

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Existential Excursion in Alan Bennett's *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

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by

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Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that Mr. Indra Prasad Dahal with Class Roll No. 69/062, T.U. Reg. No. 6-2-48-2283-2000 and Exam Roll No. 171 has prepared this thesis entitled “Existential Excursion in Alan Bennett’s *Me, I’m Afraid of Virginia Woolf*” under my supervision, following the format as specified by the Research Committee, Department of English, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara. Therefore, I forward it to the Research Committee for final evaluation.

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Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Existential Excursion in Alan Bennett’s *Me, I’m Afraid of Virginia Woolf*”
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Abstract

This thesis entitled as “Existential Excursion in Alan Bennett’s *Me, I’m Afraid of Virginia Woolf*” is about existential struggle of Hopkins, the protagonist of the play. This thesis task makes a brief view of the play and introduces problems for the existence of Hopkins where Existentialism is used as the theoretical tool. Hopkins’ searching for happiness by going against the conventional systems and prolonging life even within socio-cultural boundaries are concerned in the thesis along with the textual references. Hence, this research work concludes viewing protagonist as an existential character and *Me, I’m Afraid of Virginia Woolf* as an existential play because of the theme and message created by the extremely primitive society and Hopkins’ continue attempts for happier life that depicted in the play.

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Chapter One

Bennett as Literary Figure

Bennett and his Works

Alan Bennett (1934) was born in Leeds and went to Oxford. He first caught the public's eye in *Beyond the Fringe* (1960), dealing satirically with topical issues. *Beyond the Fringe* dramatically changed the sense of respect for authority and tradition that had been taken for granted in the early post war years. Before *Beyond the Fringe*, any jokes about politicians and those in authority were very mild – afterwards, the British public began to deflate the pomposity and self-centeredness of politicians and others in authority through the new media in a way that Charles Dickens did through the serialised novel in the nineteenth century. Bennett himself was, of course, a key part of this transition when he participated in *Beyond the Fringe*. The revue which was a joint work of four young celebrities- Alan Bennett, Dudley Moore, Jonathan Miller, and Peter Cook was launched in Edinburgh. It includes skits and parodies, songs and monologues on subjects such as nuclear holocaust, the Cold War, and Capital Punishment. In this legendary group, “Bennett had flourished as a writer” (*Backing into the Limelight 3*).

One of his most successful inventions has been *Talking Heads* (BBC Books), a series of six dramatic monologues originally presented on BBC television in 1987 and subsequently on radio, and in theatres. Alan Bennett tends to be writing about England roughly from 1900 onwards, displaying his loves for Englishness, particularly with the absurdities that he so dryly identifies. His works abound in warmth and quirkiness. In Bennett's works, anger rarely finds a place; his drollery and ironies reveal but do not destroy. Hence, he is commented for his work as “Like... John Osborne before him, he has made the theatre his turf, having worked as actor, a

director, a playwright, a lyricist... a makeup artist..." (Peter Wolfe 3). Also as a presenter on the radio and live programmes on the television he has gained a large audience. His works cover a wide range such as television plays, single plays, seasons of plays, other series, documentaries, short stories, and plays for the stages.

Bennett's most famous works, like *Forty Years On* (1968), *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1978), *An English Man Abroad* (1983), *Talking Heads* (1988 and 1995), *The Madness of King George* (1994), *Writing Home* (1994), *Untold Stories* (2005), *The History Boys* (2004) etc. have kept him in high regard of today's English Literature. The casts of his plays, starting with *Forty Years On* in 1968, have included luminaries like Joan Plowright, Maggie Smith, Alec Guinness etc. *Talking Heads* went through twenty seven printings between its original 1988 publication date and 1995. *Single Spies* won the Oliver Award as England's best comedy for 1988. Bennett was nominated for an Academy Award for writing *The Madness of King George*, in which he played a small role being a character too. Aside from the performing arts, he has achieved honours. His 1994's book of memoirs, *Writing Home*, rose to the top of England's best seller list. The recent book *The Uncommon Reader* (2008) has brought the issue how the busy life of the people get the passion for reading books. *The History Boys* became the national theatre's most commercially successful play forever and after several seasons went on a national and an international tour.

Bennett has been contributing regularly to the "London Review of Books." He is admired by other writers as well as readers and actors. "Michael Ratecliffe calls Bennett one of the funniest and most fastidious writers working in England today" (Wolfe 4). "Brantley believes that, along with Tom Stoppard, he is the slyest...and most elegant of contemporary British dramatists" (Wolfe 4). David Nokes, another writer opines "... he's probably our greatest living dramatist" (Wolfe 4).

The Television Play –*Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1978)

At the time *when Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* was written and broadcasted, there were only three television channels in Britain: BBC1, BBC2 and ITV. The competition to entertain the public was almost entirely between BBC1 and BBC2. The television drama was a regular and popular event, and many of the plays and series of the time managed to deal with difficult and interesting topics, rather than simply aiming at the lowest common denominator or working within a genre (such as detective fiction). Bennett wrote both for the BBC and for the commercial channel ITV. ITV broadcasted the play *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* in 1979. This play was written for a commercial channel.

Bennett was not writing primarily for any kind of intellectual elite who might appreciate the sly literary references, or typical educated theatre-goers, or indeed for his own satisfaction as might a novelist or poet. The work had to be accessible to any adult. One could make a comparison between this kind of television writing and the writing of heavily structured poetry, such as the sonnet. The television playwright could only be original within very strict limits. He or she was working with a popular general audience, so the play had to be immediately accessible and entertaining. Yet Bennett was the best of the television writers at the time as he managed to add considerable subtlety. Kara Mckechnie comments, “Bennett is widely recognised as the master of the television monologue” (1). Citing from Brook 2002, Mckechnie further compares Denis Potter, another writer with Alan Bennett in this way:

The idea that he [Bennett] might be the most important and innovative British television playwright since Dennis Potter initially seems laughable. But Bennett's prolific output has stretched to ... individual television plays, ... television series and... films, ... stage works, ...

short stories, ...and diaries.... And he is widely recognised as the master of the television monologue. (1)

Bennett was writing in a time when there was much more of a direct link between film, television and theatrical approaches. It was a time when television was on the cusp between the dominance of the artists, performers and writers, and the modern dominance of technology, which can easily create its own stars as and when needed.

Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf (1978) is in three parts which depicts the willingness of the main character -Hopkins to flout convention. Bennett has made the best use of his limited time of an hour by following Hopkins through his day with leaps from time and place. Bennett uses a narrator to give us insights into the character of Hopkins, which might otherwise take whole scenes to present, and also has Hopkins giving a kind of soliloquy as he tells us what he thinks. Much of the play is about Hopkins' feeling that he is unable to fit into his role, and his desire to express himself as he really is, although he only has a vague notion of what it is that he wants.

There are considerable number of locations that show to the aspects of Hopkins' life and the environment in which he operates – an environment which he appears to have a yearning to escape from. He is seen to be constrained by a comically intrusive mother, a girl friend who challenges his sexual ambivalence, a disrespected teaching environment, with mostly unappreciative students and his own reluctance to settle into a stereotypical role. We can identify with the feeling of alienation that Hopkins has in his Huddersfield surroundings, and the tension between his academic nature and the more sensuous or down-to-earth approach of those around him. Hence, the play depicts the willingness of the main characters to flout convention.

Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf was republished in the volume *The Writer in Disguise* in 1985 together with Bennett's other four plays. Bennett refers to the plays autobiographical sub text in the title *The Writer in Disguise*. And this particular play was again published in 2003 with different collection in the title-*Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. The play with its simple structure of examining one man's progress through a day of his life towards a kind of salvation is closer to situational comedy.

Trevor Hopkins, the diffident protagonist, a lecturer of English Literature who works in a polytechnic has an appointment with the doctor. He visits the doctor's clinic and waits for his turn as many other patients do. He takes the only remaining empty seat by a Ginger haired girl. As the more seats are vacant he falls into confusion and finds himself in a dilemma thinking whether he should continue the same seat or move to the other seat. In conversation with Ginger haired girl, Trevor Hopkins falsely claims that he has never been to Newcastle. But later while Ginger haired girl goes to the doctor's room, he worries about why he has denied the fact of his visit to Newcastle. His attempts to disclose the truth of his visit but she darts to the specialists and exits.

Embarrassed Hopkins is the doctor's patient already for two years and now again he goes inside and the doctor welcomes him. There is an interneer - Willard to whom the doctor reads Hopkins' history of various visits with various complaints. "Mr. Willard is an expressionless youth..." (94). Hopkins and doctor have conversation on various topics like- Hopkins' worries about "what people think" (96). The Doctor tries with a different antidepressant to Hopkins. Hopkins leaves the doctor and Willard.

On the bus, while reading a book by Virginia Woolf, Hopkins accidentally starts a conversation with conductress about the book he is reading. Then a girl gets in

the bus but Hopkins shows no concern. It is said by the narrator that a book makes one “safe” and “harmless though Hopkins was harmless without a book” (97). As another girl appears near him, he awkwardly extricates himself. He moves away when a black woman sits next to him and worries whether his moving away from her to increase available space will be considered racist. Then on the street towards institute he talks to himself about not to bother what other people think.

As he goes to the Municipal cafeteria, there he sees Mrs. Hopkins, his mother who also says that she never bothers what anybody thinks. His mother criticises his diet and the society. For her the society is “take it or leave it society” (99). She asks him about his girl friend, his life style, the foods, the service, and the utensils which are not encouraging to her because they are “Mecca for germs” (99) and the “Hygiene’s just gone out of the window” (99). So “life for Hopkins’ mother was a canopy slung between three poles Dirt, Disease and the Lavatory” (99). Hopkins complains to his mother for his name and asks why she called him Trevor. He hates his name and he thinks that is what is wrong with him. While mother and son are complaining about the various aspects of the society, Wendy, a beautiful young lady, the yoga teacher enters and waves to Hopkins. Hopkins’ mother correctly surmising that she is his girlfriend, asks her name to him, and criticises Wendy’s trousers wondering if she is a lesbian. After his mother has left, Wendy goes over to Hopkins’ table. She is thrilled by Hopkins’ reporting about Mrs. Hopkins’ lesbian relationship. Mrs. Hopkins wants to discuss Hopkins’ and Wendy’s relationship.

Now in the last scene of part one of the play Hopkins is in the corridor with Wendy. Hopkins’ students are waiting for him and they talk about Hopkins and his relation with Wendy. Suddenly, Skinner, a relaxed and good looking young man comes by Hopkins and warns him of being late for the class. Wendy is also late for

her yoga class but her conversation with Hopkins is more interesting to her. Wendy's saying "the real you wanting the real me" (105) shows her desire for relation with Hopkins. But Hopkins is scared of the relationship that shows his immature manhood about sex. Though Wendy gives priority for marriage relationship, she hosts to Hopkins in her flat at night without marriage.

There are half a dozen students in their fifties and sixties in Hopkins' class room. But Dave Skinner who is with earring is the youngest and brightest of Hopkins' students. Maurine is Hopkins assistant like student who makes the board ready for the class and has to fix the teaching materials like posters. But in the class she hesitates to unroll the poster and Hopkins unrolls the picture of E. M. Foster and Virginia Woolf. The posters are defaced and the class gets shock.

The older students criticise the modern surroundings and changes in their societies. The students are in great worry of vandalised public properties, rules and regulation. In this concern another character Mr. Dodds says "They want bringing out, their trousers taking down and, in front of assembled civic and religious dignitaries and leaders of community groups, horsewhipping" (107). Then Hopkins takes posters to Trickett's class of Mechanical drawing. There is a different scene where the students are drawing the lines to construct an equilateral triangle. They laugh at the pictures and ask who the lady is in the picture. The class becomes ruder to Virginia Woolf and even say her "Gormless-looking cow" (111). They don't know her contribution and don't know she is a novelist. Trickett says those "young unemployed persons, the latest underprivileged group to be clasped to the dry bosom of the Welfare State" (111). According to Trickett it is not the right way to achieve the "Higher National Certificate" (111). So, he sends Mrs. Broadbent out. Hopkins and his student Mrs. Broadbent go to Wendy's yoga class where the students were

meditating. Mrs. Broadbent asks if anyone there has defaced the posters. And Mrs. Broadbent leaves the class room in confusion.

