

Absurdity of Human Existence in Albee's Drama *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

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Abstract

This research paper aims to analyze how Edward Albee's characters in his drama, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* live their absurd or meaningless lives. Through this paper, I have attempted to reveal the existential absurdity of human life in modern society using the literary theory of Existentialism. This research paper is a qualitative study of Albee's drama based on existential philosophers' literary theories: Sartre, Camus, and Beauvoir. The drama is employed as a primary source, and existential theory has been used to explain the characters' roles. This research paper finds that the two major characters in this drama, Martha and George, are trying to figure out who they are. They wish to have their own child in the future, but they cannot do it. As a result, they create an imaginary son to satisfy their desire for a baby. The conclusion of this paper is that Albee's characters, just as everyone in the real world, want their own issue that makes their life meaningful. The major characters in this drama want their own issue to run their dynasty forever. Therefore, they are looking for their identity in this modern world, but they are living their absurd lives.

Keywords: absurdity, American Dream, existence, freedom of choice, meaninglessness

INTRODUCTION

In his plays, Edward Albee, a renowned practitioner of existential philosophy in America during the 1960s, emphasizes the absurdity of existence. Compared to Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, and Jean Genet, his plays are more critical of the American dream and social behaviour, yet they are not as dark as theirs. Albee's seminal drama *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is a social critique that shows the meaningless existence of human beings in the modern world.

The play starts in George and Martha's home at 2:00 am early morning. They've returned from Martha's father's house, where they attended a party. They are very inebriated and, as Martha explains to George, are expecting their visitors, Nick and Honey, whom she had met at a party. Nick is a Biology professor at a college. His wife is shallow-minded, but he is a gorgeous, self-assured man in his thirties. At first, George didn't like the late-night guests. While everyone was drinking and conversing, Martha and George had a verbal quarrel that embarrassed the guests. In front of their visitors, Nick and Honey, Martha makes fun of George and mocks his failure. Later on, she even mentions their imaginary son, which they (Martha and George) promised to keep hidden. George is enraged by her breaking the arrangement she and her spouse had reached. When Nick and George are alone, Nick tells George that he wed Honey because she had a lot of money in her home and because he had mistakenly believed she was pregnant.

Martha makes fun of George in front of the visitors on a regular basis, and the two of them are always fighting. Martha tries to make love to him, but George seems uninterested. Martha becomes outraged and quickly drags Nick upstairs to seduce him. George is humiliated and angry, and he loses control of his rage, flinging a book at the doorbell. Honey is awakened by the ringing of a bell, and she informs George that she has no children because she is scared of childbirth agony. George devises a plan to torment Martha by informing her that he has received a telegram informing him of their son's death. Nick realizes that the son is not real but a creation of their imagination. Martha is absolutely shocked and heartbroken after Nick and Honey leave. The play finishes with George attempting to soothe Martha.

Albee's drama *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is a social play with an existential subject. Existentialism holds that existence is meaningless and futile, yet we prefer to live by inventing new ways to find meaning. To find meaning in life, Martha and George construct an imaginary son in the play. In the realm of illusion, it is simple to live. The discussion of their history and other relatives suggests that they are childless, and their childlessness has isolated them from the rest of society.

Despite the fact that their son is imaginary, they are grateful to have one. They kill two birds with one stone by creating an imagined son: they get a method of seeking significance in their life, and they gain a higher social status. Their

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improved social standing is really a mirage. They are aware of it, yet they act as if they aren't. To live, we all need to have a lot of pretensions. Life isn't worth living without it.

Although George has long been a professor in the history department, he hasn't been able to reach the level of success that his wife Martha and his father-in-law, the college dean, had hoped for. Martha repeatedly humiliates him as a result of this. He, on the other hand, remains unmoved. As there is no way out of the absurdity and futility of existence, he accepts all of Martha's accusations and disdain. But when she enrages him once again by informing her new visitors, Nick and Honey, about his former life and his failed attempt to create a novel, George vows to avenge Martha. He tells Martha to stop criticizing him, but she responds by saying she wants to say more. She has already spoken openly about their son. Because of Martha's sexual attempts toward Nick and their upstairs scene, George decides to use his final ace against her. Martha and their guests are informed of their child's death by George.

