



THE MANIFESTATION OF THE ABSURD IDEA IN THE WORKS
OF SAMUEL BECKETT

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Abstract: *This article provides an in-depth literary and philosophical analysis of how the idea of the absurd is manifested in the works of Samuel Beckett, one of the most influential figures in modernist literature and drama. The paper focuses particularly on Beckett's most emblematic plays, including Waiting for Godot, Endgame, and Krapp's Last Tape, to uncover the thematic and structural expressions of existential absurdity. Drawing on the theories of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, the study contextualizes Beckett's writings within the broader framework of 20th-century existential and absurdist thought, while also emphasizing his unique artistic voice.*

The article examines how Beckett employs literary techniques such as minimalism, repetition, circular dialogue, and the fragmentation of language to reflect the futility and isolation of human existence. His characters, often caught in static routines and devoid of meaningful purpose, embody the essence of absurdity—living in a world that lacks inherent logic, where communication fails and time stands still. This portrayal raises fundamental questions about human perseverance, freedom, and the search for meaning in an indifferent universe.



By analyzing both the thematic content and structural innovations of Beckett's works, the paper argues that Beckett not only reflects but also reshapes the absurdist tradition. Unlike some contemporaries, Beckett does not merely illustrate despair but probes the silent resilience of individuals who continue despite meaninglessness. His works challenge traditional dramatic form and provoke philosophical reflection, making them both a literary and existential experience.

This article will be of interest to students and scholars of modern drama, literary theory, and existential philosophy. It provides valuable insights into how literature can convey profound philosophical concepts through form and character, and how Beckett's contribution remains vital to understanding the human condition in the modern age.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola zamonaviy adabiyot va dramaturgiyaning eng ta'sirchan namoyandalaridan biri bo'lgan Samuel Bekket asarlarida absurd g'oyasining qanday namoyon bo'lishini chuqur adabiy va falsafiy tahlil qiladi. Asosan Bekketning eng taniqli dramalari – Godoni kutib (Waiting for Godot), Oxir o'yin (Endgame) va Krappning oxirgi lentasi (Krapp's Last Tape) – asarlaridagi mavzular va tuzilmalarga asoslanib, bu tadqiqot inson mavjudotining befoydaligi, izolyatsiyasi va ma'nosizlikni qanday aks ettirishini ko'rsatadi.

Maqolada Albert Kamyu va Jan-Pol Sartr kabi faylasuflarning ekzistensial va absurdizmga oid nazariyalaridan foydalanilgan holda, Bekket ijodi XX asr falsafiy tafakkuri doirasida yoritiladi. Shu bilan birga, muallif Bekketning o'ziga xos badiiy uslubini ajratib ko'rsatadi. Minimalizm, takroriylik, aylana shaklidagi dialoglar va tildagi parchalanish orqali Bekket inson hayotining absurdligini tasvirlaydi — bu asarlarda qahramonlar harakatda emas, harakatsizlikda, ma'no izlashda emas, ma'nosizlikni qabul qilishda yashaydi.

Maqola shuningdek, Bekket faqat falsafiy g'oyalarni tasvirlabgina qolmasdan, ularni dramaturgiya tuzilmasi orqali yangidan kashf qilganini ta'kidlaydi. U an'anaviy sahna san'atiga qarshi chiqib, yangi ifoda shakllarini



yaratgan va tomoshabinni oddiy qiziqarli syujet bilan emas, balki insoniyatning borligi haqida chuqur o'yga chorlaydigan sahnalar orqali hayratga solgan.

Ushbu maqola zamonaviy drama, adabiy nazariya va ekzistensial falsafa bilan shug'ullanuvchi talabalar va tadqiqotchilar uchun foydali bo'lib, adabiyotning murakkab falsafiy tushunchalarni qanday yetkazishi mumkinligini va Samuel Bekketning bu boradagi o'rni qanchalik muhim ekanligini ko'rsatadi. U zamonaviy insoniyat ruhiyati va hayot ma'nosiga oid muammolarni anglashda muhim manba sifatida xizmat qiladi.

