

The Pursuit of the Impossible: Realistic Dramas of the "Northerners"

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1

The playwrights we are to discuss in this essay are all "northerners." Their sense of light and darkness is somewhat qualitatively different from that of us, the ordinary "southerners." The opening scene of *The Cherry Orchard*, for instance, strikes us with its unfamiliar daylight:

LOPAHIN: The train's in, thank God. What time is it?

DUNYASHA: Nearly two o'clock. It's daylight already.¹⁾

Daylight at two a.m., however, should surely not be unusual in the long summer days in Skien, Stockholm or Moscow. I am not presenting a case for a "northern" ethos as such that can be extracted from the climate, but just want to make a point that they belong to the same spiritual longitude which produced Swedenborg, Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard. They in many aspects rejected rational approaches to the solution of human problems. Some critics, Geoffrey Brereton for example, find the situation of Hedda Gabler, one of the typical Scandinavian heroines, essentially identical to that of Emma Bovary,²⁾ but Emma, her Latin counterpart, lacks the undefinably mysterious and destructive, not only self-destructive, forces that govern Hedda's psyche.

Georg Steiner asserts that the works of the "northerners" form the fifth of the five highest moments that flowered in the history of the Western tragedy,³⁾ and their tragic vision is substantially different from the Greek, English, Spanish or French visions. As he says later in discussing Ibsen, it is a "vision of a God-abandoned world and man's splintered consciousness."⁴⁾ In other words, it is a world in which any thing is permitted if man can take the responsibility of the outcome, as Dostoevsky says through Ivan Karamazov. Georg Lukács succinctly defines the world in terms of the destiny of the dramatic heroes:

...in general, destiny is what confronts man from without. In Greek and even in Shakespearean

1) As text *Representative Modern European Dramas* (Pan Korea, 1978) is used.

2) G. Brereton, *Principles of Tragedy*, p. 20.

3) G. Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, p. 107.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 294.

drama we can still easily distinguish between man and his environment, or, speaking from the viewpoint of drama, between the hero and his destiny. But now these lines of division have blurred.⁵⁾

It is a world in which traditional conventions cease to be the meaning givers, and each man is forced to find his meaning of life if he cannot do without it.

The search of meaning is closely related to the dignity of man. The heroes and heroines of the "northerners" achieve their respective dignity by standing alone and through the rejection of compromise. The works to be considered in this regard are Ibsen's *Ghosts*, *Hedda Gabler*, Strindberg's *The Father* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*.⁶⁾

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Ibsen's *Ghosts* shows a world where social conventions send Furies instead of safety and well-being to those who observe them. It is said that the play is one of the few modern dramas which has an identical structure of the Greek tragedy, especially that of *Oedipus the King*.⁷⁾ *Ghosts* not only strictly observes the three unities but has the inevitability of the Greek type. At the beginning of *Ghosts* the fate of the two protagonists is already set. The plague is already raging on the stage. There is no way out for them. The cause of the modern plague, however, is not the violation of the moral codes like patricide or incest committed by protagonists, but rather the faithful observance of the conventional moral codes on the part of the heroine Mrs. Alving.

Some critics assert that *Ghosts* is not a tragedy. Steiner thinks it is rather a dramatic tract which calls for temporal remedies. He continues, "Tragedy speaks not of secular dilemmas which may be resolved by rational innovation, but of unaltering bias towards inhumanity and destruction in the drift of the world."⁸⁾ He is telling that *Ghosts* is but a thesis play. And Brereton thinks that an unnatural combination of two distinctive kinds of tragedy led the play to a failure as a tragedy. "One could either have a simple tragedy of blood on the classic pattern, or a more modern tragedy of influence, in which the moral weight of the past crushes the present. Ibsen was perhaps too ambitious in wishing to combine both."⁹⁾

It seems that Steiner puts too much emphasis on the social issues of Ibsen's day which have been resolved in the course of time. The cure of syphilis, for instance, can be cited

5) G. Lukács, "The Sociology of Modern Drama," E. Bentley ed. *The Theory of the Modern Stage*, p. 427.

6) The four plays are chosen for their realistic representation of the crises of the protagonists. I don't think they alone can represent their authors.

7) M. Freedman, *The Moral Impulse*, p. 7.

8) Steiner, p. 291.

