

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE SELF IN WAITING FOR GODOT AND THE PANDEMIC TIME

O QUE ESTAMOS ESPERANDO? UMA COMPARAÇÃO ENTRE O EU EM *WAITING FOR GODOT* E O TEMPO PANDEMICO

¿A QUÉ ESPERAMOS? UNA COMPARACIÓN ENTRE EL YO EN *WAITING FOR GODOT* Y EL TIEMPO DE LA PANDEMIA

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this Essay is to compare the main themes of *Waiting for Godot* and our lives during this long period of Pandemic. During the development of this research, I am going to try to explore (i) the context of the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett; (ii) the context of our new routine; (iii) provide an analysis/comparison about the search for the self. As we see in the play *Waiting for Godot*, we, as humans, are always waiting for something; sometimes, we create expectations and want answers for everything, but in some cases, answers can't be said or even find.

Keywords: *Waiting for Godot*; Pandemic; Isolation; The "Self".

RESUMO: O objetivo desta pesquisa é comparar os temas principais de *Waiting for Godot* e nossas vidas durante este longo período de Pandemia. Durante o desenvolvimento desta pesquisa, tentarei explorar: (i) o contexto da peça *Waiting for Godot* de Samuel Beckett; (ii) o contexto de nossa nova rotina; (iii) fornecer uma análise/comparação sobre a busca do eu. Como vemos na peça *Waiting for Godot*, nós, como humanos, estamos sempre esperando por algo; às vezes, criamos expectativas e queremos respostas para tudo, mas em alguns casos, as respostas não podem ser ditas ou mesmo encontradas.

Palavras-chave: *Waiting for Godot*; Pandemia; Isolamento; O "Eu".

RESUMEN: El propósito de esta investigación comparar los temas principales de *Waiting for Godot* y nuestras vidas durante este largo período de Pandemia. Durante el desarrollo de esta investigación, intentaré explorar: (i) el contexto de la obra de Samuel Beckett *Esperando a Godot*; (ii) el contexto de nuestra nueva rutina; (iii) proporcionar un análisis/comparación sobre la búsqueda del yo. Como vemos en *Waiting for Godot*, nosotros como humanos siempre estamos esperando algo; a veces nos creamos expectativas y queremos respuestas para todo, pero en algunos casos, las respuestas no se pueden decir o ni siquiera encontrar.

Palabras-clave: *Waiting for Godot*; Pandemia; Aislamiento; El "Yo".

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A few Introductory Thoughts

If we were asked to pay attention on our self, we would probably reach into the conclusion that we are all the time waiting for something. Sometimes we hope for a good job, for a better condition of life, for changes, for finding a purpose in life and so on. The fact is that, based on our condition as humans, we are made up of many expectations; expectations about what will happen next, expectations about unsaid responses, expectations about what is our purpose here.

Taking into account what we said previously, two questions arise: Why those inquiries appear in our minds? And why we keep waiting for the search of the self? The answer is simple, what we only must

do is to keep waiting, searching, living, and expecting, there isn't any concrete answer, everything is unknown, everything is full of mysteries, especially when we want answers to understand the self.

Life has been the same from era to era. People who lived hundreds of years ago had the same emotions, the same sensibility, the same anxiety, the same criticism, and the same questions that we have nowadays. Our ancestors passed, and they left to us the gaps we have, and as usual we will leave it to the next generation, it will (must) be maintained, it will be eternal, according to their beliefs people will keep waiting and waiting for something.

Thus, the purpose of this Essay is to compare the main themes¹ of the play "Waiting for Godot" and our lives during this long period of Pandemic. In the following subsections, we are going to try to explore (i) the context of the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett; (ii) the context of our new routine; (iii) provide an analysis/comparison about the search for the self and (iv) conclude this work.

Some Theoretical Reflections

The human condition in the Theater of the Absurd is viewed as being "senselessness", by that the author is trying to say: Why are we here? What is our purpose? What are waiting for us after death? Does our existence stop here? By the lack of these answers, our life doesn't have any sense (by the vision of Martin Esslin). In other words, our condition is uncertain, we don't have sure about anything. The modernism movement shows us that we should be bold, critics, and ask ourselves about our condition. We mean, as the freedom that artists were having and expressing their revolutionary ideas, we should be inspired by them and break the fetters of our pre-conceptions and try to experiment the feeling of the new and its results. In this context of revolutions and discoveries, the self (individualism) started to be studied and emphasized.

As we said previously, the self began to be studied and a writer called Samuel Beckett (1992) after losing his faith decided to focus on the problems of being and the identity of the self. (Focus on who am I). According to him, we do not have answers about our existence and our purpose as humans in this world. So, Beckett decided to explore what come inside us, our sensibility, our torments, our inquiries, our existence, our purpose, our essence, our fears etc. As a mortal man, Beckett (1992) experienced all the weakness and sensations we mentioned, and he was able to express his feelings by writing. He also used to focus on themes of possession in love, illusion of friendship, love, sadness, isolation², and madness. Furthermore, Beckett's works (1992) dealt with the deepest state of mind and probably the darkest of anxiety as well.

¹ The themes are routine, existentialism, spirituality, social criticism, hope etc.

² We are going to focus on this theme "isolation" and its consequences of the self.

In addition, we can also mention that Beckett (1992) started being famous when he published some plays. However, his career exploded when he published *Waiting for Godot*; this play was against all the expectations of the public, and it was enigmatic, people were scared about it. Too many interpretations appeared, which one with a meaning. During his entire life he maintained his appreciation about the exploration of the human condition (self and who am I?) as well as our purpose. It is important to highlight that Beckett “developed” a kind of creative literature, we mean he mixed the sense of mystery, the human condition, and his despair at being unable to find meaning in existence.