Hopkins goes back to his class room. He is lecturing about the Bloomsbury Group which he says a group of like-minded people with common interests and assumptions like Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster. Skinner argues that the graffiti hints that the writers' work is deficient in some vital particular. The teaching instruments-the Posters of EM Foster and Virginia Woolf are defaced and the lecturer tries to incorporate this into his lecture by defending it as legitimate artistic expression. At the end of the class, Skinner stays on, and invites Hopkins for a drink. Hopkins is busy with Wendy and has to say no. But Hopkins wants Skinner come to the classes.

Wendy takes Hopkins in her room at night but Hopkins seems not happy and wants to search the way for his happiness. Wendy is clearly interested in marriage. She wishes people were more open about nakedness, but Hopkins thinks he is defined by his clothes. They undress alternately switching the light on (Wendy) and off (Hopkins). He quietly leaves after she has gone to sleep.

In the bus to Halifax, Hopkins suddenly peeps at a couple canoodling. A boy punches him in the face so it bleeds. He gets off in Infirmary where he meets Skinner trying to get into the bus. Hopkins wants Skinner to be with him. So Skinner fetches coffee, he tries to read for a while but a woman points out that blood is dripping onto Hopkins' book. Hopkins closes the book and drinks the coffee. Hopkins thinks that it would be a month before he opened the book again and the blood stain of the page reminds him the happy night. Skinner and Hopkins' smiling faces go along the song – South Pacific –“*I'm in Love with a Wonderful Guy*” (126).

So it can be seen how *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* illustrates Alan Bennett's way of working and his ideas. This is one of the important pieces of work in his early development. Bennett's homosexuality was not generally known and at the time of this play's publication it was a problem for most of homosexuals. Sexual liberation had only recently started. The young threw off the restrictions and taboos that their parents and forefathers had. Youth culture flourished with pop music and sexual freedom all around.

As the novel, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne has highlighted the scenario about almost similar society; it can be said less than twenty years before, sex between consenting adults of the opposite sex was frowned upon outside marriage. A child born out of wedlock was a badge of shame to any families. The novel tells the story of a conventional society about sex, legalism, sin and guilt. Sex between consenting people of the same sex was punishable by prison if he was male but just considered peculiar if she was female. Sex, in fact, was a taboo subject in respectable society. Respectable society is the key to what the play is about. Each one of them has an idea of what his or her position is in respectable society and he or she acts to fit herself or himself into that society as he or she sees it. But deep down he or she knows he is not the person he shows to society. The people in society probably also realise that they are not perceived in the same way by the people they meet in society. So, they are all part of some self deception of themselves and others.

Wendy and Hopkins are lonely and ill-suited couples which can be experienced in each other's company. Hopkins is resigned to the fact that he cannot express his true thoughts or feelings. He thus conforms to the demands of his "pale life" (124) where "literature was not much help" (93). Hopkins is deeply frustrated, bemoaning his lack of a meaningful existence. Hopkins' personal

relationships are unsatisfactory. First there is his mother who drops in on him in the Canteen. The dialogue between them is some of the truest:

Hopkins: What've you come down here for? What do you want to see me about?

Mrs. Hopkins: What do I want to see you about? Do I have to want to see you about something? I want to see you about having brought you up single-handed. I want to see you about having put you in for a scholarship. I want to see you about being my son. (99)

Mrs Hopkins and her son Hopkins' conversation in the cafe is to depict the generation gap. The changes in various fields are presented here. Hopkins wants to be away from her mother's restrictions. Similarly, the dialogues between Hopkins and Wendy are of more real types. Wendy says the body is the structure for the whole humankind. Wendy tries to link the meditation in her relation to Hopkins. Hopkins is trying to escape to search his happiness.

Wendy: As I see it the body is the basic syntax in the grammar of humanism.

Narrator: (voice over) why did they have not wade through this every time? Other people got foreplay. All he got was The Joys of Yoga.

Wendy: where are you going?

Hopkins: The lav. (122)

Still there are some gaps between Wendy and Hopkins regarding the meaning of human reality. Wendy is much spiritual where as Hopkins is practical. Without clothes Hopkins doesn't know who he is. Here British Class System is mentioned and commented. This is satirical to the phase coming out of the Dark Age. Now

there are many restrictions-classes, sex, race. But in collusion inside the clothes of body there are similarities among human.

Virginia Woolf, *Who is afraid of Virginia Woolf?* And *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf*

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was noted for her experiments in language and fictional technique, such as Stream of Consciousness. Woolf was one of the first to state vigorously the modern feminist case. Through her extended essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929), she has protested the rule of patriarchal society giving priority to feminism. Woolf is one of the members of the Bloomsbury Group, not a formal society, but the name that came to be given to a loose association of like-minded friends like Virginia Woolf and E.M Forster (1879-1970).

American Writer Edward Albee's (1928-...) play *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) and British living writer Alan Bennett's play *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1978) both have used "Virginia Woolf" in the title. Since Woolf is considered one of the greatest literary innovators and influences of the 20th century, it would not be unusual for her life and work to be discussed as any other literary work. Albee tries to depict her through the characters-Martha, Honey, Nick and George while Bennett has tried allegorically to *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Martha's treatment for her husband- George in various ways like sexual excursion with Nick, Punishing George, and working with pagan instinct are to resemble Woolf's hatred against patriarchal society and man. Honey represents the future in this scheme, full of self-interest, deception, and more sterility which is similar to homosexual relation or lesbian relation in the sense of production and reproduction. Martha's behaviour like verbal assaults to George and Sexual relation with Nick was unusual to the

society then so it's a kind of madness to the contemporary society. Similarly Woolf's madness and inclination to death are meant to be evoked by Martha's character.

The meaning of the play's title probably tries to suggest that Woolf's madness and inclination to death are meant to be evoked by Martha's character. Or it does not have deeper meaning than its clever parody –it makes an intriguing title. Edward Albee and Alan Bennett, as students of literature (because they write literature), would also be aware of the sexual issues related to the Bloomsbury group as it is mentioned in the text that Virginia Woolf had a lesbian relationship: “In practice Bloomsbury was a very liberated group and some of its members were homosexuals” (112). One could therefore add a sly and subtle additional layer of meaning to the title and it could be paraphrased for Albee's topic of this play as who is afraid of Sexual liberation of Virginia Woolf? And similarly Bennett might have used Virginia Woolf to summarise the comic contrast between the effete group of London intellectuals and the down –to-earth Northern characters. Therefore, one could add a sly and subtle additional layer of meaning to the title. So, it could also be paraphrased as *Me, I'm Afraid of the Sexual Liberation of Virginia Woolf and her friends, even though we live in an open modern society.*

Woolf's presence throughout the play *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, in the title, on the vandalised picture and in the form of book which Hopkins carries around, creates a constant significance. There are subtle references to Woolf's ambivalent sexuality through Hopkins' sexual indifference, and his lack of courage to admit that he is unhappy as a heterosexual.

The poster of Virginia Woolf as teaching material is shown in classroom stands for sacrificing personal happiness for Literature and for the literary intimidation. Hopkins tries to explain the Bloomsbury Group's upper class radical

intellectual approaches in a drab classroom on a murky evening in the provincial heart of 1970s northern England. Like Martha in Albee's *who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Hopkins may also have fears of Virginia Woolf for the seductive example of her suicide, and for the apparently unattainable model of her casually bisexual life.

Review of Literature

Alan Bennett's *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* has been interpreted by few critics from the very outset of its publication. In this connection, Peter Wolfe writes in *Understanding Alan Bennett*:

Nicholas Wapshott's appreciation of Bennett, published in *The Times* a week before *Me* Premiered on television, nonetheless details the strengths that distinguish this December 1978 work. Bennett's "Keen powers of observation his love of the north and its people and his knowledge of himself freed him to take risks in *Me* that can exhilarate and appal. The work infuses vigor and abundance into a complex emotional tension. One of Bennett's more troubling teledramas, it is also one of his sharpest and most memorable. (211)

Bennett's *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* depicts the Englishness both in people and location very well. The playwright has dared to take risk by presenting the very burning issue as homosexuality of the contemporary Britain.

Peter Wolfe in his book *Understanding Alan Bennett* has further opined about Hopkins' presentation as biographical way to Bennett himself and the real life of the society. Wolfe has quoted what Stephen Schiff wrote in 1993 as:

"Hopkins' ability to function despite feeling badgered by others calls for an acting technique resilient and adaptive enough to capture without distorting both his social and psychic cramp. It also bespeaks

in Bennett himself a doubleness that put at the heart of his comic vision.’ “There is a duality that runs through Bennett and through his work: an awareness that whatever we pretend to be on the outside is a deception; that underneath we are all weak, noisome and... deeply embarrassing. This Duality brings Bennett’s plays closer to real life.”

(9)

Bennett has put the real life like event along with humour and satire to the society. Though Hopkins has various difficult situations through out the play, the writer has safely landed him without any social and personal weakness. The play in this way is very near to the real world life.

McKECHNIE in his *The Television Series- Alan Bennett* concerning to the play states that “The text like *Me, I’m Afraid of Virginia Woolf* shows that education and literature do not necessarily offer solutions and will automatically enhance people’s lives” (118).

Likewise, Alexander Games opines that the playwright has not written other such conventional love story like this. This play has much to do with Bennett’s biography and society. So signifying on the play Alexander Games remarks.

In particular, it made a nonsense of any future attempts to diminish Bennett’s ‘Cosy Little World’ of tea cosies and cupcakes. There was a place for all that, but the reality was more complex... Bennett has not written yet a conventional love story. (*Backing into the Limelight*134)

Kara Mckechnie in his book *The Television Series* further states “*Me I’m Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is widely accepted as a gay text, and has been screened at the NFT’s Gay and Lesbian film festival. Bennett himself has referred to it as a play that suddenly turns into a love story” (137).

Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf is dealing much about homosexual relation as a way of making happy for the hero of the play. So this sexuality is much discussed here either it is lesbian or gay. In this matter the play is much related as gay text.

Peter Wolfe in his book *Understanding Alan Bennett* regarding to the theme in Bennett's setting further states: "*Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* evokes the urban realism of working class films like Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* (1959) and Bryan Forbes' *L- Shaped room* (1963)" (207).

Peter Wolfe regarding to the popularity of the song from South Pacific and the actions of the play further adds:

The song-*I'm in Love with a Wonderful Guy* from South Pacific's ends the play which has been well known for years to most theatre goers that provides a brilliant auditory shorthand, capturing the songs' ironic relevance to the onstage action of this play too. (30)

The song from South pacific (*I'm in love with a Wonderful Guy*) is a song to support the story of the play for gay relation. This is really a challenge to the conventional type of society. This ironical link to the play is to flout the traditional belief of the people.

Thus, *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* has been praised as the example of gay text, Love story and real play. It should be seen from optimistic angle that is the bright aspect of the play. Since Hopkins is trapped in Halifax, Skinner brings little hope to Hopkins. If we see the play with humanitarian perspective a small bleak of hope can emerge on the horizon. How Hopkins, Dave skinner and Wendy can escape from their anxiety, despair, nausea or boredom. This is possible if "God is dead" (*The Death of God and the Antichrist* 912) as Nietzsche says by adjustment of the situation. It is not through accepting the laws, rules or following any apostles but by

action. The play is apprehensions of pain in relation to a sense perhaps bleak or consolatory, of what it is to be human and therefore to belong to a species which must not only endure suffering but also give voice to its awareness of suffering as its destiny. Man sketches his destiny in his palms himself with his actions. No one comes there to help him to show the way and give meaning to his life.

Chapter Two

Existentialism: Philosophy and Literary Studies

Contexts and Origins

Existentialism is a philosophical theory emphasising the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining his or her own development. Jean Paul Sartre has offered a definition of existentialism in his essay of 1946 as “Existentialism is Humanism” (*Sartre for Beginners*, 21). Traditionally it was said that human beings are controlled and guided by the central power, the God. Existentialism challenges the traditional view of human beings and asserts that they are what they are made by themselves. There is no universal rule about what human beings ought to do. It is human beings who determine their own fate by choosing the ways of life they are living. They themselves are responsible in creating their fate. Existentialism denies essential human nature in the traditional sense because it was believed that essentially human nature is good being created by God. Opposed to them, it is said that human beings created their own nature. In this regard Richard Polt in his book *Heidegger an Introduction* opines “Existential means pertaining to some individual Dasein’s own existence. For instance, Should I apply to medical school? is an example of an existential question” (35). Here the speaker ‘I’ is conscious and has choice.

