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THE FEAR OF RESPONSIBILITY AND LACK OF SUBJECTIVE BEAUTY IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S MURPHY AND MORE PRICKS THAN KICK

VAISHALI JAIN

Research Scholar

Dr. Hari Singh Gaur Central University, Sagar, (M.P.)



VAISHALI JAIN

ABSTRACT

Fromm's notion of personal freedom and social responsibility runs parallel in the domain of the subjectivity. The beauty of living which lies in the responsibilities is the part of human life. The relation between the societal as well as the self-centered actions is the process of becoming/being.

Samuel Beckett's novels are the part of the abstract world, where the emotions of human beings get influenced by the act of non-action. The fear of responsibility brings subjective loss in his novels.

Besides, the epiphenomenal artifacts in Beckett's novel represent the inner state of the life of his protagonists. These artifacts also present the dissipated life, incompatible livelihood, inhibit/chaotic situations and meaning-generating dynamics.

Key Words: -Behavioral Outlook, Subjective Beauty, Physical and Metaphysical Subjectivity, Indolence, Love and Lush, Social and Personal Responsibility.

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Life is a concoction of both the subjective beauty and the objective one, which brings inclusive harmonization between mind and heart. In life, people deal with subjective beauty and most often want to be with it. All the primary jobs are the part of this subjective beauty that is why it is the life of all the worldly relationships. The life of a common man is not individual, it is socially constructed, and therefore, it is an amalgam of various associations. Love, passion, contentment, pleasures and sorrows all are the outer layers of his inner being. These abstract feelings are much capable to enhance the relationships and transport beauty in it.

Subjectivity is the source of embellishing the life of the common people. The various pleasures of life, which one views through rose-tinted glasses, are the part of subjective

gratification. The charm of being the part of this world of artifact is very much depicted on individual's experiences. These experiences are the consequences of the unanimity of heart, mind and body.

Heart encourages body and excites it. Besides, it also enhances subjective perceptivity and comprehends the sensation of human body. On the contrary, mind kindles heart and brings rationality in it. There are many happenings which are based on the life of the commoners always give the idea of the intense disposition of mind over heart and heart over mind. Consequently, mind stimulates heart and heart stimulates body; the harmony which grows amid mind, heart and body also brings a state of equilibrium.

The equilibrium state of mind and heart presents the perfect symmetry of human existence where the mind brings rationality while the heart provides emotional rapture to the actions. This stability of mind and heart makes every affiliation strong and worth living. What Descartes ideology says is something equivalent with it, he says, 'But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions' (1984, 19).¹

Therefore, our existence is a mixture of both the rational and the sensory acuity. Our imagination and wishes are the combinations of such nature. Not only Descartes, but Kant, too, agrees on this mingling of the mind and senses. His *Critique of Power and Judgment* is one such work where he tries to show the differences and the connections between rationality/judgment and aesthetic pleasure, and where he gives the answer of the question, 'what is beautiful?' If a priori is the source of pure judgment, then beauty is the source of aesthetic pleasure. So, it could be said that the aesthetic pleasure and the judgment are the supplementary and the complementary facets of each other.

Kant's theory of *sublime and beautiful* distinguishes between what is sublime/universal and what is sensory/beautiful. He says, '...night is sublime, day is beautiful; the sea is sublime, the land is beautiful; man is sublime, woman is beautiful' (1946, 732).²

Subsequently, the beauty and the sublimity are complimentary to each other. The combination of these two brings completeness in whole. What is sublime is also the source of what we call beautiful. It's a perfect intermingle of worldly feelings and rationality. Very many new creations are the upshots/offshoots of this unison.

Similarly, subjectivity can be characterized into two ways; one is physical, other is spiritual. The various phenomenon which are the part of this illusionary world, the different modes of physicalism, and sensation which is capable to induce some satisfaction, which is neither permanent nor eternal

but still acquires some contentment, as being the part of this 'materialistic world', is known as physical subjectivity. Soul, the eternal serenity of mind, the vital and cogent understanding of the indispensable reality, the rational perspective to the irrational existence and the various modes to obtain the abode of peace is the part of 'metaphysical world', is celebrated as spiritual subjectivity.

