Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Dialectical Solution to the Contradictory Relationship between Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss Beckett's dramatic solution to the problematic dramatization of Albert Camus's concept of "the absurd man," which he coined in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* translated by Justin O'Brien, in the relationship between Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*. The departure point is defining the concept of "the absurd" and then the concept of "the absurd man" since they are intertwined and interdependent. In light of this, the article presents some manifestations of the absurd in the dramatic world of the play, and then analyses how the two characters Hamm and Clov respond to them. This intends to answer the pivotal research question: How does Beckett dramatize the concept of the absurd man in the relationship between Hamm and Clov? The investigation of the question unravels the problematic relationship between the two characters who are contradictorily united. This contradiction which bends them together necessitates the adoption of Hegel's dialectical method to investigate their problematic relationship and show how Beckett solves it dialectically.

Keywords

Samuel Beckett; Endgame; The absurd man; Problematic; Hegelian dialectics

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This article aims to discuss Beckett's dramatic solution to the problematic dramatization of Albert Camus's concept of the absurd man, which he coined in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* translated by Justin O'Brien, with emphasis on the relationship between Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*. Therefore, it is important to note that, in Camus's book *The Myth of Sisyphus*, the two concepts of 'the absurd' and 'the absurd man' are coherent, intertwined, and interdependent. The absurd is a general phenomenon. The absurd man, according to Camus (1975), is that who is conscious of the absurd and his approach to life is a response to it, that is the absurd comes first and the absurd man, as a specific response, comes afterwards. Thus, it is pivotal to define the absurd as a prelude to tackling the solution to the problematic dramatization. Here arises a question: What is the absurd, according to Camus's theory of the absurd in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus*?

Camus (1975) defines the absurd as that which is "contradictory" and one of "disproportion" (p. 33), that is inconsistent, disharmonious. So, the absurd is all that contradicts with the human mind; all that which does not comply with the human terms of thought; all that cannot be made sense of. For the human mind, what is incomprehensible is meaningless. It follows then that the absurd is that which man cannot understand. Analysing the concept of the absurd, Camus (1975) explains that the absurd incorporates "definitive antinomy" (p. 33), a contradiction between

two sides, which is a fundamental characteristic of the absurd. Camus (1975) presents these two essentially contradictory sides as follows: "What is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart" (p. 26). The irrational stands for the world that cannot be understood in human terms of thought, whereas the human longing stands for man's craving for the absolute understanding of the world. These two components of have to be present in order for the outcome, the absurd, to be evoked. Considering each component, one can find that each of them is intrinsic and, thus, the outcome is inevitable: as for man, he cannot be stripped of his longing for understanding, which lies in his very human nature; as for the nature of the world, on the other hand, it cannot be anything but incomprehensible in relation to the terms of human reason since it operates in its autonomous way that differs from man's modes of thinking and expectations. It follows that the two sides of the contradiction are irreconcilable, and that the absurd is inevitable.

So, the absurd is "a confrontation and an unceasing struggle," which does not come to an end until man dies (Camus, 1970, p. 34). It is believed that the inevitability of the absurd is ascribed to the nature of the human condition that is intrinsically steered towards making sense of the world which is incompatible with the human mind: "Humans are condemned to be creatures of sense in a nonsensical universe" (Tranter, 2022, p. 375). Thus, the absurd is inescapable, and man is condemned to experience it regardless of his attempts to evade it. Despite this divorce between man and the world, the absurd is a bond that gets them together and characterises their relationship (Camus, 1975); a relationship which is based not on harmony and unity, but rather on inconsistency and contradiction. In this sense, the absurd is "that divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints, my nostalgia for unity, this fragmented universe and the contradiction that binds them together" (Camus, 1975, p. 50). Based on this reasoning, the absurd lies in one's desire for certainty, unity, and the absolute understanding of the world, a desire that calls for satisfaction on one

side and the disappointing unresponsiveness of the world which proves resistant to man's desire for the absolute understanding on the other. Camus (1975) also adds: "At this point of his effort man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" (p. 31-32). Man has an intrinsic need for satisfaction and understanding. The world does not provide man with full satisfaction and absolute comprehensibility.

In relation to this concept of the absurd, Camus bases his concept of 'the absurd man' upon his view of the Greek mythical story of Sisyphus, the absurd man, on which he has titled his book. Thus, it is pivotal to refer to Camus's view of the myth that gives insight into the concept of 'the absurd man' and his approach to the absurd life. Camus recounts that Sisyphus is punished for defying the Greek gods (especially Zeus). He is condemned to carry a huge rock to the top of a mountain and after such much toil and hustle it rolls down the mountain which forces him to roll it up again in an endless endeavour that yields nothing: "The gods [Zeus] had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labour" (Camus, 1975, p. 107-08).

Considering the scene of Sisyphus' punishment of which Camus gives an account, Sisyphus has a natural desire to accomplish the purpose of his endeavour, that is, carrying the rock to the top of the mountain once and for all. However, the rock rolls down at each time rendering his endeavour in vain, and this keeps him moving in a vicious circle. The absurd lies in the contradiction between Sisyphus' desire to accomplish his purpose on one side and the fact that it cannot be accomplished on the other. Camus (1975) describes the absurd world in which Sisyphus leads his journey as an "indescribable universe" that is dominated by "contradiction,"

"antinomy," "anguish" and "impotence" (p. 28). It is a world of unspeakable suffering where Sisyphus exerts so much toil and hustle for nothing. It is a world that is marked with a striking contradiction between Sisyphus' desire to accomplish his work on one side and the fact that it cannot be accomplished on the other, which in turn causes him unspeakable suffering. In light of this story, Camus (1975) defines 'the absurd man' as that who is characterized by "courage" and "reasoning" (p. 64). His courage leads him to live his life with what is offered in the present without having any appetite or hope for the future or the eternal that may alleviate the harshness of the absurd. However, it is noteworthy that he does not negate the eternal. The point is that he is concerned with that which lies withing the present moment and unconcerned with anything that may lie beyond it. Camus (1975), thus, puts the concept of the absurd man as follows:

> What, in fact, is the absurd man? He who, without negating it, does nothing for the eternal. Not that nostalgia is foreign to him. But he prefers his courage and his reasoning. The first teaches him to live without appeal and to get along with what he has; the second informs him of his limits. Assured of his temporally limited freedom, of his revolt devoid of future and of his mortal consciousness, he lives out his adventure within the span of his lifetime. (p. 64)

By implication, the absurd man is not a man of wishful thinking in dealing with the absurd. Being courageous, the absurd man does not try to escape from the harshness of the present absurd moment. In light of Camus's definition of the absurd man, reasoning makes the absurd man conscious of his human condition that is limited within the boundaries of the present time. Being grounded in the present moment, the absurd man is characterized by the quality of acceptance, that is acceptance of the absurd. Camus (1975) explains that living life requires full acceptance of it including its absurdity. This entails constant consciousness of the absurd without ever trying to escape it: "Living an experience, a particular fate, is accepting it fully. Now, no one will live this fate, knowing it to be

absurd, unless he does everything to keep before him that absurd brought to light by consciousness" (Camus, 1975, p. 53). Thus, constant consciousness is the first step towards living life. In the absence of consciousness, there is no absurd and more importantly no life as nothing exists, for man, unless it is perceived by consciousness. It is worth noting that this consciousness is blended with acceptance of what life is, and, at the heart of it, its absurdity. This acceptance of life allows him to live it to the absolute limits: "The absurd man can only drain everything to the bitter end and deplete himself" (Camus, 1975, p. 55). This means that the absurd man makes use of whatever resources available in the present moment without ever postponing something for the future because he lives within the boundaries of the present and never reaches out for what lies beyond it. This way gives him full gratification in the present. Camus (1975) also mentions responsibility as another quality of the absurd man, as he takes full responsibility for his, actions, life and existence. He is the sort of man who takes the lead in his life.

