

Chapter I

O'Neill's Life and His Vision of Religion

O'Neill was born into the Theatre House in New York City in 1888. His father, James O'Neill, was a successful touring actor in the last quarter of the 19th century. His mother, Ella, accompanied her husband back and forth across the country, settling down only briefly for the birth of her first son, James, Jr., and of Eugene. As a son of traveling family, Eugene, who was born in a hotel, spent his early childhood in hotel rooms, on trains, and backstage. Although he later deplored the nightmare insecurity of his early years and blamed his father for the "difficult, rough-and-tumble life the family led – a life that resulted in his mother's drug addiction – Eugene had the theatre in his blood" (Ruland and Bradbury 268). He was also, as a child, steeped in the peasant Irish Catholicism of his father and the more genteel, mystical piety of his mother, two influences, often in dramatic conflict, which account for the high sense of drama and the struggle with God and religion that distinguish O'Neill's plays.

O'Neill was educated at boarding schools--Mt. St. Vincent in the Bronx and Betts Academy in Stamford, Conn. His summers were spent at the family's only permanent home, a modest house overlooking the Thames River in New London, Conn. He attended Princeton University for one year (1906-07), after which he left school to begin what he later regarded as his real education – literature and philosophy – in life experience. The next six years very nearly ended his life. He shipped to sea, lived a derelict's existence on the waterfronts of Buenos Aires, Liverpool, and New York City, submerged himself in alcohol, and attempted suicide. Recovering briefly at the age of 24, he held a job for a few months as a reporter and contributor to the poetry column of the New

London Telegraph but soon came down with tuberculosis. Confined to the Gaylord Farm Sanitarium in Wallingford, Conn., for six months (1912-13), he confronted himself soberly and nakedly for the first time and seized the chance for what he later called his "rebirth" (12). After that, he began to write plays.

Eugene O'Neill was the first American dramatist of international significance. His plays were written from an intensely personal point of view, deriving directly from the scarring effects of his family's tragic relationships – his mother and father, who loved and tormented each other; his older brother, who loved and corrupted him and died of alcoholism in middle age. And, O'Neill was himself caught and torn between his love and rage for all the three.

O'Neill's career as a playwright consisted of three periods. His early realist plays utilize his own experiences, especially as a seaman. In the 1920s he rejected realism in an effort to capture on the stage the forces behind human life. His expressionist plays during this period were influenced by the ideas of philosopher Frederick Nietzsche, psychologists Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, and Swedish playwright August Strindberg. During his final period O'Neill returned to realism. These later works, which most critics consider his best, depend on his life experiences for their story lines and themes.

In the beginning, he expressed his contempt for the theatre. He writes, remembering his childhood, "My early experience with the theatre through my father made me revolt against it. I saw much of the old, artificial romantic stuff that I always had a sort of contempt for the theatre" (qtd. in High 225). As a result, he turned away from his family. He became a heavy drinker drinking at sailors' bars. All this indicates that O'Neill suffered from existential problems even as a child. When he began to write plays these experiences were his first

material. They helped him to change the old characters of melodrama into realistic characters.

Eugene O’Neill’s Divided Vision Regarding Religion and Science

The Eastern religions – Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism – were a great influence, not only on the plays of the 1920's but also throughout Eugene O'Neill's career. His direct study of the Eastern religions and the influence of the Western philosophers – Emerson, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Jung – were all imbued with the spirit of Eastern belief. James A. Robinson comments, "O'Neill's vision betrays deep and consistent affinities with Eastern mystical thought" (2). There is a constant tension in his vision between two contrasting philosophical traditions. However, with the rapid scientific advancement there ensued a subsequent recession of Eastern beliefs in O'Neill's work between 1925 and 1928, which led him to treat his Western source in an Eastern manner. Also, this led him to concede that only death can resolve the oppositions of existence. O'Neill saw no hope of reconciliation between religion and science, and no hope for Man, So, he goes to the old idea of an absolute enmity between religion and science as he says: “without God, we were doomed and science is the agent of our destruction” (Robinson 3).

O'Neill's affinity to Eastern mysticism informs his dynamic vision of reality, which influences the values and attitudes of his protagonists, and shapes the symbolism and structure of entire plays. Not that mysticism was always predominant in O'Neill, even though its appearance came as early as the serene stillness of *The Moon of the Caribbees* nor did it more than once pervade an entire play. There was, as Robinson suggests, a constant tension in O'Neill's vision between two contrasting philosophical traditions. One was the dualistic

Western tradition that divides self from God and nature; the other was the monism of the East that enjoins one to reject the "false distinction created by rationalism" and to "assume a passive, meditative stance that allows an intuitive apprehension of the oneness of the universe" (Robinson 5).

So the most characteristic work is not *Lazarus Laughed*, O'Neill's most Eastern play, but *Strange Interlude*, in which "Nina Leeds' vacillation between serene, rhythmical mother god and interfering, judgmental father god duplicates O'Neill's own struggle between Eastern and Western thought" (Robinson 8) -- a struggle that was never completely resolved, though the last plays suggest a man "resigned to the twin Western burdens of ego and history" and to the belief "that a Christian ethic of forgiveness and compassion is man's only hope" (Ibid 9).

O'Neill's divided vision varied according to which system influenced him more at the time of a play's composition. For instance, *Strange Interlude's* "picture of a world in flux, and a grasping heroine who finally moves beyond desire, clearly has Buddhist thought behind it" (Robinson 22) whereas it was Taoism (the Eastern religion in which O'Neill's interest was the deepest and broadest) that contributed to the "polaristic vision of reality" that is "the central issue in *Marco Millions*." O'Neill's fascination with Eastern mysticism and for why it never won his total adherence can be seen as James A. Robinson writes:

He turned to Oriental religions to find a philosophy that accorded with his suspicion that life was one—that the ultimate reality was an amoral, immanent force which moved, like his beloved sea, in a unified, eternal rhythm. The Western man in him, however, constantly challenged that intuition. (30)

The three Western influences on O'Neill—Catholicism, romanticism and American culture— offered him, even before his study of comparative religions, a circuitous route to the East", because each constituted an "East/West mixture. And the result, in the plays, is "an intriguing tension: the Western imperative expresses itself in the tragic personal conflicts depicted; the Eastern impulse appears in the rhythmic structure and mystical overtones of the work" (Robinson 34).