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), a Nobel Prize winner playwright of 1969, is well known for his plays *Waiting for Godot* (1954) and *End Game* (1958), is one of the founders of absurd plays. His writing inscribes not only on physical or metaphysical senses, but he uses both of these terms together to show the vicissitude of life. His inscriptions, special here in *Murphy*, is full of Cartesian philosophy of life: as the narrator of *Murphy* refers to Murphy, 'As he lapsed in body he felt himself coming alive in mind, set free to move among its treasures. The body has its stock, the mind its treasure' (Murphy, 71). On the other hand, *More Pricks Than Kick* presents the anti-phenomena of Dante's world where the protagonist Belacqua Shauh is just opposite of Dante's Belacqua of Divine Comedy that is why he is an anti-hero of the novel.

The way he uses such disparities in his writings shows the disillusionment of his characters that is why the often suffers from boredom, thinking and an irresistible urge to behave nicely. His the mixture of the physical as well as the metaphysical devices open many ways to perform the action, but there is no action as such. But, the protagonists use this device to subvert their responsibilities, either physically or spiritually, as they often do. It is something like 'quid pro quo' (M, 2). The term which shows evenness between loss and profit. The love of Murphy is the perfect example of such mingling; as, 'What do you love?'... Me as I am. You can want what does not exist, you can't love it' (M, 25).

Here, Murphy's talk is very much indicating towards the supreme love where one needs only love rather than all the other materialistic things. If the inclination is focused on materialistic things, then, what Murphy says to Celia about the existence and non-existence of things 'You can want what does not exist, you can't love it', is true

somewhere. It's the human life which moves around those things which are far away from its range. Besides, those things which are here with it and easy to access are not of much importance. What he tries to get here is the truth, the truth which is hidden somewhere in the deep memories/experiences of Celia.

The question of love creates many problems in the life of Murphy. He is the prey of this puzzle. Not only once, but time and again this question takes place in his life, and this question of love brings unnecessary doubts, qualms and tensions. The situation of doubts has been playing a decisive role in the lives of the Beckettian heroes. The relation(s) that get complicated is just because of the misgivings. The relationship, which establishes on the very ground of reality, trust, conviction, and care sometimes collapse because of the suspicion.

Such disbeliefs become visible in Murphy's behavior when he accuses Celia for changing him. At the same time, his blames give a shock to Celia; his statement, 'Then why are you all out to change me? So that you won't have to love me...so that you won't condemn to love me...' (M, 27). The way he has been showing his anger to Celia is the mark of fear. It is very clear, then, that he has the fear of loss of his love inside his mind. Although he knows the truth that Celia loves her a lot, and she is the only person who can live with him, but because of his own behavior, inactive and irresponsible nature, he is not in the state to accept it.

Beckett's heroes are the victim of such phenomenon where things are quite absurd rather than evocative. His protagonists, as we have seen in almost every works of him, either of the dramas or of the novels, bring absurdity in simplicity, love and livelihood. They are so bizarre that they don't want to enjoy the various raptures of life. Belacqua is the first, and Murphy is the second of this place. They always keep on moving from one place to another; Dublin is the beginning point, whereas London is the preceding destination of their journey. For what they move constantly from one place to another is not a big issue. Everybody knows the truth, and the reason behind it is responsibility. They just want to skip from their day to day tasks/mechanism. Not

only Murphy and Belacqua, but the other Beckettian heroes, like the narrator of *First Love* (1974), who lives with Anna for a shelter, personal needs and pleasure, leaves her just because he doesn't want to take the responsibility of his unborn child. And, he betrays his own wife. Such responsibilities create problems not only physically, but construct psychological distress, too, which is really excruciating. Now, it could be understood that work is just another hindrance which always tries to toughen their spare time that is why they don't want to work. It is just their habit now. But, in this temporal world, as many of the postmodern writers, like Jameson, Baudrillard, Lyotard and others, admit that everything is in flux. Nothing is permanent, and therefore, perpetual. And, one cannot afford to live long with the same habits and code of conducts. Didi, in *Waiting For Godot*, puts his thoughts in a factual direction, then; and his utterances that, 'Habit is a great deadener' (1954, 105), is fairly consistent.