The essence of the play *Waiting for Godot* is a continuous disappointment because it does not tell a story; it explores a static situation. Nothing happens and due to it, the audience criticized the play since it was against the usual. (No one was expecting that, they got disappointed). In the play, we have two acts and in each one follows a different sequence of events and the dialogue as well. The main characters are Vladimir and Estragon; they have complementary personalities. While Vladimir is more practical, Estragon is more poetical.

According to Beckett (1992), the position of the characters symbolizes the dignity of man, a balance between rationality and fantasy. The play dealt with themes such as suicide, failure, loneliness, isolation, and questions about the self. We also have two more characters, they are Pozzo and Lucky, they are equally complementary. They have different features (in terms of actions/behaviors), but they complement each other. What is missing in Pozzo we can find in Lucky. The relationship between them are compared as being the relation of body and mind; (they are tied together, they are interwoven, somehow). (BRADBY, 2001; CALDERWOOD, 1986; BECKETT, 1992).

It is important to point out that the subject of the play is not Godot, but “waiting”. (The act of waiting for someone/something). Samuel Beckett classifies “waiting” as being part of the human condition, since we are all the time waiting and hoping for better conditions or for changes. He also mentions that the flows of time confront us with the basic problem of being the nature of the self, personality. And as human beings, we are all the time changing ourselves. We are not static; we change every single day. “Nobody never recognizes us”.

In addition, waiting is to experience the action of time in constant change. So, if things always stay in the same way, we classify it as being an illusion. We must have inside us the presence of hope, it helps us to stay and feel alive. Beckett says that Godot represents two tramps: hope from the evanescence and instability of the illusion; find the peace and permanence outside it. (But even, everything is uncertainty). Our waiting deals with what we believe, it deals with our objectives.

Based on Beckett’s ideas (1992), we can relate them with the Myth of Sisyphus when in a general view Albert Camus tries to say that the man lives his existence in the search for his essence (self),

the man wants to find a meaning for his life, but instead the natural condition gives him a decontextualized world, full of repression and authoritarianism that end up with the feeling of suicide, fears, revolts and etc.

According to Beckett (1992), routine and habit can be considered and compared as being the “cancer” of time and the intercourse a mere illusion and solitude. Making a relation to our present situation, we can clearly point out that isolation, routine, solitude is a cancer. We mean, we are getting sick about everything, we are tired of waiting, waiting, and waiting. We don’t know when and how this situation will end, so we wait, we expect. As the author says, we are getting addict of being lonely, of silence as well. Our thoughts they are killing us, the isolation contributes to it. Without interacting to people are having too much time to think, to reflect, to judge ourselves, to ask about our existence (purpose) and everything maybe is leading to mental/psychological diseases (depression/anxiety) (MOUNT, 2008).

The author of the Theater of the Absurd (ESSLIN, 1961) mentions something about Samuel Beckett, and we can make a comparison to one of the consequences that the Pandemic time brought to us. He says that Samuel didn’t like to talk or interact with others, he preferred to stay at home, isolated, in someplace quiet, in this way he could reflect about life and its issues. (Maybe he would love this period of isolation). But, the point we would like to compare is that while Samuel loved this act of being alone and reflecting, we in the modern time are the opposite of he was, because he chose to live in that way, and we didn’t have this chance to choose, it was “imposed” to us and that’s it. In this process of loneliness, sadness, isolation, and fears, we have time to think/reflect, but it brings us bad consequences. It may affect us in negative ways.

Since last year, the whole world is under a Pandemic time (HWANG, 2020; KIM; BHULLAR, 2020), and we were forced to be isolated in our homes. All the interaction we used to have, must have a “break” in this way we have been passing through hard situations. (It includes losses/death, lack of hope, dreams being archived). And as a result, we are all the time expecting, waiting, and hoping (or dreaming) about when this nightmare will end, and we will get back our lives, our insane lives. Maybe everything is senselessness, as Beckett (1992) used to say, maybe we should wait a little more and rebuilt our lives, or maybe we will not. Everything is unknown and uncertain.

This situation brought us time to think about ourselves and due to it some stuffs began to be part of our daily routine. Such as: loneliness, sadness, isolation, fears, questions about our existence etc. Everything leads us to think about: who am I? What is my purpose? Everything guides us to criticize our SELF, what we are. Our hopes have been questioned; our beliefs started changing, we do not know what

to expect anymore. Life has been getting into an insane level, people are getting sick by mental health or by the virus, or even by overthinking, over being alone (isolated).

At this stage, I have been thinking that all of our inside “demons” were activated, and we must tame them all before they kill us. I mean, we should find a way out and try to do not get crazy about this situation. We are tired of being alone, isolated... We are tired of waiting for the end of this Pandemic. Furthermore, we are tired of overthinking, simply we are tired.

Some Final Remarks

In order to conclude this Essay, we would like to point out that we are all the time waiting for something/someone. We do not have answers about our existence and our purpose as well as we do not understand what comes inside us, our sensibility, our torments, our inquiries, our existence, our essence, our fears and etc. We must or not try to understand it. Maybe pretending blindness about questioning the (our) self is the best thing to do. When we question something too much, we get frustrated because we find something, or it lacks something. I guess the only thing we can do is keep waiting for... I don't know. Just keep waiting with hope for better days.

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