



Absurdity in Mood Indigo and Waiting for Godot

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Abstract: The message of the Mood Indigo and Waiting for Godot thus seems to be that God will show divine mercy only to those who please him and damn the rest to hell. Hence life is absurd, certainly, but only for the antiheroic who refuse to embrace God's statutes. The life of meaninglessness and absurdity and vanity in waiting is thus for those who do not embrace the life of faith and learn to lean on God's promises. Indeed, what God gives us is essentially a promise- a promise of hope if we learn to lean on him and seek him, and a life of meaninglessness, vanity and empty striving if we lead the faithless life. So indeed, the play might be indeed seem to be about the vanity about waiting for God, but one should rather see it as the vanity of waiting for God without faith, because God promises a life of meaning and coherence to those who put their faith in him.

Keywords:

Absurdity, Decline, Religion, Angst, Meaning

Central to Beckett's work is his notion of the absurd and his exploration of the incongruity between human constructions of meaning and the Void that lies at the core of existence, that nihilistically deflates and defies all attempts to impose order upon it, through systems of thought such as reason, language, religion and other forms of doctrine. The figure of the schizophrenic also recurs in Beckett's work, one who experiences nervous illness and mental breakdown as a consequence of this failure to decipher a coherent meaning to his existence, in spite of all elaborate semantic, logical and hermeneutic attempts to do so.

Human thought has a tendency to incline towards the systemic in its instinct towards seeking a telos in the universe. Elaborate constructions of meaning which qualify as such systems are religion, language, logic, science, and others that may be termed language games in Wittgenstein's terms. This tendency, however, conflicts with the chaos that is inherent in anti-heroic experience, as depicted in the absurd world of Beckett's fiction. This chaos often deflates pretensions to reason and truth. I qualify "chaos" as a universal experience, rather it characterizes the experience of the anti-hero, defined by his status as an outsider who often exists in an absurd and incomprehensible universe and often feels defeated and trapped in his life. Such antiheroes live on the fringes of society and often come from poor or working-class backgrounds. Chaos as such, may be viewed in Marxian terms as an awareness of overdetermination. In Foucauldian terms, knowledge and truth are inextricably intertwined with power, defined by ideologies and hegemonic narratives of dominant groups who instituted such rules in law, science and religion, and as such the vagabond, or minority, fails to derive sustenance from these epistemologies.

The schizophrenic response to absurdity in human experience is, in effect, a line of flight, a molecular revolution to accommodate the chaos inherent in existence through liberation from the molar identity which has proved empty and meaningless in the face of absurdity. The de-centered subjectivity of the schizophrenic is a defence



mechanism against having to adopt a single dysfunctional identity, to be essentialized in a barren world where no stable framework of meaning may be said to hold authority that may protect one from the vagaries and vicissitudes of anti-heroic existence. The psychotic break is, in effect, a coping device for the failure of pure reason to provide a satisfactory and meaningful account of existence. Psychosis involves the lapse into a private language and solipsism, the surge of the mind's subjective and constitutive tendencies over "objective", or consensual and social reality. Madness is postulated as an escape route from overwhelming suffering in the absence of divine mercy and a transcendental logos that will ensure meaningful existence. Didi and Gogo essentially strive to the space between, neither being nor nothing, neither point A or point B, living a rhizomatic existence because meaning collapses for them in Deleuzian interbeing where they do not exist at coherent points of existence but a space between, a rhizome, because all is uncertain for them. Schizophrenia, then, as depicted by Beckett, is a way of accommodating the chaos, an authentic line-of-flight towards interbeing where pure being at point A or point B has proved meaningless and futile. Schizophrenia as found in Beckett's work is an expression of pure difference in the face of the failure of Identity (as expressed by strata and organed bodies in this paper) and the collapse of the Absolute.