As a school of thought, existentialism is devoted to the interpretation of human existence. It takes human being as an isolated existent into an alien universe. As a mode of thought, it became prominent especially after the great world wars. World wars gave rise to the feelings of despair and separation from the established order. These feelings led to the idea that people have to create their own values in the world in which the traditional values do not work. One has to make choices and

create oneself. Therefore, one exists up to the extent one makes choices. People are free to make choices. Then existentialism stresses on concrete individual existence, freedom and choice. Ryan gives an explanation of existentialism:

Hence there is no single existential philosophy, and no single definition of the word can be given, the problem of man is central and that they stress man's concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes himself to be. (639)

Regarding the definition, the word existential and existential philosophy has no single definition. Human being is free to choose and is responsible to lead his life in the way he wants for his happiness. The problem of a man should always be kept in centre so that he or she does not define him or herself relaying on the society or tradition but rather defines himself or herself by relaying on himself or herself.

Existentialism opposes the traditional philosophy that seeks to find out the truth which is objective and universal. According to this philosophy, truths are subjective. What is true to one may be false to another. Whether the thing is true or false depends on the decision the individual makes. For making decisions, one is free. This philosophy then emphasises freedom. The focus on freedom is not new with the existentialists. Renaissance humanists were also the supporters of human freedom. They took freedom very positively. Due to freedom, people can enjoy unlimited potentiality. But the existentialists take freedom as a curse. Sartre says, "We are condemned to be free" (*Existentialism and Human Emotions* 56). Due to this freedom, there is no one to dictate to us what to do and what not to. We have to do ourselves.

Some Existentialists oppose the existence of God. According to Nietzsche, “God is dead” (905-12). This opinion has a lasting impact on existential philosophy. There is no God to determine our existence. We first exist, and then create the essence ourselves. We are what we make ourselves to be. In that sense we are in the state of becoming, not in the state of being. We do not know what we become after all because we are constantly choosing and creating ourselves. It is not possible for us to be without choice. Even when we are not choosing, we are still choosing. In this context, MacIntyre says, “Even if I do not choose, I have chosen not to choose” (149). Since we make choices, we create meaning ourselves. Then there is no transcendent absolute to govern our existence.

All the existentialists do not refuse the existence of God. In that sense, there are two kinds of existentialists: theistic and atheistic. Kierkegaard, an atheist is different to Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, and Heidegger who are theists.

Despite its prominence in the post-war years, the elements of existentialism can be found in classical philosophy, especially in the philosophy of Socrates. Though he did not name the term as an existentialist but he gave the philosophy which supports existentialism. Before Socrates, philosophers were concerned with the issue of cosmos. They tried to understand the functioning of the universe. But Socrates shifted from nature to man. His philosophy is concerned with the issue of human existence. He laid stress on human existence. Like modern existentialists, Socrates laid stress on individuality. For him, self is prior to everything. Real joy springs from the heart not from external circumstances, like reputation, power and wealth. Socrates asked people to understand the need of the self. He stressed that people should be responsible towards the self. In this connection, Richard Tarnas in *The Passion of the Western Mind* comments:

In Socrates' view, any attempt to foster true success and excellence in human life had to take account of the innermost reality of human being, his soul and psyche. Perhaps on the basis of his highly developed sense of individual self-hood and self-control, Socrates brought to the Greek mind a new awareness of the central significance of the soul, establishing it for the first time as the seat of the individual making consciousness of the moral and intellectual character. He affirmed the Delphic motto "Know thyself" for he believed that it was only through self-knowledge, through an understanding of one's own psyche and its proper condition, that one could find genuine happiness.

(33)

Philosophers before Socrates were concerned with the issue of cosmos. They attempted to understand the function of the Universe. But Socrates stressed on humanity that is human existence. Like modern existentialists, Socrates focused on individuality. For his self is prior to everything.

Socrates ideas are more idealistic types regarding to the human attitude and existence because according to him every human concept should be guided by mind. Those who are guided by mind are really idealistic. So Socrates' view is that being materialistic is to remain in illusion and in shadow. Giving priority to idealistic thinking rather than materialistic, Socrates is emphasising scholarly activities where the mind can control the body and the sensory perception is illusion. So there is no meaning to live in this world of sensory perception. Such concepts are existential types because the search of knowledge is to go in the ideal world of reality. And that is the search of meaning.

The main ideas of existentialist theory were already common to the religious thought during the medieval times. The Medieval Age was characterised by the belief in God. Everything was seen through religious eyes. Man was expected to surrender before God for salvation. Yet during such period too, existential elements can be seen, especially in the philosophy of Saint Augustine. St. Augustine asked man not to go outside himself in the quest of the truth. He affirmed the existence of human ego in the soul. He assigned importance to the individual self. Richard Tarnas' remarks in *The Passion of the Western Mind* support this fact:

Augustine was the most modern of the ancients: Possessed an existentialist's self-awareness with his highly developed capacity for introspection and self – confrontation, his concern with memory, consciousness and time his psychological perspicacity, his doubt and remorse, his sense of solitary alienation of human self without God, his intensity of inner conflict, his intellectual skepticism and sophistication. It was Augustine who first wrote that he could doubt everything, but not the fact of soul's own experience of doubting of knowing, willing and existing-thereby affirming certain existence of human ego in the soul. (144)

Though the era was dominated by the belief in God, Augustine asked man not to go outside himself in the quest of truth. In medieval period, everything was seen through the concept of God. So man was expected to surrender before god for salvation. Augustine affirmed the existence of human ego in the soul by giving priority to the individual self.

The end of the Medieval Age was the beginning of Renaissance. Since Renaissance was also a revival of classicalism, it stressed on the individual like the

classical philosophers. For the first time, they gave importance to the perspective of subjectivity. The existential trace can be found in the works of Montaigne as well.

Montaigne in his *Essays* reveals what he thinks and what he feels. He does not hide anything. He makes the exploration of his self. Why does Montaigne write about himself, rather than handling any other issues? The answer is: he assigns importance to the self. In this regard, Charles Van Doren in *The History of Knowledge* remarks:

Montaigne's main aim is to reveal with utter honesty and frankness the author's mind and heart. Montaigne makes no attempt to conceal his faults, but he does not beat his breast, either, and demand forgiveness.

He is content to report what he is, what he thinks, what he feels...

(144)

The existentialist does not become happy in layer's world. As the hero, Hopkins feels uneasy while concealing the facts about his visit to Newcastle; the existential never betrays his self. So he gives importance for his self and self-satisfaction through reality. He does not surrender rather challenges the opposition by revealing what he feels or thinks or what he is.

The line of development of the unnamed concept of Existentialism up to Montaigne, we can conclude that the development of Existentialism begins right from the classical time. It began as a distinct philosophy with the Danish Christian thinker, Kierkegaard, in the first half of the nineteenth century. He criticised Hegel's philosophical system as being abstract and having nothing to do with human existence. By criticising Hegel, he gave importance to individual existence, freedom and choice.

The development of modern existentialism was preceded by the works of the German phenomenologist Frenz Brento and Edmund Husserl. They were immediately

followed by modern existentialists. Phenomenology does the study of human consciousness. The world is as it appears to us. It means, phenomenology gives stress on subjectivism. Philosophers Skirbekk, Gunnar and Nils, and Gilije have opined in their book *A History of Western Thought: From Ancient Greece to the Twentieth Century* phenomenology as:

Phenomenology aims to describe the every day items that we use, as they appear to us; the pencil with which I am now writing is described as it is in this context. Phenomenology attacks the view that the pencil is only a collection of atoms. In this sense, we can say that this school aims to reconstruct the universe in all of its diversity and fullness, with all of its qualities, as opposed to a one –dimensional standardisation based on scientific philosophy. (440)

Having observed them, it can be elaborated that phenomenology gives emphasis to individuality. Phenomenology priorities the perceiver in the sense of determining the meaning of the phenomena. Things are as they appear to our consciousness. So, all understandings and perceptions are subjective. Individual plays a central role in perception. This idea of individuality influenced the existentialists.

Existentialism developed at the hand of Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and many others, stressing on the human existence. At present, it has become an established approach that can be applied to study literary texts.

The Concept of Existentialism

The basic existential terms are alienation, existence, protest, boredom, anxiety suicide etc. Here, the attempts are made to discuss existentialism with reference to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus and others, and bring out the issues that are relevant for the study. It is necessary to make separate discussion on some of the

existential philosophers. No doubt, they share many things in common but they have come up with significant differences as well.

Here follows the discussion on some prominent existential philosophers.

Kierkegaard was the first thinker to call himself an existentialist. He reacted against the idealism of Hegelian philosophy, which for him has obscured the responsibility of the individual towards the self. In other words, this philosophy could not make the people responsible towards their actions. Kierkegaard advocates that individual existence is prior to everything. Supporting this concept, Jostein Gaarder in *Sophie's World* remarks: "Kierkegaard has a sharp eye for the significance of the individual. We are more than the children of our time. And moreover every single one of us is a unique individual who only lives once" (377). Kierkegaard supports the choices. He believes that we are free to make choices. And one exists up to the point of making choices. He further says, "It is only when we act especially we make significant choices that we relate to our own existence" (qtd. in *Sophie's World* 380).

When the perceiver is conscious of his existence that is the moment of understanding his self. So, he chooses from the choices for his existence and the consciousness of the self leads to the existence.

Choice and will to Power

Human being is the only conscious creature among thousands other. Human's such consciousness has kept him in supreme position. Every being is guided by the will power that goes along the choices. In this sense Kierkegaard has supported the choices. Kierkegaard is different from other existential philosophers in the sense that he believes in the existence of God. But he takes it as a matter of faith. Through faith only, we feel the presence of God. But to or not to keep the faith is a matter of choice. Kierkegaard believes that "truth is subjective" (*Sophie's World* 380). There cannot be

any truth which is objective and universal. Instead of one single truth, there are many truths which are personal. The concept of subjective truth has influenced the twentieth century existentialists. Now, their emphasis on individuality is the emphasis on subjectivity. What is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong depend on the individual's decision and thought. Then for him, traditional values do not work. They can't govern the individual. If the values attempt to govern the individual, it is necessary that one should protest. Commenting on this, Jostein Gaarder remarks, "he thus sets the individual, or each and every man, up against the system" (*Sophie's World* 379). For Kierkegaard, one should protest against the prevailing system and affirm existence by making one's own choice.

Hence Kierkegaard emphasises upon personal choices and responsibilities rather than overall rationality. In his works he explained that each individual should attempt an intense examination of his or her existence.

Another prominent existentialist, Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, is known as the critique of western philosophical tradition and Christianity. For him, western philosophical tradition and Christianity were both corrupt for they taught abstraction. Western education system is corrupt, since it attempts to prepare historically educated man. Knowledge does not do anything except making him to live in abstraction. The historical knowledge does not serve life. For him life should be the centre of everything. In the essay, *On the Use and Abuse of History*, Nietzsche states that we need education "for life and action not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egoistical life and the cowardly bad act. We wish to use history only so far as it serves living" (152).

Nietzsche places life at the centre. He denounces Christianity on the ground that it discourages life. Christianity keeps reminding us that we are the product of sin.

Man cannot naturally be active when this fact is told. Christianity does not serve life. Likewise, Nietzsche does not believe in the existence of God. There is no authority or God to determine our existence. For him there is no God. Even if he was there, he is dead. He proclaimed the death of God and went onto reject the entire Judeo-Christian moral tradition in favour of a heroic pagan ideal. Nietzsche called Christianity “a slave morality” (*Sophie’s World*, 455) and held that religion provides no truth because God is dead and Christianity has become the shelter of weak and disabled people. In his famous essay *The Death of God and the Antichrist*, Nietzsche opposes the Christianity and God as:

The Christian conception of God –God as God of the sick, God as a spider, God as a spirit-is one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine ever attained on earth. It may even represent the low-water mark in the descending development of divine types. God degenerated into the contradiction of life, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal yes/ God as the declaration of war against life, against nature and against the will to life! (912)

Nietzsche stands as an atheist existentialist. His above ideas about Christianity and God is a strong slap for those who thought and think human being is guided by something else as God. So for that theist person has to follow the rules and order of the God. But Nietzsche advocates human being is free for his existence. It is the human himself who is much responsible for his life so there should not be any attempt to limit the human’s periphery in the name of God.