Perhaps the most interesting of the three Western influences was Catholicism, since its contribution to his Eastern bent was both positive and negative: its Neoplatonic and Gnostic components introduced him to some basics of Oriental thought; while the Baltimore Catechism, with its emphasis on God's otherness and its cold emphasis on dogma, motivated (along with unhappy experiences at home and school) his rejection of Catholicism and his Eastward search for a more affirmative belief that "offered less morality and hence less guilt.

The romantic philosophers and artists most influential on him (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Jung and Strindberg) are all shown to embody the same blend of East and West, as are the cited exemplars of American culture (Emerson, Thoreau, Pound and Eliot). Given that ethos, that composite "battleground between Eastern and Western approaches, it is not surprising that O'Neill, "a true romantic," was imbued "with the same ambivalence toward Eastern thought as his major Western predecessors and sources" (Robinson 73).

In the first phase of his writing career (1916-1925), traditional Western dualism dominates O'Neill's vision, but during it his "growing affinity" with Eastern mysticism becomes apparent. In *Moon of the Caribbees*, it is the

Donkeyman alone through whom O'Neill dimly foreshadows his later attraction to Oriental thought. Indeed, the attraction is never total in the first phase, and the East/West tension is some-times clear in a single play, like *Anna Christie*, in which the heroine's discovery of peace through symbolic absorption into the sea she worships" is balanced by the Western, man-against-nature emphasis in Chris's distrust of 'dat ole devil, sea.' The other two early plays discussed -- *The Fountain and Marco Millions*—epitomize, in their differences, O'Neill's divided vision, since the former optimistically implies the spiritual unity of East and West, while the latter "pessimistically delineates their differences.

O' Neill's Plays and Theme and Technique

O' Neill's plays is an exploration of human condition and predicament. *His Bound East for Cardiff* (1916) describes a sailor dying on board the ship *S.S. Glencairn*. In this "S.S. Glencairn series of three plays, the mood is dark and heavy. The theme of each play goes beyond the surfaces of life to study the "forces of behind life" (High 225).

In all of O'Neill's work, human existence and fate are one of these forces. In *Anna Christie* (1920) and in many other plays, fate is symbolized by 'that old devil' sea. Psychology is another of these 'forces behind life'. In fact, O'Neill often uses the new psychology of Freud to deepen his dramas. According to Peter B. High, O'Neill was one of the first playwrights to study "the struggle inside a character's mind between conscious motives and unconscious needs" (225). While most of his plays are realistic in form, he experimented with anti-realistic techniques. He sometimes 'distorted' reality in order to 'express' the inner meaning or problem in a play. *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *The Hairy Ape* (1992) are important examples of this "expressionism." In order to show the

sailor in *The Hairy Ape* as caged animals, prisoners and robots, O'Neill calls for an expressionistic setting:

The treatment of this scene, or any other scene in the play, should be by no means be naturalistic... The ceiling crushes down upon the men's heads. They cannot stand upright. This accentuates the natural stooping posture which shoveling coal... has given them. The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. (qtd. in High 226)

The form of each play of O'Neill is based upon the special dramatic needs of that play. As D. V. Falk notes, "he never echoes himself" from play to play. In *Strange Interlude* (1928), the play's most important action happens inside the minds of the main characters. We listen to them thinking. O'Neill takes the stream of consciousness technique from the novel and dramatizes it. The characters allow the audience to hear their inner thoughts. O'Neill has also used themes and technique from Greek tragedy in such plays as *The Great God Brown* (1926) and *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931). Similarly, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1952) explores the spiritual problems of the American family. *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) is considered to be a "triumph of realistic play" as it explores the human responsibility (High 226). This is the evidence that O'Neill explored existential themes in his writings.

In the play *Dynamo* (1929), O'Neill shows modern character Reuben's inability to reconcile either of his father's belief in God or in the fruit of science – the "dynamo." Despite his happy love life, his attempt to find an appropriate place for existence in an increasingly soulless and mechanistic world, Reuben feels that there is meaninglessness and emptiness. So, he embarks on his search

for truth by abandoning his parents and love, Ada. Their religious fanaticism adversely affects his life, leading him to the brink of suicide. At the same time, scientific and technological advancement greatly impresses him at the beginning as he is possessed by the miracle of the power of electricity. Finally, this also fails to give him any meaning as his mother dies because of him and his father blames him for her death. Moreover, he cannot come to terms with Ada. So, Reuben faces existential crisis and commits suicide because of his inability to reconcile between the existence of old God greatly revered by his parents and his new electrical God – modern scientific technology. In this way, the study explores the modern man's inability to reconcile either religion or scientific and technological advancement.

O'Neill is a serious dramatist concerning himself with major issues of his time. Edward Albert views his play *Dynamo* as having the theme of "religion, philosophy, psychology and scientific thought in many of his works, such as *Dynamo*" (553). Another critic Edmund M. Gagey views the changing attitude of O'Neill's heroes in the plays. He comments: "O'Neill returns to abnormal psychology as he sketches his characters. His heroes lose faith all of a sudden and follow atheistic life like in *Dynamo* they leave home recognizing no faith" (58).

Regarding the play, *Dynamo* Brooks Atkinson has observed that O'Neill had clearly "cut loose from the realistic drama" (4). An overwhelming majority of reviewers lamented the squandering of such an astonishing production on poor dramatic material. Richard Skinner, for instance, called *Dynamo* "a case of immense talent in play writing, acting and production all being wasted on the

immature profundities of a man whose intelligence cannot catch up with his chaotic and intense feelings" (15).

According to Dennis G. Jerz, *Dynamo* is an experimental seduction of mechanistic modernism. He highlights on the writing techniques. He believes American dramatists struggled to find theatrical form to express America's development from an isolationist agrarian nation into an industrial world power. He remarks:

Eugene O'Neill's *Dynamo* (1929) features a scathing critique of blind faith in scientific progress . . . which used expressionistic staging devices and religious imagery to explore the seductive quality of technological progress. Modernism, futurism, techno-eroticism, the lofty optimism of the emerging industrial design and profession form the backdrop against which historical sources and contemporary reviews are used to analyze these plays. Tracing the fault lines and stress patterns of these two flawed theatrical works raises complex questions about how people might actually live in the society of the future, as it was imagined in the early twentieth century. (184)

Joseph Wood Krutch finds the theme of belongingness again and again in *Dynamo*. He says: "It appears in *Dynamo* whose insane hero electrocutes on the *Dynamo* which comes to seem to be the altar of the God electricity" (89).

