

Jean Paul Sartre and ‘False belief’ in Becket’s Krapp’s Last Tape

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Becket was one of the most influential dramatists of twentieth century. His plays are categorized under the Theater of Absurd due to the existential questions and qualities in his works. Krapp’s last tape like many other plays by Becket, delineates the restlessness of man, trapped in a life which they are condemned to live. However in the case of Krapp, the character does not designate absurdity as much as he manifests nostalgia, despair and regret. In other words, Krapp and Becket’s other characters are desperate although, as for Krapp, the interlocutor knows the thread which goes back to the strong source of dissatisfaction.

Krapp has a reason for looking absurd and disillusioned, which has left a lasting mark on his life. The despair of the individual comes as a conflict between past and present. Krapp is the one and only character in this play. He listens to his own voice recorded in the past. He is incessantly lambasting himself by disapproving of his past.

Krapp is obviously a regretful disdainful character. All through his life, krapp has felt crestfallen, and the audience realizes this by listening to Krapp’s recorded voice. His past is as unpromising as his present. His life is a complete failure and he could not have any success in his life. Through lack of faith, Krapp’s condition could be explained better. He is a person with a “bad faith”, and such people are accustomed to lying to themselves. Such lying is distinguished from other forms of lying since the liar and the lied are one. The first issue that Sartre brings up here is the fact that a person who is lying or negating is aware of the truth which they are hiding; there must be a truth from which the individual retreats. Sartre asserts that “the ideal

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description of the liar would be a cynical consciousness, however “self-knowledge” is a perennial tool of defiance according to Sartre. In order for an individual to resist “bad faith” they should attempt to be in full possession of their inner self. He also draws on the same issue in his discussion on moral psychology which is later going to be dealt with. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, as a precursor of Sartre, foregrounds the notion of “faith”.

Krapp utters a sentence which seems to be a sort of recognition; he says “...clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality”. He supposes that he has eventually realized where this darkness rises from, however this is by itself a self-deception since the character maps his life’s darkness onto reality, the external world. Conversely, the darkness stems from inside, his inwardness. Such darkness is a sufficient account of lack of “faith”. According to Kierkegaard such darkness could be met effectively by “faith” which leads to a positive change. Evidently in Krapp’s life no real change occurs. His life is of a monotonous shape because he doesn’t “leap”. A “leap” in Kierkegaard’s view takes place when an individual decides to act in a particular way, certainly not by the way of necessity, which is not justifiable in terms of objective knowledge and logic. Having regularly confronted “objective uncertainties”, one cannot deal with decisions but through “faith”. He asserts that all human knowledge is “approximation” so that the only way out of such absurdity is a “leap of faith”; a sort of “bridging the gap”. What Krapp lacks is “bridging the gap”. The darkness he associates with reality has emerged from his lack of “passion” and hence “faith”.

Sartre points out that there is a Not in man’s life that gives him/her the ability to maintain life in Being and nothingness. ‘Bad faith’ happens when a human being denies a truth or negates an object or the essence of an entity. Krapp in Becket’s play is one who is consistently negating everything.

Krapp’s experience of life seems to be a failure to him. He is not currently satisfied with what he has achieved. He has this ‘bad faith toward himself’. Krapp’s bad faith and negation, according to Sartre, is a result of failing to achieve what he had wished. Sartre says about negation that when one is misled by bad faith, like Krapp, one highly stands the chance of depriving him/herself of all the ‘human agency’ and ‘freedom’. Sartre inveighs against this quality which he sees in hard determinism.

Krapp is sorrowful and anxious, he is totally isolated; it’s overtly remarkable from the scene description of the play and the light of the scene. The only communication

that occurs in the course of the play is between Krapp and the Tape. What's more is that he is a manifestation of absurdity which are all tenets of existentialism particularly that of Sartre and Camus; however Krapp isn't really an existentialist since he continuously shrinks from the responsibility of his own life, from the choices that he had to make but he did not.

Considering Krapp, he holds such suffering and "pathos" as Kierkegaard offers; nonetheless, the suffering he has been undergoing for so long a time is in fact a consequence of his "bad faith". Thus in Kierkegaardian philosophy "faith" is a prominent component in one's "subjectivity" as a means of achieving a higher goal or "life-ideal".

Existence has turned into a trouble for Krapp. Existence will indeed appears to be mere catastrophe if a person does not own its fundamental substances. According to Kierkegaard "passion" and "faith" are paramount components of true existence which makes a true character. "Inwardness" is also what Krapp lacks and as a result projects the "darkness" inside to reality, to the world outside. "Bad faith" is also a result of the absence of "subjectivity" and "passion". According to Kierkegaard "subjectivity is truth" thus forgoing "subjectivity" means dismissing the truth, and that's the reason why "self-deception" occurs frequently. Absurdity in effect is a predictable outcome of such existence.

Key words: Krapp's Last Tape, Faith, False Belief, Existentialism, Drama.