Since the absurd man holds no hope for the future and holds himself accountable for his own life, he, Camus (1975) adds, exercises this freedom in the present, a fact which makes him more present and effective because he holds no expectations for the future which limit one's ability to exercise his freedom of choice and action in the present. This implies that the absurd man is characterized by effectiveness and availability. The absurd man's approach to the absurd life fuels him with the feeling of greatness: "At last man will again find there the wine of the absurd and the bread of indifference on which he feeds his greatness" (Camus, 1975, p. 52). The absurd man's greatness stems from his consciousness that he never clouds and his courage that never settles. This, in turn, nurtures his self-esteem as he enjoys his pursuit in the face of the absurd for it remarks his exceptional capability to see the truth of the world as it is. Thus, Camus presents the absurd man as a call for saying yes to life and living it as much

as possible. The absurd man's approach to the absurd life is a call for life no matter how uncomfortable it is.

Since things are known through their opposites, to further understand the absurd man's approach to life, it is pertinent to present its opposite, that is the non-absurd man's approach, which takes one of two forms: physical suicide and philosophical suicide. Concerning physical suicide as a possible response to the absurd, Camus (1975) defines it as the act when "one kills oneself" willingly (p. 15). He states that suicide has always been dealt with as a social problem, but he views it in a different way, that is from a philosophical perspective which considers the relationship between suicide and individual thought. For him, committing suicide is a confession that life is so full of suffering and is so incomprehensible that man can no longer cope with its troubles: "Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the ridiculous character of that habit, the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation and the uselessness of suffering" (p. 13). Camus shows how this trajectory of the idea of physical suicide could emerge from the moment one becomes conscious of the absurd and grows unconsciously, silently, and thus undetectably, in one's mind and aggravates to the point of undermining him in the face of death. However, Camus (1975) believes that there is no inevitable relationship between what one believes about life and the act of committing physical suicide, and he considers committing suicide an insult to one's existence. Camus explains that "we get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking" (p. 15). This shows that man is intrinsically attached to life. Man's reasoning develops later. For Camus, the body has a judgment just like the mind does and it escapes annihilation and opts for survival regardless of the difficulties of life. Camus adds that physical suicide does not result from one's revolt in the face of the absurd: "Suicide, like the leap, is acceptance at its extreme" (p. 54). Suicide involves surrender, which is the opposite of revolt.

Concerning philosophical suicide, the non-absurd man may escape from the absurd by means of what Camus (1975) calls "the act of eluding" (p. 15), which is hope. The non-absurd man evades facing the absurdity of life by hoping for another life that he believes to deserve, or an idea that transcends the existing life and gives it a meaning:

> Eluding is the invariable game. The typical act of eluding . . . is hope. Hope of another life one must "deserve" or trickery of those who live, not for life itself, but for some great idea that will transcend it, refine it, give it a meaning, and betray it. (Camus, 1975, p. 15)

In light of this, Camus defines the concept of philosophical suicide as "the movement by which a thought negates itself and tends to transcend itself in its very negation" (p. 43). He explains that this thought negates itself by negating the premise upon which it is primarily founded, namely the absurd. The negation of the very basis of their arguments is ascribed to escaping the absurd reality by means of adopting hope that evades man's consciousness from the present moment with its absurdity. As one hopes for a life better than the present, he takes a "leap" (Camus, 1975, p. 43), that is he jumps over the absurdity of the present moment. It can only happen depending on "the negation of human reason" (Camus, 1975, p. 43). Thus, philosophical suicide is metaphorically named "suicide" since it is negation of the mind and its logical reasoning.

Instead of arriving at the idea of suicide, man can adopt another approach suggested by Camus (1975), namely the absurd man's approach to the absurd life, as exemplified by his interpretation of the mythical story of the Greek figure Sisyphus. This serves as a recommended response to the absurd away from the gravity of suicide, which in turn serves the purpose of Camus's book in helping man to live and produce even in the midst of nihilism, as Camus notes. Thus, it can be said that Camus's book is not merely an investigation of suicide; it goes beyond the issue to put forward a message that calls for life. In this sense, Camus's philosophical

approach is concerned with the individual rather than society at large (Pölzler, 2018). Through the absurd man's approach, the individual can live a fulfilling life.

One could extrapolate from Camus's views about the characteristics of 'the absurd man' and the non-absurd man one basic and primary contradiction between being conscious of the absurdity of life and, thus, accepting to confront it courageously with the will to life; and denial and refusal to face that basic quality, namely the absurd, as being the hallmark of the human condition and escaping from it into suicide. This contradiction leads us to the issue of the problematic dramatization of the concept of the absurd man in the relationship between Hamm and Clov, which revolves around two basic interrelated concepts. One is "problematic" and the other is "dramatization." As for "problematic," it can be defined as "perplexing, questionable. . . . . The word is sometimes used in the German manner as a noun, for a set of problems or a way of seeing problems" (Honderich, 2005, p. 760). From this definition, it can be inferred that what is problematic entails a contradiction that raises questions. As for "dramatization," it is transforming the abstract ideas into concrete dramatic terms, which include dramatic characters, dialogue, scenery as well as the theatrical paraphernalia which any theatrical performance dictates. Here, a question arises: How does Beckett dramatize Camus's concept of the absurd man in the relationship between Hamm and Clov?

To provide an answer to this question, the article adopts the dialectical method which deals the contradiction that lies at the heart of Beckett's dramatization. In Michael Forster's essay (1993) entitled "Hegel's Dialectical Method" published in The Cambridge Companion to Hegel, he explains that the general structure of the dialectical method consists of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, and that Hegel asserts that this pattern is applicable to any concept. In this sense, the present article lends itself to the dialectical method that is suitable to examine the problematic dramatization of the concept of 'the absurd man.' Forster defines the dialectical method in the following manner:

> In the Logic, the dialectic is essentially a method of expounding our fundamental categories (understood in a broad sense to include not only our fundamental concepts but also our forms of judgment and forms of syllogism). It is a method of exposition in which each category in turn is shown to be implicitly self-contradictory and to develop necessarily into the next (thus forming a continuously connected hierarchical series culminating in an all-embracing category that Hegel calls the Absolute Idea) . . . Beginning from a category A, Hegel seeks to show that upon conceptual analysis, category A proves to contain a contrary category, B, and conversely that category B proves to contain category A, thus showing both categories to be self-contradictory. He then seeks to show that this negative result has a positive outcome, a new category, C (sometimes referred to as the "negative of the negative" or the "determinate negation"). This new category unites -as Hegel puts it- the preceding categories A and B. . . . At this point, one level of the dialectic has been completed, and we pass to a new level where category C plays the role that was formerly played by category A. (p. 132 -133)

This definition shows that a category necessarily entails a contrary category within it, and, thus, it smoothly develops into it. So, a category in the dialectical method is not finite. Each category is self-contradictory as it subsumes the contrary one and flows into it and vice versa, which leads to a new category that is the combination of the two previous categories. This new category subsumes a contrary category, and thus, the dialectical process flows infinitely. Forster (1993) explains that one of the main functions of this method is to show the self-contradictoriness involved in each concept.

A number of points can be elicited from this definition. First, the idea that each category is implicitly self-contradictory means that the antithesis is a natural

development that inevitably stems from the thesis and vice versa. Each of which produces the other. They are not separable entities of different origins. So, both are inextricably bound up with each other and have a common origin. Second, this dialectical relationship is not static. It is dynamic and this dynamism comes from the interaction between the self-contradictory categories, that is the thesis and its antithesis leading to the birth of a new entity, that is the synthesis. Third, the dialectical relationship is an ongoing process of constant creation: the thesis gives birth to its antithesis, and both give rise to the synthesis. According to the Hegelian dialectical method, an answer is attempted to the question as to how Beckett dramatizes the concept of the absurd man in the relationship between Hamm and Clov.