Most of the critics have analyzed O'Neill's works through expressionistic, realistic and psychoanalytic perspective. But no critic has, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, yet made an attempt to study his plays through atheistic existentialistic perspective. Therefore, this researcher attempts to study *Dynamo*

through the viewpoint of atheistic existentialism because Reuben does not believe in God but Dynamo, invention of science, but when this also fails to satisfy him, he faces existential crisis and chooses to commit suicide. This is his inability to reconcile to either religion or science. The following chapter discusses atheistic existentialism with special reference to Sartre, Nietzsche, Camus, and the like as a theoretical framework to analyze the text *Dynamo*.

Chapter II

A Study of Atheistic Existentialism

With devastating effects of the two World Wars especially the Second World War and scientific and technological advancement, many thinkers started opposing the doctrines that viewed human beings as manifestation of an absolute value. Thrown into an incoherent, disordered and chaotic universe in which individuals' destinies were obstructed and turned apart by the Second World War, they did not believe in traditional concepts like, rationality, morality, unity, value and even in Christianity. The thinkers and writers found the world totally absurd, incoherent, disintegrated, chaotic and disordered, not directed by the laws of God, but by pure change, chance and contingency. This feeling of an existence without justification became the main proposition of twentieth century.

In fact, man is free of routines and conventions; he has no preset destiny fixed and any kind of unseen power. When he is born, they bring with them nothing but their mere physical body. In this sense, he is an alienated being. This feeling of utter alienation was the product of the recognition of Nietzsche's proclamation "Death of God" on the one hand and the cabalism of the World War I and II on the other. Not only "God *is* dead" as Nietzsche proclaimed, but also all the intermediary values connecting God and man declined. Man has lost even the certainties and values of his own existence, which he had originally supposed to receive from his belief in God. He is thus a castrated and deserted animal in the overwhelming and the absurd universe. He is thrown into this world which possesses no meaning.

On the background of such fragmented and disillusioned situation, many writers and philosophers sought at least to reduce if not to alleviate the present

condition of modern man. They had nostalgic feelings and expressed contempt for those rulers who had waged wars frequently for the fulfillment of their trivial individual selfishness. The writers easily realized that life has become alarmingly insecure. Moreover, the industrial revolution, the race for ornaments, large-scale manufacture and the great political tycoons and straws has shaken the very foundation of human existence. As it is, today existential philosophy is probably the most dynamic of appropriate philosophical movement to define and interpret the anxiety, absurdity and the uncertainties of the human existence at the modern time.

Existentialism as a philosophical concept has been in vogue in recent years especially after the postwar periods. So, the theory of existentialism found a particular relevance during and after the Second World War when Europe found itself threatened by “incoherence, emptiness and lack of durability of Western civilization” (Abrams 167). The negative aspects of human existence such as pain, frustration, sickness and death became for existentialist the essential features of human realities. As the doctrine emerged worldwide, the existentialist thinkers also differed greatly in various ways. However, it may be said that with existentialists the problem of individual is central and that they stress on man's real existence, his uncertain nature, his personal freedom and his responsibilities for what he does and make him to be.

The centrality of individual passion in contrast to the passion of the mass as Kierkegaard called “crowd,” or Dostoevsky’s “an ant in an ant heap” is one of the basic concepts of existential philosophers. (qtd. in *The Encyclopedia Britannica* 620). For Kierkegaard, ‘crowd’ and cowardliness are the one and same thing. He believes in the view that “truth lies only with the individual

being” (809). So, for him ‘crowd’ is untruth. The individual is the combination of temporal (in the process of becoming) and eternal (for from) existence) and, finite and infinite. The individual is a paradox within himself. Kierkegaard holds the view that the belief in a crowd and gathering is the belief in abstract system, which is the only possibility and never occurs, but belief in the individual is the belief in concrete existence that constitutes reality.

Nietzsche also rejects the concern for the welfare of ‘crowd’ and the establishment of “common good” or “herd-desires” (804). He advocates for the “unconditional mental and physical state of the free and independent thinker rather than the consensus of the herd” (814). He considers that the free and independent thinker does not care about good and evil while exercising his “life will “to possess an unbounded “power – will” subjective will and instincts,” according to Nietzsche, play a major role in shaping the ideas of an individual (817). Thus, Nietzsche advocates the welfare of an individual. He values an individual’s subjective way of looking at things in this meaningless world.

Although there is no denying the fact that many Christians and even some Jewish theologians have made use of existentialist themes in their writings, it remains a fact that existentialism is much more readily and commonly associated with atheism than with any sort of theism, Christian or otherwise because of its strong emphasis on the first premises that existence of man is the most important thing. So, the concept of existentialism is that man is the center of all things. That is why Sartre says, “existence takes priority over essence” (13).

This philosophy views that man is free to choose his destiny. The belief not to believe in faith comes under atheistic existentialism as opposed to theistic existentialism which emphasizes on the man’s relationship with God. As

existentialism emphasizes on the freedom of choice of an individual to set a course of his destiny, not to believe in God is a personal choice made on the basis of a passion, experience, and observation. So, atheistic existentialists can freely choose not to believe in God. So, Sartre divides the existentialist thinkers into two groups. The theistic or Christian group includes Martin Buber, Kierkegaard, Gabriel and Karl Jaspers. In the atheistic group, Sartre ranks as a leader after Martin Heidegger and other French existentialists.

Atheistic existentialism begins by agreeing with nihilism. Nihilism is the belief that all values are baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and a radical skepticism that condemns existence. A true nihilist would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than, perhaps, an impulse to destroy. While few philosophers would claim to be nihilists, nihilism is most often associated with Friedrich Nietzsche who argued that its corrosive effects would eventually destroy all moral, religious, and metaphysical convictions and precipitate the greatest crisis in human history.

Among philosophers, Friedrich Nietzsche is most often associated with nihilism. For Nietzsche, there is no objective order or structure in the world except what we give it. Penetrating the façades buttressing convictions, the nihilist discovers that all values are baseless and that reason is impotent. "Every belief, considering something true," Nietzsche writes in his "Will to Power," "is necessarily false because there is simply no true world" (12). For him, nihilism requires a radical repudiation of all imposed values and meaning: "Nihilism is . . . not only the belief that everything deserves to perish; but one actually puts one's shoulder to the plough; one destroys" (13).

Obviously, Fredrick Nietzsche is the forerunner and chief source of inspiration for the atheistic existentialists as his declaration “God is dead” influenced many thinkers. These thinkers repudiated the concept of God as an authentic shelter. They began to regard human beings as optimistically forlorn, free and spotless and a helpless creature. In this helpless universe, the atheistic existentialists undertake to create a system in which an individual is paradoxically free and condemned to choose his own destiny, whereas, the theistic existentialists hold that the anxiety of modern man can be eradicated when one submits himself to the will of God.

