

There are poems, novels, and plays in modern world literature, describing human life as an absurd, ridiculous, and superfluous phenomenon. In our day a number of people consider these works demoralizing, destructive, and refuse to accept this kind of approach. However, one can not be certain at all that it is one's right indeed to refuse the representation of this ancient cycle of experiences if we take the fact into account that humans have been so often hit upon the consciousness and experiences of the futility, insignificance, and superfluity of their lives. In spite of all difficulties, one should rather face these problems, that is, to examine the factors inducing the absurdity of the world and the human life, to seek for methods to cease them, to find ways to reduce their influence or to diminish their pressure on the human mind.

STRUGGLING AGAINST THE ABSURDITY OF THE HUMAN STATUS

BASIC CONCEPTS

The Humanization. Humanizing the world means reorganizing it to suit human purposes and reshaping it to serve human ends. Many scientists, writers, and artists believe that this world is inimical to human beings, and has too many features that are indifferent to people or even anti-human or counterproductive. Some also believe that changing the world so that it serves mankind is an effort that is a moral duty required of any creative individual. Genuine poetry, art, literature, or science can never be anti-human, hostile, or indifferent to people, but should serve human interests.

Legitimacy of the Humanization. If we are looking for an answer to the question on why humans have the right to change the world so that it serves their interests, we find greatly varying views in scientific literature and fiction. There are extreme points of view that do not admit the legitimacy of such efforts, considering human beings to be immeasurably small, insignificant creatures in the Universe. They consider passivity appropriate and quiet death reassuring. Our ideas about this problem, however, differ from the above-mentioned ones. We think that besieging and changing the world is probably right, because the world itself demands it. We think that humans are the result of a process of evolution that has formed our basic characteristics and our instincts of self-preservation and race preservation, which have remained unchanged up to our current day. Forced by these instincts, human beings try to improve the condition of their lives and reorganize every accessible sector of the Universe so that it accords with their needs. In other words, human beings are compelled to humanize the world by an elemental force that originates from the world itself.

Humanization and Absurdity. In Humanology, the opposite of Practicability of Humanization is Absurdity. Can the world be humanized, or can it not be (is it absurd)? As the basic issue of Ontology is the primacy of matter or the spirit; or, as the basic issue of Epistemology is the problem of whether the world can be known or will remain ultimately unknowable, Humanology considers the above-mentioned opposition as its basic issue

Naturally, the word 'absurd' covers more than its meaning in Humanology. Literary language names those situations absurd that are senseless; especially those ones that denigrate human efforts, present them as foolish, and make humans appear as ridiculous and pitiable beings. In the ordinary language, it also means senselessness, superfluity, aimlessness, meaninglessness, or situations that admit of no solution. In this meaning, its nearest synonym is 'nonsense.'

Absurd Drama as a Collection of Arguments. 'The whole world, and human life as part of this world, is definitely and inevitably absurd. Existence is unknowable, and the human fate is nothing but an endless, wretched, and abjectly clumsy adaptation to the caprices of a baffling world. Any discovery, scientific achievement, heroic human performance, or action is only a lamentable self-deception.' These ideas, suggesting many times bitterness, gloominess, self-mockery, and also many times calling upon us to be indifferent, have been returning again and again in world literature. However, they are evoked most amply and comprehensively by the Theater of the Absurd. The Absurd Drama, through its rigor, its meticulous and comprehensive nature, and its nearly encyclopedic breadth, almost fully succeeds in showing the sum total of arguments that world literature has come up with in the course of forming an opinion on the absurdity of the world and the worthlessness and mediocrity of life. Defining these arguments is indispensable for anyone who wishes to refute them with irrefutable and persuasive force. In the same way a significant diagnosis and pathology can be made from the sum of arguments in these works, so one can ponder the chances of cure and find the varieties of treatment. We, too, would like to pick up this thread.