Touching briefly upon a number of the manifestations of the absurd in *Endgame*'s dramatic world is a prerequisite for discussing how Hamm and Clov respond to the absurd, and consequently, how the concept of the absurd man is dramatized. The manifestations of the absurd starts with the setting that Beckett creates. *Endgame*, a one-act play, opens in a setting that is presented, as the stage directions describe, as "bare" (Beckett, 2006, p. 92) with little decor and few stage props. The background of the stage is a grey wall. This setting resembles the absurd world which Camus (1975) likens to a desert to indicate the feelings of emptiness, void and alienation. This nakedness of the setting echoes that moment which Camus refers to when man faces the feeling of the absurd "in its distressing nudity, in its light without effulgence" (p. 17). This minimalist setting also implies that there is nothing in the internal world of man except man and the absurd grappling with each other inside his mind. Levy ... believes that the setting of the play could be "a mimesis of mentality"(Levy, 2002, p. 265). In this sense, the setting of the play does not refer to a geographical place but rather to a mental state. Thus, this setting is reflective of and yet evocative of the feelings of emptiness, desolation and alienation which are concomitant with the absurd. The setting seems to be "a post-apocalyptic scene" but there is no reason mentioned for this all-

engulfing destruction that renders the dramatic world unfamiliar (McDonald, 2007, p. 43). This world is unfamiliar, peculiar, and infertile to the extent that the seeds which Clov has planted fail to sprout, as McDonald observes. Additionally, what lies outside is a derelict lifeless world, which Clov describes as "all is corpsed" (Beckett, 2006, p. 106). This indicates that there is nothing in this world but physical debility and death, a fact which renders the setting evocative of the feeling of the absurd.

Besides the setting which evokes the feeling of the absurd, both Hamm and Clov, from the outset of the play, declare their absurd suffering. As for Hamm, he compares his suffering to that of his mother, father and dog and questions whether or not they go through the same degree of severity:

> Can there be misery- (he yawns) -loftier than mine? No doubt. Formerly. But now? (Pause.) My father? (Pause.) My mother (Pause.) My ... dog? (Pause.) Oh I am willing to believe they suffer as much as such creatures can suffer. But does that mean their sufferings equal mine? No doubt. (Beckett, 2006, p. 93)

This extract shows the fact that all living beings whether humans or animals are suffering, a fact which indicates the predominance of the absurd. The phrase "no doubt" indicates inevitability and inescapability as two characteristics of the absurd. It is so pervasive and inevitable that there is no doubt that everyone experiences the feeling of the absurd in some way or at some time, as Camus (1975, p. 17) believes. Part of Hamm's feeling of the absurd is his feeling of alienation which he expresses in the following manner:

"HAMM (proudly): But for me,
(gesture towards himself)
no father. But for Hamm,
(gesture towards surroundings)
no home" (Beckett, 2006, p. 110-111).

Despite the fact that he has a shelter to dwell in, and his father Nagg is still alive, Hamm feels that he is homeless and fatherless. This

indicates his alienation, an unmistakable sign of the feeling of the absurd.

To further demonstrate how unfamiliar the present is, Hamm recollects memories of the past, a fact which shows his feeling of alienation as he recollects memories of a once familiar world that cannot be retrieved. Hamm constantly reminisces about his past experiences in nature when he used to go into the woods. He also imagines what he may dream of when he gets into sleep. He dreams of regaining his capability to see, move, walk, run: "If I could sleep I might make love. I'd go into the woods. My eyes would see ... the sky, the earth. I'd run, run, they wouldn't catch me. (Pause.) Nature!" (Beckett, 2006, p. 100). These familiar memories of the past are the antithesis of the currently alien world in which they experience the absurd. The severity of the absurd in this current alien dramatic world cannot be recognized except through contrasting it with their memories of a past familiar world. McDonald (2007) observes that the characters are strikingly nostalgic about the past (p. 46). This sense of nostalgia indicates that the present is far worse than the past. This contradiction between a past marked by comfort, happiness, and health and a present marked by suffering, agony, and decay is the absurd. Hence, Beckett instills this sense of nostalgia to deepen the feeling of the absurd and to show the unbridgeable gap between both the past and the present. In this sense, nostalgia for the past is not an escape from the present. Rather, it serves to establish a deeper consciousness of the gravity of the absurd in the present. The phrase "I'd run, run, they wouldn't catch me" shows how thirsty Hamm is for his former life when he relished his full health that enabled him to forge ahead and see forward. The word "nature" which seems to be eagerly spoken from the bottom of his heart is his "lost home" (p.13), as Camus (1975) calls it, that home of which he keeps a dear memory that he can never forget. This explains why Hamm gets back to sleep as soon as he wakes up. He wants to recall that dear memory of a lost home, the loss of which has disquitened his peace and destabilized his full existence. Away from this home, Hamm feels

alienated. Such nostalgia for a lost home can be further understood in light of Camus's view:

> His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity (p.13).

In addition to alienation, Hamm suffers from increasing physical decrepitude. He is paralyzed, blind, sitting on an armchair, and his eyes have "gone all white" (Beckett, 2006, p. 94). Since health is what empowers man to forge ahead in life, Hamm's physical deterioration gives him a tormenting sense of helplessness in the face of life. Physical deterioration seems to be a commonality between Hamm and Clov, who is supposedly Hamm's servant, as Hamm "can't stand" and Clov "can't sit" (Beckett, 2006, p. 97). Besides, Clov's eyes and legs are in a bad condition:

"HAMM: How are your eyes?
CLOV: Bad.
HAMM: How are your legs?
CLOV: Bad" (Beckett, 2006, p. 95).

Clov also walks with stiff and mechanical movements, which could be ascribed to the bad health condition of his legs which makes him incapable to sit. Clov provokes the absurd as he keeps moving back and forth with stiff strides between the right and left windows in a peculiarly repetitive manner for no apparent reason, as the stage directions tell us (Beckett, 2006, p. 92). Such mechanical and repetitive movements are unfamiliar and unreasonable to the audience, and thus, evocative of the absurd. McDonald notes that the physical decline of the characters, as seen in the blind, paralyzed and crippled characters, gives a striking sense of entrapment (McDonald, 2007, p. 43). This sense of entrapment, as Beckett gives expression to it, resonates with Camus's pronouncement of the inescapability of the absurd as seen in that unbreakable bond between the absurd and man as long as he lives on the earth.

In addition to the physical decline of the characters, uncertainty stands as another manifestation of the absurd. The chronotope of Beckett's *Endgame*, to use Bakhtin's term which means the combination of time-place, is much similar to the chronotope in which Sisyphus endures his absurd punishment, for his punishment takes place in no definite time and in no definite place. Since the absurd is to believe that nothing is meaningful, clear or determinate, it is logical to delineate a setting that is marked by uncertainty in order to set up and reinforce an atmosphere of the absurd. Beckett himself contributes to this sense of uncertainty. Whenever asked about clues to *Endgame*, he usually responds by saying that he does not know (McDonald, 2007, p. 43), a typical Beckettian response that further nurtures the aura of uncertainty surrounding the play which is already pervaded by an inner atmosphere of uncertainty.

Besides the aspects of physical deterioration, alienation and uncertainty which manifest the absurd in the play, Beckett gives strong expression to the absurd in the interrelationships between the characters. For example, the relationship between Hamm and Clov is one of shocking violence and struggle. Hamm mistreats Clov, who is supposedly his servant. He is a demanding master who repeatedly asks for his painkiller, his toy dog, and escorting him around the room, etc. and he frequently whistles to Clov and asks him repeatedly the same questions about the surroundings and about his parents. Part of Clov's absurd suffering manifests in the linguistic violence that Hamm exercises against him. In response to this, Clov exercises linguistic resistance as seen in his repetition of phrases and his indirect vagueness. However, these strategies do not prove efficient in liberating Clov from the hegemony of his master (Ware, 2015, p. 12):

"HAMM: Do you think this has gone long enough?