Aesthetic pleasure is the basic need of human beings. One who lives in this world needs all sorts of pleasure. Body is the source of accomplishment of the dreams and the various raptures, ecstasies, and rollicking experiences allied with this illusionary world. Basically, these pleasures are found on human feelings and on different sheds of experiences that is why they are much subjective in nature. Worldly pleasures are deeply connected with stimulus, what is pleasurable, then, is possibly, what is emotional in nature. Relationship is the part of these emotions which is not bounded. Both, responsibility and relationship, are the backbones of human existence, one cannot separate them from each other. Society is a mixture of such combinations where these different shades of human relationships endow with an assortment of colours.

In Kenneth's view, society is a place of different entities, groups, and relations are set in using symbols. And, it would be hard to separate them from each other. In his article *Postmodern Self: A Theoretical Consideration* (1997), he says:

'...humans that are different wear different clothes in real group interaction settings where self-identities and group boundaries

are created. It is this embedded interactional use that gives symbols meaning, emotion, and power. To divorce symbols from human-embedded-interaction and structure is like trying to understand clouds apart from the water cycle: there may be dragons out there but they don't have much of a relationship to what clouds are and do' (1997, 3-24).³

Moreover, Society is one such place where u will come to term with all these fluttering feelings and emotions. Human beings are the constructor of this society, and all the norms, which we engross to run our life satisfyingly, offer a harmony to it. This harmony brings many congenial and substandard moments in one's life. These are the rudimentary emotions which have been the part of the society since time in memorial.

Habermas, in his *Modernity And Law* (1996), talks on rationalized *lifeworld* and says that there are three pillars of *life world*. These are the structures inside where the lives of the common people get shaped, and these components are *culture, society and personality*. What he says, with regard to the 'life world', is:

Culture, society and personality are the structural components of the rationalized life world. Thereby, the process of societal rationalization entails a differentiation of a once unified life world into different structural domains and specialized social institutions' (1996, 4).⁴

But Beckett's writing, at times, present the anti-social phenomenon which presents an appalling status of society. Marriage, which is a symbol of love, trust and coming together with each other, is the part of social institution, and is very essential to grow the society. But, the *Marriage*, which has been used three times by Beckett in *More Pricks Than Kicks*, is just the reflection of all these connotations, there is no love, no compassion and no commitment. The truth is something quite distorted. Why he chooses such a pious thing to be condemned by. It's the second life in one's life, by which one can easily get away from his/her solitude. Such a noble act of life cannot be so bad that it

could condemn so easily. These are some of the acts which are based on personal experiences.

As, Allan Kenneth says: 'A sociology of symbols is concerned with the subjective experience of actors in social interaction and the symbols that express some affective or cognitive aspect of that experience' (1997, 3-24).⁵

The interaction, which Kenneth talks, is nowhere in the life of Beckett's characters. The personal delight, which should be there in the life of the common people, is nowhere in his world of dark/ignorance. The statements, which come from the protagonists' side, are the clear indicator of such anti-social phenomenon. The way the narrator of *Murphy* condemns the social system, which is based on certain practices and norms, shows the deep annoyance headed for the system. For example:

'In the first were the forms with parallel, a radiant abstract of the dogs life, the elements of physical experience available for a new arrangement. Here the pleasure was reprisal, the pleasure of reversing the physical experience...Here the whole physical fiasco became a howling success' (M,71).

Beckettian world is full of such people who have almost the same mental state except Belacqua. His personality and appearance both are very different from others. His life, which he is living in full of pride and delusions, is nothing, but a false representation of the reality. He is very far from any kind of physical relationship which needs a solid ground of commitments and devotion, and it also requires some responsibilities to be fulfilled. In any of the good relation(s), these are some of the basic requirements a person can insist on for. How these basic requirements bring problem(s) in Murphy, Celia, Belacqua, Smeraldina, and others' life is also a matter of consideration. How they suffer from this scant of commitment is mandatory to exposure.