The schizophrenic response to absurdity involves the deterritorialization of the organic subject, liberating it and freeing it from closure. The absurd and meaningless existence of the organic body is territorialized. Deterritorialization frees the

subject through allowing it to become, in effect, a body without organs (BwO). In A Thousand Plateaus, the organed body is one that is centred around what the authors call a "General". Its mode is arborescent. According to it hierarchies are generated and strictures imposed. The organed body is striated. The space of its existence is that of one or other spatio-temporal reference points. It is to be located either at point/site A or point/site B, essentially integral to itself. Not so the BwO. Here the arborescent mode is cast aside. The BwO, is, instead, rhizomatic. This results in the creation of a smooth space of nomadic forays, distributions and alliances as opposed to the striated one of the organed body. The rhizomatic BwO exists between rather than at point A and/or B. Didi and Gogo and schizophrenic and rhizomatic BwOs because they accommodate the chaos in existence and claim that all is uncertain for them because to them life is essentially meaningless, barren and absurd, which is why they pass time cracking jokes about suicide and the curse of being born. Yet, put in a metaphysical perspective, it is to be seen that being a rhizomatic BwO is a choice, one can choose to live a life of non foundations by claiming that all meaning is void and that everything is absurd or clinging to the Absolute cornerstone of Christ in the face of the apparent collapse of meaning in life, which is essentially the response of faith to nihilism and absurdity. I will elaborate what it is to choose the life of faith and redemption which leads to certainty in the face of apparent radical uncertainty in the next section.

Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* could be viewed less as a religious satire than as a reading of the human condition that deems it utterly meaningless without the founding foundation of Christ and the presence of



God. While the waiting for Godot seems to be in vain, this could be less a commentary on God's palpable absence than a comment on the utter meaninglessness and void of those who do not wait on God. Indeed, life for Didi and Gogo is absurd because they wait in vain, but it is also their waiting which gives their lives a goal, a telos, a meaning and hope towards which they strive. At the same time there are multiple points of Christian allegory within the play. The comment that one of the thieves was saved (Beckett 7) alludes to the fact that salvation is a 50 percent chance. Faith is a gamble, in which there is half a chance you will be saved if God deigns to favour you enough to give you faith. Then there is the allusion of the boy who tends to the sheep who is treated well and the boy who tends to the goats who is treated badly (Beckett 64) implying that God is partial and treats his elect well while those who are not his elect will be cursed and treated badly. Hence God is depicted as showing favouritism and partialism as well as arbitrary favour towards those who please him. Lucky's speech is also about a divine and omnipotent God who loves us dearly but only some for reasons unknown as he damns the rest to hell. (Beckett 45). Hence it is seen that God is arbitrary and shows favour only to those who please him and damns the rest who do not please him to hell, which contradicts the predication of God as all loving, merciful and compassionate.

The message of the play thus seems to be that God will show divine mercy only to those who please him and damn the rest to hell. Hence life is absurd, certainly, but only for the antiheroic who refuse to embrace God's statutes. The life of meaninglessness and absurdity and vanity in waiting is thus for those who do not embrace the life of faith and learn to lean on God's promises. Indeed, what God gives us is

essentially a promise- a promise of hope if we learn to lean on him and seek him, and a life of meaninglessness, vanity and empty striving if we lead the faithless life. So indeed, the play might be indeed seen to be about the vanity about waiting for God, but one should rather see it as the vanity of waiting for God without faith, because God promises a life of meaning and coherence to those who put their faith in him. Hence the angst, emptiness and absurdity in the play is essentially about the barrenness of a life lived without faith, without hope in God's promises of a redeemed life, where suicide attempts and jokes about life's meaninglessness ensue. God promises to redeem those who believe and put their trust in him, so divine mercy is essentially shown to those who will believe, as the tree sprouts leaves in the second half and Lucky is liberated from Pozzo in the second act, the life of belief and faith overcomes the life of absurdity by bringing it hope.

Mood Indigo is set in a surreal Paris, and tells the story of a wealthy bachelor named Colin (played by Romain Duris), who spends his time developing a cocktail-making piano known as a pianocktail (not the most subtle of names), and devouring strange moving dishes prepared by his chef, Nicolas (played by Omar Sy). Colin learns that his best friend, Chick (Gad Elmaleh), who is a fellow assistant of philosopher, Jean-Sol Partre (played by Philippe Torreton), has a new American girlfriend (played by Aissa Maiga, who is actually a Senegal born French actress doing an admirable job pretending that her French accent is low), and so he decides to attend a party in hopes that he may find someone for himself. There he meets Chloe (played by Audrey Tautou) and the two fall in love. Eventually an illness comes over Chloe, one



very strange illness, as a flower begins to grow in her lungs. The only way Colin can save her, is to supply her with an endless amount of fresh flowers.