CLOV: Yes! (Pause) What?" (Beckett, 2006, p. 114)

This way of giving a yes/ no response and then raising a question is Clov's way to exercise his sense of humour and questioning upon his master to whom he is tied by an absurd relationship. In this

respect, McDonald states that Clov is very expressive of his disgust towards the role he plays in the world (McDonald, 2007, p. 45). This disgust is seen in Clov's frequent threats to leave Hamm and in his questioning of his subservience to him and, more strikingly when Clov gets inconceivably exasperated by Hamm to the extent that he "strikes him violently on the head with the dog" (Beckett, 2006, p. 129-130).

At the very heart of the absurd relationship between Hamm the master and Clov the servant lies the contradiction between the goals of the two: while Clov seeks to escape, Hamm seeks to keep him. This contradiction makes their relationship tormenting for both. Hamm acknowledges that he is the source of Clov's suffering and admits that has tormented him: "I've made you suffer too much" (Beckett, 2006, p. 95). This inhumanity of suffering is characteristic of the absurd. In light of this, the names of Hamm and Clov have drawn attention and given rise to critical speculations about why Beckett has chosen them with their connotations that are relevant to suffering. As to Hamm's name, it can be read as a short form of Hamlet, the renowned tragic hero (McDonald, 2007, p. 47). This is merely because Hamm, despite being acrimonious towards Clov, suffers to a severe degree and laments his "misery" at his earliest lines of the play. As to Clov, his name is close to the French word "clou" which means "nail" while Hamm is close to the word "hammer" (McDonald, 2007, p. 45). This inextricable relationship between a nail and a hammer implies how inescapable the absurd is for Clov in his inextricable relationship with Hamm and how much Clov is brutalized, manipulated and put under intensive pressure by his master. McDonald refers to such inextricability as he states that the relationship between Hamm and Clov is a master-slave relationship that is "based on mutual need" (McDonald, 2007, p. 45). Thus, there is a bond that seems to exist between Clov and his source of the absurd, Hamm, in a way that resembles the unbreakable bond which Camus speaks about between man and the absurd despite their contradiction.

Another aspect of the contradiction in the absurd relationship that bonds Hamm and Clov is that although Hamm craves psychological satisfaction through communion with Clov, the latter disappoints him. This is evident when Hamm feels cold and asks for a rug which turns out to have run out, and he, instead, asks Clov to kiss him or to give him his hand at least, which shows his thirst for the warmth of human closeness, but Clov disappoints him by refusing to even touch him and threatens that he will leave him. Hamm considers human closeness a source of warmth to confront the coldness of the absurd world that is dominated by alienation. He seeks a kiss, a touch, or a holding of hands, any act of human closeness that provides psychological satisfaction. When Clov refuses, Hamm remains psychologically unsatisfied. This contradiction between Hamm's craving for human closeness on one side and Clov's detachment is an example of the absurd:

Hamm: Give me a rug, I'm freezing.
CLOV: There are no more rugs. (Pause.)
HAMM: Kiss me. (Pause.) Will you not kiss me?
CLOV: No.
HAMM: On the forehead.
CLOV: I won't kiss you anywhere. (Pause.)
HAMM (holding out his hand): Give me your hand at least. (Pause.) Will you not give me your hand?
CLOV: I won't touch you. (Pause.)
HAMM: Give me the dog. (Beckett, 2006, p. 125)

A touch is a human nonverbal way of communication that is deeply intimate and heartwarming. When Clov responds with that heart-wrenching reply that he will not touch Hamm even in such excruciating conditions which necessitate deep human communication, his refusal gives an indication to the audience of how alien and inhuman this absurd world is. When Hamm faces such deprivation, he asks Clov to hand him a toy dog which has three legs instead of four. Robert N. Wilson interprets the gap between Hamm's mutilated toy dog and a real dog as a symbol of the gap between the limping interaction between the characters and

a genuine satisfying human interaction. Thus, the toy dog serves as a symbol of emotional deprivation (Wilson, 1964, p. 64). Hamm also gestures towards material deprivation when he threatens Clov to give him an inadequate amount of food that keeps him from dying but does not get him satisfied. Clov, on his part, refers to an incident of deprivation when he has desired to get a bicycle, but his desire gets disappointed. He has "wept to have one" (Beckett, 2006, p. 96) but Hamm has harshly disappointed his incessant pleas. All these incidents manifest the absurd since they entail this contradiction between what the characters naturally need as an integral part of their basic human needs, i.e., satisfaction, and what they are actually proffered, that is insufficiency and deprivation.

Theodore W. Adorno (1982) suggests that *Endgame* evokes the absurd, for it is full of incomprehensibilities or manifestations of the absurd of which we have mentioned a few: "Understanding it [*Endgame*] can mean nothing other than understanding its incomprehensibility, or concretely reconstructing its meaning structure- that it has none" (p. 120). The play does not lend itself to straightforward understanding as it is not understandable in itself even if one tries to reconstruct it, and then, it would have no meaning to convey. Hence, it always evades understanding and, for Adorno, the important thing that one has to understand is that it is immune to understanding. The play, in fact, identifies with the absurd which it argues for its existence to the extent that it has become evocative of the absurd itself. In other words, the reason behind the indeterminacy of the play could be that the play has not been intended to theorize about the absurd. Rather, it dramatizes it to the extent of evoking it (McDonald, 2007, p. 44).

Having viewed some of the manifestations of the absurd encountered by Hamm and Clov, it would be pivotal to consider how they respond to them to see how the concept of the absurd man is dramatized. From the very outset of the play, Hamm displays his consciousness of the absurd. At the beginning, he wakes up and, soon after that, he reveals his misery as seen in his blindness and

paralysis, the misery which he sees as unparalleled, for there is no misery "loftier than" his, as he believes. This acknowledgement of his misery is an acknowledgment of the absurd without denial. Besides acknowledging the absurd, Hamm is also acutely aware of death which constitutes one of the two pillars of the absurd man's freedom alongside the absurd the consciousness of which constitutes the first pillar (Camus, 1975, p. 58). He gestures to death as he says to Clov: "But you'll bury me" (Beckett, 2006, p.112). This shows Hamm's acute consciousness since Camus (1975) describes death as "the most obvious absurdity" (p. 58).

In a soliloquy articulated by Hamm, he further shows his consciousness of the absurd as he asserts its inescapability. Since a soliloquy is usually known not to be addressed towards other characters, it could be seen as addressed towards the audience giving them more insights and knowledge about the innermost ideas of a character. In other words, Hamm's soliloquy is mainly concerned with the audience. For a fleeting couple of moments, Hamm laments the fact that he has not proffered any help to all those who have passed away and filled the surroundings with their corpses due to some undefined catastrophe. However, he pauses for some time and speculates on the idea of saving someone from the absurd, shows his surprise towards it, and, then, changes his mind. He arrives at the conviction that the idea of escaping from or saving someone from the inevitability of the all-engulfing absurd is implausible: "All those I might have helped. (Pause.) Helped! (Pause.) Saved. (Pause.) Saved! (Pause.) The place was crawling with them! (Pause. Violently.) Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that" (Beckett, 2006, p. 125)! From this soliloquy, a number of implications can be recognized. Hamm implies that man has to take full responsibility for his own life without waiting for some saviour. By implication, Hamm renders the idea of some saviour to be implausible in an unavoidably absurd world. Waiting for some saviour leads man to lose faith in his own potential and to believe that he is not in full responsibility for his life. The idea of intervention of some saviour

implies that things will end up in some way that is favourable to man, which, in turn, lends a streak of certainty to life that is contradictory with the very uncertain and chaotic nature of the absurd. This also gives a sense of implausibility that stems from such wishful thinking. Thus, at the same time Hamm negates the likelihood of the idea of a saviour, he implies his own sense of responsibility and effectiveness as he takes the lead in his life without waiting for some saviour that undermines his independence and takes the lead of his life away from him. By taking full responsibility for his life, Hamm shows that he exercises his own personal freedom within his lifetime span without submitting to any external judgments which try to convince him otherwise. Furthermore, in this extract, one can notice the pauses Hamm takes to show that he takes time to exercise his reasoning, a fact that is asserted when he urges himself to use his "head," that is his reasoning. Here, Hamm shows that he is characterized by the absurd man's major quality of reasoning. As a result of his reasoning, Hamm emerges enlightened stating that there is "no cure for" the absurd, which underscores a salient characteristic of the absurd, that is its inescapability. It is so inevitably concomitant with the human experience that it cannot be subtracted from the scene of human life.