All the male/female characters of *Murphy* and *More Pricks Than Kicks* are in want for substantial/physical/subjective love. Sometimes they get it, but sometimes not. Belacqua's female partners are just want to fulfill their desire of bodily love, but they all are unable to satisfy their appetite of love. What is the reason of it, then? Smeraldina, a

German girl and the third wife of Belacqua, is in the strong desire of making love with Belacqua, but it is he who doesn't want to do such labour. His Sexual life is untouched. Although he is a good student of Dante, an admirer of women's beauty, a lover of art, but then too, he didn't allow anyone to come close to him. His first wife Lucy, who was crippled and physically incapable to perform such acts, was his friend for whole life. He cares for her and truly thinks for her. He knows his nature very well that is why he confesses to God, that: "God help me, I'm no fit company for anyone let alone lovely Lucy" (More Pricks Than Kicks, 106). On the contrary, she surely not poses for any sort of sexual intercourses, but she always wishes to live her life 'like a music' (More..., 109); that was why he was very happy with her. Eugene Webb, in his book *Samuel Beckett: A Study of His Novels* (1971), writes:

'He tended to be sorry for himself when she died'-he also seems to sense that in losing her he lost something more valuable than merely an easy life: the narrator tells us that Belacqua felt keenly 'the lack of those windows on to better world that Lucy's big black eyes had been' (1971, 34).⁶

Despite the fact, for Belacqua, the act of love is more bushed, drained and tired rather than of contentment. The person like Belacqua, who has his own 'pried and prejudices', cannot afford such pleasure in his life. Belacqua is so much indolent that these acts of love making are like the waste for him.

But, Belacqua is so very fortunate that he gets female companions in each and every step of his life. Miss Signorina Adriana Ottelenghi was the first lady who was appreciated by Belacqua. She was the first crush of him. He has had a great infatuation for her. Winnie, his first girl-friend, who meets him in *Fingal*, is the girl with whom Belacqua enjoys every scene of *Fingal*. He gets so excited there that he kisses Winnie even in spite of the scab on his face. But when Winnie shows the objection, then for the very first time, he admits that "'I forgot" he said "I got so excited you know"' (More...24).

Instead of such feelings, Belacqua goes passive in his later years. In *A wet night*, he moves frequently from one place to another and meets

Alba, who is questioned to her own virtual appearance. She is a singer and sings for her own enjoyment. Buthe is not interested in her appearance and other things, he doesn't find anything of his taste there. The journey goes on and he meets Lucy, whom he loves without any physical relationship.

The marriage with Thelma née boggis, is just for her father's money or for the economic support only. There was neither physical nor psychological relationship in this marriage. Both were separated from their inner or outer feelings/emotions. But, the relationship with Smeraldina is quite the opposite of the earlier one. Smeraldina, who addresses *Bel* to Belacqua, and who sends many letters to Belacqua with regard to the sensual gratification, was somewhere connected emotionally with him. Her letters were the only source which divulge the inner desires of Smeraldina. While writing the letters, she gets so excited that everything start coming alive in front of the readers. In *The Smeraldina's Billet Doux*, she expresses all her intense feelings of love with/to Belacqua. Each of her letters divulge her mind-set and shows her solipsism also. The way she writes, is:

Oh! Bel I love you terrible, my hands and lips and breasts and everything els on me, sometimes I find it very hard to keep my promises but I have kept it up till now and will keep on doing so untill we meet again and I can at last have you... (More..., 152).

The passion, affection, desire and the excitement of Smeraldina for/to be with her love is something which shows the palpable/hard requirement of physical alliance. Even in the bus, she expresses her innocent feelings not only once, twice, thrice but hundred times, for him. The way she keeps on writing shows the very excitement and keenness towards her love for/with Belacqua. She puts pen on the paper and writes, 'BlovedBlovedBloved Bel BelBel, I felt as if I never longed so much in my life for the man I lone, to be with him, with him. I want you so much in every sense of the word, you and onely you' (More..., 153).