9) Brereton, p. 201.

as one of the most prominent cases. But his judgment may amount to saying that the tragedy of *Antigone* is impossible nowadays because of the penal code changes. And even if we admit some truth in Steiner, the essential experience of *Ghosts* may not be disease, but "inheritance."¹⁰ Or we may say that the heart of the play is the perennial struggle of human truth versus conventional "law and order." All societies including our own have their social yokes, and we can find Mmes. Alving among us facing our problems. As for Brereton, his rigorous criticism of the kinds may lead us to the conclusion that most of Shakespeare's tragedies are failures because of their combination of tragedy and comedy.

As in Greek tragedies no alternatives are allowed to Mrs. Alving. The only opportunity of choice was given to her twenty years ago when the tragedy of her and the house began. The wayout, however, suggested by the attempted liaison with Pastor Manders could not have brought happiness or self-fulfillment to her, which the shallow character of Manders eloquently reveals throughout the play. She acted in the "bad faith" twenty years ago, in the sense of Sartre, but no "good faith" was around for her to grasp. And now she has to bear the burden alone. All her hopes are gone, and when the curtain falls at the end of the play, she is the only conscious human being left in the house or on the stage.

She never loses her dignity till the denouement. In the course of her disaster she attains a far wider view on morality, nearly tolerating the expected incest between her son and his half-sister. She reaches the point where human suffering has priority over all social conventions and moral codes. And at the same time a new insight into her marriage life dawns upon her.

MRS. ALVING: Everything was marked out into duties—into my duties, and his duties, and—I am afraid I made his home intolerable for your poor father, Oswald.

OSWALD: Why have you never spoken of this in writing to me?

MRS. ALVING: I have never before seen it in such a light that I could speak of it to you, his son. (Act III)

It is an epiphany, and once more we meet Oedipus with his ultimate knowledge just before his downfall. But the endings differ sharply. Our modern Oedipus finds her eyes already plucked out. In a sense, her eyes were plucked out twenty years ago when she went back to her dishonest and adulterous husband. In retrospect, she decided to live Nora's life even if she had to live in a doll's house. To a woman of Mrs. Alving's character that was a decision to live eyeless. Anyhow, there is no heroic or ritualistic action for her to perform. With a box of morphia for euthanasia in front of her mad unconscious son she can only say, "No; no; no!—Yes!—No; No!" It is just a human cry. Even "Readiness is all" is not allowed to a hero of our "God-abandoned world".

10) R. Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, p. 48.

In comparison with *Ghosts* most of the works from Aeschylus to Racine are less dark. The heroes and heroines of Corneille and Racine for example, playwrights of the fourth highest moment of the Western tragedy according to Steiner, usually die for honor or love. Their deaths do not reject the Providence of God. Ibsen's protagonists die Godless deaths.

Hedda Gabler is even darker. There have been efforts to see it otherwise. Many people including Strindberg and Shaw find in Hedda a typical "new woman," shallow, sterile and destructive. To them the play is a drama of the rise and fall of a "new woman." But through a close reading, or a close re-reading, of the play emerges a strange, powerful and stupendous figure comparable to Meursault of *L'Etranger* or Colonel Stupen of *Absalom, Absalom!* Through Hedda appears a woman who is almost beyond our rational comprehension.

Ibsen himself must have had a very hard time to make Hedda's tragedy a manageable one. The writer's notes he left for *Hedda Gabler* are long and complex compared with those for other plays. In *Playwrights on Playwriting* edited by Toby Cole, notes for *Hedda Gabler* occupy fifteen pages, while Ibsen left four pages for *A Doll's House* and only one page for *Ghosts*. And we should keep it in mind that what is concerned is not only the quantitative comparison.

I feel I should quote Ibsen to show one of the most important aspects of the play, even if I might be criticized for presenting a case of "intentional fallacy."

The play shall deal with "the impossible," that is, to aspire to and strive for something which is against all the conventions, against that which is acceptable to conscious minds—Hedda's included.¹¹⁾

It is certain that Ibsen tried to write a play that goes beyond the conventions or conventional concepts like the "new woman." And he left a succinct note against those who try to find a genuine and warm woman in Thea in contrast with Hedda:

Thea Elvsted is the conventional, sentimental, hysterical philistine.¹²⁾

It is true that Ibsen has made Hedda and Thea different from each other (for instance, while Hedda's hair is not particularly abundant, Thea's is abundant and wavy), but it is also true that he has not fashioned Thea as Hedda's foil.