Nietzsche is quite positive towards suicide. He seems aware of the fact that suicide can be one of the choices that a person makes. For him, suicide can also be a solution somewhere. So in his *Beyond Good and Evil* he states, “The thought of

suicide is a great comfort: it is a good way than of getting through many a bad night” (qtd. in Hill 348). Suicide is not surrender; it is a means to achieve some goal. Suicide also brings fulfilment. So Nietzsche does not take suicide negatively. An individual may use it as a weapon to win something. Nietzsche became one of the influential of all modern thinkers. He attempted to unmask the motives that underlie in traditional western religion, morality, and philosophy that deeply affected generation of theologians, philosophers, psychologists, poets, novelists and playwrights. The declaration that ‘God is dead’ determined the agenda for many of Europe most celebrated intellectuals after his death.

Nietzsche continued the revolt against reason initiated by the Romantic Movement. He affirmed the value of vitality, strength, and the supremacy of an existence that is purely self seeking. He also scorned the Christian and democratic ideas of the equal worth of human beings. He asked all to refuse to subordinate themselves to a state and to achieve self realisation and greatness. For Nietzsche, the power to be strong was the greatest value in life. Nietzsche upheld that all human behaviour is motivated by the will to power. In its positive sense, the will to power is not simply power over others, but the power over oneself. It is possible after negating the world inside and outside.

Nietzsche’s influence on Sartre and the whole existential movement was unavoidable. He is known as a leading existentialist.

Being and Meaning

German philosopher Martin Heidegger developed existential phenomenology that is widely regarded as the most original and influential 20th century philosopher. Heidegger’s original treatment of themes as human finitude, death, nothingness, and authenticity led many observers to associate him with existentialism. In this

connection Richard Polt in his book *Heidegger an Introduction* (1999) has cited what Heidegger claims:

Celebration...is self-restraint, is attentiveness, is questioning, is meditation, is awaiting, is the step over into the more wakeful glimpse of the wonder-the wonder that a world is worlding around us at all, that there are beings rather than nothing, that things are and we ourselves are in their midst, that we ourselves are and yet barely know who we are, and barely know that we do not know all this. (1)

Questioning in this hurled world is an attempt for celebration. The aware of the fact that the world is more complicated tells the limitation of the human being. Try to find the reality is the way of being sceptic. Very few people in very less number know who they are because we all people do not know this World. So, very few people are sceptic.

Heidegger was concerned with what he considered the essential philosophical question like what it is to be. This led to the question of what kind of being human beings are. He said that they are thrown into a world, which they have not made but that consists of potentially useful things including cultural as well as natural objects. These objects come to humanity from the past and are used in the present for the sake of future goals. Individual is always in danger of being submerged in the world of the objects, everyday routine, and the conventional shallow behaviour of the crowd. The feeling of dread brings the individual to a confrontation with death and the ultimate meaninglessness of life. In this confrontation an authentic sense of 'being' and of freedom can be attained. He declared 'being' is to show what it means for a person to be and how it is for a person to be. This task leads to a more fundamental question like what it means to or what the meaning of 'being' is. These questions lie behind

the obviousness of everyday life. Therefore, they also lie behind the empirical questions of natural science. They are usually overlooked, because they are too near to everyday life to be grasped. Heidegger's entire prophetic mission amounts to making each person ask this question with maximum involvement. In the present crisis of mankind, whether one arrives at a definite answer or not is of secondary importance.

According to Heidegger, the crisis stems from the deep falloff western thought since the time of Plato. This is the condition brought by the one-sided development of technological thinking and the neglect of other kinds that resulted in alienation or in a highly inauthentic way of being. Although fallenness or inauthenticity is an inescapable feature of human existence, it is an existential and an essential potentiality. It colours epoch and individuals in different degrees. It is possible to find a kind of liberation through thinking of 'being'.

For Heidegger, the sober anxiety and the indirect confrontation with death are primarily of methodological importance because through them fundamental structures are revealed. Among these potentialities, for being joyfully active knowing that joy is a door to the eternal. Anxiety opens man up to 'being'. This does not mean that 'being' contributes in the dark aspect of dread. 'Being' is associated with light and with the joyful. 'Being' is to arrive at one's true home. It is clear that Heidegger opposes a cult of mankind and wishes to call attention to something greater. For him man is the servant of 'Being' but not the lord of 'Being'. Thus, 'being' is always thrown in to things being there. So the man falls away and is on the point of 'being' submerged into things. So he has to work to affirm his existence creating his possibility, choices.

Heidegger was the critique of Western metaphysics. For him, western philosophy was obsessed with the problem of knowledge. And it was less concerned with the issue of being. But Heidegger fulfilled that gap, since he was concerned with the issue of existence. Like any other existentialist, existence is his point of departure. He was interested in the study of 'Dasein' (Man's being). Likewise, Heidegger believes that we have been living in an incomprehensible, indifferent world. The universe is alien to us. We have to choose a goal, with the awareness of certainty of death and meaninglessness of one's life. For Heidegger, being is not realised in normal situation. It does not occur all the time. It is realised in the state of boredom, anxiety, or ill-at-ease. So he states in "*What is Metaphysics?*" "It erupts when one is bored, profound boredom drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like a muffling fog, removes all things and men oneself along with it into a remarkable indifference. This boredom reveals being as whole" (4).

For Heidegger, human obsession should be more with existence than with knowledge. The principal object of investigation is the search for the being (Sein) and more particularly man's being (Dasein). In conclusion, Heidegger's existentialism stresses on existence, goal, alienation and choice.

Revolt and Freedom

Existentialism emphasises on subjectivity. It is based on individual experience rather than on abstract thought and knowledge that is foregrounded in this philosophy. It really concerns to the problem of man and his concrete existence and his freedom.

After Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre was the leading advocate of existentialism. Sartre defends existentialism against the charges that it gives a bleak view of humanity; it neglects what is good in human life; and it denies reality and seriousness.

Sartre believes that existentialism is humanism since it takes human undertaking as the point of departure. Establishing existentialism as the humanistic philosophy, he states: “By existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity” (*Existentialism and Human Emotion* 10). Then existentialism gives dignity to man. It encourages human action. In that sense, it is quite an optimistic philosophy.

The existentialists have held that human beings do not have fixed nature or essence as other animals and plants have. Each human being makes choices that create his or her own nature. Existence precedes essence in the formulation of the 20th century French Philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. He has defined the human freedom to make choice as only way to exist. When we go about the world, we have expectations that are often not fulfilled. So there is negation, a void and nothingness. Sartre argued that the influence of modern society over the individual is so great as to produce serialisation, by which he meant loss of self. Individual power and freedom can only be regained through realisation of self worth that gives main quality of Existentialism.

Sartre is clearly influenced by Martin Heidegger’s “*Being and Time*” though he was profoundly sceptical of any measure by which humanity could achieve a kind of personal state of fulfilment. In *Being and Nothingness*, man is pictured as a creature haunted by a vision of completion that religions identify as God. One finds oneself inserted in being with a lower case ‘b’ born into the material reality of one’s body in an all –too –material universe. But consciousness is in a state of cohabitation with its material body: it is no thing. Consciousness can imagine that which is not imagining the future.

Sartre asserts the existential dogma of human freedom and explores the inexhaustible mechanisms of bad faith. He does not fail to notice that legitimate series of obstacles to freedom that human being has to face in the given of place, past, environment, fellowmen, and death. His preconceived notion demands that man surmounts these limitations by acts of conscious decision. Human existence achieves authenticity only in acts of freedom. Opportunity of making choices asserts human authority over his existence. It is also essential for an existent to understand that negation allows the self to enter the great stream. The great human stream arises from a singular realisation that nothingness is a thing in which we can become anything if reference to our situation that we desire. So Sartre writes that there existence precedes essence. A 'being' exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that this 'being' in man is human reality.

Being a human requires one to deny authentic impulses, which are everything that make us human and change one's actions on the will of another person. Being a moral person is one of the most severe forms of bad faith. It is at the heart of their existence. In Sartre's opinion it should not be. He has a very low opinion of conventional morality for this reason. He condemns it as a tool of the bourgeoisie to control the masses. He argues:

The world comes on to you differently, and you can no longer have a total subjectivity. The World is now other's world, a foreign world that no longer comes from you, but from other. The other person is a threat to the order and arrangement of your whole world... Your world is always haunted by the Other's values, over which you have no control.

(Existentialism and Human Emotions 113)

The person becomes existential when he realises this world is not his world. It is not his world because here he has to be afraid of the foreign rules and order. These other's values are always to guide him. So in this human plight also the existential hero tries to create his own values to guide his life by challenging the established norms to make his life happy.

Thus, human existence is ever under the threat of elimination in the world. This fear is nerves taking and maddening. Challenge to deconstruct it empowering himself to live in happier way is the existential way. This process is continual and unavoidable. Subjectivity is competitive. Sartre declares "the man is a useless passion and human existence is a challenge" (*Existentialism and Human Emotions* 115). Each of us exists, for as long as we live, within a overall condition of nothingness or nothing-ness that ultimately allows for free consciousness. But simultaneously, within our being or physical world, we are constrained to make continuous, conscious choices.

For Sartre many relationships are created by people's attraction not to another person but rather how that person makes other feel. This is a state of emotional alienation whereby a person avoids experiencing their subjectivity by identifying themselves with the look of the other. The look of the other is found in the person's won being. The consequence is conflict. In order to keep the persons own being the person must control the other and must control the freedom of other. Man is a useless passion and his existence is a challenge.

Hence, people often become unconscious actors-Bourgeois, Worker, Party Member, in living their lives doing as they must to fulfill their chosen characters' destinies. Protest is another theme of existentialism. One protests against the social system to affirm one's existence. The Social mechanism always imposes burdens.

The existential man is not governed by the laws that the society has formulated.

Rather one governs oneself with the laws that one has made. In that sense he is a law maker who sets the example for the whole of humanity.

Regarding what the real existentialist really possesses; on *An Introduction to Western Philosophy*, Antony Flew claims:

Crucially an existentialist is one who insists upon and develops the notion that existence is prior to essence, particularly with regard to man. This development brings with it an enormous emphasis on the scope and significance of human decision. It is presumably this which has given existentialism its special appeal both for professional playwrights and for all those who have a taste for—in a very broad sense—dramatics. (462)

Existentialism of course focuses to the humanity for which man's existence is important so it is prior to essence. Human decision has a vital role for his existence that has some impacts in literary aspects like drama.

Absurdism as a belief system was born of the existentialist movement when the French philosopher and writer Albert Camus (1913-1960) broke from that philosophical line of thought and published his manuscript "The Myth of Sisyphus." The Second World War provided the social environment that stimulated absurdist views and allowed for their popular development in the world. The absurd aspect of the human life is his major concept in philosophy. Camus' famous novel *The Stranger* (1942) concentrates on the alienation of human being in the midst of a silent universe. Camus believes that human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe. The universe doesn't possess any inherent truth, value or meaning. And it is absurd to seek meaning into this universe. Humans are simply keeping the illusion

that the universe has meaning. But there is nothingness in the world. So he states in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that “In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. It is an irremediable exile... This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity” (68).

Like Sartre, Albert Camus supports choices. Choices may lead to repetition and repetition leads us to a sense of absurdity. But there exists man then. Sisyphus is given the choices. He doesn't surrender to God and makes a choice. He chooses the tough work, and he exists through his choice. He chooses to face punishment rather than bow before God. Camus' essay is meditation on suicide. Even suicide can be a choice that human beings are compelled to choose for their existence. The freedom of man is established in man's natural ability and opportunity to create his own meaning and purpose and decide himself. The individual becomes the most precious unit of the existence, as he represents a set of unique ideals that can be characterised as an entire universe by itself. Camus believed that man-made meanings should never replace an acceptance of absurdity. He makes a vivid example of modern man's plight in his famous essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*. He writes, “Thus I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death, and I refuse suicide” (11). The conscious participate at the various fields of the human life even though in difficulties becomes happier because that is the life – many ups and downs but not surrendering.

In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feelings of absurdity.