They are attempting to escape reality by creating an imaginary son in order to find purpose in life. The Reality of life is always harsh; life is meaningless and absurd and realizing this makes it much more difficult to survive. The cause of the tragedy is realization. They build an illusion: son, in order to evade the awful fact of life. When they murder that imaginary one, however, they do not cease to exist; they continue to live as before. It is obvious and significant that their acceptance of life's futility is a natural process, not a result of their disagreement.

When the childless couple kills their imagined son because they have grasped the absurdity of existence, they continue to live as before. There is no hope or meaning in life, and there is no option to live as well. Why do Martha and George make a fictitious kid, while Nick and Honey make a fake pregnancy? Why did George murder his made-up child? Why does he have such a hatred for Martha and Nick? George and Martha create an imaginary son. When George becomes angry with Martha, he kills the unborn child. What does this occurrence demonstrate? Why does George console Martha after the visitors have left and the child's death has occurred? A final dilemma comes from all of these diverse questions: what is the solution?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Critics find plenty of food for thought in Albee's dramas. Many critics and academics have made an effort to decipher and evaluate his writings. Albee contends that all of the moral, religious, political, and social systems that man built to deceive himself have collapsed, leaving the world incomprehensible. Schechner (1963) in *The Tulane Drama Review*, writes:

Albee makes dishonesty a virtue, perversion a joke, and adultery a simple party game. (. . .) The American theatre, our theatre, is so hungry so voracious, so corrupt, so morally blind, so perverse that Virginia Woolf becomes a success. (10)

According to Schechner, *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is a perverse and corrupt drama, yet it succeeds because of society's corruption. Albee's portrayal of such situations is not a mistake, but rather the result of the pressure of American society. He discovers that the corrupted and decadent people of American society readily welcome such dramas. Albee's representation of social reality and disturbing the American-conscious people is praised by him.

On the other hand, Potter (1995) studied *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in the background of a morality game. He also discovers parts of morality play in this play. He finds in this play too the aspects of morality play. He claims that the human drama of a morality play has a life cycle that is comparable but fundamentally different. By using his free will and appetite to escape a situation he has put himself in, the man manages to lose his innocence. As opposed to "simple oblivion," regeneration—always followed by rebirth—marks the conclusion of human existence. However, he is compelled to achieve salvation and eternal life by divine grace.

According to Potter, man's involvement with heavenly matters and ignorance of the divine as a result of his transformation from reality into an illusion is what causes the fall in the morality play. Therefore, misperception serves as the basis for man's fall.

In Albee's drama, critic Dumenil (1995), discovers women's equality. For him, the media and its frequent use of Freudian sexuality are the results of their equal involvement in parties and drinking. He has this to say:

In particular, women wanted equality with men in matters of style and behaviour. They insisted upon their rights to drink and smoke in public to be unrestrained in their behavior and in particular to obtain sexual satisfaction. This new emphasis on sexuality was evident in changed expectations about material sexual relationships. Prompted by the media popularization of Freud and the increasing availability and use of birth control the ideal marriage was more sexual. (180)

Here, Dumenil claims that the women of the 1960s were trying to be equal with the males. For this, they are energized by the media, which popularized Freudian sexuality. They have used sex to control the male and be equal with them. They take these pills for birth control and try to be ever energetic and young. This illusion encourages them to go on it but that is leading them to their doom which they have never thought.

Surprisingly, Zimbardo (1975), found the Biblical themes and symbols in Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. He discovers Albee developing a contemporary theme in which he [Albee] regularly employs Biblical symbols. Zimbardo shows:

Albee, in creating this theme, has used a pattern of symbolism that is an immensely expanded allusion to the story of Christ's sacrifice. But the symbolism is not outside the story of modern man and his isolation and hope for salvation. He uses allusion to support his own story. He has chosen traditional Christian symbols, thinks not because they are tricky attention-getters, but because the sacrifice of Christ is perhaps the most effective way that the story has been told in the past. (45)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? has Biblical connotations, according to Zimbardo, is startling but not pointless. Christ's suffering can be paralleled to that of George or Martha.

From reviewing the above-mentioned literature, this researcher came to the conclusion that this drama hasn't been interpreted under the lens of existentialism. The characters' absurd lives and meaningless existence have never been analyzed before. For that reason, this qualitative research paper has been prepared under the lens of existential philosophy.

METHODOLOGY: EXISTENTIALISM AS A TOOL

In this research paper, this researcher has used existentialism as a tool for the qualitative interpretation of Albee's drama *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. As library research, textual evidence are explored and justified with the ideas of different existential theorists. For this, it is essential first to make clear what existentialism really is.