In the nineteenth century, Nietzsche called Christianity a “slave morality” and held that religion provides no truth because ‘God is dead’ and Christianity has become a shelter of weak and displaced people that he hated" (Russell 732). Nietzsche expresses his view on religion and God as “the Christian conception of God – God as sick, God as a spider, God as spirit – is one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine order ever-attained on earth. God has declared war against life, against nature, against the will to live” as the Christianity itself has defined God through such symbols and metaphors (912).

In the twentieth century, existential nihilism began with the notion that the world is without meaning or purpose. Given this circumstance, existence itself – all action, suffering, and feeling – is ultimately senseless and empty. At that time, it's the atheistic existentialist movement, popularized in France in the 1940s and 50s, that is responsible for the currency of existential nihilism in the popular consciousness.

Sartre, who ranks himself in a group of atheistic existentialists along with others, insists that ‘existence precedes essence.’ Sartre’s straightforward vision

of existentialism lays emphasis upon the existence of individual – "first of all man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and only after wards defines himself" (13). For existentialists, man himself is responsible for his action and effect. Sartre says that it is the feelings of freedom and responsibility that is the source of man's anguish (15). Anguish is an emotion to all man's problems. For Heidegger, man's existence in the world is fundamentally different from the being of others only because man exists, while other does not. Heidegger says, "the being whose manner of being is existence is man: man alone exists. A rock is, but does not exist. A tree is, but it does not exist . . . God is but does not exist" (65).

Hence, Sartre, one of the eminent French existentialists, contributed to the meaning of atheistic existentialism. Along with Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett, he developed the existential philosophy to its farthest point. The earlier thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger are the chief influences upon these three great philosophers and writers. Sartre put himself in the group of anti-religious existentialists and described existentialism as a "means of facing the consequences of the modern world that is devoid of any absolute power like God" (13-15). Elaborating on atheistic existentialism, Sartre writes:

It states that if god does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being that exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that this being is man, or, as Heidegger says human reality. What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene and, only afterwards, defines himself. (15)

Even to think of God is to go against life, against the will to power. As there is no God in the world, the supermen are the gods. The supermen are higher men, who declare war over the masses of inferior men, and are free from any restrictions imposed by the society.

Thus, the term “existentialism” covers diverse areas both geographically and theoretically contrasting directions. In terms of its function and nature, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes existentialism in line with atheism:

Existentialism can insist on the transcendence of being with respect to existence, and by holding this transcendence to be the origin of foundation existence, it can thus be assumed a theistic term. On the other hand, it can hold that human existence, posing itself as a problem projects itself with freedom creating itself by itself, this assuming to itself the function of god. As such existentialism presents itself as a radical atheism. (621)

As most of the existentialists claim, Sartre also stresses upon the subjectivity of the individual. But the individual is not free from other beings. When he becomes conscious of Rene Descartes’ “*Cogito ergo sum*, i.e. I think, therefore I am,” he also becomes aware of the other that constitutes his whole beings. (qtd. in Gaarder 238). The central tenet of Sartre's existentialism, says Robert C. Solomon, "is the freedom of human consciousness, freedom to act, freedom to value, and freedom to make itself" (89). Sartre, as Heidegger says, holds that only human beings exist. He argues that emotions can be understood only if it is said in the context of this total "human reality" (289)

Another German thinker, Heidegger, who publicly praised Hitler and Nazism, is another leading figure of atheistic existentialism. He made a

distinction between beings and “being”; the oblivion of “being” (individual) into the beings (group) has made us last in unreal existence (879). To get back the last being, Heidegger suggests us to “return in the ground of metaphysics, and find the roots of our existence” (qtd. in Ellmann and Feidelson 808). He held the belief that man should face explicitly the problem of “being”: he has to determine his own existence create his own possibilities and make choices and commitment. The feeling of dread due to the awareness of death, may incite us to flee away from the problems of being, accepting a way of life set by others instead of coming face to face with it. But if we take the dread of death as an opportunity, we may construct our life unique, and our own.

Emphasizing on action, freedom, and decision as fundamental, existentialist thinkers oppose themselves to rationalism and positivism. That is, they argue against definitions of human beings as primarily rational rather, existentialists look at where people find meaning. So, existentialism asserts that people actually make decisions based on what holds meaning to them rather than what is rational.

Jean-Paul Sartre saw rationality as a form of “bad faith,” an attempt by the self to impose structure on a world of phenomena – “the other” – that is fundamentally irrational and random. According to him, rationality and other forms of “bad faith” hinder us from finding meaning and freedom. So, Sartre defines existentialism as an “attempt to make life persistent by creating a system in which one realizes “human loneliness and human subjectivity” (10). So, the focus of existentialism is on “being” and subjectivity as opposed to the logical reasoning or “objectivity” individual experience rather than abstract thought and philosophy is given importance in existentialism.

The rejection of reason as the source of meaning is a common theme of the existentialist thought as it focuses on the feelings of anxiety as dread that we feel in the face of our radical freedom and our awareness of death. Kierkegaard saw rationality as a mechanism humans use to counter their existential anxiety, their fear of being in the world. He says, “If I can believe that I am rational and everyone else is rational then I have nothing to fear and no reason to feel anxious about being free” (135).

At the present time marked by chaos and insecurity, where human have failed to have a meaningful existence, existentialism is the most appropriate philosophical theory to define and interpret the human predicament –anxiety, absurdity and the uncertainty. For existentialism, the most important thing is the knowledge of the absurd existence, which awakens the human beings to freedom and choice, and therefore, presents us from being simply things. In this regard, Abrams says:

Existential philosophy views a human being as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe, as possessing no inherent truth, value, or meaning and to represent human life – in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves from the nothingness where it came toward the nothingness where it must and as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. (1)

In this regard, M.H. Abram’s explanation of the term “absurd” would be insightful: “The term is applied to a number of works . . . , which have in common the sense that the human condition is essentially and ineradicably absurd and that this condition can be adequately represented in works of literature that are themselves absurd” (1). This implies that human condition at

the modern time is completely ridiculous and nonsensical which can be shown through literary forms which look nonsensical and illogical. Instead of concerning on logic or rationality, Sartre says, “existentialities is primarily concerned with human existence, especially with man most extreme experience: the confrontation with death, anguish and anxiety, despair and guilt” (589).