Further on, Hamm shows his consciousness of the absurd more clearly in that significant scene when he orders Clov to move his chair closer to the wall and starts to touch and examine it: "HAMM: Stop! (Clov stops chair close to back wall. Hamm lays his hand against wall.) Old wall! (Pause.) Beyond is the ... other hell. (Pause. Violently.) Closer! Closer! Up against!" (Beckett, 2006, p. 104). It is notable that when Hamm lays his hand against the wall, he says that "beyond is the ... other hell." The word "other" implies that there is another hell herein, that is where Hamm lives, a fact which shows his consciousness of the agonizing absurdity of his constricted world. Additionally, referring to what lies beyond the boundaries of his world as hell resonates with Camus's description of the beyond as "all is collapse and nothingness" (Camus, 1975, p.

58). For Hamm, this fact thwarts any hope of having any meaning lying outside the time and place of the natural environment. Hamm seems to be conscious that no one is coming to help them or save them from the adversity of their absurd conditions. The beyond is unlikely to provide help of any kind because it has none for it is mere nothingness, as Hamm believes. Failure of hope in what lies beyond this world redirects man's eyes to what lies within the boundaries of this world, only here and now and nothing else. This constant consciousness of the absurd shows that Hamm is a man of revolt since he persists on staying conscious of the absurd as he keeps touching and examining the wall.

This wall is a scenery that Beckett uses to concretise Camus's metaphor of "the absurd walls" (Camus, 1975, p. 17), which refers to all the incomprehensibilities surrounding man and which his mind cannot penetrate. These are the limits of his absurd world beyond which there is nothingness and death, as Camus states (p. 58), or in Hamm's words, there is hell beyond the boundaries of this world. Although Hamm, by examining the wall, acknowledges the absurd, he does not end up here, as he goes on to examine it much further in a significant way:

> CLOV: Take away your hand. (Hamm withdraws his hand. Clov rams chair against wall.) There! (Hamm leans towards wall, applies his ear to it.)
>
> HAMM: Do you hear? (He strikes the wall with his knuckles.) Do you hear? Hollow bricks! (He strikes again.) All that's hollow! (Pause. He straightens up. Violently.) That's enough. Back! (Beckett, 2006, p. 104).

Here, Beckett delineates a scene in which Hamm's act of examining the wall with his hands and applying his ear to it to listen to something is symbolic of man's incessant attempts to explore and search for any signs of the beyond. Through these exploratory attempts, man knows his boundaries. These walls composed of hollow bricks symbolize these impenetrable boundaries. The fact of being "hollow," as Hamm describes the bricks of the wall, is to show the emptiness of the absurd world. Presuming that the

characters are Becketts' catalysts that are intended to spark the audience's consciousness of the absurd through their dialogues and their actions, it can be said that Hamm examines the wall not in search for the beyond but in assertion of its absence. This examination of the wall is Beckett's attempt to rekindle the audience's consciousness of the absurdities surrounding them on one side and the absence of the beyond on the other side. Since Hamm places no hope in the beyond and asserts its absence and hence does not get disappointed, he remains conscious of the absurdity of the present and does not commit philosophical suicide.

In another dialogue between Hamm and Clov, Hamm directs his servant to examine the beyond with the intention of ascertaining its absence:

Clov: Let's see. (He looks, moving the telescope.) Zero ...

...

Hamm: All is what?

...

CLOV: Corpsed. .

HAMM: Look at the sea.

CLOV: It's the same.

...The light is sunk.....All gone. (Beckett, 2006, p.106)

When Hamm asks about the beyond, that is the land and the sea, his question does not imply that he is waiting for something from the beyond. Rather, he, by means of his very question to which he knows the answer, tries to ignite the audience's consciousness of the collapse and nothingness of the beyond, which is described in Clov's description of a derelict and lifeless world. Hamm's prior knowledge of the answer to the question of the beyond is indicated in the following extract:

"CLOV (looking): The light is sunk.

HAMM (relieved): Pah! We all knew that" (Beckett, 2006, p. 106).

Beckett intends this absence of the beyond to give man a sense of isolation that he is alone in confrontation of this absurd world. This is solely because the beyond has been subtracted from the scene and

there is only the here and the now and nothing else. The absence of the beyond, as Hamm proves, is an indication of the deadly silence of the world the confrontation of which triggers the absurd: "The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" (Camus, 1975, p. 32). Man cries out for meaning and help but the world does not respond because "nature has forgotten us" (Beckett, 2006, p. 97), as Hamm states.

However, Beckett's declaration of the absence of the beyond does not only result in man's profound sense of isolation. It also has the potential to empower man and drive him to take the lead in his world since no one is coming for his assistance. However, it has to be noted that this effect cannot be achieved unless man becomes conscious of the absurd and faces it with courage. In this sense, it is pivotal to clarify that Beckett does not portray a bleak vision of life. Instead, he simply depicts characters who unravel the absurdity of life in their dialogues in order to raise consciousness and instill courage. Although Beckett presents the suffering and isolation of man in this silent world, it is an empowering isolation that drives man to effective acceptance which results in living life to its fullest. Additionally, the bare minimalistic setting that has very little visual distraction, that is a few stage props and little scenery, is meant to magnify the characters and put them into focus as much as possible to see how they respond to the absurd. This evinces how much Beckett is dedicated to the concept of the absurd man as dramatised in the form of the characters.

This absence or rather cancellation of external interference from nature gives man the chance to exercise his full efficiency and availability. It is exclusively the world of man. Man cannot exercise full dominance over his world in the present moment except when all the external interferences are negated. Now, the scene is not at issue. The Greek gods have relegated to the background and now what lies under the scope is Sisyphus. The same applies to the absurd-man and the non-absurd-man characters in their problematic interplay in *Endgame* as their positions and movements are put under focus and magnified.

Beckett uses the positions and movements of Hamm and Clov tactfully to convey specific implications. For instance, when Hamm gets sure of the absence of the beyond, he gets back to the centre of the stage, which symbolically refers to claiming his centrality in his own world. In Clov's search for the telescope, he unintentionally moves Hamm's chair away from the centre to see if he is sitting on it. Hamm hastily asks Clov to get his chair back to where it was: "Don't leave me there" (Beckett, 2006, p. 129)! When Clov restores the chair to its place, Hamm wants to make sure of his centrality and, thus, asks: "Am I right in the center" (Beckett, 2006, p. 129)? Hamm's obsession with this central place is not to be taken lightly. It shows that it is significant. Here, it is important to recall that moment when Hamm declares: "I'm warming up for my last soliloquy" (Beckett, 2006, p. 130). In his use of soliloquies, choice of words and storytelling, Hamm seems to be a man of literary style. Since a literary style is known for its deep implications, one has to deal with Hamm's words with a discerning eye that reads between the lines and that contemplates what is implied more than what is stated. In this sense, his words are so profound that they should not be taken lightly or superficially. They have metaphoric and symbolic significance, which Clov seems to largely miss. In light of this, we can consider the following significant order which Hamm gives to Clov:

"HAMM: Take me for a little turn.
(Clov goes behind the chair and pushes it forward.) Not too fast!
(Clov pushes chair.) Right round the world! (Clov pushes chair.) Hug the walls, then back to the center again" (Beckett, 2006, p. 104).