BASIC ARGUMENTS IN THE ABSURD THEATER

The Levels and Variations of the Arguments. The symptoms revealed in absurd drama suggest the universal absurdity of the world and human life as a whole. However, the theory of the complete impossibility of humanization has already suffered damage at the hands of one of the authors of absurd theater. After his early works, Arthur Adamov gave up the above idea when he sensed that there were layers of the world that he thought could be changed and reorganized so that they served human interests. Adamov found that the social realms of existence were suitable for humanization; he considered their exacerbated, human-

tormenting circumstances to be correctable or, as he put it, curable. His example evokes that the sum of arguments presented by the absurd theater is not equally strong in every respect and, considered from the standpoint of its content of the truth, has divergent layers. We could take a closer look at these arguments, as well as at the possible counterarguments, to classify and analyze them.

We could proceed by pursuing a number of points of view; for example, we could classify and analyze the arguments and counterarguments according to the division of philosophy, weighing the pros and cons on ontological, epistemological, axiological, ethical, or aesthetical absurdities. Or, we could begin by classifying and analyzing them with respect to the various spheres of existence, pondering over absurdities that originate from the features of the Universe, of human society, or of human individuality itself. We could make a classification and analysis in accordance with the various fields of human personality, talking about the absurdities of the emotional, irrational, rational, voluntary or sexual aspects of human beings. Several other possibilities also could offer themselves, but the impulse that strives for a more complete, continual treatment is brought up short by a few thought-provoking elements that cannot be disregarded. The authors of the absurd drama judge most of their arguments to be only a secondary level in their works. However, they have prime issues, and just these they consider as the basic inductors of absurdities of the world. The alteration or cessation of these would really ban absurdity from the world, as they indicate.

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It is not the purpose of this work to muster to the last smallest detail all the pros that have been brought up by the authors of the absurd dramas, and all the cons that have arrived from many fields of human thinking. We do not consider ourselves qualified to evaluate the conflicting opinions either. However, we should like to mull over the validity of the prime issues of the fundamental and ultimate arguments of the absurd theater.

The Level of Fundamental and Ultimate Arguments. In searching for the common features of this circle of views and arguments, we can say right away that they do not derive from historical, social, or economic conditions of human beings. They are features that can be described as eternal characteristics of humans, as ineradicable peculiarities of human life. Social existence, for example, did not produce the connection of human fate to death, or the temporality of human life, or the fact that the individual is bound to his body and soul, to the same ones for his lifetime. These are anti-human and human-hindering features of the manner of our existence, of the human condition...

Death, Passage of time, and Bondage to body and soul are primarily responsible for the absurdity, as the absurd theater evokes. Death, the fear of death, the tragic experience of the decease of others, the frightening realisation of the variety of ways in which humans can die - all these are anti-human, working against us. The passage of time; the vanishing of the self-forgetful shy beauties of childhood; the evanescence of the fresh world of youth; the depressingly inevitable advance toward old age - all these are human-hindering, too. The fact that we are bound to the standards of a body and soul, and that we have to serve their needs for a life-long time - these are obviously also human-hampering.

What can we do against these factors? At first sight, putting an end to the anti-human and human-hampering forces of death, fleeting time, and the condition of being bound to body and soul - or transforming them so that they serve human interests - seems an impossible illusion, a vain and frighteningly naive hope. However, on the pages that follow, we will attempt to evoke the details and suggestions of many great achievements of human culture that are related to the cycle of problems that we are discussing, and the variations of behavior that are connected with these. We will do this in order to try to prove that there still exists, after all, fascinating solutions of great intensity, sometimes seeds of solutions, and sometimes prospects of solutions that promise success.

COUNTER-ARGUMENTS TO THE BASIC CONCEPTS

Humanization of Death.

The awareness of the certainty of death appears in many guises in the intellectual world of writers and artists. It is determined and modulated by the individual's personal characteristics, the circumstances surrounding the experience of the transitoriness of life, and the nature of the society in which a personality moves. We will emphasize those experiences and descriptions of death that render perceptible the transformation, ending or mitigation of its anti-human character... The idea of 'rational death' has existed in literature since ancient times. According to this concept, death is subordinate to the intelligence - a particularly human faculty - and, in this way, is actually reduced to being no more than an implement.