Existentialism is a philosophy that emerged in Europe following World War II; however, its roots may be traced back to Kierkegaard in the eighteenth century. The name is a combination of the words "exist" and "essence." To put it another way, man exists before he obtains essence or a distinct identity. Thus, existentialism not only explores the variety of human experiences, but also reveals how the objects, people, and events we perceive are coloured by our own subjective patterns. As the critics, the meaning of existentialism also varies. In *The Dictionary of Philosophy*, Mautner (1996) opines that though the views of different philosophers vary, they are similar in basic concepts. He writes:

The existentialists differ widely from one another and, given their individualistic emphasis; it is not surprising that many of them have denied involvement in any 'movement' at all. Kierkegaard was a devout Christian; Nietzsche was an atheist; Jean-Paul Sartre was a Marxist and Heidegger, at least briefly, a Nazi. Kierkegaard and Sartre enthusiastically insisted on the freedom of the will; Nietzsche denied it; Heidegger hardly talked about it at all. But one would not go wrong in saying that existentialism represented a certain attitude particularly relevant to modern mass society. Existentialists have a shared concern for the individual and for personal responsibility. (141)

This extract clarifies that existential philosophers were not following the same trend, ideology, or thoughts.

Tarnas (1991), on the other hand, finds existentialism to be grimmer and more chaotic. He assumes the human condition in this alien world is absurd and bleak. He writes:

... [A] mode and philosophy reflecting a pervasive spiritual crisis in modern culture. It addresses the most fundamental naked concerns of human existence – suffering and death, loneliness, guilt, spiritual emptiness, ontological insecurity, the sense of cosmic absurdity, the frailty of human reason, and the tragic impasse of the human condition. Man is condemned to be free. (389)

Tarnas observes that man must make decisions and is aware of the ongoing costs of errors. He is forced into a limited existence that is surrounded on all sides by nothingness, and he never knows what his future holds.

Existentialism is a reaction to conventional philosophy, which treats philosophy as a science. Traditional philosophers developed objective, universally true, and certain knowledge. Existentialists reject the conventional approach of attempting to understand the ultimate essence of the universe through abstract systems of thought. Rather, they seek to understand what it means to be an 'individual' human being in the world. They emphasize that everyone, including philosophers seeking perfect knowledge, is a restricted human being. As a result, every individual is faced with critical and difficult decisions to make with limited information and time. Existentialists

are obsessed with the human predicament. In this connection, Sartre (1994) says:

We are like actors who suddenly find themselves on stage in the middle of a performance, but without having a script, without knowing the name of the play or what role they are playing, without knowing what to do or say yes, without even knowing whether the play has an author at all – whether it is serious or a farce. We must personally make a decision, to be something or other – a villain or a hero, ridiculous or tragic. Or we can simply exit, immediately. But that is also choosing a role – and that choice too is made without our ever knowing what the performance was about. (qtd. in Skirbekk and Cilijje, 44).

The essential source of human beings' freedom in each and every instant is emptiness and the non-existence of an essence. In light of his position, the human being has the freedom in making decisions that help him solve his problems and exist in the world. When a human being is born into the world, he or she is doomed to be free.

Despite the fact that all existential philosophers believe existence has no value and that we are simply creatures thrown into a strange universe with no past or history, they encourage us to live. Despite the absurdity of life living attempts to offer meaningless life, they do not yield us to terminate the meaningless existence. Despite life's absurdity, 'living' attempts to give meaning to it. We die meaningless deaths, but we should fight for our lives. Albert Camus uses the mythological character Sisyphus as an example of someone who had an absurd life yet survived. He was sentenced to drag the rock to the peak of the mountain just to have it roll back down.

Again, he should come down and take the stone up, again to roll it down. This futile act was Sisyphus's punishment, but he lived his life happily. Camus also cites the example of Oedipus' blinding. Greek Oedipus was prophesied to kill his father and married his mother. How much he tried, he could not whitewash his fate, and when he realized the reality, he did not kill himself, just blinded himself and struggled with his fate. He would kill himself like his wife-cum mother but he chose to live, and struggle for his existence.