We should learn to face Hedda as she is without any preconceived ideas. Richard Gilman sheds light in this regard. "On one level Hedda is indeed a frustrated woman and the play does offer a cold view of specifically bourgeois existence. Yet it is a mistake to stop there. For there is not the slightest indication in the play that a change of circumstance would have saved Hedda, that she is suffering a local, socially engendered fate."¹³⁾

11) Toby Cole, ed., *Playwrights on Playwriting*, p. 159.

12) *Ibid.*, p. 161.

13) R. Gilman, *The Making of Modern Drama*, p. 67.

Her fate cannot be interpreted in terms of social or psychological facts. To Ibsen at least, according to the notes, she was made a stranger even to herself. In many aspects her actions are existential in character, that is why she reminds us of Meursault though almost everything in her including sex is different from that in him.

The room for choice allowed to her is certainly no wider than that given to Mrs. Alving. As Morris Freedman plainly says, "The only men available to whom she can respond seriously are Brack and Loevborg. And her tragedy, at last, is that she is so much more woman than Nora Helmer (who did marry a Brack) or Mrs. Alving (who married a Loevborg.)"¹⁴ If it is allowed to carry Freedman's analogy a little further, we can say Hedda's husband Tesman is but a shallow Pastor Manders. In a sense, Hedda is living an "impossible" life.

Even if there were men available to whom she could respond seriously, the outcome might not be substantially different. In a world of God's disappearance, in a world where anything is allowed, nothing short of absolute satisfaction could give peace to a woman of Hedda's caliber. While marriage presupposes compromise, she is one of those human beings to whom compromise is impossible. At the end of the play when Brack tries to reassure Hedda, saying that he will keep her scandal a secret and will not abuse his advantage, she refuses to step down from her lofty position and shoots herself. Let us see the two brief scenes:

BRACK: [Laughing] Oh fie, Mrs. Hedda! Well, then—you and Tesman—?

HEDDA: Well, we happened to pass here one evening; Tesman, poor fellow, was writhing in the agony of having to find conversation; so I took pity on the learned man—

BRACK: [Smiles doubtly] You took pity? H'm— (Act II)

BRACK: [Whispers softly] Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

HEDDA: I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! [Rises impetuously] No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never! (Act IV)

Hedda is telling that her marriage is the result of a momentary pity (Act II); and she refuses to be self-deceived (Act IV). She is the only one in the play who stands most alone. Compared with her even otherworldly Loevborg appears to be a worldly man. His killing himself in a ludicrous accident vividly contrasts with Hedda's lucid suicide, which can be interpreted as a non-verbal manifesto declaring that there is still some real courage and freedom left for human beings, the courage and freedom of those who pursue "the impossible," even if their pursuits lead them to deaths without the hope of redemption. Brack's cry just before the curtain shows the gap between Hedda and others: "Good God! —people don't do such things."

14) Freedman, p.9.

The Captain of *The Father* by Strindberg is also a man of no compromise, though his situation on the surface is quite different from Hedda's. While Hedda keeps her high stance, the Captain becomes an underdog in the course of the play. Strindberg's misogyny is a well-known fact, and Ibsen's feminism a generally recognized trait. But the pursuits of Hedda and the Captain are so passionate and violent that the difference of the situation tends to blur; and the two figures stand out in bold relief.

On one level, *The Father* can be said to be a strictly domestic drama exhibiting a struggle for power between an immature husband and his stronger-minded wife, which culminates in the wife's complete victory. On that level, we can say that the underlying structure of this play is identical to that of Shaw's *Candida*. But Gilman duly warns against this kind of interpretation:

Something of great significance for our understanding of Strindberg's dramatic art emerges from this: it is that the facts of sexual warfare so prominent in *The Father* are not causes but instances, so that the play's subject is something other than what appears. The excessiveness and inexplicability of the couple's hatred—qualities that have been used to question the play's validity on psychological grounds—are due precisely to Strindberg's not having written a psychological—and naturalistic—study at all but a modern legend of ancient despair whose subject is larger and more complex than the play's means of embodying it.¹⁵⁾

Even if we do not accept whole-heartedly Gilman's conclusion of "a modern legend of ancient despair," close investigation of the play reveals that the Captain is rather an alienated modern man than an immature husband. He is a freethinker and a believer in Naturalism—in short, a typical intellectual of his time. (Strindberg himself was a Naturalist when he wrote the play.)

