shorn of vitality, they are constantly haunted by the past and its, present manifestations in the form of reminiscences regrets and yearnings. Experiencing death moment by moment struggling the ultimate fortune, man's life is a period of senseless waiting. When a man pins his hopes on something outside himself, he is deprived of the ability to overcome his stagnated situation. His conflict with the world within and without is the biggest hindrance in his path of life's journey towards the unattainable goal of reaching the destination. Thus the metaphor of road and journey is predominating the play. The tramps are in the eggs of existence, perched at the brink of a narrow wall, braving the violent winds, even though they know in their heart of hearts that a final fall of nullity is inevitable. With their arrival and departure, the play starts and ends with a nauseating stasis.

4. Conclusion

Throughout our lives, we always wait for something and Godot here simply represents the objective of our waiting for an event, a thing a person or death. Moreover, it is in the act of waiting, that we experience the flow of time in its purest, most evident form. Waiting is to experience the action of time, which is the constant change and yet as nothing a real ever happens that change is in itself an illusion. The ceaseless activity of time is self-defeating, purposeless and therefore null and void.


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