Beside these aforementioned ideas given by the philosophers, we can still discuss the basic existentialist standpoint. Here an attempt has been made to summarise the views that existentialists generally share in common. Alienation is the major theme of existentialism. People live in this alien universe. They are basically alone. An individual may find oneself alone even among the relatives. Therefore, the sense of alienation is a common phenomenon to people. This sense of alienation poisons the human relationship, the relationship between the parents and children, husband and wife, friends and relatives, and teachers and students. Alienation occurs especially when an individual cannot integrate into the social structures and customs.

Similarly, “existence” is the basic theme of existentialism. Being alive does not mean to be in existence. Human beings exist while the animals and plants live. One exists only when one is conscious of one’s existence. People are conscious of their existence. But the animals are not conscious of their existence. And this existence is prior to the essence. Humans are what they make themselves to be. So they should not seek meaning, they should rather create meaning through their actions. Protest is another theme of existentialism. One protests against the social system to affirm one’s existence. The social mechanism always imposes burdens. It expects human being to act within social norms. Human is stereotyped and does not do anything new, if he/she continues the tradition of society. The existential person is not governed by the laws that the society has formulated rather one governs oneself with the laws that one has made. In that sense he/she is a law maker who sets the example for the whole of humanity.

Boredom or anxiety is another phenomenon that existentialism talks about. When one becomes conscious of one’s existence, one shows radical dissatisfaction with the prevailing systems and norms of society. Due to this dissatisfaction one feels

boredom. When one becomes conscious of the human reality then the sadness comes to the life. That's why the same consciousness is a block on way to human happiness. Similarly suicide is human specific phenomenon. Only those who are conscious for existence, commit suicide. Animals or non-human beings do not commit suicide. Human beings tend to feel that they can use their life in the way they like. If they cannot win anything through the choice they make in life then they can do it through death. Suicide is not surrender but a means to avoid the surrender needing situation. When the existential man becomes conscious of his existence, he can do anything for his happiness if possible more than committing suicide. It means existentialism is a theory which is entirely related with one's existence.

Chapter Three

Hopkins an Existentialist

Excursion

Excursion refers to the activities of the experiment doing in the movement. The movement may equally face hospitable environment and strong objection as well. As excursion is an experimental activity, it sometimes pushes the fences like socio-cultural limits. Hopkins is pushing the traditional boundaries in his journey of a day. So it is an excursion in regards to Hopkins activities. On the other hand, the most part of the play concerns different types of changes in the society. And those changes represent the experiments that are adventurous and new. *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is also a new and experimental type of work at that time. In this point, Hopkins is an existential character and the play is an existential work so it is an existential excursion.

Hopkins' Excursion

Structurally *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is a three act play that was broadcasted in ITV, a business Television channel in 1979 in UK. So it is a television play. Hopkins is the protagonist and writer's mouthpiece. There are some similarities between Hopkins and Alan Bennett, the writer. But here Hopkins is not studied on the basis of the writer's mouthpiece. Rather through the situation and surroundings that Hopkins has to go throughout the play and the life he leads, it is felt that Hopkins is working in an environment where he finds it hard to express himself. The play begins as Hopkins visits to the doctor's surgery and it is an outing from the home. In other word it is Hopkins' traveling. This is Hopkins' excursion with the feeling of alienation that Hopkins has in his Huddersfield surroundings. The tension between his

academic nature and the more sensuous or down-to-earth approach of those around him represents the changes in the society just after wars.

As Hopkins comes into the doctor's surgery he finds only one vacant seat by a ginger haired girl. Later when there are more vacant seats, Hopkins has a confusion of whether carry on the same seat or move somewhere next. He moves away saying that there is "no need to bunch up; ... spread ourselves" (93). He frightens to the ginger haired girl because she thinks Hopkins is taking her seat. In her eyes Hopkins is attempting to go against the rule.

In fact the initial page, with the Ginger-Haired girl is to establish the Northern location (derived from the mention of Sunderland and Newcastle) as well as Hopkins' general insecurity, his discomfort in social situations. We also find, from his book and the narrator's comments that he may be an intellectual of some kind, or at least that his bookishness is alienating him from his surroundings.

Hopkins has so many problems with him so he visits to the doctor. He has been the visitor of the doctor for two years. But the doctor has not solved his problem yet. Hopkins has nice job, money and qualification but he is not happy. Willard, the doctor's assistance thinks may be Hopkins' problem is sexual. But doctor knows that Hopkins has his lady friend with whom he gets on. "No worries at home, no worries at work" (95). And he has it all but still empty. Hopkins says he is not happy, he is uneasy, uncertain of himself, and people make him uneasy. Hopkins is prescribed another antidepressant. Hopkins goes away while Willard and doctor are finishing the day. Willard says that he is happy but the doctor is not. And doctor thinks "Ones life is misery, futile, hail the onset of bankruptcy..., because nothing encourages one's fellows more" (96).

One is free to make choices and opportunity of making choices asserts human authority over his existence. Hopkins understands that negation allows the self to enter the failure but his problem arises from a singular realisation that he feels nothingness. Nothingness is a thing in which Hopkins can become anything. As existence precedes essence a being exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that 'being' in man is human reality. And this realisation of human reality deals with human self and this realisation of self is human existence. The Doctor not only gives us a character analysis of Hopkins, but also becomes the comic stereotype of the kind of person who is critical of Hopkins' patent inadequacy in modern society. His insensitive, merciless critique of Hopkins is essentially the stuff of farce, and Bennett adds the character of Willard to give the Doctor an audience to talk to and dramatise his cruel analysis. Neither Willard nor the doctor is anything more than comic stereotypes, and the scene ends with a piece of comic bathos. After all the social and personal analysis and description, and even a brief foray into the meaning of happiness we discover that Willard's actual interest is in the comically pathetic 'inner ear.' This is the comic punch line of the scene which undermines any feeling that we may be moving into a play having some serious moral dilemma.

While Hopkins is on the bus to the way to institute, he uses the book really to hide him from the people's sight. He likes to remain away from the people. A girl gets on the bus and sits opposite Hopkins. The narrator says that a book makes one safe. "With a book you're harmless. Though Hopkins was harmless without a book" (96). Hopkins is using his book on the bus as a kind of protection from the society. His responses to the girl's looking are in fact not timid but rather he says he is smiling at his book. Similarly when a large black lady gets on the bus and Hopkins provides her more space by moving a bit. He says he is moving away because of not her colour.

Here Hopkins satires both racist and anti-racist British society. He raises the issues skillfully at a time when it was considered as a taboo to talk about colour. Hopkins determines not to get bothered what other people think. As phenomenology gives emphasis to individuality, Things are as they appear to human's consciousness. So, all understandings and perceptions are subjective. Individual plays a central role in perception.

As existentialist priorities individuality, Hopkins' disliking to what he has and the unhappiness depicts his motives of existentialist. His revolt is through his consciousness and that is what his individuality is. The scene on the bus develops a portrait of Hopkins as social inept, particularly with women; it reinforces the way in which he uses his apparent intellect, or the book as a defence against reality. An astute viewer might also realise that in the title of the play one of the key meanings is that Hopkins is afraid of women, whether or not they are Virginia Woolf. Or Virginia Woolf is used as parody to big bad wolf that frightens the western British or American children. Hopkins is childish in the matter of dealing with women. It is a great example of how cleverly and intuitively Bennett manages to reach so many levels of meaning and understanding in his readers and audiences.

When Hopkins is in the municipal cafeteria he sees his mother, Mrs. Hopkins who is already there. She comes there to see her son after long time. Mrs. Hopkins talks about rules and systems which Hopkins denies. According to her it is immoral to treat contemptuously to her because she is his mother. She complains on his diet, he is eating wrong. Now, the foods are not hygienic, muck, but it is a compulsion in this "take- it- or- leave- it society" (98). She represents the British respectful society so she wants to take back the cracked cup. She wants to see being brought up having put in for scholarship, and being her son. She wants to choose a girl for him.

Mrs Hopkins is in a cafe to see Hopkins' girlfriend about whom she has heard from Mrs. Goodall. The service and the food in the cafe, treatment and the surrounding place all resemble the barbarism to her. "Hygiene's just gone out of the window. Toilet's real hell-hole" (99). Such a situation has made Mrs. Hopkins think about life and now the life is "a canopy slung between three poles-Dirt, Disease, Lavatory" (99). So, Mrs. Hopkins regards the present situation as "barbarism" (99). Yorkshire was famous for toasted tea cake but now the staff in the cafeteria asks if she means a cheeseburger. The place that was popular has lost its identity. So, this is barbarism for her.

In this scene, Mrs. Hopkins represents the comic archetype of the Northern mother – blunt, forthright, down-to-earth, partly representing an older state of society and family, using quite sophisticated language and description to create wonderful pictures and opinions of everyday life, and with a deeply ironic sense of humour in her observations and linguistic foibles. I love the phrase: "It's a Mecca of germs" (99) and the verbal play which can move from consumerism to constipation in the space of a couple of sentences. This is both the staple of the way bluff no-nonsense Northerners see and describe the world, but also the core of much of Bennett's comic touch when it is only very slightly exaggerated from reality. It is the kind of language and conversation with which he would have been imbued in his youth, both in his surroundings and around his own relatives.

Having established his female character as a public embarrassment for Hopkins, Bennett neatly switches the issue so that Hopkins begins to operate on the same level – almost like an adolescent child: "Trevor was not what he was. Trevor was what he was called". Why did you call me Trevor?" (100). The two characters move off into a comic 'riff' in which they debate the apparently ridiculously trivial

topic of misnaming. Here we can see Hopkins' dissatisfaction to the name that has really linked him to the respectful society.

Suddenly Wendy waves to Hopkins but it is Mrs. Hopkins to see it first. Wendy is a yoga teacher in the same place where Hopkins works. Hopkins waves her weakly but Mrs. Hopkins smiles courteously. Here Hopkins mother is much curious to see Wendy and asks many questions to Hopkins about her. As a mother choosing a bride for her son, Mrs. Hopkins asks him about her occupation, age, name, and points out her negative aspect only. She criticises her dress, age, occupation, and suspects Wendy as lesbian because of the dress-ski pants that she is wearing.

Of course, the core theme in *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is the sense of alienation that a younger generation feels from the values of its elders, and the conflicts this can promote within play. The wonderful comic sequence in which Mrs. Hopkins intrudes into the canteen at her sons workplace, tries to find out what Hopkins' girl-friend is like. There are references in the title and the jokes about the Bloomsbury set, so viewer would be able to pick up on the jokes about the 'posh' versus the 'proletariat', and the sexual dilemmas that Hopkins has. Mrs. Hopkins suspects Wendy to be a lesbian because of her get up. Hopkins has come across lesbian in literature because he is going to teach about Bloomsbury Group to his class that day. He asks his mother what she knows about lesbian. Mrs. Hopkins discloses the fact saying that she slept with Hopkins' aunt and it might be the lesbian not for her but for his aunt. Mrs. Hopkins tries her best to manipulate her son for parrot like life but she is not successful. Hopkins thus, represents the viewpoint of a generation that has had the opportunity to go to university when parents, often working-class, had not. But Hopkins still seems to be surrounded by his past, it is realised when his mother visits him at the Mechanics Institute and embarrasses him in the cafeteria.

Hopkins' situation is that he is thrown into a world which he has not made but that consists of potentially useful things including cultural as well as natural objects. These objects come to humanity from the past and are used in the present for the sake of future goals. Individual is always in danger of being submerged in the world of the objects, everyday routine, and the conventional shallow behaviour of the crowd. Hopkins' feeling of dread brings him to a situation of meaninglessness of life and is alienated.

According to Heidegger, in this confrontation an authentic sense of 'Being' and of freedom can be attained. Anxiety opens man up to 'being'. This does not mean that 'being' contributes the dark aspect of dread. 'Being' is associated with light and with the joyful. It is clear that Heidegger opposes a cult of mankind and wishes to call attention to something greater. For him man is the servant of 'Being' but not the lord of 'being'. Thus 'being' is always thrown into things being there. He falls away and is on the point of 'being' submerged into things. So he has to work to affirm his existence creating his possibility, choices. This is what Hopkins has done so he exists. He is existentialist and his outing is an existential excursion. So, he is on a way to find his identity for his satisfaction.