From the first scene in the dialogue between the Captain and the pastor, his brother-in-law, we encounter an intellectual anxiety. When a freethinker and Naturalist tries to seek immortality as the Captain does, or many men of the Captain's time would do, he must do it exclusively through his creative work or through his offspring. For the former he writes scientific works; for the latter he tries to mold the life of his child [his only daughter] in his own way. He declares, "It isn't enough for me to have given the child life. I want to give it my soul too." Again, it is a pursuit of "the impossible." Both his efforts completely fail through his wife Laura's cruel and inhuman manipulations.

For all infirmities, the Captain is the only principled man in the play. As for Laura's strong-mindedness, her brother Pastor clearly qualifies it in Act I:

Oh, so Laura won't? Well, then, I'm afraid you are in for trouble. When she was a child if

15) Gilman, p. 93.

she set her mind on anything she used to play dead dog till she got it, and then likely as not she would give it back, explaining that it wasn't the thing she wanted, but having her own way.

Of course we should not wholly trust a character's speech in a literary work without reservations. But we need to pay attention to the fact that the same pattern repeats itself later in the play on a larger scale. After she blotted out the opportunity for recognition of the Captain's scientific research (thus blocking his ambition of immortality through creative works), told a lie about his fatherhood of his daughter (thus blocking his ambition of immortality through offspring), and finally put him into a strait jacket, she asks him forgiveness. In many aspects she is Furies themselves. The fact that the Captain inadvertently helps Laura in the scheme of his own downfall reminds us of the classical furies of the Greek type. But while Orestes committed matricide, what crime has the Captain committed? Even if we drop the analogy, her inhuman cruelty is beyond comparison in modern literature. Eric Bentley in discussing Shaw's *Candida* exclaims, "How much more savage [than *A Doll's House*] is the ending of *Candida*! Only Strindberg could have written a sequel to it."¹⁶ But who in the world can write a sequel to *The Father*?

The Captain's household itself gives us a strong impression that it is rather an arena for contest than a typical bourgeois household. Robert Brustein in this respect presents a clear picture of contrast between the Captain's household and Nora's, another well-known family in which the husband-wife struggle takes place.

The setting of *A Doll's House* is so carefully documented that the Helmer household is as tangible and solid as the real world, but the walls of the Captain's house seem flimsy and penetrable, as if incapable of containing the explosive forces within. Actually, the setting of *The Father* is less a bourgeois household than an African jungle...¹⁷

We may substitute a primordial psychical arena for the "African jungle," and watch an archetypal image of a suffering modern man emerge from the psychical darkness.

But the Captain is also a man as well as an archetypal image. One of the most striking characteristics of him is that he is a man of no compromise. In the arena where he is destined to defeat, he never loses his dignity till the end, like Mrs. Alving or Hedda Gabler. It is true that he sometimes rails, but his railings are against the women who symbolize the irrational forces or Fate. His ultimate defeat arouses in us not only pity and terror but also some undiluted admiration.

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The Cherry Orchard by Chekhov is a play that does not fit neatly into the category of

16) E. Bentley, "The Making of a Dramatist," T. Bogard and W. Oliver ed., *Modern Tragedy*, p. 307.

17) R. Brustein, "Male and Female in August Strindberg," *Ibid.*, p. 328.

tragedy. Chekhov himself called it a comedy, while his director of the play Stanislavsky interpreted it as a tragedy. Martin Esslin explains the situation:

...a play like *The Cherry Orchard* can be treated as comedy or as tragedy. The way in which Mme Ranevskaya loses her property through sheer incompetence and indecisiveness can be shown to be silly and therefore funny...but one could... produce the play as a deeply sad account of the downfall of the last truly civilized people in a society which is being engulfed by commercialism, vulgarity and mass barbarism.¹⁸⁾

