

"the endgame"

Business



The characters in Beckett's play *The Endgame* are depicted in desperate situations where they have to seek their own meaning of life. There are themes of hope, cruelty, birth, death and material obstacles in his play. The characters are based on human rationality found in the western cultures, and their logic heavily influenced by that of Descartes, the French philosopher.

They have to question everything imaginable in order to create or discover the true meaning of life, and through their doubts life turns out to have no true meaning. Beckett's play starts with repetitive use of the word finished and life is seen as an endgame (Lawall, MacK and Lawall). He, therefore, tries to lead his readers to a preconceived conclusion that life is ending. In other words, going through the motions such that, in the end, one dies. The discovery of meaning of life begins when an individual is born and ends in death. This implies that the beginning and the end are intertwined.

That is, that we go through life as if it is a chess game where the first moves made seem to determine the final move. In the game of chess, masters often study the final moves to strategize on their game. In other words, the end is the final move that determines their game from the starting move; all the way to the last move. This is the irony that Beckett wants his audience to imagine; a game that we already know the outcome. The play is set in a stage that has a human's head skull as its door. He uses symbolism even in his stage setting where the door is likened to the mouth .

The eye sockets, on the other hand, are used to symbolize the windows; while the play characters are depicted as the memory and brain. This turns the entire play and setting into a metaphor about life from birth through

aging to death. In the play, the characters are depicted as chess pieces to symbolize the authors perception of life as a chess game. The protagonists Clov together with Hamm are symbolized as red while white is used as the imagery for Nell and Nag the author's admiration of the game of chess that heavily influenced his play. The play's main subject is whether the mutually beneficial relationship between the two protagonists, Hamm and Clov, will end when Clov leaves. Clov depends on Hamm for shelter and food, while, on the other hand, he acts as Hamm's eyes and legs.

His leaving would seal his fate since he will lack shelter and food and, therefore, die. Hamm also loses if their relationship ends in that he can no longer have mobility or sight, thus, denying him the help that ensures his capability to undertake life's necessary tasks. Thus, ending their relationship spells the end of their game which in this case, is their lives (Lawall, MacK and Lawall). Beckett used irony just like al-Hakim in Sultan's Dilemma. His main characters have to depend on each other, yet the more wholesome of the two cannot leave without the handicapped character.

This is ironical since in reality, their relationship should be reversed just like the condemned man had to auction the only man who could save him. There is also the irony of their slave master relationship. At times, Clov seems to be Hamm's slave, yet he can see and walk while his master is incapable of performing these two vital tasks. Al Hakim, in his play, turns the master subject relationship into an ironical imagery where the sultan has to be auctioned by a condemned man, and owned by a courtesan. The two authors both used ironical imagery that drives their authors to question the power

relationships and morality. We can argue that both the Sultan and Clov are put in positions where they have to reevaluate their relationships.

A sultan, by all accounts, is a powerful individual whose decision can determine the quality of lives of all his subjects. Nevertheless, Al hakim puts him in a reverse position in his play where he has to rely on his subject to determine his quality of life. This is because he has to be auctioned, and the new owner has to decide whether to set him free. This is the only way he can resolve his dilemma that resulted when his predecessor forgot to free him. We can argue that there is a parallelism between his dilemma and the decision that Clov has to make. For Clov, his decision involves terminating his relationship with his master, Hamm.

This implies ending his life. Thus, his freedom will come at a very high cost; which is death. The Sultan, on the other hand, has to agree to be auctioned as a slave in order to earn his freedom. For a powerful man, this means the loss of his dignity and social status, as well as his power. He also has to put his trust on individuals, who he may have crossed paths with or demeaned. This means that his auctioneer is waiting to face the ultimate symbol of his power, that is a sword in an execution (Lawall, Mack and Lawall).

At the same time, his new owner is probably someone he has treated without dignity in the past considering the auction is open and the highest bidder wins. He ends up being bought by a courtesan whose reputation among the citizens is not a very good one. The two authors, therefore, present us with unique moral dilemmas. In one case, we have a powerful individual losing his status and are demeaned in order to earn his freedom.

In the other case, we have a man whose quest to earn his freedom will cost him the ultimate price; his life.