The language that is there in the letters of Smeraldina is not the precise one, but still has the power to communicate her feelings. Hence,

conferring to Habermas, in social communication action, the syntactic or semantic paradigms of language are not matter. Only the mutual understanding between the addressor and the addressee works:

The communicative model of action does not equate action with communication. language is a means of communication which serves mutual understanding, whereas actors, in coming to an understanding with one another so as to coordinate their action, pursue their particular aims...'(1981, ix).⁷

But, the understanding, which Habermas talks of, is not there in Belacqua. Although he appreciates the approaches of Smeraldina, but he is such a person who wants to enjoy his life according to his own will. His too much thinking makes him passive, but for him, it is a good thing which he always admires. His life is very much focused on his lunch, reading and sluggishness. At the very opening of the novel, Belacqua spent whole of his time to prepare a good lunch for himself, but couldn't eat because of its sharp taste or tartness. But when it comes to the soggy toast, he said, 'Buttered toast was all right for Senior Fellows and Salvationists, for such as had nothing but false teeth in their head'(More...12).

Such statement refers to Belacqua's real thinking, and also shows that he doesn't like the life of hypocrisy; but quite the opposite, he does the same. His statement with regard to this world and the world of insane people shows the sanity in insane world. The rationality which comes via insanity is the mark of meaninglessness.

Whereas the life of Murphy is full of uncertainties, disorder and commotion. What he thinks of his future is just another mirage of the reality. The love, which came out after a long period of time, was full of obsession, intimacy, ardor, and passion. Both, Murphy and Celia, cherished for each other from their malleable feelings. It was the second come back of Celia to Murphy. Murphy, who has forgotten everything, is now enjoying the contentment of love amid Celia; such love needs nothing. The togetherness which is there in their love is amazing and giving the sense of complete

whole. The narrator is describing the whole scene with bewilderment and great enthusiasm:

...The beloved features emerging from chaos...He closed his eyes and opened his arms. She sank down athwart his breast, their heads were side by side on the pillow but facing opposite ways, his fingers strayed through her yellow hair...(M, 21).

This situation is greatly comprehensible which is capable to show the inner feelings of Murphy that he has the mood of love and lush, but his sensation has been overpowered by his self-centeredness/selfishness.

A source of pleasure can be anything. One cannot ascribe to a particular thing for its lifelong pleasure. Things can change because they are prone to change. It's all depends on the experience of the observer. But what will be the future of those experiences is a big question to be answered, then. If someone likes a red rose, which is full of its charm, and is on the top of its blooming, could be a source of magnetism for many, but not for all. The same is with Murphy. What he likes is not the one which is the most likable thing/object in the world, but a common thing, as common as anyone can afford, but not Murphy. He likes to live a free life with Celia. But, at a time, he can elect only one thing, either Celia or freedom. He can't keep living with both of these together.

The job, which he has taken in at someplace in Alba's company some six month before, is not satisfactory to him. Even though he is with Celia during his job, but, then too, he is not happy inside. Just to please Celia, he can't keep this job further. Since he knows that it was not his choice of work, rather some other were forcing him to do the job. The consequences of this persuasiveness culminate into a big frustration which comes before Celia in the form of augmentation. What he says, then, is: 'Ever since June,' he said, 'it has been job, job, job, nothing but job. Nothing happens in the world but is specially designed to exalt me into a job'(M, 87).

These bitter allegations hurt Celia's feelings a lot, and strained her wholeheartedly. Such approaches destroy subjective beauty, which can be seen through Murphy's behavior. His invariable

claims and avowal regarding to the job forays on the feeling of Celia when he admits, 'I say a job is the end of us both, or at least of me...' (Murphy,87). Such acts of Murphy kill the charm of his own love, and which sometime pretends him as a villain to Celia. His obstinacy brought disjunction in their beautiful relationship.

Although work is not the ultimate duty to carry out in one's life, while some works are really very necessary to run the house. What Murphy thinks/says about all these responsibilities and workings is not very satisfactory to Celia, it often discomforts her. But when it comes to his own values, likes and dislikes, he gets individual, and in such places he forgets that he too is the part of this society. This is the way to kill one's own emotions for the sake of nothingness. He transmits his denunciation go off the deep end to work, sex and femininity, in general as well as in particular. It, moreover, clears all the suspicions and doubts regarding his opinion on the issue of all these prejudiced relationships. Every single word of his talk charges her for all those actions which Celia thought would help her to make him a good man. But, she didn't think of it that Murphy would allege her with such indictments. He not only points on Celia, but on all women in general:

'Women are all the same bloody same, you can't love, you can't stay the course, the only feeling you can stand is being felt, you can't love for five minutes without wanting it abolished in brats and house bloody wifery. My god, how I hate the char Venus and her sausage and mash sex' (M, 26).

