

# EMBRACING THE ABSURD CONDITION OF EXISTENCE IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S *ENDGAME* CHARACTERS

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## Abstract

This research initially attempts to determine characteristics and characterization of the characters; Clov, Hamm, Nagg, and Nell, as well as how it represented the concept of absurdity. The play involves a critical review and otherwise, more appropriately, a conception addressed toward the audience or reader. As a result, researcher chooses to utilize a moral- philosophical approach to conduct this research. As according Camus, absurdity cannot be fully investigated. It is only determined by utilizing the method for explaining the concept of absurdity. Several concepts are represented throughout the drama by the characters' acts, utterances, and thoughts. Those ideas include monotony routine, meaningless circumstances, and the end. Depending to Camus' theory of absurdity, those concepts might well be classified as a representation of such the absurdity concept. The author's condemnation on existence of humankind in the play script may be recognized by considering the perspective regarding Camus' absurdity concept as the characteristics and characterization of characters represents the absurdity concept.

**Keywords:** Absurd, Absurdity, Existence, Character, Routine, Circumstances, Meaningless.

## INTRODUCTION

The Absurd is the tension between the universe's meaninglessness and our desire to find meaning in it. When people discover this contradiction, they try to run away from it, according to Camus. They either commit physical suicide or intellectual suicide. Camus proposed another option: accept that life is meaningless and that we will never find meaning, but that we can achieve happiness by continuing to live our lives (*Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux*). Essentially, we can tell the universe to go betray itself without being bitter, jaded, or angry. Those referred to as routine or ordinary.

One of the themes of play in *Endgame* is the character's habitual behavior. The way the characters elaborate on this theme can be seen in the play. The theme of Beckett's other work, *Waiting for Godot*, is the activity of awaiting, which has become the characters' major habit. *Waiting for Godot* depicts the characters' activities in their never-ending habit of waiting. Those characters are frustrated by the realization that they are trapped in an impossible circumstance. This state looks to be a trap for them in the guise of everyday routine.

Through his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus stated that the absurdity of the human existence is the dilemma of man whom is full of yearning to comprehend everything in their existence and the entire universe. He must understand that there is nothing in life or the cosmos that can be explained. (Camus, 1955, p. 16).

When man becomes aware of his own condition, the absurdity emerges. At this point, he becomes aware of his own existence. This realization posed a fundamental question about the existence of man. This awareness also causes him to feel alienated from the rest of the world. Camus illustrates this situation with the example of people going about their daily lives, such as rising, taking the streetcar, working four hours, eating, sleeping, and going to work on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. This approach is usually simple to comprehend because it follows the same rhythm (Camus, 1955, p. 15).

In *The Theatre of the Absurd*, a book which somehow developed the sentence "Theatre of the Absurd" there in realm of theatre, Martin Esslin assessed Beckett and his writings by implementing the premise of *The Quest of The Self*. *Endgame* is discussed in many ways, including symbolism, its relationship to other works by Beckett, and the author's bibliographical background. As stated in *The Theatre of the Absurd*, James Joyce has adversely affected Beckett, as he is a friend and literary master of Beckett's (Esslin, 1969, p. 46).



*Endgame*, like many of Beckett's works, has a bleak tone and a pathetic outlook on life. Characters are defined by their obvious disability and incapability to discover essence within their existence. Characters are defined by their obvious disability and incapability to discover essence within their existence. Nothing appears to be anything, as Beckett put it, "Nothing is more real than nothing."

*Endgame* likewise depicts Beckett's reflections on the conflict with both a man's consciousness and hence the environment around him. The drama takes place in an internal chamber of a house as ordinary that is claimed to be home to the last humans remaining on Earth. There seems to be scant information regarding what happened outside the chamber. Outside the chamber, several of the characters, Hamm, goes on to say, "A death" (Beckett, 1986, p. 96). The characters' only certainty was death, the unavoidable end of their lives. This was portrayed by Esslin as a symbol of man's personality and the power outside of him. *Endgame* certainly confronts us with a devastatingly highlighted in bold of any notion of nothingness, darkened edema, or otherwise desperation that has been undergone throughout state of anxiety: the realm somewhere else runs for such complainant among these asserts, while within his consciousness there exists a never-ending accusation around pieces of his demeanor which are fully independent enterprises, (Esslin, 1969, p. 48).