But it will be very hard for us to make the play a comedy in the ordinary sense, even if the heroine does not die or wears a strait jacket at the end of the play. In this regard Steiner's proposed solution is worth due consideration. He proposes for *The Cherry Orchard* and other Chekhovian plays an another genre, an amalgamation of tragedy and comedy, not just a tragi-comedy, as suggested by Plato, though incompletely, for a future drama at the end of *Symposium*.¹⁹⁾

Considering the enigmatic nature of the dramas of the Absurd which prevailed after the World War II, we feel the need of a re-definition of tragedy and comedy genres. Is Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* a tragedy or a comedy? And Ionesco's *The Chairs* or Pinter's *Homecoming*? It is not my intention, however, to discuss whether *The Cherry Orchard* is a tragedy or not here in this essay. It will be enough to point out that the fall of Mrs. Ranevskaya and her household compels us with pity, more genuine perhaps than the pity with which we respond to Mrs. Alving's, Hedda's or the Captain's downfall. And the inexorable sound of ax cutting the cherry wood from the orchard where only music and hope have resided at the end of the play arouses in us a feeling amounting to terror.

Freedman sees *The Cherry Orchard* as a play "exploring the tension between illusion and reality."²⁰⁾ His judgment implies that Mrs. Ranevskaya's tragedy comes from her predestined illusion. But his subsequent argument that Mrs. Ranevskaya stands for illusion while Lopahin stands for reality seems arbitrary and groundless. The character who stands for illusion in the play is Trofimov, the incurable idealist. Mrs. Ranevskaya stands for nothing but herself as tragic heroes and heroines usually do. The impression that she is a woman of illusion comes from the fact she is a woman of no compromise. She is essentially passive and compulsively magnanimous, like most of Chekhov's protagonists from *Uncle Vanya* on, but we must not see her passivity and magnanimity as weakness. At the heart of the matter is the fact that her dignity does not tolerate compromise.

Lyubov Ranevskaya's passivity and seeming illusion is closely related to the difficulty of communication we find in Chekhov's later plays. In a typical Chekhovian play we find

18) M. Esslin, *An Anatomy of Drama*, p. 69.

19) Steiner, p. 302.

20) Freedman, p. 31.

people who never seem to hear or notice one another. Here is an illustrious example. Lyubov Ranevskaya, a longtime exile, returns to her house in the opening act of *The Cherry Orchard*. She is moved to tears by her reminiscences. But her brother Gaev talks about the late arrival of the train. And Charlotta...

LYUBOV: My nursery, dear delightful room.... I used to sleep here when I was little.... [cries] And here I am, like a little child.... [kisses her brother and Varya, and then her brother again] Varya's just the same as ever, like a nun. And I know Dunyasha. [Kisses Dunyasha]

GAEV: The train was two hours late. What do you think of that? Is that the way to do things?

CHARLOTTA: [To Pishtchik] My dog eats nuts, too.

Pirandello sometimes shows difficulties of communication similar in appearance, but they are the difficulties of ego defining. Pirandellonian characters at least listen attentively to other people. We should wait till the appearance of the Absurdists to find the legitimate successors of Chekhov in this regard.

The difficulty of communication reflects Chekhovian *Weltanschauung*. The disappearance of God that began in drama with Ibsen, or Büchner to be more precise, culminates in Chekhov. This is not a place to discuss the matter fully, but if we simplify it, the situation is as follows. One of the most vital Christian tenets is expressed in St. Paul's epistle to Corinthians: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three: but the greatest of the three is love." (I *Corinthians* XIII, xiii) Chekhov saw with his insight that the world in which he lived at the turn of the century lacked faith and love to rely on, and viewed human life in terms of the remaining hope. He, in a sense, changed the above dictum into "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the only tangible of the three is hope." The difficulty of communication can be seen as an epistemological symbol of the loss of faith and love, or the disappearance of God.

"Hope" is the only hope for the protagonists of *The Three Sisters* and *The Orchard*. Chekhov and later the Absurdists alike find that in this life where humanlike human beings are condemned to end in failure the human beings are still hope-generating beings. The hope does not materialize, even symbolically. Their characters, however, generate it like electricity. It is not a mere coincidence that the most famous Absurdist play is *Waiting for Godot*, and the most conspicuous aspect of Chekhov's later plays is "waiting." Mrs. Ranevskaya's passivity should be understood in the light of this "waiting."