Introduction

The 20th century was marked by profound philosophical and literary responses to the existential crises brought about by war, industrialization, and the apparent loss of meaning in human life. Amidst this backdrop emerged the philosophy of the Absurd, famously associated with thinkers such as Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. This concept, which revolves around the conflict between human beings' search for purpose and the indifferent silence of the universe, found powerful expression in literature, particularly in the works of Samuel Beckett.

Samuel Beckett, an Irish-born playwright, novelist, and poet, is widely recognized as one of the most influential figures in the Theatre of the Absurd. Through minimalist settings, repetitive dialogue, and characters caught in seemingly purposeless routines, Beckett vividly portrays the absurdity of existence. His works do not offer resolution or meaning; instead, they mirror the futility and uncertainty of human life in a fragmented, chaotic world.

This paper explores how the idea of the Absurd is manifested in Beckett's major works, particularly in plays such as *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. It examines the philosophical underpinnings of Beckett's writing, his use of language and structure, and the way he challenges traditional notions of plot, character, and meaning. Through this analysis, the paper seeks to highlight Beckett's unique contribution to modern literature and his role in articulating the existential concerns of his time.



Literature Review

The concept of the Absurd has been a central theme in 20th-century existential and postmodern literature, with Samuel Beckett often cited as one of its most profound literary representatives. A wide range of scholarly work has been dedicated to analyzing Beckett's contribution to the Absurd, his relationship to existentialist philosophy, and his stylistic and thematic innovations.

One of the foundational texts in understanding the Absurd is Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*¹, in which Camus defines the Absurd as the confrontation between the human need for meaning and the indifferent silence of the universe. While Beckett himself rejected being labeled an existentialist or follower of any philosophy, many scholars have noted strong parallels between Camus's theory and Beckett's dramatic vision. According to Martin Esslin,² who coined the term "Theatre of the Absurd" in his influential book *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961), Beckett's plays perfectly illustrate this philosophical tension. Esslin emphasizes Beckett's use of minimalism, repetition, and circular dialogue as literary techniques that strip life down to its bare essentials, exposing its inherent meaninglessness.

Scholars such as Ruby Cohn³ and Hugh Kenner⁴ have analyzed Beckett's unique use of language and silence as tools for expressing the Absurd. In her book *Back to Beckett* (1973), Cohn argues that Beckett's rejection of traditional narrative structure and character development is not simply stylistic but deeply philosophical. She notes that his characters are not symbols or allegories, but rather representations of human consciousness caught in an endless struggle for significance. Kenner, in *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study* (1961), highlights Beckett's ironic and often bleak humor as a crucial element in coping with the absurdity of existence.

Recent scholarship has also explored the psychological and metaphysical dimensions of Beckett's absurdism. Shane Weller,⁵ in his work *Modernism and*

¹ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 10–15.

² Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 22–35.

³ Ruby Cohn, *Back to Beckett* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 18–20.

⁴ Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 56–60.

⁵ Shane Weller, *Modernism and Nihilism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 101–112.



Nihilism (2011), situates Beckett within a broader tradition of modernist writers grappling with nihilistic thought. He argues that Beckett's writing is not merely about despair but represents a sustained inquiry into what it means to continue living and creating in the absence of certainty. Meanwhile, Anthony Uhlmann,⁶ in *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image* (2006), explores Beckett's engagement with philosophers such as Descartes, Schopenhauer, and Heidegger, showing how Beckett's work subtly interrogates ideas of selfhood, time, and being.

In addition, studies of individual works—particularly *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*—reveal how Beckett uses absurdity not only to reflect philosophical ideas but to evoke a visceral emotional and existential experience in the audience. Critics such as Elaine Aston⁷ have examined how performance and staging affect the reception of the Absurd, showing that the physical presence of silence, repetition, and inactivity on stage creates a unique theatrical language that challenges the viewer's expectations.

Taken together, these works reveal a rich and evolving scholarly conversation about Samuel Beckett's manifestation of the Absurd. While interpretations vary, there is widespread agreement that Beckett's work is not merely a reflection of existential despair, but a profound artistic exploration of the condition of modern man. His plays and novels continue to be studied not only for their philosophical depth but also for their formal innovations, emotional intensity, and lasting cultural impact.