This is not the end of his accusations. Changing spaces brought further issues; his was just the beginning of those troubles. Further, before leaving Dublin and Celia, he shouts on her, that: 'The job is your fault. If it doesn't come off I'll be back this evening. If it does come off I don't know when I'll be back...' (M, 89).

Although freedom is good to enjoy, but it gets a bad shape when it starts twinging those who really be bothered. The way Murphy reacts to Celia is not a massive obsession at this moment. His hatred towards work brings a sort of psychosis in his character. Now, work is just like the irrational fear in

him. All his charges, allegation, disgust, and hatred lead him to the end of his love. Even before, he has said Celia, 'Here a little more', said Murphy, 'and then I expire. If I had to work out what you are from what you do, you could skip out of here now and joy be with you' (M, 26).

This kind of self-centeredness is the root cause of suffering which slays subjective beauty in the novels of Beckett. Everybody is busy in thinking of his/her own happiness. Moreover, nobody wants to be the mean of others' satisfaction/pleasure. The way Murphy was defending himself was not required. Nobody asked him for that. Since it is clear that he cannot work, but then again, for his own satisfaction, he goes on defending himself. The narrator, then, apparently admits, 'an atheist chipping the deity was not more senseless than Murphy defending his course of inaction, as he did not require to be told' (M, 26).

But, the same Murphy, who is now in the mental asylum (Magdalen Mental Mercyseat), finds the only suitable place for him where he can spend whole of his time without any problem. Since he always tries to go away from the people of his society that is why he loves to spend his time with the insane people. He works well with Ticklepenny and others in Magdalen Mental Mercyseat, and is satisfied in himself. But, his perception and understanding of things is beyond the understanding of his own self.

Space can change the feelings. How the various spaces change the feelings of Murphy and Belacqua could be seen throughout. The chess game in the cell of Mr. Endon, and the night duty in Magdalen Mental Mercyseat, the various silent colloquial between Murphy and Mr. Endon, and so many other things made Murphy inert. His imagination stops working. He tries to recall all his family and friends, but he doesn't get success. His senses stop working for him. The narrator, at the end of Murphy's trajectory, declares, 'soon his body would be quite, soon he would be free' (M, 158).

Inversely, Belacqua remembers all the female companions, who were there throughout his passage of several experiences, and unsurprisingly, idealized the beauty of Smeraldina, who just came to meet him in the hospital. The nature of Belacqua

was quite different from Murphy, his understanding of things were far better than Murphy. But then again, he couldn't understand the beauty of the life. On his death, the narrator articulates:

'One insertion in the Press
Makes minus how many to make a black
dress?' (More...178).

These changes which came at latter part were because of the changed space. The responsibility which was there throughout their life was no more now. Belacqua, just because of his 'indolence', couldn't enjoy the various rollicking and cuddlesome events of life. On the other hand, Murphy's 'inaction' separated him from all his dear and near ones.

Eliot's 'dissociation of sensibility', which he applied in his essay *The Metaphysical Poets* (1921), for the lacking of the very conjoint subjective sentiments, somewhere is the part of Beckettian world. The clear portraiture of such lack could be seen during the course of discussion. This dissociation of subjective feelings and sentiments in their lives brought not only self-suffering, but somatic as well as perceptual distress, too.

Shortly, it could be understood that both Murphy and Belacqua were incapable to realize their real needs and aspirations. If they were not so stubborn with their attitudes, then, the end, which came as the recalling history of them, could be something very pleasant and happy. But the truth of now is quite changed. Murphy's Celia is now with Mr. Kelly, and Belacqua's Smeraldina is with Hairy. The lack of subjectivity, which was there in both the protagonist's life, is not there in the life of other people. The death left nothing sad behind. People are enjoying the 'classico-romantic scene' (More...191).

Hence, Beckett's heroes fail to perform the subjective actions, and lose the world without having any satisfactory position. The charm of love, the care of the beloved, and the pleasure of the body, all were the transitory things in front of the responsibilities. What remain at the end of their life was nothing. The fear of action crushed the subjective beauty of their life.

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