Similarly, Camus said in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942): “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 feeling of Absurdity” (qtd. in Abrams 1). Rene Wedlock writes that existentialism is a last and vital trend in this century. It dominated French and German intellectual scene after World War II. He further classified that “if we interpret existentialism as a philosophy of despair, of fear and trembling, of man’s exposition to a hostile universe the reasons for its spread are not far to seek” (82). Thus he says the world is void, meaningless, irrational and absurd further.

In this sense, Albert Camus is a strong follower of all atheistic philosophy. As Frederick Olafson genuinely remarks, Camus believes in fraternity and humanism rather than 'nihilism'. He states that "this universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor fertile" (852). Camus reached the conclusion to declare the condition of man to be absurd when he realized that the speculative system of past provided no reliable guidance for life or guaranteed any foundation of human values. According to Camus, when the absurd man becomes aware of his futile living, he is naturally filled with anxiety and hopelessness but he does not surrender himself to the mouth of death.

Existential Anguish

Ellmann and Feidelson write, "As Sartre's allusion to Kierkegaard indicates his use of the term "anguish" derive from the angst or "dread" about which Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger after him, have written. They use the term to explain:

The mental state of person who departs from routine pattern of human observation and comes to realize that he can use his freedom; when the path that may be chosen is not understood any yet exercises an attraction and comprehend his existential condition. (805)

The term 'angst' is a state of mind of an individual who wants to escape from the pre-determined ethics and notions of society in search of his authentic existence.

Sartre explains in detail about anguish. He declares that "man is anguish" (15). The man who feels his total and deep responsibility for himself and for all men can not escape anguish. It is an inescapable sense of deep and total responsibility for one's own choice and deeds "anguish is evident," writes Sartre, "even when it conceals itself" (19). In anguish, the individual's relationship with the world seems to be "uncanny" and fateful, though the true existence requires that the situation be faced through a commitment to the decision that brought him face to face with it. The anguish of existential man is like the anguish of military officer on whom depend the lives of several men, but he has to give order for attack, sending certain number of men to death. He should decide and in making decision, he feels the anguish. Although the order for attack comes from above, it is he himself, who has to interpret the order and be responsible for his commitment, and for the lives of other men. If anyone says that he doesn't

feel anguish he is rather masking it. "It is a matter of simple sort of anguish, "clarifies Sartre," that any body who has had responsibility is familiar with" (20).

'Forlornness' was the favorite term of Heidegger which, Sartre means, "only that God does not exist and that we have to face all the consequences of this" (21). Thus, from among abundant of possibilities, it is the individual himself, who has to choose one. One is free to choose and 'invent" and by choosing only can he face the consequences of Godless universe. After all, we ourselves choose our being. "Forlornness and anguish", writes Sartre, "go together" (29)

Sartre says, "existentialism is," according to Sartre, humanism". It is "optimistic, a doctrine of action" and not a doctrine of despair (51). Authenticity demands from life a free choice without excuse and without help that presupposes the full responsibility. The adaptation of responsibility, in consequence, causes certain uneasiness, of which no one can save oneself. This uneasiness or the anguish is the heart of human existence. Thus, existential anguish presents a reality of human life, which has to be faced heroically and optimistically according to Sartre.

In the play, *Dynamo*, we find the major character in total existential crisis because of his inability to reconcile with either of the – traditional God and his new Electric God which is associated with scientific technological development. As a result, Reuben ultimately commits suicide by electrocuting himself in the “dynamo” – invention of science. This is not like surrendering to the God as Kierkegaard does to traditional God when other means fail, whereas Sartre chooses not to surrender to God but make an individual effort to face life boldly. But here Reuben’s new God fails to satisfy him, so out of disappointment and

shock, he commits suicide. The following chapter analyzes this in a greater detail.

Chapter III

Modern Man's Inability to Reconcile with God in *Dynamo*

In his play *Dynamo*, Eugene O'Neill repudiates religious thought by associating himself with the modern electrical God worshipped by the play's protagonist, a representative modern character, Reuben Light, whose devotion is psychotic and suicidal. In the play, Reuben wavers between these two poles. He finds meaninglessness in life and in his search for truth he rejects God, and surrenders to the power of science which is the sole thing he can turn to when the traditional concept of God fails to satisfy him. However, this new God cannot satisfy him too. So, he faces a severe sense of existential crisis as he is torn between old God greatly revered by his parents and a new electrical God, dynamo – modern scientific technology advocated by an atheist, Mr. Fife.

Although Reuben's father, a strict minister at a local church, whose voice is described as the "bullying one of a sermonizer," Reuben does not seem to have been affected by his father's religious profession and strict behavior (422). From the very beginning of the play, he possesses a rebellious streak though he does not go against his father in a radical way. However, his father Hutchins Light's strict rule and practices regarding Christianity make it difficult for him to come to terms with his father. He wants his son to "follow in his footsteps," so he does not want his son to mix with other people who do not believe in religion and God (423). When Mr. Fife, who lives next door, says blasphemous things about Reuben, Mr. Light expresses his outrage:

What did he mean about Reuben? . . . that foulmouthed scoundrel!
. . . "Better call in your son or some night I might mistake his odor
of sanctity of a skunk's and fill his" . . . I heard the corners loafers

laugh . . . and I had to slink by and pretend not to hear! . . . If it weren't for my cloth I'd have beaten his face to a bloody pulp! . . .”

(423)

This shows Reuben father's over solicitude for him, which makes Reuben uncomfortable, and it backfires on him leading him to seek something different which he could resort to because the family environment creates existential crisis. So much so that Reuben's mother is not happy about Mr. Light's strictness regarding religion that he tries to impose on him. She says:

. . . but Reuben'll never be a minister if I can prevent it! . . . I'd rather see him dead than go through the poverty and humiliation I've had to face! . . . Reuben's got to go to college . . . then into business . . . marry a nice girl with money . . . he doesn't care anything about girls yet, thank goodness! Each of us must judge about Reuben according to the light vouchsafed by God. (424)

Reuben's father expresses much hatred towards Fife for his atheistic practices. If Mr. Light had had moderate views on religion and had shown towards other people's liberal views, Reuben would not have suffered that much. Mr. Light curses Fife:

But, Lord, Thou knowest what a thorn in the flesh that atheist, Fife, has been since the devil brought him next door! . . . How long, O, Lord . . . does not his foul ranting begin to try Thy patience? . . . is not the time him dead? . . . Lord God of Hosts, why dost thou not strike him? . . . If Thou didst, I would proclaim the awful warning of it over all American when Mr. Light hears this he, “with his voice booming,” says it is "God's will" (424).