Sartre has a lot of criticism of God. He is a devout atheist who does not believe in God. He believes that God does not exist and that if he does, he is also useless. He backs up his claim by stating, "Existentialism isn't so aesthetic that it exhausts itself in proving the absence of God. Rather, it states that even if God exists, it makes no difference" (51). Despite his repeated references to freedom, he has a negative attitude toward it. He considers freedom to be a burden rather than a blessing for him; man is condemned to be free (52) because he must select his path in life and is accountable for his acts. As a result, a person's life is decided by their choices.

There are no predetermination or fate-like elements in our lives; everything happens based on our choices. According to Sartre (1984), there is no predetermined essence; rather, the essence is created via choice. As a result, the most important thing is to exist. He claims that existence and liberty are inextricably linked. "Freedom is existence, and existence precedes essence," says Sartre (66). When he talks about freedom, he also mentions that individual freedom is contingent on the liberty of others. In this approach, Sartre, like most existentialists, emphasizes human responsibility

and freedom of choice, implying that there is no absolute authority to govern a man.

In human life, however, existence comes first, since each individual is constrained by his historical and environmental circumstances. As a result, he is the creator of his own story. Unlike Kierkegaard and other theistic existentialists, Sartre claimed that existentialism is concerned with the treatment of individuals rather than God, a pre-determined ethic, or a universal idea of divine power.

Individual subjectivity is heavily emphasized in existential philosophy. Sartre, like other existentialists, emphasizes the individual's subjectivity, which distinguishes it from inanimate objects. Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre's lifelong girlfriend and intellectual colleague, is a strong supporter of his philosophical worldview (1908-86). But it would be a mistake to assume that just because she was close to Sartre, her ideas are a carbon copy of his. She provides a fresh and distinctive view of existentialism while maintaining a perspective similar to Sartre's. She, in contrast to him, likes to focus on the moral and personal aspects of life. She made an effort to meld existentialism with feminism. Sartre never finished the research on ethics that he had promised, and Beauvoir takes a feminist stance when discussing existentialism. A life of existence is defined as a passive acceptance of the role that one has been socialized into, whereas a life of transcendence is defined as actively and freely evaluating one's options with the aim of remaking one's future, according to Audi (1995).

Beauvoir argued that there is no such thing as a fundamental 'female nature' or 'male nature.' Man has a 'transcending' nature, according to popular belief, and will seek purpose and direction outside the home. Women are 'immanent,' which implies they want to be right where they are. As a result, she will take care of her family, drive a car that is good for the environment, and do other things that are more domestic. Beauvoir did not agree with our gender perceptions for this reason. Adhikary (2020) wrote:

Existential psychology is about human existence and the human drama of survival. It helps in overcoming or confronting existential anxieties and living an authentic life. Existentialist psychologists avoid treating a person as if they were isolated from events and situations in the world. The features of choice, responsibility, and freedom in human lives are of particular importance in existential psychology. For both good and bad, people are expected to seize their freedom and take responsibility for the choices they make in their lives.

Here, he made it clear that existential anxiety compels a man to make a choice for his fortune.

In conclusion, existential philosophy or existentialism highlights the absurdity of the human state in the world. It not only makes us aware of the futility of our efforts and the meaninglessness of our lives, but it also motivates us to confront our troubles and afflictions and continue to live joyfully like Sisyphus and Oedipus did. Despite shining a light on the world's dark and bleak human state, it entices us to live by inspiring us to develop a love for life and living. Existentialism seeks to promote this positive concept as one of our primary sources of living.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

The existence of humans is always under doubt. But it is caused by humans and the civilization they have established, not by other creatures or agents. Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* represents the human struggle for existence. The world of the 1960s in America was enthralling. The Second World War, its aftermath, America's status as a superpower, and the materialization of American society have all cast doubt on individuals' abilities. Almost all characters in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* are also struggling for existence.

Because Martha was the daughter of the college's dean, George married her. He would not marry Martha if this were not the case, since she is 'unbearable' and older than him. George's father sees him as a potential son-in-law, as well as the sources of power he possesses. We can see how disgusted George is with Martha in the dialogue between Nick and George. He doesn't appear to like Martha at all:

GEORGE: How old are you?

NICK: Twenty-eight

GEORGE: I'm forty-something. [waits for reaction . . . get none.] Aren't you surprised? I mean . . . don't look older? Doesn't his . . . grey quality suggest the fifties? Don't I sort of fade into backgrounds . . . get lost in the cigarette smoke? Huhh?

NICK : [looking around for an astray] : I think you . . . fine.

