

The Theatre of the Absurd

The play “Waiting for Godot” (1955) - by Samuel Beckett - became a cornerstone of the “Theatre of the Absurd”.

The “Theatre of the Absurd” is a term coined by Hungarian-born critic Martin Esslin, who made it the title of his 1962 book on the subject.

The term refers to a particular type of play which first became popular during the 1950s and 1960s and which presented on stage the philosophy articulated by French philosopher Albert Camus in his 1942 essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in which he defines the human condition as basically meaningless.

Camus argued that humanity had to resign itself to recognizing that a fully satisfying rational explanation of the universe was beyond its reach; in that sense, the world must ultimately be seen as absurd.

The playwrights grouped under the label of the absurd attempt to convey their sense of bewilderment, anxiety, and wonder in the face of an inexplicable universe.

In the “Theatre of the Absurd” is described a hostile, absurd world; man is alone and it’s impossible for him to communicate. His life is purposeless: it has no meaning.

According to Esslin, the five defining playwrights of the movement are Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, and Harold Pinter.

We can say that the Theatre of the Absurd is related to EXISTENTIALISM.

What is Existentialism? In a few words: the theory that humans are free and responsible for their own actions in a world without meaning.

The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre [1905–1980] was one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialism.

a different kind of pessimism:

Orwell's *"Nineteen Eighty-Four"*

and

Beckett's *"Waiting for Godot"*

We could say that Beckett's pessimism is much deeper than Orwell's: in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" pessimism is related to **society**, while in "Waiting for Godot" it is related to **human condition** (which is considered **absurd**).