*Endgame's* character development culminates to Camus' concept about Absurdity. Each other's inability to engage with one another, as well as their circumstance and all of the contradictions that arise between them and the rest of the world, will lead the analysis in order to discover a manifestation of something like the concept of Absurdity. This study will examine at the characters Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell's pessimism in *Endgame* through the lens of Absurdity.

## METHOD

Structuralism criticism is a literary approach that discusses a work by the elements that comprise it, particularly intrinsic elements. As a result, the qualitative method will be used in this study. The researcher concluded that this method would be appropriate for literature research, as in this study, because the reference of this method is data with explanations in words rather than numbers in other types of research.

According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975, p. 5), qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of oral or written from the object being observed. This research considers the individual's personal background as a whole, rather than as a variable. The purpose of this qualitative research is to find answers to questions about the meaning of social reality.

Qualitative research yields non-systematic findings. This method can generate data from a variety of sources, including observations, interviews, tests, and archives or documents. The characteristics of the problem being studied, as well as the researcher's beliefs based on his experience, are the reasons why researchers use social research. As a result, the researcher wishes to comprehend it as a previously unknown phenomenon.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Characterization of *Endgame* Characters Reflects the Idea of Absurdity

Beckett's *Endgame* has four characters. Some research has examined these traits from a variety of perspectives. The focus of this thesis is on character characterization and how the way that it reflects the concept of absurdity. The analysis of character characterization was completed in the previous section of this chapter. The analytical results demonstrate that the characters' characterization contains various characteristics that can be claimed to reflect the notion of absurdity.

Based on the preceding chapter's examination, the researcher pursues a number of issues that will serve as the focuses of the discourse concerning how the characterization represents the concept of absurdity. These themes are underlined through examining the character characterization as well as Camus' concept of absurdity. For essence, the three concepts are the elements of resemblance between a numbers of the characters and express the concept of absurdity. Routine, Meaningless Circumstances, and The End are the themes. Camus believes that absurdity cannot be thoroughly examined. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus analyzes the notion of absurdity via a complete description in the shape of an essay. Therefore, throughout the essay he proclaimed absurdity as the truly truth and provided prerequisites, which as he described as a quantification, to comprehend absurdity (Camus,

1955, p. 10). The application of the three themes in the debate of absurdity may be found in the scheme.

The three concepts are the things on which some of the characters agree. The absurdity that may be perceived in the character portrayal in *Endgame* does not present explicitly. The portrayal of the characters in the play fits into the scheme of criticism and allegorical.

#### A. Monotony Routine or Habitual

*Endgame's* Characters are bereaved and suffering. These people go about their everyday lives, knowing only that it will come to an end. Their living conditions have already deteriorated to the point that they are running low on food and medicine. These people are aware of what is going on. They recognized everything about their action by referencing to the past.

Camus talked about the signs of absurdity in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus demonstrated how absurdity might appear to mankind in a rapid attack in his article titled Absurd Walls. When mankind becomes aware of their predicament, the ludicrous will emerge. This realization brings person to the realization which as there is an inexplicable divide between them and whole of the realm. It might be claimed as when mankind becomes conscious, whole objects of the reality come to be unveiled from the essence that they themselves already had. The everyday life is one of the objects. When person become aware of the mechanical rhythm of their lives, they take the first step toward experiencing absurdity.

The stage configurations behave unpredictably. Rise, streetcar, hours at the workplace or factory, food, buses, four hours worked, supper, bedtime, then Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in a consistent repetition of the time, this course is easily followed. But then the why appears, and everything starts with that fatigue laced with amazement. (Camus, 1955, p. 10).