Those cases can be mentioned here when someone offers his life rationally in order to achieve some rational purpose that can be attained through self-sacrifice. The classical representatives of this behavior can be found chiefly in adventure stories, historical novels, and in romantic operas. Its prototypes in this century include Saint-Pierre in the 'Citizens of Calais', Proctor in the 'Witches of Salem', and Katrin in 'Mother Courage'.

Even richer in content is the phenomenon of 'grandiose death' which has also

existed in art and literature for hundreds of years. In this conception, death submits to grandiosity, that is, to a complex human quality in which intellectual, emotional, voluntary and moral values are concentrated.

Those events can be mentioned here wherein human beings try to convert annihilation to grandiosity by trying to act as an example in a way that their descendants will remember, providing motivating power for them. The classical representatives of this type are, among others, the soldiers of Zrínyi's heroic epic, and the bards of Arany.

The depiction of 'blissful death' also dates back a long time in the arts and literature. This attitude suggests that death can be tamed into being a means of achieving happiness, a liberated feeling of joy, serving and not objecting humans.

We can rank those situations of life in this class in which joy has been promised to someone through death, because life is tormenting, horrific and unbearable. The classical example of this could be Shakespeare's Juliet, who kisses the poison from Romeo's lips and delivers herself to annihilation with joyful expectation, quiet, and gentle rapture, not even perceiving the sufferings that accompany her destruction.

The evocation of the willingly planned 'beautiful death' is also of ancient origin in literature; it can already be found in archaic folk poetry. Death is again subordinated to a basic human value: beauty, aesthetics.

The archetype could be Géza Csáth's mortally ill baron who, on the verge of dying, hands out gold coins to the musicians, has them put mutes on their instruments, and collapses only when the music of Chopin floats quietly through the ballroom. Doctors take him out to the bower for some fresh air, and, while girls dressed in white stare at him from inside the ballroom, he dies outside in the moonlight.

The above-mentioned variations of humanized death rarely appear alone and plain, unalloyed with other phenomena. Even the variations themselves mesh with and emerge into each other. And even if they indicate mostly a succession of unusual and extreme cases, their success is not insignificant: it points to the vulnerability and transmutability of an anti-human force that is considered by many people to be invulnerable, inviolable, and indissolubly solid... Humanizing death means, in part, attempting to ease the burden of its certainty, which presses on our minds. In literature, it is brought out by the attempt to get the mind in tune with the mood of death, to become familiar with its atmosphere. Since the vital fabric of life has processes and states that recall death, many creative artists have tried to immerse themselves in these in order to understand the unknown that seems to be dreadful, observe fully its basic characteristics, and also try to make peace with it. The example of many outstanding poets shows that human beings can grow fond of the taste of annihilation. They can get impressions, moments, and impulses to which it

is good to deliver themselves, even when they are aging and becoming worn out. Let us mention the names of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Ady, Babits and Kosztolányi. Reacting to the events of dissolution solely through the irrational perceptive faculties, one can also ease the burden of the inevitability of death. There exist states of mind in which the explanatory, evaluative, and rational functions grow weak, and only the irrational mechanism remains intact in the tattered psyche. Under these circumstances, the elements of the evanescence of life become irrational, unreal, fabulous, dreamlike and seems harmless to humans. This way, annihilation is reduced to a succession of colors, atmospheres, ornate and plain appearances, and tones that lack logical connection. We are reminded of Krudy, Kosztolányi, or Art Nouveau, Post-impressionist, and Surrealist masters of painting...

Literature tries to ease the burden of our awareness of inevitable death by repeating in various ways the idea that there is something good in annihilation. Death will always put an end to things that are worthless, negative, or even distressing. It is customary to say of someone who has been suffering great and incurable physical pain, that dying was a release for him. Many of us would consider death to be beneficial when spiritual agony increases to a murderous point and slowly demolishes us. Many poets who have relentlessly taken the measure of the horrors of existence do not consider death to be frightening or bitter. We are reminded of Kosztolányi and Sándor Weöres... While life can inflict unpredictable cruelties, death will always offer a kernel of promise.