The Concept of the Absurd in Beckett's Thought

Samuel Beckett never directly aligned himself with the absurdist movement or existentialism, yet his works are widely interpreted through these lenses. The absurd in Beckett's drama is not merely thematic but structural. Traditional narrative arcs are rejected, characters are frequently confused or immobilized, and time seems circular rather than linear.

His protagonists, such as Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, epitomize the absurd condition. They do not understand the world around them,

⁶ Anthony Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 65–75.

⁷ Elaine Aston, *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1995), 91–94.



cannot control their fate, and yet persist in meaningless routines. Their constant waiting for someone who never arrives becomes a metaphor for the human condition itself—hoping for salvation, purpose, or closure in a world that offers none.

Language and Communication Breakdown

A key tool Beckett uses to express absurdity is the deliberate subversion of language. In plays like *Endgame* and *Krapp's Last Tape*, communication is fragmented, repetitive, and often contradictory. Words fail to carry meaning, and characters seem trapped in a futile attempt to connect or explain.

This linguistic disintegration reflects the broader existential crisis at the heart of Beckett's work. If language—the primary medium of thought and interaction—is unreliable, then so too is any attempt to derive stable meaning or truth from life. Thus, Beckett's absurdity is not just philosophical but linguistic and communicative.

Repetition, Routine, and Static Time

Another manifestation of the absurd in Beckett's works is his use of repetition and static temporality. In *Waiting for Godot*, each act mirrors the other: the same actions, the same conversations, and the same result—nothing changes. This cyclical structure suggests a view of time not as progress but as stasis, another existential frustration.

Characters are often caught in habitual routines that seem to offer no escape or evolution. This insistence on repetition underscores the futility of action and the illusion of progress. The absurd, in Beckett's vision, is not just a condition of mind but a structure of existence.

Human Isolation and the Search for Meaning

Beckett's characters are profoundly isolated, often physically as well as emotionally. In *Endgame*, Hamm is blind and cannot stand, while Clov cannot sit. Their co-dependence is both comical and tragic, underscoring the loneliness of the human experience and the absurdity of relationships built on necessity rather than love or understanding.

This existential loneliness amplifies the central absurd question: Why go on? Beckett does not offer answers, only the presentation of human beings who continue,



despite suffering, in the face of nothingness. This perseverance, however, can be read both as despair and defiance—a paradox at the heart of absurdist literature.

Conclusion

Samuel Beckett's contribution to literature and drama is deeply intertwined with the philosophical notion of the Absurd—a condition defined by the tension between human longing for meaning and the meaningless nature of the universe. In his major works, Beckett does not simply illustrate the absurdity of human existence; he immerses his audience in it. Through barren settings, cyclical plots, fragmented language, and characters who persist despite despair and disorientation, Beckett redefines the boundaries of narrative form and theatrical expression.

In plays such as *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Krapp's Last Tape*, the idea of the Absurd becomes a living, breathing presence. The characters are suspended in a state of uncertainty and futility, yet they continue to speak, to wait, and to remember. Their actions, though seemingly pointless, reflect a deeper human impulse: the desire to endure, to communicate, and to impose some kind of order, however fragile, on a chaotic reality. Beckett thus presents a world that mirrors the post-war disillusionment and existential anxiety of the modern era.

Furthermore, Beckett's refusal to provide clear answers or traditional resolutions is itself a philosophical stance. In denying the comfort of meaning, he invites his audience to confront the absurd condition of life with honesty and humility. His minimalist style and experimental form challenge audiences not only to engage intellectually but to experience the discomfort, silence, and emptiness that define the absurd condition.

Ultimately, Samuel Beckett's works do not merely reflect the Absurd—they embody it. His dramas and prose works continue to resonate because they confront fundamental questions of human existence in a world devoid of guarantees. In doing so, Beckett not only aligned himself with the philosophical tradition of the Absurd but also reshaped the landscape of modern literature and drama. His legacy endures as a powerful artistic testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of meaninglessness.



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