On the one hand, Reuben's father advocates strict religiosity; on the other hand, his mother stands for freedom and liberal attitudes. His parents' stand on two different poles cause existential crisis for Reuben. So he becomes unable to reconcile with either of his parents' beliefs. Neither does this affect or convince Reuben. Instead, Reuben begins to argue with his father taking Fife's side, because he finds Fife much liberal:

What's he shouting about? . . . What do I care about him any way? . . . he hates Fife because he's scared of him . . . there's God nor not . . . When Fife took out his watch and said if there was a God let him prove it by striking him dead in five minutes, why was it nothing happened? . . . I should think of . . . (424).

When he says this he finds himself in confusion as to whether totally support Fife or put trust in his father. His confusion is seen in his statement "I should think of." Then he looks around uneasily, afraid of where "his thoughts are leading him" (424). He starts guiltily and hastily, which makes a reassuring declaration of faith as he says, "of course there's God . . . He wouldn't pay any attention to a fool like Fife, that's all . . ." (424). Perhaps Reuben says so not to offend his father. In fact, this is the reflection of his inability to reconcile with his father's God.

Mr. Light symbolically mentions "storm" as he says, "storm must be coming this way" to warn Reuben that something bad might happen to him for challenging God, Mr. Light further utters, 'lightening' by implication, 'faith' "gets on lots of people's nerves without their being afraid of it" (424). At this, Reuben again disagrees with his father about the question of God as he says, "Aw, what's the matter with me? . . . that lightening had nothing to do with what

I was thinking . . .” (224). This statement of Reuben shows both awe and apathy towards God. One of the major reasons why Mr. Light is furious with Fife whom he calls an atheist, is that he has got a daughter whom Reuben loves. He sits thinking gloomily and says:

. . . Why? . . . have I been too stern? . . . but even when he was little I sensed in him his mother's rebellious spirit . . . and now . . . if it is Fife's daughter . . . what a feather in that blasphemer's cap to corrupt my son! . . . how the gossips would sneer at me ! . . . (426).

Reuben does not care whatever his father says to him. He has taken a fancy to Fife's daughter, Add perhaps partly because her parents are more liberal and modern. When he visits the Fifes, Mr. Fife always provokes him into argument regarding religion, God, and faith. His challenge to his father that whether “he is ever going to take up my challenge to debate with me” makes Reuben uncomfortable and thoughtful. While there he cannot side with Fife and oppose his father. Neither does he fully support his father when he is with his father. Reuben goes for moderate, liberal and subjective way of looking at things which existentialism advocates. So, Reuben replies "defensively." saying "No, he isn't! He can answer all your arguments easy with things right out of the Bible! He is only scared that folks'd think he was wrong to argue with you! But I'd argue if I was in his place!" (436). However, when Mr. Fife says that they would argue it out some time when he becomes a minister: He says: "Father wants me to but mother doesn't – and I don't want to be. Besides, I've never felt the call" (437). This shows that Reuben suffers from mental instability because of his being squashed between his father's fanaticism and Fife's radical atheistic attitudes.

What Reuben wants is subjective, individual truth, but not the objective 'Truth' held by the mass. At this, Fife retorts sarcastically:

And how does call you, tell me? I'm thinking He wouldn't use the telegraph or telephone or radio for they're contraptions that belong to his archenemy Lucifer, the God of Electricity. What's the trouble, young fellow? Are you afraid of a bit of lightening? Don't worry about me. The devil looks after his own! But a minister's son has reason to worry, may be, when he's in a den of atheism, holding intimate converse with a damned man! I'm thinking your Jehovah might aim a thunderbolt at me but Lucifer would deflect it on to you and he's the better electrical expert of the two, being more modern in his methods than your God!(437)

This makes Reuben even more troubled and disappointed as he says "in turmoil of guilt and fright, I wish I'd never come here" (437). Mr. Fife reads and keeps books on science; one he always reads is on Hydro-electric Engineering, which later preoccupies Reuben's mind, leading him to forsake his father's old God. In order to shock Reuben and his father and destroy their faith, Mr. Fife makes up a false story that he committed a murder of a person who used to be in secret love with his would-be wife 20 years before. As Reuben has not totally abandoned his father's belief in God, this incident throws him off balance. He thinks from the perspective of his father. Mr. Fife and his wife are great sinners as they have committed murder and adultery. So, he thinks his love for their daughter will not materialize. He says "torturedly":

Then that's her mother! . . . she's the daughter of an adulteress! . . . and a murderer! . . . how can I ever trust her? . . . She's gone around

with lots of fellows . . . how do I know she never? . . . Oh, Cod,
why did I ever come here tonight? . . . (441)

This incident puts Reuben in such a difficult situation that he can neither support Fife's atheistic practices nor can he go to surrender to his father's fanatical beliefs. Neither can he reveal this to the police nor can he do so to his father because he loves their daughter. Mr. Fife intentionally does this because he thinks Reuben is like his father. He wants to show Reuben worthless in the eyes of law and God. Fife says: "You don't say a word. Well, may be I shouldn't have told you, because now I have made you an accessory in the murder for you'll be shielding me unlawfully by keeping silence. And the devil knows what sin you'll commit in the sight of God!" (441). This makes him much tormented and "conscience-stricken" (441). He find his existence meaningless as he cannot decide as to how to act in such a situation. He expresses his indecision and recitation: "But God! . . . I'll be guilty before God! . . . but he knows I gave my word! . . . but does that count with him? . . . when I didn't swear on the Bible? . . ." (441). This makes Reuben's life more unstable and meaningless. However, on the other hand, his father's influence is equally working on Reuben. This shows that though he is against God, it is too big thing as to go against the existing system of faith in traditional concept of God. He says to Fife:

. . . You needn't be afraid I'll tell-but you ought to go and tell yourself! You know you're guilty in the sight of God! Do you want to burn forever in hell? Don't you dare talk like that! I won't stand for it – not now! If you don't stop your blaspheming, I'll – mean, it'd serve you right if I . . . (442)

While on his way home Reuben thinks over the whole incident at Fife's house, he becomes desperate as he becomes torn between his father's belief and Fife's open atheism. Again, he is unable to reconcile with his father's faith in the face of Fife's open atheistic practices. He thinks:

Aw, What is sin, any way? . . . maybe that's just old women's like Fife says! . . . why should I have a guilty conscience? . . . It's God's fault! . . . why hasn't He done something to Fife? . . . I should think He'd have to punish adultery and murder . . . if there is any God . . . (444)

At this very moment "a great flash of lightening" paralyzes him reminding him of his father's warning (444). So, he becomes more and more obsessed by a feeling of guilt, of being a condemned sinner alone in the threatening light. He thinks "it [lightening] comes every time! . . . when I deny [God]! . . ." (444). Then he begins to get frightened of God. He says: "Fife's damned me with him! There's no use praying! . . . it's getting black! . . . I'm afraid of God! . . ." (444). However, he does not embrace and reconcile with God.