Humanizing the Passage of the Time

According to literature, human beings experience time in two different ways: partly as a mechanical external flow that can be measured in minutes, hours and days; and partly as an inner time of thoughts, experiences, impressions, and memories. When we are living in the latter time, lost in our memories, meditations and dreams, external time will not even be perceptible many occasion. In the same way, the advancement of external time and its systematic division will end when inner time takes over and rapt memory, impression or thought brings in its train new associations and successions of memories. These generally do not even take place in the original order that the events happened, and above all, they do not require the same amount of time as the original events. As a matter of fact, inner time is disorderly; it shuttles back and forth, wandering about in the past, present and future. Inner time is of human interest in origin and, as a whole, is determined by the human psyche.

External time puts obstacles in the way of any humanizing attempts. Since the natural sciences consider external time to be indelible and unstoppable, many

writers and artists do not have any illusions in this respect. Instead of vain efforts in ceasing or stopping external time, their creative actions are directed rather to changing and reorganizing the secondary level of anti-human characteristics of time; to reduce a little bit the human-hindering force of it, or to lift or ease its burden on the human psyche. It seems to us that the above-mentioned aims have been expressed most successfully and spectacularly by the poems and novels of the beatnik generation. Their adventures and heroes do everything they can to speed up their lives to a dizzying pace. The constant dashing about on the road; the frenzied pursuit of new experiences; the stimulants; the intoxicating music; the continual excitement - all these serve this purpose. At this pace, they actually do have more experiences in a year than an ordinary person in his entire life. Compared to the ordinary, the number of life-happenings is unimaginably increased, and the human-limiting force of time begins to disappear. Obviously, the awareness of passing time is no longer so oppressive to the mind.

Naturally none of this lacks precedent. The idea of increasing the intensity and speed of life can be traced back to ancient civilization. Beginning with Kerouac, Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and Ferlinghetti, we can head backward in time through the poems of Pound, Marinetti, Mayakovsky, Whitman, Poe, Byron and the works of Rabelais, Boccaccio, Villon, all the way to Diogenes.

In the literature of today, the so-called Nouveau Roman would like to liberate its readers from the depressing burden of fleeting time. At first sight, its technique of achieving this aim appears strange and incredible. To avoid arousing the depressing feelings of passing time, this type of literature tries to describe events and moments in the novel without including the passage of time. Plus, it highlights that advancing time does not necessarily age the creatures, objects and phenomena.

The essence of its treatment is as follows: imaginary mirrors are placed everywhere in space, amid immobile living creatures and objects. With the help of these mirrors, we get innumerable variations of still pictures of objects and creatures at the same moment. Projecting these pictures in succession creates the illusion of movement and action in the novel. It actually makes us perceive motion in the same way the ancestor of the motion picture - the *laterna magica* - did. The object or living being represented appears here in one of the still pictures, there in another, then yet in a third and fourth place, giving the appearance of movement - although to the previously informed reader they are motionless. Finally, the succession of flashing still pictures, and the illusion of motion that they create, carries the actions of the novel. Thus, the movements and events of the novel have nothing to do with the passing time, because the living beings and objects are not moving. Instead, the writer is continually presenting to us their different aspects.

Besides, the passage of time, which is created by the succession of stills, doesn't involve the aging of any of the living beings or objects in the novel, since they remain the same as they were originally at the arrested moment. They did nothing - not even a small one of their features had changed, only the angles of their reflections were changed continually.

Vast landscapes and territories can be transformed into mirror-halls and mirror-mazes, and sometimes even colorful and exciting plots can be created by the flashing succession of stills. The Nouveau Roman is rich, interesting, captivating, and - what is not of minor importance - introspective in its description of time. This demonstration of time is not remote from the ordinary self-evident world and the time perception of human beings in our century. This is partly because human perception is inherently more sensitive to moments and phases than to an intact and whole succession of events. It is also partly because it has, in the last few decades, become infinitely more varied, especially in the mechanized big cities that are bombarded with a flood of information.

Modern man can concentrate on many phenomena and objects at the same time; thus, he is able to put together even short actions from the still pictures that reach him in the same moment from many directions. And if the reader becomes accustomed to the time description of the Nouveau Roman, he can, after a while, look around in everyday life armed with this way of looking at things. So in addition to his usual time experiences, he can be impressed by the above-mentioned, unusual but free and pressureless feeling of time.