*Endgame's* protagonists become aware of their mundane existence. This is especially evident in the portrayal of Hamm and Clov. They always strive to convey their lives and situation through wordplay and discussion. We can observe from the discourse that they are aware that their life is a circumstance in which a continued existence plays a role. These personalities always describe the scenario as "something taking its course."

**HAMM** It's the end of the day like any other day, isn't it, Clov?

**CLOV** Looks like it. [Pause]

**HAMM** [Anguished] What's happening, what's happening?

**CLOV** Something is taking its course (Beckett, 1986, p. 98).

**CLOV** Pah! You saw your heart.

**HAMM** No, it was living. [Pause. Anguished] Clov!

**CLOV** Yes.

**HAMM** What's happening?

**CLOV** Something is taking its course (Beckett, 1986, p. 107).

Characters in *Endgame* are classified as individuals who discovered that there is a reality about their lives and existences that they do not grasp. Life moves on in stillness and meaninglessness. These sections of the talk were conducted in Hamm's anguished tone. He is defined as an inquisitive character who wants to find out what is going on. This is considered as such an existential problem. What is absurd, since we discover in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, seems to be the contradiction between this illogical and the frantic need for comprehension, which resonates in the entire soul (Camus, 1955, p. 16). Hamm's portrayal of a person who is curious about their own life as occurrence that happens might be seen as a representation of the concept of absurdity.

Clov simply knows that something is following its natural course. He doesn't go into any further detail. This is an indication that Clov is restricted, and he is aware of it, to provide a deeper explanation for their existence. They recognized they were locked in a situation where there was no way out of their predicament. Clov's brief response might be seen as evidence that he is aware of the unexplained nature of their existence. Thus, Clov's portrayal has shown the concept of absurdity.

In *Endgame*, the majority of the characters emerge with some typical query concerning their existence. They discovered that the routine had separated them from the true purpose of life. The ritual has been a source of contention for them. The passage of time causes people to ponder their existence and the life that they must live in the future. This question is posed by the characters Clov and Nell.

**CLOV** Why this farce, day after day?

**HAMM** Routine (Beckett, 1986, p. 107).

**NELL** Why this farce, day after day? [Pause]

**NAGG** I have lost my tooth (Beckett, 1986, p. 99).

These characters seem to be had similar concerns. It inquires about the daily regimen that they must follow. Clov's query was addressed by Hamm, while Nagg did not react to Nell's. The query indicates that the character is aware of their existence and routine, and they are inquiring about their relationship to those. Furthermore, they inquire about the significance of certain themes. Clov and Nell believe that there is something pointless about their lives and routines. The situation of those characters' characteristics reflects the concept of absurdity.

According to the quotation above, Hamm says to Clov that the farce they encounter every day is regular. In another section of *Endgame*, Clov questions him about the reason for his presence. Hamm responds to this question succinctly.

**CLOV** What is there to keep me here?

**HAMM** The dialogue. [Pause] (Beckett, 1986, p. 121).

Hamm's responses reveal that he is likewise unaware of their existence. He is in the same circumstances as Clov. They are restricted from learning more about their existence. His response "routine" demonstrates his deficiency. Hamm understands that the significance of their existence is more than the fact that what they undertake every day is a routine, and that the discourse is what keeps them in this stage of life. The conversation might be thought of as a reference to the play itself. Furthermore, it is a reference to a person's role in life. The system, the civilization that humans have created that is yet unable to resolve the issue of their own existence.

**HAMM** We're not beginning to...to...mean something?

**CLOV** Mean something! You and I, mean something! [*Brief laugh*] Ah that's a good one!

**HAMM** I wonder. [Pause] Imagine if a rational being came back to earth, wouldn't he be liable to get ideas into his head if he observed us long enough. [*Voice of a rational being*] Ah, good, now I see what it is, yes, now I understand what they're at! [*CLOV starts, drops the telescope and begins to scratch his belly with both hands. Normal voice*] And without going so far as that, we ourselves ... [With emotion.] ...we ourselves...at certain moments ... [*Vehemently*] To think perhaps it won't all have been for nothing! (Beckett, 1986, p. 108).