This incident makes Reuben devastated and he deserts home with a divided mind and heavy heart. He finds himself in a great quandary as to how to cope with this situation because he finds his life absurd and meaningless. Neither can he denounce his parents nor can he do so to Fife because of his love for Ada. This is when Reuben begins to feel alienation and a deep sense of despair which greatly overwhelms him. This leads him to feel existential crisis in life. And, he decides to undertake a journey in search of truth that satisfies him. This is his existential choice.

When he arrives home he cannot remain silent as he is a son of a minister. Finding his mother less strict and harsh, Reuben decides to confide in her the secrets of Mr. Fife because he finds no one to turn on. In order to console himself he takes his mother's favor: "I love mother better' than anything in the world . . . she always forgives me . . . I wish I could tell her . . . she'd know what was right. . . . I'm scared, Mother! I'm guilty! I'm damned!" (446).

However, his mother betrays him by letting Reuben's father know what he tells about Mr. Fife. This adds to Reuben's already worsened misery and despair. Moreover, she calls Ada a "little harlot" despite his plea that he loves her "with all his heart" (447). His trust in his mother shatters and he becomes a lonely person in his life. His statement that "I'm through with you!" [his mother] is a testimony to this (450). This loneliness forces him to seek authentic existential meaning in his life.

When his father whips Reuben as punishment for what he calls a sin, Reuben grows bold and decides to defy his father and his God. He fiercely warns his father against touching him again, calling him "fool." He further says: "I'm not scared of you or your God any more!" (452). His father prays to God to have mercy but Reuben says with a sneer; "What God? Fife's God? Electricity? Are you praying to it for mercy? It can't hear you! it doesn't give a damn about you!" (452). At this moment O'Neill creates an atmosphere favorable for Reuben's father faith because there is a tremendous crash of thunder. Reuben looks up and "gives a wild laugh as though the thunder elated him," Reuben even shouts up at the sky saying to God, "Shoot away, Old Bozo! I'm not scared of you!" (452). At this point Reuben totally becomes an atheist believing in the miracle of science – his existential choice. He thus declares the "death of God":

What's the matter? Do you still believe in his fool God? I'll show you. If there is his [father's] God let him strike me dead this second! I dare him. there! didn't I tell you! There is no God! No God but Electricity. I'll never be scared again. I'm through with the lot of you! (453).

He passes through a severe sense of angst because he does not accept preconceived notion of faith in God. So, he embarks on a search for authentic existence. After this he deserts his parents and goes to surrender to the power of science. When he meets Mrs. Fife, he confesses to her that Mr. Fife awakened him. As he says, "He did me a favor. He woke me up. You can tell him I've joined his church. The only God I believe in now is electricity" (458). In the meantime, he has begun studying many things on science in an effort to seek truth. He tells to Mrs. Fife:

I'm studying a lot of science. Sometimes I've gone without eating to buy books –and often I've read all night – books on astronomy and biology and physics and chemintre and evolution. It all comes down to electricity in the end. What the fool preachers call God is in electricity some where. Did you ever watch dynamos? What I mean is in them- some how. (458)

Reuben has deserted home for good because it becomes impossible for him to reconcile with his father's fundamentalist and fanatical religious belief. In an effort to make his existence meaningful, he devotes his life to the study of science. In the meantime, he comes to visit his love Ada who he confides in:

I've watched them [dynamos] for hours. Sometimes I'd go in a plant and get talking to the guys just to hang around, and I tried to

everywhere to get a job in a plant but never had any luck. But every job I've had -- I never stuck to one long, I wanted to keep moving and see everything -- every job was connected with electricity some way. I've worked for electricians, I've gone out in helping linesmen, I shoveled sand on a big waterpower job out West. You've got to get year old man to give me a job in his plant -- any job, I don't care what! (461)

This shows Reuben has been able to reconcile with the miracle of science for the time being because he needs a means to live with when the traditional concept of God cannot satisfy him. He is particularly influenced by the power of electricity which he calls -- "Electric God."

Later on when Reuben learns of his mother's death through his father, he becomes sad and dejected. He goes home and quarrels with his father blaming him for her death. On the contrary, his father puts the blame on the son. He says:

She'd been pining away for almost a year. Her heart was broken because you'd gone. She hoped for a time you'd come back but finally she gave up hoping -- and gave up wanting to live! And your horrible blasphemous postcards kept coming! She blamed herself for your ruin and she wrote long letters begging your forgiveness, and asking you to come home! But you'd never given her an address! She couldn't mail them, she knew you'd never read them, and that broke her heart most of all! You killed her as surely as if you'd given her poison, you unnatural accursed son! (465)

This greatly disturbs and traumatizes Reuben because he holds himself responsible for his mother's death. Once again he loses all meaning of his life.

He finds himself in existential crisis. When his father reminds him of the fear of God, he declares that

We have electrocuted your God. Don't be a fool . . . that's what I kept writing her . . . her last words! . . . then I'd converted her away from his God!. . . the dying see things beyond . . . she saw I'd found the right path to the truth . . . we electrocuted Satan. Electricity is God now. And we've got to learn to know God [New one], haven't we? Well that's what I'm after. Didn't you ever watch dynamos? Come down to the plant and I'll convert you! I converted Mother, didn't I? (467)

In this way, Reuben tries to bring the world into accord with his sense of justice, but if this fails, he will attempt to match in himself its injustice and choice. As Dostoyevsky said, "If God didn't exist every thing would be possible." That is the very starting point of existentialism. "Indeed everything is permissible if God does not exist" (Sartre, 27). This is what atheistic existentialism advocates.