Those practitioners of the Nouveau Roman who observe the imaginary mirror-mazes, and who name their time description 'mirror time process,' have, of course, a more complex and colorful time technique than the one mentioned above. We have attempted only to introduce the basic elements and schema of this technique... The most outstanding representatives of this kind of novelist are Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Nathalie Sarraute. Alain Robbe-Grillet's novella, "The Labyrinth", is considered to be the basic work of this school. Robbe-Grillet is also active in cinema, where he shows the familiar and everyday world in a totally fresh way by creating vivid, extraordinary time experiences on the screen. One of his films, *The Immortal*, is particularly exciting in this respect.

As a few impressionist novels and secessionist short stories show, we can react to the elements and phenomena of the mechanical passage of time even solely with our irrational perceptive faculties. This, too, can lift from our minds the burden of fleeting time. To this kind of perception, midnight, dawn, noon and late afternoon do not mean time data but moods and poetic impressions. In this way hours and minutes can be felt as atmospheres, enchantments and poesy - as, for instance, in the novel *N.N.* by Gyula Krúdy, or *Colors and Years* by Margit Kaffka.... External time can sometimes be even friendly to human beings. Rushing time helps us in many cases; it calms painful memories of shocking experiences, heals bruises, or can nurture in us qualities and values. In still other cases, it can reorganize many

small elements of daily life and open up brand-new and promising paths for us. Even that feature of external time that is indelible and unstoppable can be useful for us; sometimes, for instance, in bad eras of history it suggests the obviousness of the passing of the corrupt present, as the literature of many small nations show.

Humanization of the Bondage to the Body and the Soul.

The natural sciences consider the idea of moving from one body to another, and one soul to another, to be impossible, and so do those writers who insist on being realistic. Consequently, the efforts at humanization are directed rather at loosening the ties to the body and soul; in other cases, at reducing the human-hindering force of this bondage; and again, in other cases at lifting the depressing feeling of being locked up in ourselves...

There are innumerable works of literature of minor importance that represent the losing of human bondage by unreal or mystical means. While including science fiction and the ghost story, this trend can reach the world of the fable or tale. Some authors even try to recall the world of ancient and modern religions, and events of the transmigration of the personality. But there also exist realistic ways of loosening the human fixity, and we would like to concentrate on these.

There is in literature, art, and even in everyday life a constantly recurring, strange type of soul: the so-called metamorphosing personality. This is based on an extraordinary pliancy of the soul and an extreme malleability of the characteristics of a personality. This reorganization of the self extends to the entire individuality - all areas of the rational, emotional, ethical, voluntary and sexual behavior. A person who has the ability to transform himself has a soul that is not so strictly imprisoned; he can loosen his bondage and reshape himself according to his own purposes. At the same time, the human-hindering force of the bondage will disappear almost entirely in the process of taking on a new personality.

The poems of the young Babits show many marks of a metamorphosing personality; Fernando Pessoa also created and experienced poetic oeuvres of completely different persons... Of course, motives simpler than those of philosophical or lyrical grounds can also be behind the desire to change character, such as the wish to adapt oneself to new and promising life situations, or the hope of attaining a more productive and higher standard of behavior. Or, the desire to banish those basic features of oneself that disgust and bore one. The wish to begin a new life, to reorganize one's personality, is not unfamiliar even to an ordinary person.

Another strange type of soul that appears in literature and art is the personality that has grown to world-dimensions. The representatives of this state of mind will absorb virtually every observed, understood, and heartfelt moment of the world, and endow them with the color of their own nature. Based on the perception that

the events and features of the outer world, and the inner events and features of the mind, have many small similarities and analogies, some people try to experience the world as a movement of their own personalities. In this cycle of experiences, the outer world becomes a part of and subordinate to the world-dimensional personality and his rational and emotional activities. At the same time, the impression of human bondage starts to dissolve.