There is a wonderful surreal comic transition when the mother asks about Hopkins' work so he brings out the pompous title "The Culture and Expropriation" (100). She completely undermines his attempt to ground her with his intellectual achievement by completely changing the topic to the woman and the sandwich, and so on. This is a conversation, but also a kind of competition between the two. Such apparently unreal conversations and rapid switches from the insightful to the mundane are of course comic, but they are great observational comedy of what happens in real

life, how the generations can embarrass each other, and how pseudo-intellectual has to survive in everyday culture.

The conversation between mother and son continues in this vein, with the topics moving rapidly from girl-friend to ski pants to lesbians. The mother seems immune to what might be considered shockingly modern open topics. Hopkins tries but cannot shock his mother as they go into an even more surreal discussion of Lesbianism. Bennett uses the comic technique of combining the down-to-earth with the exotic and challenging. This verbal concatenation of totally unrelated ideas and topics leads to some wonderful comic lines, one of Bennett's ongoing strengths: "Well, I hope it is in literature and not in Huddersfield" (102).

There are uses of unexpected conjunction of the trivial and irrelevant with the apparently serious and profound. That use of conjunction is also just as ridiculous for from nowhere we find that the "President of Romania's mother's died" (100). There is a wonderful surreal comic transition when the mother asks about Hopkins' work so he brings out the pompous title "The Culture and Expropriation etc". She completely undermines his attempt to ground her with his intellectual achievement by completely changing the topic to the woman and the sandwich, and so on. This is a conversation, but also a kind of competition between the two.

Mother-son conversation scene ends with Hopkins' final humiliation as the mother of a thirty-five year-old man wipes lipstick from his lips in his workplace. On the other hand, this shows that the feminist like figure often does to dominate the male in the society. A kind of suppression upon male is observed with the treatment of Mrs. Hopkins so she somehow resembles to Virginia Woolf. And the class discrimination can be observed there when Mrs. Hopkins reports that people have asked whether her son is teaching the wood work when she had told them that he works in Polytechnic.

The world comes on to us differently, and we can no longer have a total subjectivity. The World is now other's world, a foreign world that no longer comes from us, but from other. The other person is a threat to the order and arrangement of our whole world. Human's world is always haunted by the Other's values, over which the human does have no control. But this realisation and continuous work for our establishment creates our existence. In this way, human existence is ever under the threat of elimination in the world. This fear is nerves taking and maddening. But Hopkins challenges to deconstruct it empowering himself to live in happier way, that is the existential way. This process is continual and unavoidable. Sartre has said that the human existence is a challenge. One exists, for as long as he or she lives, within a overall condition of nothingness or nothingness that ultimately allows for free consciousness. But simultaneously, within his or her being or physical world, one is constrained to make continuous, conscious choices.

The scene in cafeteria goes ahead along with Wendy's expressions in the mater of love making. It depicts the freedom in the aspect of sexual relation. But Hopkins is passive even in a beautiful young wanting lady's presence. On the other hand, Wendy has taken the place of Mrs. Hopkins because she also criticises Hopkins food. Wendy criticises the parents as "Mother- Capital M and Father Capital F" (103). In this sense the Capital M probably means Male and Capital F means Female. So father is female figure and mother is like male figure. Father looks for another Father and Mother looks for another Mother for their good relation. Wendy thinks herself as an intellectual and says person like her and Hopkins should not have homosexual relation because she thinks that unusual relationship is restricted to them. It is the unusual to have homosexual relation. It is for the less reasoning people because such relations are "lower down the social scale" (103).

Wendy as host even can't stop Hopkins' journey for happiness. He assimilates that he should be happy; he has everything but lacks one thing. So he is less active for Wendy's invitation for that night because that is not what he is searching for. Wendy is herself a stereotype: motherly, serious, humourless, superficially caring, and talking the inane jargon of pop sociology and psychology ('deviant relationships' etc.). We find out later that she is a parody of a Yoga teacher. Suddenly it is Hopkins who is the practical realist: "You've got Yoghurt on your chin; "Your hair's in your muesli" (103). The food items are, of course, selected as somewhat strange in the North of England in the 1970s and symptomatic of a lifestyle that is utterly not northern. In a way Wendy is also an outsider, and so in some ways a good match for Hopkins.

Bennett, of course, can make great comic capital out of this intense seriousness by doing such things as linking dandruff to masturbation. It is a comic shock technique, but also in a small way a satiric comment on a particular kind of superficial intensity of belief. This was also an era in which sexuality was just emerging as an acceptable topic for public discussion. Consequently, the discomfort and shock some people felt over these issues made for good comedy fodder. In this way society was quite split between welcoming the new-found freedom, and just hoping to return to more traditional standards.

There is a neat build-up to the final climax as we then switch to Hopkins talking to Wendy as he approaches his class. It is a classic build-up to a comic show-down which will hopefully keep the television audience watching after the commercial break. As with so much comedy (and indeed tragedy) there is a moment when we feel there might be some serious discussion of a relationship, and whether Hopkins can commit to Wendy, but then we are suddenly introduced to the facetious but attractive student Skinner. Bennett manages to introduce another joke linking

meditation and sex which is in fact the leap from the transcendental to the physical being typical of Bennett's comic technique in the play.

Hopkins asks Wendy if he is coming that night. Hopkins is not that active for the relation, so his asking is too passive. In this response Wendy says that she has got the feeling that he does not really want to. She gets the feeling that it's not he who really wants. This means Wendy is eager to meet him. Hopkins dares to ask again and Wendy replies "come if you want to. If you really want to. And it is the real me, the real you wanting the real me" (105). Hopkins is too excited but still lacking one thing among many things. It shows how the sexual and mating trend is changed from the strict society to the liberal thinking of the sex in young mass.

There had been a massive shift in sexual and mating behaviour in the previous decade. Firstly, the oral contraceptive had been made available to a wide range of people in an open and unquestioning way. The consequence of this was that sexuality was more openly talked about, young people began to enjoy more transient sexual relationships, which did not lead to marriage, and in particular women felt increasingly sexually liberated. It is one of the key changes in the society of 1960s Britain that and one of the themes of *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Trying to live in this more open social environment that causes Hopkins his problems with the attractive Yoga-teacher who in part wants an open and exciting sexual relationship with him, but yet she also dreams of marriage. This was one of the dilemmas of young people in relationships at the time. As background to this change here are some notes from the Internet on the development of contraceptive services.

1967 The National Health Service (Family Planning) Act enabled LHAs to give birth control advice, regardless of marital status, on social as well as medical grounds using voluntary organisations such as

FPA as their agents if they wished. FPA National Council resolved that branches would be allowed to give advice to the unmarried if they wished.

1969 Formal training of doctors and nurses in contraceptive techniques started.

1970 On 1 April the National Council agreed that FPA clinics should be mandated to provide family planning advice irrespective of marital status.

1974 From 1 April, all contraceptive advice and prescribed supplies provided by the NHS were free of charge irrespective of age or marital status.

1977 The National Health Service Act imposed a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that a full range of contraceptive services was available, free of charge. (www.fpa.org.uk 2012/September/25)

The events that have an effect on the way the characters in *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* would behave and think. These were dramatic changes in British society, which have been responsible for changing relationships profoundly and in particular made many women feel sexually liberated for the first time, and able to behave as promiscuously as men.

Part one of the play ends in the manner of a stage farce building up to its central complications. The audiences are introduced to the humourless Wendy and her unintentional naïve comic conjunctions of ideas ('dandruff' and 'heart attacks'). Whilst her ideas are bizarre, they are also the lingua franca of popular newspapers and of a certain kind of apparently forward thinking liberal type of person of the time.

Bennett, as in so much of his work, satirises his society as much by astute selection of

realistic detail as by exaggeration. The final couple of pages then introduce Hopkins' classroom and some of his students in preparation for the satirical picture of typical further education classes of the time which takes up the whole of Part Two.

The characters are the stereotypical Northern ladies of Bennett's childhood, and Maureen is the characteristic weak-willed stereotype. Hopkins students are waiting for him impatiently. While the conversation between Hopkins and Wendy made both late for their classes, Hopkins students who are in their fifties and sixties were angry with Hopkins because he is not punctual. Here, we notice the old people's conventional ideas. They saw Hopkins being with Wendy so they were talking about their relation and mocking at them. Because it is against the society to be open like that. Students think that Hopkins is misusing the corporation's time. Mrs. Trucker says Hopkins and Wendy are having a little private conversation in the time of duty. In this way everything done by the person is linked in social rules or order. In fact here is the break of tradition that creates gap between two generations.

Hopkins has two posters one of Virginia Woolf and other E.M. Forster as his that day's teaching materials. Maureen, the student is the teacher's pet; hesitates to unroll them because she saw the posters defaced and she does not dare to put. She is asked by fellows to put the posters but she remains calms. Hopkins asks her to hang the posters but again she hesitates. So Hopkins does it by himself. The posters are of two representatives of Bloomsbury Group. Virginia Woolf is decorated with a pair of huge breasts and E.M. Forster is decorated with moustache, a little beard and a large cigar. The defaced Virginia Woolf's poster that forms the comic climax and cliffhanger is typical of Bennett's skill at reconciling theme, humour, slapstick, and satire in one package.

The students aged fifties and sixties get shocked with the scene of the posters and say it is the vandalism of council's property. The early classroom scene and the conversation among the characters depict the conventional society and their attacks to the changes in the society. It helps us to see the conflict between two social aspects- choices or changes and no changes or following up the tradition without practising individual freedom in the absence of realisation. The old generation and new generation or the person who thinks the life is to lead on ones own choices for happiness or more by challenging the conventional ways of living through the consciousness living and dedicating the life for copying and continuing the past killing the creativity with the fear of rules and power. Here older generation represent the conventional systems while younger generation like Hopkins and Skinner are the modern.

Mr. Dodds Wicked? It's bloody blasphemy.

Hopkins Well. I am sure he wouldn't have minded (meaning Forster). Why should we?

Mrs. Broadbent Why should we? The point is: these photographs are council property. (107)

The dialogues depict for and against of the character's idea about the defaced posters. There is verbal conflict among them. Hopkins beautifully tries to calm down the raising argument about the rules and discipline.

As senior fellows began to say that people of Stone Age did not know how to respect the God; the person who has defaced the posters represent the Stone Age. The old students think that it is against God. So it is a crime to them. So they want the criminal to be taking out whipped, should do the volunteer service for old aged people; his trousers should be taken out publicly. They think they are in Stone Age

with such minorities. But Hopkins tries to console the students saying that Forster would not have minded and it might be a joke. But the class is not calm and Mrs. Broadbent says “on the rates of joke it is two pence” (107). They become ruder to the person who did it. And their anger began to burst out against the youths and the surrounding changes. They suspect the students from Trigonometry Class because they are comparatively younger.

The teachings in some different classes represent the education system of Britain. This is because of this change in the society. Maureen and other older students represent the people of that trend who think everything has fixed meaning by tradition. It is not that much easier to such traditional type of people to see the objects in different viewpoints. They think that they are from the respectful society so they don't want any changes in the social standards. For them the way of living the life is fixed and they should follow their systems. So they represent the past, while Skinner is the only hope for Hopkins.

Hopkins' Will Power

As the belief of existentialists the existential hero never surrenders to the established norms or conventional faiths of the society; Hopkins challenges to the old students and tries to ignore what they say about the penalties and the artist of defaced posters. Hopkins saves Skinner from the anger of the old students. Another student Mr. Dodds think the defacing of the council's property is an insult to God. This shows how the earlier generations were connected to God for everything they do. Dodds like students are from much dominating Christian society for whom their life is made by god and life has to be lived in god's rule remaining in the limitation of the society. But for protagonist like Hopkins and his only young student Dave Skinner God is already dead. Nietzsche's strong proclamation against the existence of god is trying to

be highlighted here. Because these old people who are not on the favour of changes and always talk about the rules and regulation of the society are representative of that world of Christianity who always keep the God in the centre for everything.

Hopkins has dissatisfaction because of social limitation and the high-class people's conservative treatment, which he challenges motivating Skinner letting him throw his ideas about social discrimination on the base of Class, Ideas and Sex. Hopkins tries to explain the defaced posters bringing the different way of expression to depict the suppressed feelings because of social boundaries. But still it is an insult for God for those grandparents like figures. And this is what Hopkins does not like from the society so encourages Skinner to throw the idea regarding to the duties prescribed by society.