When these individuals attempted to convey further about their existence, they recognized that they had failed. The only certainty they have is the fact they exist. In their attempt to find meaning, Hamm came into the concept of their existence. In the passage above, we can see Hamm pondering the purpose of their existence. He was pondering if they were starting to signify something. The characters Hamm, Clov, and Nell are described as being curious about their existence and the world they confront on a daily basis. This portrayal of those people is a reflection of the concept of absurdity.

## B. Meaningless Circumstances

In this section, the researcher will therefore thoroughly examine the meaningless circumstance that can be expressed in the portrayal of characters in *Endgame*. The researcher discovered that communication exemplifies the meaningless circumstance in *Endgame*. Beckett is already well-known for his utilization of the theme of communication failure in several of his works.

In his life, communication is an essential component of coping with human connection. There are several processes for communicating emotion, purpose, and meaning through communication. In actuality, the communication system does not operate in a rigorous or formal manner. Because of the dynamic nature of humans, communication

becomes more challenging. Men rely on their impressions and preconceptions.

Beckettian plays have been studied as a method of communication criticism. This perspective focuses on language as a major component of communication. There is a linguistic divide that contributes to the absurdity. This void leads in a loss of meaning while utilizing words.

Beckett's utilization of "character" in this way reveals the conceptual divide that seems to be central to postmodernism. This "gap" exemplifies language's absurdity: language provides us with an abundance of meaning while also presenting a lack of meaning since language is always irreducibly complicated. We explain what happened by employing other conceptions, either through the chain of signifiers; as a result, we never "get to" the reality and we are separated by unquestionable truth.

By using this perspective, we can observe that Beckett previously mentioned some motifs throughout the majority of his plays. One of them concerns communication. *Endgame* characters are linked together through communication through the use of words. Communication allows these characters to clearly identify themselves as well as others. The communication has made their existences brazen. They are creating the world that surrounds them by using words to signify someone or something else. This universe is a large creation of the meaning supplied by these characters' comprehension. In regard to Camus' concept of absurdity, this knowledge might be described as a human endeavor to discover the purpose of life.

Men attempt to comprehend the universe by constructing understanding systems. Camus attacks these systems for being tools that pursue dissonance within themselves. He said that the mind's initial step is to discriminate between what is true and what is untrue, and that when thinking reflects on itself, the first thing it discovers is a contradiction (Camus, 1955, p. 12). According to Camus, rational reason with its contradictions fails to help men grasp the universe. The notion is expressed in the form of words. Language, it might be claimed, bears all the contradictions of logical cognition. In this section, language, as one of the mechanisms that men must fully comprehend about the universe, also fails to assist mankind.

A sort of discourse exhibited in *Endgame* characters is the exchange of quick responses. The figures utilize mode of dialogue as just a play in which the phrases are the players while there is no goal other than to utilize language for the sake of communication.

**HAMM** I'll give you nothing more to eat.

**CLOV** Then we'll die.

**HAMM** I'll give you just enough to keep you from dying. You'll be hungry all the time.

**CLOV** Then we shan't die (Beckett, 1986, p. 95).

**HAMM** Why do you stay with me?

**CLOV** Why do you keep me?

**HAMM** There's no one else.

**CLOV** There's nowhere else (Beckett, 1986, p. 95).

*Endgame*'s swap responses are performed as the characters prepare to enact their roles throughout the play. The essence of the language they employ has become irrelevant. Their inquiry has already been answered. Language's role is just not to communicate something, but rather to be examined in its logical side. Clov's reaction to Hamm is a consequence he can make from it. Hamm also does this.

**CLOV** So you all want me to leave you.

**HAMM** Naturally.

**CLOV** Then I'll leave you.

**HAMM** You can't leave us.

**CLOV** Then I shan't leave you (Beckett, 1986, p. 110).

**HAMM** Wait! [**CLOV** halts] How are your eyes?

**CLOV** Bad.

**HAMM** But you can see.

**CLOV** All I want.

**HAMM** How are your legs?

**CLOV** Bad.

**HAMM** But you can walk.

**CLOV** I come...and go (Beckett, 1986, p. 109).

The quotation above illustrates Clov and Hamm's brief answer. One of Clov's qualities is his need to keep things in order. This trait greatly aids him in his use of the language. Furthermore, it aids him in his investigation of language systems are the rule of asking and answering questions as well as drawing logical conclusions from statements.