GEORGE: I've always been lean . . . I haven't put on five pounds since I was your age. I don't have a paunch, either . . . what I've got . . . I've got this little distension just below the belt . . . but it's hard . . . it's not soft flesh. I use the handball courts. How much do you weigh?

NICK : I . . .

We can obviously conclude from George's attitude toward Martha that he is not least satisfied by his conjugal relationship with Martha. He just married in an effort to progress in his profession.

Nick, on the other hand, is married to Honey as a result of a fake pregnancy. He admits that this isn't the only reason; he married her because her father is wealthy. When Honey informed Nick that she was pregnant, he realized that he would have to marry her in order to function in society. Because of her affluence, he was also willing to marry her. He confides in George, saying:

NICK: Sure. [with no emotion, accept the faintest distaste, as GEORGE takes his glass to the bar] I married her because she was pregnant.

GEORGE [pause] : Oh? [pause] But you said you didn't have any children . . . when I asked you, you said . . .

NICK: She wasn't really. It was a historical pregnancy. She blew up, and then she went down.

GEORGE: And while she was up, you married her.

NICK: And then she went down.

Nick is not hesitant to tell George about his interest in his father-in-law's money. Though he is a religious person he owns much money by the means of religion. And Nick was thinking about wealth which can be seen in the following dialogue:

NICK: We are talking about my wife's money . . . not yours.

GEORGE: O.K. . . . talk.

NICK: No. [pause] my father-in-law . . . was a man of the Lord, and he was very rich.

GEORGE: What faith?

NICK: He . . . my father-in-law . . . was called by God when he was six, or something, and he started preaching, and he baptized people, and he saved them, and he traveled around a lot, and he becomes pretty famous . . . not like some of them, but he became pretty famous . . . and when he died he had a lot of money.

GEORGE: God's money.

NICK: No . . . his own.

Nick's struggle for his position and wealth is justifiable and natural. Though he seems greedy and selfish, we all have a similar instinct in us. His struggle, but, would not benefit him forever. Life itself is futile and without meaning, then what is the meaning of such little advance in the means of economic matters?

As a result, we see people struggling for survival in many forms all throughout the world. Because our society is so complicated and critical, we must struggle for our survival in either a moral or an immoral manner. Nick has even planned to sleep with faculty spouses in order to advance in college. Among them is Martha. Honey and Martha, with the exception of George and Nick, are fighting for survival. They don't have any kids between them. Martha has raised an imaginary child to be a respected member of society with the help of George. Because she fears the pain of delivery, Honey did not want to become pregnant, but she used the pregnancy to get married to Nick. Her hurried marriage to Nick reveals her struggle for existence. The imaginary child of Martha and George is just for camouflaging society. They have to 'make' the child survive in society as they do not live easily without the child.

The most turbulent period in American society was the 1950s and 1960s. It was just after World War II. The Vietnam War was still to come, and civil rights movements, blacks, and women's liberation movements were causing a lot of turbulence in American culture. The long-ago American Dream was fading, and the Beats and Hippies were only getting started. People were becoming more tangible and automated, and family values were eroding. Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is placed in such a circumstance.

According to Albee, all societal ideals are empty, which leads to impotent and corrupt religion, loveless and sterile marriages, unsuccessful jobs, riches that were obtained illegally, squandered education, and failed vocations. Albee suggests that the nation is a desolate wasteland where individuals must create a different reality to make up for what is absent as a result of the decline of these principles. Albee has denounced the moral and spiritual harm that unwisely pursuing the "American Dream" and excessive material affluence cause to people. Before America established a distinct shape as a nation, the notion of the 'American Dream' it realized was becoming a part of European cultural tradition.

FAILURE OF FINDING MEANING IN LIFE

We arrive in this planet knowing nothing about it. We strive to find purpose in our lives after we have our conscience. Because there is no purpose in life, this hunt for meaning is

always pointless. Everyone struggles to find significance in their lives. They strive to find meaning through a variety of methods. Martha and George are in the same boat. They invent a fake child in order to find purpose in life.

However, in their quarrel, they lose their temper and kill the boy they have created. Though they struggle to find purpose in their lives – as we all do – they are not in despair; as the curtain closes, we see George consoling Martha.