The best examples of personalities who have grown to world-dimensions are two poets: Ferenc Juhász and Saint-John Perse... Although the dazzling feeling of the cosmic personality is rarely experienced in everyday life, the excitement of the widening human psyche can be recognized frequently in daily life. It is experienced in the suddenly overwhelming feeling of love; under this influence, we can spontaneously take over the other's intellectual and emotional manifestations, entire series of gestures, and, in the event of strong empathy, we can even experience them more intensely and deeply than the other. In such relationships the bodily events of the other can become familiar, and many of their details can even be felt in the pattern of his or her original perceptions - which, of course, leads toward the disappearance of the boundaries of the self.

There is in the history of poetry and the fine arts a personality type that tries to transcend the human. Having had 'enough' of the traditional character of body and soul, this type of personality tries to change fundamentally the physical and psychical functions. This involves the transformation of the instincts; the ordinate way of perceiving, experiencing, and interpreting the world; thinking, and even the use of language. The personalities and works of Alfred Jarry and Joseph Torma even urge their readers to smash man's instincts of race-preservation and self-preservation. Arthur Rimbaud fought consistently to muddle human emotions and perception, sweeping along with him hundreds of poets and artists beginning with the Impressionists up to today's avant-garde, and including even those artists who try to suggest smells through colors, colors through music, or experiences of taste through sound.

In the United States, a psychedelic, hallucinatory art and poetry form has emerged, the products of which show us new ways of perceiving and describing experiences that were born under the influence of drugs. The neo-Dadaist movement breaks apart, in many European cities, the usual methods of human thinking and language, sometimes hoping for the birth of a system of information that is independent of thought and language. The basic idea behind these trends is that it would be a good thing for human beings to escape from the physical and psychic features that determine them, and to become a completely new kind of creature...

The above-mentioned experiments lead us beyond the problem of the humanization of the world, for they would like to transcend the beloved but unsatisfactory human beings themselves. It is not their aim to rearrange the world so that it serves human interests. Nevertheless, these experiments cannot be ignored, for through them human bondage can be loosened and the doors of the physical and psychic

prison are opened in perceptible ways.

The extreme experiences of the personality that tries to transcend the human is not entirely unknown to ordinary people. Its manifestations can be seen in the big modern cities, whose accelerated and hurried paces of life can give rise to abnormal states of the nervous system - to delirium, intoxications, visions, and nightmares. But it can also be felt in the calmer, more peaceful areas of social existence - for example, in the everyday life and art of primitive peoples, or in the magical ceremonies and trances of sorcerers and shamans.

The fact that there are some positive elements in bondage to soul and body can also ease its burden on humans. Like other classic beat poets, Kerouac and Ginsberg celebrate body and soul as an inexhaustible source of joy and pleasure. Dino Buzatti declares several times that the bondage to the same body and soul is the source of lovely, precious, and honorable human characteristics that help us live an intensive and colorful life. In Kosztolányi's late poetry, the bondage to body and soul is declared to be a power increasing the value of humans. Because none of the features or actions of a body or a soul are repeatable exactly the same way as they were, consequently, even the smallest characteristics and activities of an individual become unique rarities of the Universe

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CONCLUSION

We have reached the end of our work, probably far from complete. In addition to the above-mentioned ways of transforming or neutralizing the anti-human forces from the absurdity, or of easing their weight on us, there are obviously other ways of struggles. We have attempted to summarize only our knowledge and literary experiences. The views and procedures of the poets, writers, and artists that we have dealt with suggest the inadmissibility of the idea that life is generally, definitely, and in every aspect absurd. Their works contrast and undermine even some stronger arguments of the absurd works, and they definitely do not show human beings as defenseless or chanceless creatures confronted with the basic forces of absurdity. One thing they share is that they do not consider ending these basic forces to be indispensable to ending their anti-human character. Instead, they struggle to find ways of transforming the anti-human qualities into qualities that help human beings. But for the most part, the creators achieve their results by extraordinary ways and often extreme means, thus revealing that the problem is unsolved if taken on a broader, more ordinary plane. Although several leading creators have begun humanizing the absurdity of existence, the victory is still remote

Translated by Elizabeth Smith.