This phrase of going "round the world" is not exaggeration. This is merely because this cell in which the characters dwell is their only world outside of which there is nothingness and hell, as Hamm observes. Moreover, the phrase reflects Hamm's consciousness of the limitations surrounding him which keep him within the boundaries of this world which he knows cannot

transcend. Hamm's journey from the centre to the walls and vice versa is a reminder of these limitations surrounding man. When the attention is not directed there outside the boundaries of the human life, it is directed here to the here and the now claiming man to regain the centrality of his position in his exclusive world. However, by directing attention to what lies beyond the human life, as the non-absurd man does, he remains subservient to the beyond, that is what lies there and what lies in the future. This focus on the beyond has long displaced man from his centrality. Through man's consciousness of the absurd that is inherent in the present moment, he reclaims his central position in the world. Thus, Beckett's *Endgame* is an acknowledgment of the centrality of man as much as being an acknowledgment of the boundaries surrounding him. In this sense, Hamm has turned his prison into his kingdom, which is unrivalled by the beyond in a way reminiscent of Camus's (1975) words, "the hell of the present is his kingdom at last" (p. 52). He turns the negative into positive, a fact that ascertains his effectiveness. Besides the central position that Hamm takes in his kingdom which is suggestive of the absurd man's centrality and effectiveness, Beckett utilizes Hamm's movement around the stage to give a specific implication, as Hamm says to Clov: "Clov Take me for a little turn...Right round the world" (Beckett, 2006, p. 104)! This movement around the stage takes the shape of a circle that is a reminder of the vicious circle of the absurd in which Sisyphus ceaselessly moves. Hamm insists that he keep going on just like Sisyphus who keeps going on despite his consciousness of the vicious circle of the absurd in which he is entrapped.

Acutely conscious of the absurd and death, Hamm depletes all that is available in the present moment without worrying about the future because he knows for sure that there is none and that all he has is the present moment which he lives and consumes to the bitter end:

"CLOV: No more pain-killer. You'll never get any more pain-killer (Pause.)

HAMM: But the little round box. It was full!

CLOV: Yes. But now it's empty" (Beckett, 2006, p. 127).

Hamm, the absurd-man character in *Endgame*, is obsessed with depleting all medicine. Nevertheless, at every time Hamm asks for the painkiller and gets disappointed, at every time he asks for human closeness and gets disappointed, he exposes the absurd in that contradiction between man who craves something and the world which disappoints him. At every time he exposes the absurd and makes it soar in front of the audience, he asserts his quality of courage as an absurd man, for he is courageous enough to constantly keep his eyes open to the absurd.

In this respect, it is important to mention that Camus (1975) states that the absurd man views himself in constant opposition to the world because of his mind which seeks familiarity with a world to which it does not belong: "That conflict, of that break between the world and my mind" (p. 51-52). Despite the tormenting conflict which marks the absurd and its concomitant suffering, the absurd man, as represented by Hamm, is characterized by revolt, which is "a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity" (Camus, 1975, p. 53). He insists on his consciousness of the absurd. He faces his feeling of anguish with his revolt:

> Man enters in with his revolt and his lucidity. He has forgotten how to cope. This hell of the present is his Kingdom at last. All problems recover their sharp edge. Abstract evidence retreats before the poetry of forms and colours. Spiritual conflicts become embodied and return to the abject and magnificent shelter of man's heart. None of them is settled. But all are transfigured. (Camus, 1975, p. 52)

Man preserves his revolt by refusing to claim that all is clear. There is no question of settling such disquieting issues: "None of them is settled." John Foley (2014) comments upon this revolt as follows: "Revolt here is an acceptance of the fact of the absurd . . . but it is not a meek acceptance. Instead, it is an acceptance filled with scorn, defiance, and suffering" (p. 10). Revolt in such a manner saves the absurd man's pride in the face of adversity. It is an acknowledgment

of an existing reality without acting with docility in the face of absurdities.

Although Hamm is tormented by all such absurdities as seen in his physical decrepitude and his emotional and material deprivation, he refuses to cloud the absurd. He, on the contrary, intentionally exposes and acknowledges it at every possible situation and herein shows up his revolt. Hamm's exposure of the absurd is an act of acknowledgment that asserts the absurd and accepts its existence despite his dissatisfaction with it. In this way, Beckett utilises Hamm's unfulfilled requests to expose the absurd that lies in the disharmony between man and the world, and to show the absurd man's qualities of consciousness, courage, and revolt. That being said about Hamm, a question poses itself: What about Clov? How does he deal with the absurd?

On the contrary to Hamm who acknowledges the absurd, Beckett delineates the character of Clov who displays his feeling of weariness without transcending it to a state of consciousness of the absurd. He just complains about Hamm and shows how much he feels weary. As much as Hamm unravels the manifestations of the absurd in the dramatic world, he also does the same thing with Clov, as he contributes to unravelling his response to the absurd through dialogues as in the following one:

"HAMM: Do you remember your father?
CLOV (wearily): Same answer.
(Pause.) You've asked me these questions millions of times" (Beckett, 2006, p. 110).

The stage directions show Clov's feeling of weariness as indicated by the word "wearily." This feeling is a requirement for man to get conscious of the absurd and start to exercise his reasoning and pose the why question, as Camus (1975) observes: "Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness . . ." (p. 19). Clov has grown weary of the repetitive questions that Hamm asks him ad nauseam and that require him to give the same repetitive and, thus, mechanical answers in a vicious circle that

recurs on a daily basis. However, there is no indication that this feeling of weariness is followed by awakening. Clov still seems to be indulging in his oblivion.

As Hamm questions other people's experience of the absurd, he asks Clov whether or not he has reached that turning point of "weariness," as Camus calls it, that point when man feels that he had enough:

"HAMM: Have you not had enough?
CLOV: Yes! (Pause.) Of what?
HAMM: Of this ... this ... thing.
CLOV: I always had" (Beckett, 2006, p. 94).

In response to the severity of the absurd world, Clov declares that he has had enough, which, in turn, has led him to weariness. Since the feeling of weariness "comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life," it is the result of a cumulative process of suffering. Clov has already drawn attention towards this accumulation at the outset of the play: "Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. (Pause.) I can't be punished any more" (Beckett, 2006, p. 93). This accumulation has reached a point of suffering that is beyond Clov's imagination rendering it as "the impossible heap." This inconceivably cumulative suffering usually works its way leading man to question the reason behind his suffering and the reason behind his existence, a questioning that is supposed to be followed by consciousness. The question now is: Does Clov reach a state of consciousness of the absurd?

In fact, Clov only complains about Hamm being the source of his adversity and hopes that he could kill him in order to put an end to such tormenting absurdity: "If I could kill him I'd die happy" (Beckett, 2006, p. 105). This wish implies how much Clov is enslaved to his own wishful thinking that clouds his consciousness and evades him from living in the present. He believes that killing Hamm would liberate him while, in fact, living in the present is the

only thing that could liberate him. This shows the contradiction between the absurd man's mindset and the non-absurd man's.

This contradiction crystallizes further when we go on discussing how Hamm, the absurd man, and Clov, the non-absurd man, respond to the absurd in their different ways and how their conflict accumulates as indicated in their dialogues. As Clov just complains about Hamm without gaining consciousness of the absurd, he also expresses his profound grief in a few words in an exchange with Hamm:

CLOV: I'll leave you. I have things to do.
HAMM: In your kitchen?
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM: What, I'd like to know.
CLOV: I look at the wall.
HAMM: The wall! And what do you see on your wall? Mene, mene? Naked bodies?
CLOV: I see my light dying. (Beckett, 2006, p. 97-98)

This shows Clov's feelings of grief and its resultant anguish which lead him to question, even momentarily, his own suffering: "Why this farce, day after day?" (Beckett, 2006, p. 107). This is the "why" question that Camus refers to in his theory. It comes naturally in the wake of mechanical life actions and indicates the feeling of weariness after which it is the definitive awakening or getting back into the chain of daily mechanical actions (Camus, 1975, p. 19). What Camus terms as "awakening" is the opposite of oblivion, which is the state of mind that characterizes the non-absurd man. By awakening, Camus suggests the constant consciousness of the absurd that leads one to adopt the absurd man's approach to life. To determine whether or not Clov has reached that stage of definitive awakening, it is significant to have a look at the following situation in which Hamm asks: "What's happening"? and Clov answers: "Something is taking its course" (Beckett, 2006, p. 107). This indeterminacy signified by the word "something" indicates that Clov is not conscious of what he is facing, that is the absurd. He is still in a state of oblivion. Clov believes that there is no reason for

him to remain in such tormenting absurdity, which, in turn, shows that he believes he has the freedom and capability to break from the absurd: "What is there to keep me here" (Beckett, 2006, p. 120)? It is such a pressing idea that it keeps raging in his mind. Hamm answers by stating that "the dialogue" is a good reason for Clov to remain (Beckett, 2006, p. 121). This stresses the significance of the illuminating dialogue that Hamm initiates through the thought-provoking questions that he poses in order to trigger consciousness.