The futility of life's "meaning search quest" leads to the recognition of life's absurdity. The search for Martha and George's imaginary son leads them to the reality of a pointless world. Nick and Honey, on the other hand, are looking for significance in their lives as well. Honey is determined to marry Nick by any means necessary, and she succeeds. She had hoped that life would be easier and more meaningful after that, but nothing has changed. Her marital life is also devoid of novelty. She is unable to find any newness or significance in her life, even after her marriage.

Nick's strategy of sleeping with prominent professors' wives in order to advance in college seems to be failing. He begins by experimenting with Martha, the daughter of the college dean and wife of history instructor George, but this does not appear to be productive. His struggle to find significance in life is symbolized by Martha's finding him a lousy spouse. Martha refers to him as a flop:

MARTHA [her glass to her mouth]: You're certainly a flop in some departments.

NICK [wincing]: I beg your pardon . . . ?

MARTHA [unnecessarily loud]: I said, you're certainly a flop in some . . .

NICK [he, too, too loud]: I'm sorry you are disappointed.

MARTHA [braying]: I didn't say I was disappointed! Stupid!

NICK: You should try me sometime when we haven't been drinking for ten hours, and maybe . . .

MARTHA [still braying]: I wasn't talking about your potential; I was talking about your goddam performance.

NICK [softly]: Oh.

MARTHA [she is softer, too]: Your potential is fine. It's dandy. [Wiggles her eyebrows]. Absolutely dandy. I haven't seen such dandy potential in a long time. Oh, but baby you sure are a flop.

NICK [snapping it out]: Everybody's a flop to you! Your husband's a flop, I'm a flop . . .

MARTHA [dismissing him]: You're all flops. I am the Earth Mother, and you're all flops.

It demonstrates Nick's inability to find meaning in his life by improving his position. In the first socioeconomic ladder, he has failed. He does not, however, appear disgusted. That is the individual's existential spirit, which endures men and motivates them to go farther. Even if he fails in his first effort, he shows no signs of dissatisfaction or defeat.

Nick's marriage to Honey is a similar attempt to find meaning and even dream in life, but it fails as well. He married Honey because he assumed she was expecting a child. However, he eventually discovered that he had been deceived. He stays with her in the hopes of inheriting more money from her father. However, he is unable to

comprehend this. He still thinks she will have a child. It is also a decision to degrade cultural and familial values, and it is an unavoidable choice to live in a degenerative state. Every choice, in this sense, is an effort or commitment to existing in the true sense, which each character strives for in the never-ending journey for the self and being.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE FUTILITY OF EXISTENCE

Martha and George are husband and wife from the 1950s. George was a 46-year-old college professor and he married to Martha, as she was the 52-year-old daughter of the college's dean. They don't have any children. They have made an imaginary son in the eyes of society, but they have agreed not to tell anybody else about it. They are just returning from the college dean's party when the action begins. To George's and our amazement, Martha has extended an invitation to a late-night party to the new biology professor Nick and his wife Honey.

When the visitors come, Martha and George dispute and quarrel with one another in various ways. Honey learns about Martha's son, which George had banned. The back story of George and Nick is also revealed. Honey was married to Nick because she was pregnant, which subsequently turns out to be untrue. Nick had also had a look at his father-in-law's property. George is enraged enough to 'kill' their kid due to Martha's constant mockery of George's failure and her sexual attempts toward Nick. As a result, he notifies Martha of their son's death in front of the visitors, which disgusts her immensely. We discover them consoling each other later after the visitors have left.

The sophisticated process is hidden underneath the seemingly simple plot. The creation of an imaginary son is the pinnacle of today's showy but empty existence. Because modern individuals lack meaning in their lives, they seek to create meaning from nothing. However, such creations are of little use to them. Their imaginary child does not heal them completely, but it does heal them for a while. They have forgotten the futility of hollow existence by creating the imagined child. However, once they destroy it – break out of the illusion – they resolve to live life genuinely, i.e. absurdly and meaninglessly.

The couple is a suffocating example of the 'existential hero.' They move on with their lives without complaining or regretting their lack of meaning. They are unaffected by the tragedy because they have grasped the true meaning of life, which is that life has no intrinsic meaning. As a result, they do not abandon their attempts to find purpose in their lives, even when they are aware that there is none. Even after witnessing the hollowness of existence, we, like Oedipus or Sisyphus, find vitality and enthusiasm for life. They don't grumble or point the finger at anybody. They embrace the results since it was entirely generated by them and not by others.