The opening of *Mood Indigo* introduces us to what most of the film's tone will be as we are treated to a variety of things happening: people using typewriters in a room; then we cut to a man getting out of a bathtub; we see a rat, who is just a small guy in a rat suit etc. Every single thing we see in the introduction relates in some way to some form of technology. Throughout the film when objects are thrown and touched, multiple versions of them appear suddenly out of the blue; during the dance, the entire background of the area is blue; the ringer in Colin's room is treated like a bug, and falls apart into little tiny robotic bugs anytime it makes a sound; the two couples, Chick and Alise, and Colin and Chloe (who are getting married), ride in small cars throughout the building in order to get to the wedding; and a man gets in a rocket suit with wings of sorts and goes into the sky.

MOOD INDIGO tells the story of wealthy, bohemian inventor Colin (Romain Duris) who lives in a rooftop, trailer-esque apartment overlooking Paris with roommate, chef and lawyer, Nicolas (Omar Sy). Bemoaning the lack of a lover with Nicolas and 'Patre' fanatic pal Chick (Gad Elmaleh) over lunch, Colin decides to attend a party at Isis' (Charlotte Le Bon) house where he meets 'a girl like a Duke Ellington tune' named Chloé (Audrey Tautou). After wooing her with dancing, ice-skating and a trip across Paris in a floating cloud car, the two fall madly in love and get married.

The honeymoon, filmed in split-screen with

sunshine on one side and rain on the other acts as a transitional point to a more sombre, monochromatic setting as Chloé becomes afflicted by a dangerous lung condition after swallowing a water lily. Again, Gondry to uses evolving set designs to represent fluctuating character moods and a 'six month later' title card to fast forward their declining situation.

In order to pay for the ongoing and expensive medical treatments and surgery proposed by Chloé's doctor (played by Gondry himself), Colin (who is now broke), is forced to give up his bohemian lifestyle and take on a number of jobs to save his dying wife including one in a munitions factory. This symbolic metaphor for Chloé's death knell is also heightened visually by the muting of colour to monochrome.

Romain Duris stars as the wealthy bachelor Colin who lives in a converted train where pretty much anything turns into an animation. He has a live in lawyer who is also a chef named Nicolas (Omar Sy). He also has a friend named Chick (Gad Elmaleh) who has an unhealthy obsession with an existential philosopher Jean Sol Partre (obviously a play on the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre). In his house, he has a door bell that comes to life when someone rings and it crawls around the room until someone steps on it. Also, people's legs go all noodley when they dance, Colin's shoes run away from him, there is a piano that makes cocktails and many more. There is not a single scene that goes by without multiple visual quirks or whacky, random events which just happen for no reason. Later in the film, it does take a progressively darker tone as Chloe accidentally inhales a



water lily which starts to grow in her lung. When things go all sad and Colin has to work extremely random jobs to fund Chloe's recovery, one experiences depression at the decline in the romance.

On the surface thus, *Mood Indigo* seems to be about the absurdity and decline we experience in life. The message of the film thus seems to be that God will show divine mercy only to those who please him and damn the rest to hell. Hence life is absurd, certainly, but only for the antiheroic who refuse to embrace God's statutes. The life of meaninglessness and absurdity and vanity in waiting is thus for those who do not embrace the life of faith and learn to lean on God's promises. Indeed, what God gives us is essentially a promise- a promise of hope if we learn to lean on him and seek him, and a life of meaninglessness, vanity and empty striving if we lead the faithless life. So indeed, the film might be indeed seen to be about the vanity about waiting for God, but one should rather see it as the vanity of waiting for God without faith, because God promises a life of meaning and coherence to those who put their faith in him. Hence the angst, emptiness and absurdity in the play is essentially about the barrenness of a life lived without faith, without hope in God's promises of a redeemed life, where suicide attempts and jokes about life's meaninglessness ensue. God promises to redeem those who believe and put their trust in him, so divine mercy is essentially shown to those who will believe.

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