Hamm uses a tactful way to trigger Clov's consciousness of the absurd and its inescapability. Hamm seemingly provides Clov with a way out of such absurd conditions, that is through killing the master, Hamm himself who represents the major source of Clov's feeling of the absurd. However, Clov responds that he cannot do that because he does not have the combination that opens the cupboard in which food is stored. The only one having this combination is Hamm, and by killing him, Clov runs the risk of starving to death:

"HAMM: Why don't you kill me?

CLOV: I don't know the combination of the larder" (Beckett, 2006, p. 96).

This further asserts the fact that there is no escape from the absurd world. It is noteworthy that the question Hamm raises is Beckett's attempt to ignite an enlightening dialogue that rekindles the consciousness of the absurd and asserts its inescapability. By his question, Hamm does not suggest getting killed by Clov. In fact, he raises a question whose answer shows that there is no escape for Clov from the absurd, that it is inevitable. It is a question that is meant to show a major characteristic of the absurd, which is inescapability and meant to show Hamm's consciousness of the absurd and its nature. In the same manner, Hamm, in an answer to Clov's exasperated statement, "you drive me mad, I'm mad," he replies: "If you must hit me, hit me with the axe" (Beckett, 2006, p. 130). Although it may seem that Hamm urges Clov to kill him once again, he is, in fact, making a suggestion that he knows would not

materialize. He intends to show that Clov has no outlet from his absurd conditions since the absurd cannot be vanquished, as he suggests. When Hamm asks Clov why he stays with him, the latter answer that "there's nowhere else" (Beckett, 2006, p. 95). Hamm poses questions that mean to ascertain that Clov cannot escape the absurd. This shows that Clov is imprisoned in that absurd world under the mercy of an acrimonious master just like Sisyphus who is imprisoned in his absurd world and compelled to endure the impossible punishment of the acrimonious Greek gods. Once again, this ascertains Camus's statement that there is no escape from the absurd. Through these enlightening affirmations, Hamm urges Clov to accept the absurd as it is and lead his life in the absurd man's way, that is through consciousness, courage, and acceptance. Moreover, Beckett, through his protagonist Hamm, urges his audience not to escape the absurd but to live life with its absurdity to its fullest.

In order to see how Beckett's play is meant to trigger the audience's consciousness through the problematic dramatization of the absurd man, it is essential to get a closer look at this extract:

> 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 rational being.) Ah, good, now I see what it is, yes, now I understand what they're at! (Beckett, 2006, p. 108)

This extract is a call for the audience to take a critical distance to exercise their reasoning and ponder the manifestations of the absurd in Hamm's and Clov's lives and how they respond. However, in response to this intellectually sophisticated issue that Hamm raises and that calls for serious reasoning, "Clov starts, drops the telescope and begins to scratch his belly with both hands," as the stage directions tell us, and he declares: "I have a flea" (Beckett, 2006, p. 108). This mindless unsophisticated response that shows no care for the dilemma of his existence and shows exclusive care for an itching from a flea is a comical situation of Clov's in the play that shows his

oblivion and, hence, ridicules the non-absurd man's attitude and behaviour.

In spite of this mindless response, Hamm shows an unwavering commitment to enlightening Clov as to the absurd, and he speaks more plainly about his role towards enlightening him:

"HAMM: I'm obliged to you, Clov. For your services.

CLOV (turning, sharply): Ah pardon, it's I am obliged to you.

HAMM: It's we are obliged to each other" (Beckett, 2006, p. 132).

One more thing that Hamm stresses is the bond that bends him with Clov, which he refers to in terms of mutual obligations. Moreover, it is interesting that Hamm is committed to the audience as much as he is committed to Clov and tries to influence them, which shows his effectiveness as an absurd man. In this sense, Ware (2015) observes that "once the wheels of *Endgame* have passed over us, there is no longer any chance of being at peace with the world" (p. 16). This shows how influential the play is at igniting the audience's consciousness of the absurd alongside that of Clov.

In response to such enlightening attempts, Clov admits that he sometimes questions his own stand. Man does not usually question his stand except when he detects some contradiction. This contradiction is the essence of the absurd. However, Clov admits that he skips it and gets back to his normal state of mind when he thinks of himself as "intelligent" (Beckett, 2006, p. 128), a claim which implies that he is under the conviction that he understands all that is around him and that everything is clear and meaningful in his world:

> Sometimes I wonder if I'm in my right mind. Then it passes over and I'm as lucid as before... What a fool I am! ... Sometimes I wonder if I'm in my right senses. Then it passes off and I'm as intelligent as ever (Beckett, 2006, p. 128).

Skipping such contradictions without contemplating them implies that Clov lacks a major defining quality of the absurd man, which is reasoning. However, from time to time, Clov pauses to raise the why question which never evolves into consciousness:

"HAMM: Go and get the gaff.
(Clov goes to door, halts.)
CLOV: Do this, do that, and I do it. I never refuse. Why?
HAMM: You're not able to.
CLOV: Soon I won't do it any more" (Beckett, 2006, p. 113).

When asked to go and get the gaff among other things he has been ordered to do, Clov "halts" in a way that seemingly implies a moment of speculation about his conditions, and he asks: "Why"? He ponders on the reason behind his suffering. In this moment of speculation, the dramatic time seems to freeze, and man ceases to circle around the vicious circle of his mechanical life. However, out of his speculation, Clov does not come up enlightened and conscious. Rather, he comes up with his wishful thinking about leaving his absurdity behind in a complete ignorance of its inescapability, and Hamm responds by stressing the inescapability of the absurd. However, Clov insists on believing that it is a matter of will that separates him from leaving the absurd:

"HAMM: Well! I thought you were leaving me.
CLOV: Oh not just yet, not just yet" (Beckett, 2006, p. 96).

Clov speaks as though he was free to leave his absurd conditions behind. He is still unconscious of the inescapability of the absurd. Hamm reminds him that "outside of here it's death" (Beckett, 2006, p. 96). Again, Hamm displays his consciousness of the absurd and Clov his oblivion. This contradiction between Hamm who is conscious of the absurd and Clov who is unconscious of the absurd lies at the heart of the problematic dramatization of the concept of the absurd man. It is meant to trigger the audience's minds to ponder the differences between the absurd man and the non-absurd man.

Part of Clov's non-absurd man's mentality is the unshakable belief in meaning. Hamm comments upon the fact that Clov questions the meaning of every task assigned to him: "Ah the creatures, the creatures, everything has to be explained to them" (Beckett, 2006, p. 113). In an exclamatory tone, Hamm comments that Clov tries to make sense of his absurd labour, that is he tries to confer meaning upon the absurd, an attempt which contradicts with

the very nonsensical and chaotic nature of the absurd. Moreover, the plural form of the word "creatures" suggests that this striving to make sense of the nonsensical is not only confined to one individual, Clov. Rather, it refers to all the masses who commit philosophical suicide on a daily basis by deluding themselves into believing that there is an inherent meaning in all things surrounding them and that they can dig up that meaning in order to negate the absurd. On the contrary, Hamm is conscious that it is impossible and futile as well to reach the absolute clarity and understanding of the world.