In this sense Hopkins means there is no God to determine human's existence. He/she first exists, and then creates the essence herself/himself. People are what they make themselves to be. In that sense people are in the state of becoming, not in the state of being. They do not know what they become after all because they are constantly choosing and creating themselves. It is not possible for them to be without choice. As Nietzsche thinks that all human behaviour is motivated by the will to power, Hopkins dissatisfaction to what he has and his endeavours for something that he is searching is his consciousness and his will power. In its positive sense, the will to power is not simply power over others, but the power over oneself. And Hopkins' journey of searching something he was really wanting is Skinner whom he is achieving by power over self. And it is purely self-seeking. As Nietzsche revolted against reason initiated by the Romantic Movement, the novelists Virginia Woolf and EM Forster are criticised for much uses of the feelings not the action by lecturer Hopkins and his student Skinner.

Maureen is busy attempting to rub the marks of the posters but rubs the nose off the photographs of Virginia Woolf. Now Virginia Woolf is without nose. So now the aged students think it is the marker with the pointed nib has made such difficulties to rub. And no sooner Skinner, the brighter student of class satires the old students saying that they have to use the stone tablet because these old students (Mrs. Broadbent, Mrs. Tucker, Miss. Gibbons, etc) have said that they are in such a savage stone age. Skinner is too sarcastic to the aged students and plays a kind of verbal game with them and Hopkins. The elderly group of students are with narrow concept of the changes in the society so they pick the very minute issues in the class. As Mrs. Hopkins is against the social changes and is interfering to Hopkins in his private life, the students like Gibbons, Dodds, Tucker, Garland and Broadbent are also not much different to his mother for Hopkins. These students also begin to talk about the surrounding changes like sanitation, the urban life, and the inner cities. They are intolerant to the things going around them.

On the other hand, Skinner often plays on these aged students' illiteracy. While they are busy to report sceneries around bus station, toilet, train platform etc; Skinner throws the rhyming word of cities as "titties" (108), is another shock to the female students. Everybody except Skinner is against the present happenings. They try to find the nice word to describe the woman's chest and breast more beautifully.

Hopkins wants to give some more attention to Skinner. So he is waiting something from Skinner. Skinner wants to be addressed as Dave Skinner and similarly other two students are also not happy with their name. But only Skinner and Hopkins protest against it. Skinner is too dangerous to Hopkins. Hopkins hates Skinner but wants to be like him. He wants to wear ear rings like Skinner's and longs to be him. Hopkins knows that he can't manage the rings well. Hopkins wants to

listen to Skinner something about the defaced pictures because Hopkins knows it is Skinner who has really done this. Hopkins attempts to be like Skinner and it is his will power that drives the plot in different way to the conventional love story.

Skinner says may be a guy from a peasant background who carelessly writes in a simple form of literary criticism is trying to say that the novels of the both writers in a way are not complete. He says that Virginia Woolf's Novels are not daring, more sensitive, and poetic. Now Skinner really touches Hopkins so Hopkins addresses Skinner as Dave. This shows that Hopkins really wants Skinner. So now Hopkins asks to the class may be these things symbolised by breasts, moustache and large cigar are what those two authors lack. Mrs. Broadbent wants to ask those questions with the guilty one. So they go to Trickett's Trigonometry class. The students are junior to age from Hopkins' class and these students are playing to each other with some sorts of geometry equipments. They don't recognise the picture and describe Virginia Woolf as dull cow.

Some glimpses of British class system are also seen in Trickett's class. The lucky one gets to be the factory worker but the rest are "young unemployed persons" (111) who are the latest underprivileged group. And these people have to go through the hopelessness, ignorance, and foolishness. But there is one thing that provides hope for them is the higher national certificate. So Trickett pushes Hopkins out of the class saying that, that is not the way to gain the certificate. This should humiliate Broadbent because she is there to find the person who defaced the pictures. Now Hopkins must be encouraged by the creative thoughts of the students from trigonometry class.

When Margret Thatcher, the British ex-Prime Minister got the position first in education ministry and later as the prime minister in Britain; she emphasized in education. Regarding her education policy here is a fact about her contribution from

internet. “During her tenure as Education Secretary ... schools to become comprehensives; the proportion of pupils attending comprehensive schools consequently rose from 32 per cent to 62 per cent” (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Thatcher). The various teaching scenes in the play are to depict the British education system and the contemporary trend for the education which was compulsory and through its only they could achieve higher national certificate. This is to satire the moment while Margret Thatcher was giving priority for education.

In this primarily comic mode Hopkins’ feelings about his predicament, and about his feelings of a lack of fulfillment in his life can be explored. This new, more open, society gave many people more opportunities, but also left them more uncertain and sometimes dissatisfied as they became increasingly aware of how other groups in society lived. It is worth noting that, at the same time, the students in Hopkins’s evening class, the lecturer Trickett, is also encountering an alien being in his living.

Mrs. Broadbent and Hopkins go to the yoga class of Wendy. The busy class gave the full attention for the posters and is asked by Broadbent if any of them has done that. The answer is no. As the class answers no, Hopkins and Broadbent leave the class leaving confusion in Wendy’s yoga class. The failure to find the culprit of the defaced posters is in fact victory of Hopkins. Now Hopkins goes back to his class and begins to lecture about Bloomsbury group. There is clever student Skinner but often the questions go to Maureen. Maureen is parrot like character as she often reads the meaning of the word from dictionary. And that is what the other older students prefer. But actually Hopkins gets satisfaction from Skinner’s ways of answering because he is more creative. There is much conversation about Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster as they represent the Bloomsbury Group. Hopkins lectures that Bloomsbury group was a vague and not organised ill defined one, talking the same

language, laughing at the same jokes, common interests and common assumption.

This is also told there in the text that this group was sexually more liberal and some of the members of this group were homosexual.

Immediately the comedy of combining the down-to-earth with the academic and slightly surreal continues. Hopkins's pupils are similar to his mother, their comedy emanating from a conversational style which can at once be down-to-earth working class, and yet include references to Malcolm Sergeant, the World Bank, and the efficiency of German culture. Once again there are delightful and memorable phrases such as "that slut from Transcendental Meditation" (Me 104), which perfectly sum up the comic disparity between differing world outlooks just in the choice of vocabulary.

In Part Two Bennett manages to give the viewer an oversight of an apparently typical Further Education institute by use of just a few simple locations within a limited time span. Although he has possibility of switching locations very freely that television offers, he writes this whole section almost like a stage play again, keeping to the traditional unites of time and place.

The opening scene, in Hopkins's Classroom, develops the Northern comic stereotypes which we met at the end of Part One. The class itself seems to be making little progress, and Hopkins is shown as an ineffectual teacher making occasional academic forays into a general discussion about vandalism and suchlike, while his students are critical. Dodds, for example, is a caricature of the classic right-winger who is obsessed by punishment. The ladies also seem to represent another British comic stereotype, the dominant matriarchal lady who has no fear of expressing her views, however critical of everything they may be.

Including the scene of Mechanical Drawing with Trickett not only makes an advance in the plot, but also provides a neat contrast with Hopkins and all his class stand for. Trickett is described as “a rat”. He is sarcastic, cynical, unpleasant and domineering but he is also successful in control of a much more purposeful and effectively organised class than Hopkins’s. And he is just as articulate as Hopkins, using phrases like “denizen of the lofty spheres of literature” (110). In the same way that Bennett’s other characters frequently leap from the colloquial and everyday speech to parody, pastiche, or simply more arcane vocabulary. Like many of the other characters he is a comic stereotype, this time of a certain kind of traditional teacher. The scene is, of course, yet more social satire on the current state of Britain. Trickett’s final speech, which reconciles the Welfare State, youth unemployment, the apparent uselessness of literature, and the need for examination qualifications, very effectively expresses the feelings of many people at the time – and indeed today. As Trickett works up to a climax expressing his ideology he also becomes a demonstration of Bennett’s structural skills. This speech-cum-soliloquy provides a clear dramatic ending to a section which could almost be performed as a miniature drama of its own.

In the space of a few sentences Bennett introduces to the ambience of the Yoga class, which forms a further contrast from the earthy to the supposedly ethereal. Once again here is a perfectly balanced piece of comic structure. The parodic meditative mood is established by Wendy’s speech. This is then dramatically, ironically and comically undermined by the entrance of Broadbent and Hopkins as Wendy asks her pupils to “let the peace in” (111). Bennett turns this into a wonderful comic symphony with two more bathetic twists. Just as Wendy asks the class to open their ears, Mrs. Broadbent accosts them with all the truculence and insensitivity of a

sergeant-major “As you were. Carry on” (111). This very masculine military language is all the funnier coming from a middle-aged lady who represents a traditional British archetype at odds with the ‘airy-fairy’ vagueness of Yoga and Meditation.

The next scene, with its overt academic structure and actual discussion of the Bloomsbury group, forms yet another contrast with the preceding action, as each scene echoes the preceding one in some way. Hopkins almost manages to run a proper seminar discussion here and start to get to the core of what he intends to teach, but reality and people’s personal preoccupations consistently intrude. The comic irony, of course, is that the issues that the class raise, such as Dodds’ difficult teenage daughter are more meaningful than the literature they are supposed to be studying. And despite his weak personality and lack of drive, Hopkins is now beginning to understand the limitations of Virginia Wolfe, and to identify with them. Like Virginia Woolf’s books he begins to see himself as “concerned with feelings, impressions rather than actions” (114) and in Hopkins existence he too has not got what we would call “euphemistically life” (114).

Bennett here manages to switch in a few speeches from broad farce to provide a core of meaning to the play. The scene moves onto Hopkins giving out some bland clichés about ‘Books read us’ etc, but with classic irony the core of the truth that Hopkins seeks is in the wonderful comic irony of the terminally bland and characterless Maureen reading out a definition of life as ‘liveliness, vivacity, animation’ – which is, of course exactly what Hopkins lacks as an individual, and what he is rather painfully and ineffectively seeking. As we shall see shortly, his only access to this at the moment is in Skinner.

Hopkins is teaching something like Liberal Studies or General Studies, ostensibly a way to broaden their minds. His students have no real interest in the

subject from the teacher's perspective, so Hopkins plays a constant cat-and-mouse game with them during the lectures as they try to take him away from whatever his main subject is. They try to distract him while he tries to make sure that the discussion keeps going throughout the session regardless of what is discussed. Both sides are playing a verbal game.

Hopkins – So what I would like to do if I could do is to try and steer us back from her life to her work.

Mrs. Garland nods sagely.

(voice over) Don't nod, sweetheart, you've never read a word.

(aloud) It has been said that the novel widens experience and poetry depends on it.

Skinner- Who by?

Hopkins- In this sense Mrs. Woolf's work is nearer poetry... I think it was Harold Nicolson.

Skinner- Christ

Hopkins- Why

Skinner- Nothing. I pass.

Mrs. garland- Excuse me.

Hopkins- (voice over) Oh hell. (113)

Hopkins challenges the traditional view of human beings going against his mother and students of conservative ideas by asserting himself that he is what he is made by himself. There is no universal rule about what human beings ought to do. It is human beings who determine their own fate by choosing the ways of life they are living.

Human beings themselves are responsible in creating their fate. Existentialism denies essential human nature in the traditional sense. Hopkins carefully lands the

students to his subject matter related to Virginia Woolf and her works. Now they more openly begin to talk about her lesbian relationship. The fear is raised up due to the changes in youths' lives regarding in the field of sex.

Dodds has a fear about the daughter so he prefers novels instead of daughter. "Because novels don't get pregnant, never have fifteen years boy friend, novels don't come in with the teeth marks in their neck. Novels don't hang around the bus station in night" (114). Virginia Woolf did not have her children. May be that's why she did not know what life is all about. Dodds says Novels are her children. But Hopkins says that they are more impulsive and feelings but not actions.

Hopkins is as an isolated existent into an alien universe. As he has choices he becomes prominent especially to the figure like Skinner whom he hates because he wants to be Skinner. The society, his mother, his girlfriend and his students gave rise to the feelings of despair and separation from the established order. These feelings led to the idea that Hopkins has to create his own values in the world in which the traditional values do not work. One has to make choices and create oneself. Therefore, one exists up to the extent one makes choices. People are free to make choices. It is known that existentialism stresses on concrete individual existence, freedom and choice. Whether the thing is true or false depends on the decision the individual makes. For making decisions, one is free. This philosophy then emphasises freedom.