At last, we find both reconciled with each other and trying to bring happiness in life again. They have already been reconciled because the antagonism between them is also worthless and absurd:

MARTHA: Did you . . . did you . . . have to?

GEORGE [pause]: Yes

MARTHA: It was . . . ? You had to?

GEORGE [pause]: yes

MARTHA: I don't know

GEORGE: It was . . . time.

MARTHA: Was it?

GEORGE: Yes

MARTHA: Was it?

GEORGE: Yes

MARTHA [pause]: I'm old.

GEORGE: It's late

MARTHA: Yes

GEORGE [long silence]: It will be better.

MARTHA [long silence]: I don't . . . know

GEORGE: It will be . . . maybe.

MARTHA: I'm . . . not . . . sure.

When they become aware of their failure, they simply dismiss it as a failure of their endeavor, and they appear to be ready to try again. The most essential finding of existentialism is perseverance. It is also the fundamental value of life that has brought mankind to this point. This individual's corpus is the civilization and development of humanity's central nervous system. They would have gone extinct like dinosaurs many ages ago if they had not tried again after the initial setback.

After so many failures, an individual's effort and love for life elevate the human being above so many other species. Human creatures are competent beings who, unlike animals, cannot forget their failures and instead continue on to complete another job. The excitement of Martha and George exemplifies man's search for existence and even purpose.

Their revelation confirms the futility of existence once more. They don't have a kid; they don't obtain George's promotion to the dean; they don't gain permission to publish his work, but they don't surrender to failure or the ground. They believe that if one crumble, another will be ready to take its place. Nick, on the other hand, intends to be promoted to a higher position. Martha refers to him as a "flop" as he makes love to her.

Martha and George are able to persuade their visitors to believe in their son. But, eventually, everyone, including the visitors Nick and Honey, emerges from the fog of deception. They are aware of their son's delusory fantasies. Honey changes her mind and claims that she needs a kid as they pretend and make their visitors believe in the child, fascinated by the same false optimism. Martha goes so far as to mention their son's lady pals, his college studies, and so on. Martha is genuinely attempting to replace one failure with another. Later, George informs Martha and Nick about their son's death, which comes as a shock to them:

GEORGE: Well, Martha . . . I'm afraid our boy isn't coming home for his birthday.

MARTHA: Of course, he is.

GEORGE: Martha . . . [long pause] . . . our son is . . . dead. He was killed . . . late in the afternoon. [silence] He drove against into a . . .

MARTHA: YOU CANNOT DO THAT.

GEORGE: . . . large tree.

MARTHA: You can't decide that for yourself . . . He is not dead.

GEORGE: Martha, I'm not a God. I don't have the power over life and death, do I? There was a telegram . . . and I ate it. (136)

The sentimentality of the situation is reflected in the silence of their quarrel. Martha can't believe George would breach their pact by killing their son. George, on the other hand, is attempting to adjust to a new world. Despite his belief in God, he appears to be more powerful than God by murdering his kid in a struggle for survival. This is startling news for Martha, and the entire home is in mourning.

The act of creating a kid and then killing it is absurd. However, it is still meaningful since it is a rebuttal to the illusion and failure of a previous decision. When George asserts that he has no control over life and death since he is a wretched creature on this planet, he is demonstrating an existential predicament. If Martha had followed George's instruction not to discuss the kid, George would not have killed him. The son must either perish or come into being once exposed. He is just the moon that Martha wishes to grab; she has a series of nightmares, some of which criticize George and others which question conventional ideals.

When people realized the dismal fact of existence, they snuffed out the light in their lives, yet existential philosophy and existential authors like Albee elegeize life and optimism in individuals. Albee, therefore, calls for the survival of an optimistic life while confirming the futility of being in life.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* has the theme of existentialism and it shows human life is meaningless. Albee creates an optimistic play that urges the "hopeless" to enjoy a life of absurdity. Albee subtly proposes to us, through his four characters, that we might make the fruitless and meaningless life meaningful by understanding reality. We should be positive about the meaningless existence since it has always been like way, and our denial will not alter anything. The drama's narrative isn't all that essential. Nothing new occurred there. A couple had invited another couple for drinks. All four drank heavily late at night and criticized one another. Finally, the guests went out. The arguing hosts had finally calmed down and decided to retire for the night. Their discussions and imprisonment, though, are crucial. They have fascinating conversations on the futility of existence and its realization. They've seen the absurdity of life and are prepared to face it.

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