Reuben and Ada have a quarrel over their marriage, which adds to Reuben's frustration. Reuben has totally forsaken social practices. He considers nothing sin; rather he considers everything a natural process. When Ada insists on valuing some customs, Reuben says:

Cut out that talk of being scared! What are you scared about? Scared what we did was a sin? You're the hell of an atheist! (Then jeeringly) And you're the one that used to be always kidding me about being a goody boy! There's nothing to be scared about or sorry for. What are did – just plain sex- an act of nature – and that's all there is to it! (469)

When Ada reminds him of his promise to marry her, he says that

Talk sense Ada! We're married by nature now. We don't need any old fool of minister saying prayers over us! Say, here's one me, Ada – speaking of praying. It was out at Mother's grave. Before I thought, I started to do a prayer act – and then suddenly it hit me that there was nothing to pray to. (he forces a laugh) It just goes to show you what a hold that bunk gets on you when you've had it crammed down your throat from the time you were born! You can't pray to electricity unless you're foolish in the head, can you? But maybe you couldn't, that if you knew how. (470)

This proves Reuben has totally deserted traditional concept of religious practices and rituals, which is indicative of atheistic existential philosophy he chooses. However, although he has forced such thoughts into his mind, Reuben passes through a very traumatic stage. He finds everything disillusioning. He tries to seek truth, and meaningful existence. He thinks of his mother:

There's something queer about this dump now . . . as if no one was living here . . . I suppose that's because Mother's gone . . . I'd like to reach her somehow . . . no one knows what happens after death . . . even science doesn't . . . there may be some kind of hereafter . . . I used to kneel down here and say my prayers . . . she taught there to me . . . (472)

From the very beginning, Reuben is committed to finding truth for himself because he wants authentic meaning in his life. He does not follow the mass, rather he decides to follow his own existential choice. On the other hand, when he sees the dynamo, he finds the miracle of science overwhelming and

mysterious. This makes him dejected again leading him to existential crisis. At the sight of dynamo, Reuben expresses his surprise: “It’s so mysterious . . . and grand . . . it makes you feel things . . . you don't need to think . . . you almost get the secret . . . what electricity is . . . what life is . . . what God is . . . it's all the same thing . . .” (474). Ultimately he chooses to surrender his self to the power of electricity, what he calls “Electric God.” He likens the every power of the world to this power. This becomes his God:

It's like a great dark idol . . . like the old stone statues of gods
people prayed to . . . only it's living and they were dead . . . that
part on to is like a head . . . with eyes that see you without seeing
you . . . and below it is like a body . . . not a man's . . . round like a
woman's . . . as if it had breasts . . . but not like a girl . . . not like
Ada . . . no, like a woman . . . like her mother . . . or mine . . . a
great, dark mother! . . . that is what the dynamo is ! That's what
life is! . . . (474)

And Reuben listens to the sound produced by the “dynamo.” It’s like beating all organs in the church. It's like the hymn of electric God for him. So, for the time being he makes this ‘Electric God’ his means to live with.

However, the pain of not seeing his mother for quite a long time, even at the time of her death frequently haunts him. Moreover, his father's blaming him for her death and his misunderstanding with Ada cause havoc in his life. His new electric God cannot satisfy and provide sufficient answer to him. Nonetheless, he tries to console himself about the loss of his mother by regarding the ‘dynamo’ as his mother. He utters, "I feel mother wants me to . . . Mother of life, my mother is dead, she has passed back into you, tell her to forgive me find your

truth!" (474). Besides, Reuben tries to force his concept of new 'Electric God' into Ada's mind in a crazy way, saying, "Why can't you understand? You've got to believe in 'dynamo,' and bow down to her will" (482). This is his ultimate effort to be able to reconcile with his new electric God. But Ada dismisses him saying, "For God's sake, what's come over him . . . the damned dynamo! . . . It's driving him crazy" (482). He further tries to persuade her as he finds himself alone in his new "faith." So, he asks her, "Oh, Ada, you simply can't help believing in her! You only have to listen to her! Her song is the hymn of eternal generation on, the song of eternal life!" (482). But when Ada is scorned of him, he begins to lose confidence in himself because no one is there to support him. Instead, he realizes that even this new Electric God cannot make him happy. So, finally he says to Ada, "You're so damned pretty! Oh, how I wish the miracle was over and we could!" (482). This is how the miracle of the 'dynamo' fails him to give him any meaning.

So, in the end, ultimately out of helplessness, and despair, he commits suicide as he utters before electrocuting himself, "I don't want any miracle, Mother! I don't want to know the truth! I only want you to hide me" (488). Before, Reuben feels a sense of anxiety in the face of his way to freedom to seek his subjective truth. He foresees his impending death. This is his inability to reconcile with his new Electric God as well. In this way, Reuben is unable to reconcile either with the traditional God or his new Electric God. This reflects the modern man's inability to reconcile either with religion or science in the modern times. This reflects a modern man's inability to reconcile with religion or God. So, he tries to find another means to live with.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

This research work concludes with the findings that Eugene O'Neill was an existential writer who was unable to reconcile with the traditional concept of God as well as the modern scientific development which he thought have brought meaninglessness in human life. This has been beautifully demonstrated through his play *Dynamo*. Obviously, the influence of Nietzsche and Sartre's existential philosophy can clearly be seen on O'Neill's *Dynamo*.

. In this play, the protagonist, Reuben passes through a very extreme existential crisis as he finds it very difficult to reconcile with old God greatly revered by his parents, especially by his father and his new electric God – modern scientific technology advocated by his neighbor, Mr. Fife. They cause havoc in his life. In between Reuben faces a severe existential crisis as he tries to come to terms to both of them. Both of them fail to satisfy his search for truth meaning in life. He finds no meaning in life. Even his love life fails because of this instability in faith and scientific advancement.

In the beginning, thrown into existential crisis, Reuben makes his choice to lead his own course of life totally rejecting his father's God. So, he deserts home and his parents in an attempt to seek truth. He spends quite a lot of time meditating on the question of religion, God and Science before he ultimately declares "the death of God," and surrenders himself to the miracle of scientific discovery. The "dynamo" which is central in scientific invention greatly enchants Reuben which he proclaims as "Electric God." As he now desperately needs a means to live with, he only believes in "Electric God," so, he surrenders himself

to it. His predicament is towered because of his determination. These acts are governed by his free will because he denies the existence of traditional concept of God.

But, when he learns of his mother's death through his father who curses him for committing a sin of blasphemy, he is greatly moved. The tragedy with his lover, Ada adds to his misery. He realizes that this new God won't give him anything and take him nowhere. So, out of hopelessness, he then places himself on the moving 'dynamo,' he throws himself on the moving dynamo and commits suicide. In this way, Reuben commits suicide because of his inability to reconcile with the existence of old God greatly revered by his parents as well as his new electrical God – modern scientific technology, which he desperately tries to stick to right until the end.

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