**HAMM** Answer me first.

**CLOV** What?

**HAMM** Do you know what's happened?

**CLOV** When? Where?

**HAMM** [*Violently*] When! What's happened! Use your head, can't you! What has happened?

**CLOV** What for Christ's sake does it matter? [*He looks out of the window*].

**HAMM** I don't know (Beckett, 1986, p. 128).

**HAMM** I've got on with my story. [*Pause*] I've got on with it well. [*Pause. Irritably*] Ask me where I've got to.

**CLOV** Oh, by the way, your story?

**HAMM** [*Surprised*] What story?

**CLOV** The one you've been tell yourself all your...days.

**HAMM** Ah you mean my chronicle?

**CLOV** That's the one. [*Pause*]

**HAMM** [*Angrily*] keep going, can't you, keep going! (Beckett, 1986, p. 121).

Hamm's character is already renowned as a commanding figure. He employs his mastery in the communication he establishes with Clov. When Hamm uses it, the language becomes more fractured. As we can see from the preceding statements, Hamm and Clov's communication is based only on the logic of language, rather than communicating what they truly wish to say, if it exists at all.

The following quotation shows how these characters express their views on language and communication directly. It demonstrates how the persona, during this case Clov, distinguishes himself out from language. As said by Clov, words or language are created in some kind of a mechanism to communicate meaning. The purpose is not fixed; rather, it is based on the speakers' consensus. This illustrates how language may lose its meaning and transform into a machine with its own logical principle.

**CLOV** I oiled them yesterday.

**HAMM** Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday!

**CLOV** [*Violently*] that mean the bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything anymore, teach me others. Or let me be silent (Beckett, 1986, p. 113).

Camus' concept of absurdity refers to the situation that men encounter when attempting to make sense of the universe and their lives. Camus stated that at this stage in his journey, man is confronted with the illogical (Camus, 1955, p. 21). Men's lives have no significance, despite the fact that they utilize mind as a mechanism to comprehend them. Language is a component of the system. In *Endgame*, characters' use of words demonstrates that language as a mechanism is not always successful for communication. This failing may result in these characters becoming useless in the *Endgame*. They utilize language is not to just for having a conversation, but to pass the period of their existence. It thus leads to the conclusion that meaningless circumstances that occur on the portrayal of Hamm and Clov as when they converse are a representation of the concept of absurdity.

### C. An End

The ending of *Endgame* is one of the primary themes as something that can be discussed and dissected out from play. *Endgame* is a drama about the end of the world. *Endgame* characters yearn for the conclusion. There may be many different interpretations of the ending of *Endgame*. Understanding Astrology Samuel Beckett stated that the conclusion of *Endgame*, which was shown at some point in the play, refers to the fate of men's deaths.

Clov's opening lines would be repeated later by Hamm: "The end is at the beginning, and yet you continue." As puzzling as it seems, this notion is not fresh. When a baby is born, it is destined to perish and revert towards the motionless state from whence it came.

The ending or death is among the issues of discourse upon that concept of absurdity. According to Camus, everything that remains is a fate with only the ending is predestined. All, joy or happiness, is freedom apart from this solitary predetermined reality of death. The only certainty in life is that it will come to an end. *Endgame* characters are aware of the truth.

Their awareness of the goal resulted in their useless and purposeless activities done for the purpose of reaching the finish. They discovered that their existence had no significance. This circumstance, in which the individuals are depicted as comprehending the end of their existence, reflects the concept of absurdity.

Clov's first soliloquy in the play script is "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished..." as it shown in the following passage. The very first words of Hamm are likewise about the end. *Endgame* characters acknowledged their understanding of the end. This end might refer to the end of their life or the end of themselves. These characters are portrayed to be aware that they will eventually come to an end. Clov determined that their life span is only the period between the present and the end. They are always in the state of being closely done.

