

Origin

The term was coined by the critic Martin Esslin, who made it the title of a book on the subject first published in 1961 and in two later revised editions; the third and final edition appeared in 2004, in paperback with a new foreword by the author. In the first edition of *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Esslin saw the work of these playwrights as giving artistic articulation to Albert Camus' philosophy that life is inherently without meaning as illustrated in his work *The Myth of Sisyphus*. In the first (1961) edition, Esslin presented the four defining playwrights of the movement as Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugène Ionesco, and Jean Genet, and in subsequent editions he added a fifth playwright, Harold Pinter—although each of these writers has unique preoccupations and techniques that go beyond the term "absurd." Other writers associated with this group by Esslin and other critics include Tom Stoppard, Friedrich Dürrenmatt¹, Fernando Arrabal¹, Edward Albee, Boris Vian, Jean Tardieu

Chief Features

- Life is essentially meaningless, hence miserable
- There is no hope
- Reality is unbearable unless relieved by dreams and illusions
- Man is fascinated by death which replaces dreams and illusions
- There is no action or plot. Very little happens coz nothing meaningful can happen
- The final situation is comic or absurd
- Absurd drama is not purposeful and specific as it solves no problems.
- It is like an abstract painting which is supposed not to convey a definite meaning

Prof Sarkar