Lyubov Ranevskaya in addition has a rare sensibility on beauty which in the end makes her downfall far more poignant than others'. Her love of beauty reminds us of Hedda's asking Loevborg to shoot himself beautifully. Aesthetic consciousness is one of the last ramparts of humanity not yet given up in the materialistic world. Most protagonists of dramas speak beautifully, but it will be very hard to find one who speaks beautifully for

beauty's sake like Mrs. Ranevskaya. Her conversational art, exquisite and essentially evanescent, should have been very attractive and meaningful in the old traditional upper-middle class world. But in the transitional world where rude Lopahins, and perhaps shallow Pishtchiks, are incessantly advancing and gaining ground, her art becomes indirectly but inevitably tragic.

Under her magnanimity and love of beauty lies her spirit of no compromise. Lopahin's proposal to convert the orchard into building plots and let on lease for summer villas is a reasonable and sound one. If she accepts it, she and her family may live comfortably, if not luxuriously, on the lease income. She even may go back to her lover again with money, which is her chief attraction to him. She, however, rejects the compromise offer, even if she intuitively knows that she will eventually lose the orchard and the lease money too. Is it another pursuit of the impossible? Absurd? Yes, but as Robert W. Corrigan points out, the essential quality of the "is-ness" of life, the phenomenal aspect of life, is its absurdity.²¹⁾ And *pace* Corrigan who asserts that the absurdity ultimately belongs to comedy, Lyubov Ranevskaya keeps her tragic dignity. In a sense, she is the first tragic protagonist in the setting of the drama of the Absurd. She pursues the impossible and in the end fails, but her failure eloquently betrays a world without human beauty and dignity.

5

The drama of the Absurd seems to be the end of the long journey begun by the "northerners." Ibsen's later dramas of absolute possession and death, and Strindberg's later dream-plays respectively show the way to the desolate mental landscape and brilliant theatricality of the Absurd plays. Chekhov stands midway between them and the Absurdists. Chekhov's ambivalence in the tragedy-comedy genre can be understood in terms of this ambivalent position.

Seen in the broad perspective, the drama of the Absurd can be the logical conclusion of the "northerners." The "northerners" introduced into the play value judgment, the criterion of which was the dignity of man in the vacuum created by the disappearance of God. During crises their protagonists do not seek solution through compromise, and suffer the outcomes alone. But the criterion itself presupposes the solid entity of the self, or the essence of man, which cannot be sustained in the twentieth century. The essence of man is not a ready-made entity, but an entity to be remade continually. So their pursuits of selfhood and dignity become the pursuits of the impossible, and are subject to continual readjustments. And in the course of time the value judgment of the "northerners" becomes the value readjustment of the Absurdists.

The realistic tragedies of the "northerners" are significant as they are, even if we

21) R.W. Corrigan, "The Drama of Anton Chekhov," T. Bogard and W. Oliver ed., *Modern Tragedy*, p. 96.

ignore their influences. They show human beings are value-condemned beings even when they are left alone without God. In many aspects we are living in their world. Whenever a new tragic vision comes into our sight, we should look back at the dramatists who started bravely under the dim northern light, like Dostoevsky and others in novel, to carve the dignity of man on the stage surrounded by the howling absurdities.

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Abstract

The realistic tragedies of the "northerners," Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov, forming the fifth of the five highest pinnacles that towered in the history of the Western tragedy according to Steiner, have usually been treated as a strictly nineteenth century phenomenon. But the factor of value judgment introduced by Ibsen is as viable today as in the nineteenth century. The spiritual vacuum created by God's disappearance that prompted Ibsen's entrance still remains unaltered.

The dignity of man underlies the value judgment. The rejection of compromise is one of the most conspicuous aspects of the dignity. The protagonists of the "northerners" are above all men and women of no compromise, and meet their crises alone and suffer the outcome to keep their dignity. Love and honor are seldom their goals. Truth is their main motive.

The criterion of the value judgment, however, presupposes the solid entity of the self, or the essence of man, which cannot be sustained in the twentieth century, while the

dignity of man is sought more than ever. Thus to us their pursuits of the dignity become the pursuits of the impossible, and in the long run the pursuits of the absurd. In many respects the drama of the Absurd, which clearly shows the above situation, can be seen as the latest readjustment of the value system established by the "northerners."