**CLOV** [*Fixed gaze, tonelessly*] Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished (Beckett, 1986, p. 93).

**HAMM** And yet I hesitate to...to end. Yes, there it is, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to—[*He yawns*—]to end (Beckett, 1986, p. 93).

The end has become a topic of discussion between Hamm and Clov. They are expressing their viewpoint. When they talk on the end, they are referring about their existence and their lives, as which Hamm refers to as "this thing." *Endgame* has multiple instances of this term. It may be claimed that these characters are described as people who are truly pained by their own lives.

**HAMM** Have you not had enough?

**CLOV** Yes! [*Pause*] Of what?

**HAMM** Of  
this...this...thing.

**CLOV** I always had. [*Pause*] Not you?

**HAMM** [*Gloomily*] Then there's no reason for it to change.

**CLOV** It may end. [*Pause*] All lifelong the same question the same answers (Beckett, 1986, p. 94).

**HAMM** Do you not think this has gone on long enough?

**CLOV** Yes! [*Pause*] What?

**HAMM** This...this...thing.

**CLOV** I've always thought so. [*Pause*] You not? (Beckett, 1986, p. 94).

For the characters, the end is considered as such genuine truth. They never predict how soon it will occur, whereas on the other hand. This sparked a disagreement between them. Hamm is shown as someone who feels that the end is near, but Clov does not have a view on the subject. He's just gloomier about it.

**CLOV** Do you see how it goes on?

**HAMM** More or less.

**CLOV** Will it not soon be the end?

**HAMM** I'm afraid it will.

**CLOV** Pah! You will make up another (Beckett, 1986, p. 122).

**CLOV** You don't believe me? You think I'm inventing? [Pause]

**HAMM** It's the end, Clov, we've come to the end. I don't need you anymore. [Pause]

**CLOV** Lucky for you (Beckett, 1986, p. 131).

Camus stated that the end or mortality is really the actuality that is what remains is such a fate in which only the ending is predestined as one of the subjects of discussion on the concept of absurdity. It serves as one of the listing points of the sensation that may tolerate the ludicrous. *Endgame's* characters are defined as people who are aware of their impending demise. This realization led them to the system of enumeration, in which persons believe they belong to the period. This is the type of enumeration that allows for the ludicrous (Camus, 1955, p. 11).

## CONCLUSION

The concept of absurdity explores human existence as its primary goal and offers a perspective on how to cope with absurdity in humankind. Men should accept and continue to live with the absurdity. The researcher discovered that the portrayal of characters in *Endgame* represented various themes throughout the examination. These ideas are a representation of the theoretical construct of absurdity as defined by Camus. The themes include monotony routine, meaningless circumstances, and an end. The researcher discovered that not every one of the characters in their portrayal represent the concept of absurdity. Only three characters' characterizations embraced the concept of absurdity. They are known by the names Hamm, Clov, and Nell.

One of the aspects in determining the impression of absurdity is the monotony routine. *Endgame's* characters become aware of their mundane existence. This is illustrated by Hamm and Clov, who constantly attempt to convey their lives and circumstances through puns and conversations. We can observe from the discourse that they are aware that their lives are a circumstance in which a continued existence plays a role. This circumstance is constantly described as "something taking its course" by these individuals. The passage of time causes people to ponder their existence and the life that they must live in the future. Nell, the character, also inquires about their daily routine.

The conversation between the characters exemplifies *Endgame's* meaningless circumstances. *Endgame's* swap reaction occurs as the characters prepare to take on their roles in the play. The substance of the language they employ no longer resonates. They are already aware of the answer to their query. Language's role is not to communicate, but rather to be examined in its logical aspect. Clov's reaction to Hamm is a sort of conclusion he can make from that as well. Hamm also does the same thing.

One of the points of discussion on the term of absurdity is an end or mortality. According to Camus, all is left is a fate where only the end is predestined. All, joy or happiness, is freedom apart from this solitary predestined reality of mortality. The one and only certainty in life is that it must

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