There is a gap in time and we rejoin Hopkins and Skinner after the rest of the class have left. When the caretaker comes in, it is Skinner whose sarcastic comments and wit put the man in his place while Hopkins can only apologise. Right now the moment comes for flourishing the relation between Hopkins and Skinner. We find Hopkins dapplying with a more assertive self, but unable to make the decision to

change. He is clearly fascinated by Skinner, but hasn't got the willpower to go for a drink with him.

Hopkins' Realisation of Self

There is then another brief scene with Wendy and Skinner in a corridor, which impeccably encapsulates the three characters: Skinner, Wendy constraining Hopkins with her arm showing her affection; Hopkins finding excuses for inaction and finally resorting to needing to go to a toilet outside the College but can't because he is too shy in the presence of stranger. The stranger at the toilet suspects him gay. The final scene before the advertisement break leaves Hopkins in a gentlemen's toilet and accidentally perceived as a potential homosexual. In part this brings Hopkins back to where we have seen him before: an ungainly, weak man consistently preoccupied with his own inadequacies. But Bennett manages to add a little further comic irony: whilst Hopkins is completely innocent of loitering at the urinal, somewhere in his psyche there may be an element that harbours a homosexual love for Skinner, as narrator's voice implies. The scene also demonstrates once again Bennett's skill at moving rapidly through the range of approaches to events. Within a few pages he has managed to shift from literary discussion to the existential discussion and he maintains his verbal ingenuity with the amusing metaphor of the "Zambesi" and the "Aswan Dam" (118). The audience is left interested to find out whether Hopkins can in some way break free, or will he continue to be an inept observer of modern life.

Bennett keeps the viewer's attention in this final section by beginning it with a bedroom scene which takes place in Wendy's flat. In fact this takes up most of the final part, and is followed by a rapid denouement now that we have followed Hopkins throughout his day. But since our hero's role is against a traditional love scene, or a sexual relationship. And the final denouement has elements of satire, surreality,

comedy, existential - a blend. Wendy is too open for the expression and she wants to establish relation with Hopkins and expects to marry him. But Hopkins is too shy and still not happy to get her. Wendy tries to excite Hopkins letting the light on when they are having sex. But Hopkins wants to switches off the light. Wendy switches it on. Hence, on and off goes on. When Wendy feels sleepy then Hopkins leaving her there escapes silently.

Hopkins is persuading to individual Dasein's own existence. For example, Should he accept Wendy as her mate? And he feels aliened so he leaves her in the bed in the search of his happiness. It is an example of an existential question. Here the hero Hopkins is conscious and has choice. It is then rapidly realised -if the acting had not indicated it before - that Wendy, for all her free thinking and eccentricity is really just seeking to be deadly normal, get married, and to have children. She is a very ordinary person, not particularly intelligent, who uses a veneer of the esoteric to give her a kind of identity. At the same time she tries to be unconventional by talking of seeing one's parents naked, and suggesting that they sit together naked.

Actually, here the scene moves into a farcical parody of a kind of 'hippy' rebellion which was taking place at the time. Of course, Wendy's jargon is in some ways not radically different from the nonsense about literature and history and the upper class that Hopkins is obliged to spout in his evening class – except that he is closer to realising its pointlessness and closer to becoming more self-aware. In his own comic, and slightly pathetic, way he is the hero who is learning from his 'Hero's Journey. As the situation gets more painful to watch due to Hopkins embarrassment, Bennett reminds us of the essentially mundane nature of the man through the comments of the narrator. At the same time Hopkins himself manages to put Virginia Woolf into the context of a real life, as opposed to a romanticised literary ideal. The

end of the scene and the actual love-making are left to the viewer's imagination. But, by now, we would see Hopkins in his terms as the victim of a voracious sexual monster who is also a bit of an intellectual fraud, albeit a comic one.

Bennett neatly continues the theme of sexual passion as Hopkins accidentally views a young couple passionately kissing on the bus. Once more he is the outsider, and with inevitable consequences. His intentions are misread, and his overt weakness leads to his victimisation and a punch in the face. In the rest of the play he has just been threatened due to his appearing or behaving differently from those around him, now he is physically assaulted. The viewer can see this as the inevitable outcome that he has so far just about avoided.

At this point Hopkins meets Skinner and through a series of rapid hints the viewer is informed that the necessary transformation to enable Hopkins to deal with reality has been achieved. Trevor at last becomes 'Trev', and Trev has apparently freed himself, at least for a time, of the need to live out his life through Virginia Woolf and her group (who represent not just themselves, but the whole artificiality of literary criticism).

Hence, they begin to go deep with a song from South Pacific. Hopkins and Skinner both are happy. Self is prior to everything. Real joy springs from the heart not from external circumstances, like reputation, power and wealth. Socrates asked people to understand the need of the self. Similarly, Hopkins feels happy while he meets Skinner and the song from south Pacific is the result of it when his real joy is coming out from his heart. Although there were many outside materials and situation with Hopkins; which made him unhappy, he is happy now. He is an existential hero who really continued searching his identity and has really got it.

Chapter Four

Hopkins' Happiness

Individual Freedom over Social Restriction

Human being does not possess all knowledge of his world or his self. He is always emerging to become something new but limitations to life, like cultural and natural standards, try to limit his choices. Some people see everything and get everything within such limitation but others like to exercise their will power. He or she must choose within these limitations. Hopkins represents the human beings of that attitude who seeks the meaning to his life while Mrs. Hopkins, Doctor Willard, Wendy, Maureen, Mr. Dodds etc. try to live in limitation. Their unhappiness is a consequence of their inability to continue their searching for meaning of life by breaking through the established norms. But Hopkins is only in the course of searching his own existence i.e. 'being'. Hopkins keeps on going out until and unless he realises his self. In this excursion, Hopkins is really dealing much with his attempts of meaningful life no matter if there are social obstacles. So, the play *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is an existential excursion.

Other characters remain in the same place by obeying the rules and order of society or God. They think that their lives are to be lived in defined way by society or God. Hopkins chooses to break the social and religious norms. He is different to the people around him and it has made him problematic character and that is the driving force in the play. This problematic self is suffering until the final scene of the play. So the hero continues his outing leaving the beautiful lady in the bed to find meaningful life for him. He has not surrendered in front of mother, students and Wendy. Rather such active protest against the established norms has made Hopkins happy. This creates his existence or identity. Thus, he celebrates his triumph over his unhappiness.

Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf records the events of Hopkins' life from Mid day to mid night. This play depicts a day of a modern professional man. The day begins with the visit to the doctor. Hopkins realises the problem and begins to search the solution to the problem. He is in alienated world so, the doctor's consolation can't sympathise him. Hopkins is setting out in search of his identity is real existential outing. The scenes, showing Hopkins approaching the Mechanics' Institute helps the viewers to get a keen sense of the rather drab non-academic teaching environment. As Hopkins talks to himself, it is further noticed his total preoccupation with his own issues, and isolation from his surroundings. The world is beyond rational explanation but humans have to commit themselves to something to make their life meaningful. Bennett in the play *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* really focuses on the human desires and the way the rules dominate human thoughts. While in Hopkins' classes the students' contemplation on the posters shows that they are on the way to social orders, rules and systems. But Hopkins feels suppressed and guided by norms and uneasy which has made him unhappy and this is where Hopkins' problem lies. Hopkins' search for his 'being' and challenge to the prevailing systems is his search for identity. He in fact challenges his body by his mind in the search of meaning. So he is controlling his sensory perception and using his mind. Hopkins' activities done in search of meaning of his life is to avoid the material world and grab to idealistic world. He is coming out from the den of illusion for the search of his existence.

Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf is the clear reflection of modern society. The play is a description of the playwright's young life. There are the incongruities of the British class system, which Bennett has viewed from several perspectives. The hero of the play picks the issues of major discriminations like colour, sex and class. The domination of Mrs. Hopkins on Mr. Hopkins is due to the generation gap and

traditional thought of life. The traditional belief is another problem of Hopkins. The plot and the humour come from the tension between working class and middle-class, between the ‘unworldly’ and unrealistic academic and the down-to-earth working man. This tension takes another form in the contrast between the blunt and direct Northerners which formed the basis of Bennett’s youth, and the supposedly effete pseudo-intellectual southerners whose world Bennett entered by virtue of his academic education.

Looking now at the play as a whole, the events in Hopkins life appear to ramble rather aimlessly to reflect his own uncertainty and insecurity, Bennett has constrained the narrative by having all the events taking place in a period of probably less than twelve hours – from mid-afternoon to the middle of the night. It is not quite the classical unities of time, place and action, but very tight nevertheless. Bennett gives it also cyclic quality of repeated patterns by beginning and ending in medical situation (the doctor’s surgery at the start, the infirmary out-patients’ clinic at the end). He adds to this sense of patterning by the two scenes on the bus – one coming from the doctor’s, the other (where he is punched) as he leaves Wendy’s flat. Superficially this is just a bit of naturalism, but Bennett is astute enough to use it to give the viewer a sense of already seen the present and of fate coming full circle. I think this is one of Bennett’s great skills as a playwright: the ability to disguise the profound and meaningful, or the structurally significant as entirely everyday.

Another example of this subtle skill is the way that the *Virginia Woolf* book is used symbolically throughout the play. On one level the book, which seems to travel with Hopkins through all his adventures is a simple prop to make to his unworldly, academic nature, his alienation and intense self-consciousness noticeable. It gets him into trouble because it shows how ‘different’ he is from those around him, and it

becomes a convenient starting point for conversations. It also forms the key topic for the central scene in the lecture room. But it also takes on symbolic properties. It is the barrier between Hopkins and the real Northern world he inhabits; it is his mask or shield, and his inefficient weapon. At the end of the play the blood on the book symbolises a kind of battle won.

Hopkins' obsession with the effete nature of his name performs a similar function. At various points in the play he indicates how disappointed he is with the name 'Trevor' (both when talking to his mother, and then later in conversations with Wendy). At the end, as he emerges from his pseudo-intellectual cocoon, Skinner calls him 'Trev' and he feels able to respond with 'Dave'. At last he feels he has come off his contrived and painful pedestal and is one of the 'lads' – the ordinary, everyday folk who seem to be so much more attached to reality.

The play is concerned to the society and change. How the changes have been reacted in the contemporary British society is clearly depicted in the play. The two types of the characters in the play represent the two types of people in real world. The changes in the systems are not easily accepted by the conventional people. So there is conflict between the modern and traditional beliefs and activities. The scenes of loneliness, anxiety, feeling of alienation are everywhere in the play which are also found in today's real human life. Hence, *Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is satirical comedy as it reveals the particular problems of our life along with traditions, systems or order, and man's sense of his existence and his grandeur in facing that existence. Hopkins chooses to be with Skinner because he sees his meaning there where he finds his freedom and maintains self-dignity. He rejects the idea of being tied to order of society, class and duty. So, he is in fact tied with the continuous labour of his self-satisfaction where such activeness creates the existence.

As the free characters of existential author, Hopkins realises that he has to create his own values as man is responsible and maker of his own values. The men being free to live are also free to choose. And it is clear that no person can really be free to live if he is afraid to choose.

Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf hence depicts some ideas of existential philosophy and further adds the collapse of the traditional certainties, the belief of living a meaningful life. There is no one behind and above humanity who can show people the right way and give them the meaning. Bennett presents the idea of individual freedom. It is the modern age of humanism where traditional norms and values are of no more importance. The will to live in this alienated world enables Hopkins to struggle. Hence, the play refuses any attempts to impose meaning, systematically and is the vision of rational process. People rely on a nebulous outside force either it is the God or tradition to give them meaning to their lives. People have to live on their own. Hopkins chooses to turn himself not by following other's path rather by making his own idealism by making himself happy. Bennett by presenting the understanding between Skinner and Hopkins assumes the dignity and central position of human self in the world. He emphasises the importance of the modern practical values rather than conventional belief. Hopkins' will to choose Skinner is will to life and it defeats any rules made either by man or God. He is now ready himself to detach from Wendy, sex partner, and his mother. Forsaking the illogical, impractical mere imaginary belief of the society and being ready to get rid from the feeling of alienation, Hopkins and Skinner helping each other are the prospects of modern humanism. Hence, humanity overcomes the conventional beliefs.

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