However, Clov insists on his belief in some meaning that he vainly strives to grasp, as he says to Hamm: "There's one thing I'll never understand ... Why I always obey you. Can you explain that to me" (Beckett, 2006, p. 129)? It seems that Clov believes that all is clear and comprehensible for him except one single thing, which is his obedience to Hamm. Clov's belief in meaning is contrary to the absurd man's belief in the absurd. Moreover, the aforementioned extract points out that Clov does not accept his agonizing conditions and still lives in denial. He also largely misses the insight that the reason behind not reaching any reason for his tormenting conditions despite his incessant questions is that they are absurd, that is they are meaningless and contradictory with his mind. Simply, he cannot put this world in order to align with his mind, a fact which lies at the core of the absurd. When Clov tries to put things in order such as the toy dog and other few things, Hamm gets astonished as Clov says: "I love order. It's my dream. A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust" (Beckett, 2006, p. 120). This indicates that Clov believes that there is a possibility of setting the world in order and negating the chaos, that is to align man and the world together and to put them in absolute harmony. This attitude contradicts the absurd since chaos lies at the heart of the absurd and is manifested in the form of the contradictions with which the world is replete. Unlike Clov's non-absurd man's attitude, the absurd man does not try to negate the

chaos of the absurd world. Instead, he recognizes and accepts it as it is. In reaction to this tendency towards false harmony and negation of the absurd, Hamm gets "exasperated" and asks Clov in an exclamatory tone: "What in God's name do you think you are doing" (Beckett, 2006, p. 120)? Hamm implies that there is no such thing as order in an inherently absurd world. Thus, he asks Clov to "drop it" (Beckett, 2006, p. 120), which can be understood literally as asking Clov to drop the material things he is trying to put in order. However, it can be interpreted metaphorically as leaving the idea of order and meaning altogether behind.

However, Clov fails to appropriately receive all such insights and thought-provoking questions that Hamm consistently and by all means provides him with. In actuality, Clov feels the absurd, yet he fails to acknowledge or accept it on the intellectual level. As Clov refuses to accept the absurd, he tries to avert Hamm as much as possible: "I'll leave you, I have things to do" (Beckett, 2006, p. 110). In fact, on the contrary to what he declares, Clov has nothing to do. He unravels this fact when Hamm asks him about the things he does in the kitchen:

"CLOV: I'll leave you, I have things to do.
HAMM: In your kitchen?
CLOV: Yes.
HAMM: What, I'd like to know.
CLOV: I look at the wall" (Beckett, 2006, p. 97-98).

Clov does not actually have things to do in the kitchen, as he claims, and makes up excuses to go there every now and then. The reason is that he takes refuge in the kitchen that lies outside the reach of his master to whom he is tied by a tormenting contradictory relationship. Thus, It can be said that this statement which Clov reiterates about the urgency to leave Hamm to fulfil some undefined business in the kitchen is a mere escapism strategy that is intended to help Clov escape from the absurdity of his condition. This is the contrary of what Sisyphus does, as he never escapes the place of his suffering even momentarily. Sisyphus commits himself to his

destined absurdity without ever trying to swerve from it into some other place or to adopt illusory hope.

Camus (1975) mentions that the absurd requires "a total absence of hope," which does not mean despair (p. 34). That is because hope makes one avoid facing the absurd in the present and cling to something he aspires to in the future that gives him a meaning in life, which is the contrary of the absurd. Camus states that "a man devoid of hope and conscious of being so has ceased to belong to the future" (p. 35). This explains that the absurd man has no futuristic vision, and that he has no hope and yet he is not desperate. By implication, this is possible as he holds no expectations whenever he approaches any experience in life.

Since the non-absurd man clutches at hope, he is solely focused upon the future, as he perceives it. However, this hope is so fragile and unsubstantiated by reality that it could easily turn into apprehension about the future. When Clov speaks apprehensively about the end, that is some point in the future, and says, "the end is terrific!", Hamm responds "I prefer the middle" (Beckett, 2006, p. 115). This middle refers to the present moment which can be conceived of as a midpoint between the past and the future on the timeline. Hamm's statement asserts again that he lives with his full consciousness in the present moment and that he resists all temptations to let his mind wander to a memory from the past or an assumption in the future. When Clov asks Hamm about whether he believes in the future or not: "Do you believe in the life to come"? Hamm answers: "Mine was always that" (Beckett, 2006, p. 116). The past tense indicates that he ceased to believe in the future. This also indicates that his awareness has developed from that of the non-absurd man, who is unconscious of the present moment, to that of the absurd man, who is fully conscious of the present moment with its core absurdity. Another situation in which Hamm shows his exclusive consciousness of the present is when Clov tells him that he oiled the casters of the wheelchair yesterday, and Hamm seems to wonder about the meaning of the word "yesterday":

"HAMM: Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday!
CLOV (violently): That means that bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody awful day" (Beckett, 2006, p. 113).

It can be said that, for Hamm, the word "yesterday" has ceased to carry any meaning. His mind is only focused upon the present moment and nothing else. Hence, Hamm views the past and the future as mere empty words. Clov refers to this emptiness with exasperation: "I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent" (Beckett, 2006, p. 113). At that moment, Clov gets a hint that there is no such thing as the past or the future, and that they are mere empty words which carry no intrinsic meaning.

However, Clov seems to be so constantly preoccupied with the end, the future, that his mind drifts away from the actual present moment as when he wonders: "Then how can it end" (Beckett, 2006, p. 127)? Hamm observes Clov's obsession with the future that turns his attention away from the process that is at the present moment: "You want it to end" (p. 127)? Hamm seems uninterested in how things would end up in the future. He is rather immersed in how things go on in the present unlike Clov who adopts the non-absurd man's attitude towards time. In hope for the future, Clov presumes that there will be a moment in the future in which the absurd will come to an end. For that end, he keeps waiting. This is highlighted by his statement at the outset of the play: "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished" (Beckett, 2006, p. 93). This act of waiting hinders Clov from living his life because the act of living involves the act of acceptance of life with its core absurdity, as Camus observes. What Clov leads is a life in suspension, a state of death-in-life. Speaking of death, Hamm says to Clov: "You stink already. The whole place stinks of corpses" (Beckett, 2006, p. 114). By referring to Clov's stinking smell, Hamm suggests that Clov is in a state of death-in-life and that he is not actually living his life.

In contradistinction to Clov he evades the present moment and clouds his consciousness, Children's consciousness is less

corrupted by philosophical suicide since they have not yet been fully influenced by the domineering systems of thought in society which cloud the absurd and instill wishful thinking. A child lives the present fully and can see contradictions with lucidity. Thus, he is more likely to be conscious of the absurd and less likely to be misguided by philosophical suicide. It is lucidity at its highest degree. Bearing that in mind, we see Clov, in a dismayed tone, declares the presence of "a small boy" in the horizon as he watches it from his telescope (Beckett, 2006, p. 130). The child's appearance in the horizon could be interpreted as a symbolic reminder of the emerging consciousness of the absurd and the failure of philosophical suicide, a reminder that possibly shows up for Clov near the end of the play as the last trigger to urge him to adopt the absurd man's approach to life. The appearance of the child adds up to the insights that Hamm has been trying to provide Clov with in order to liberate his consciousness from philosophical suicide and see him through the absurd. As the child, being a symbol of lucid consciousness, appears near the end of the play, his appearance seems to be a final call for Clov to adopt the absurd man's approach to his absurd life. However, Clov resists consciousness and chooses to live in denial.

For Clov, Hamm is the embodiment of the absurd that has to be escaped from. In this sense, Clov is an embodiment of philosophical suicide because he hopes for the negation of the absurd. This dramatic confrontation between the absurd and the hopes of philosophical suicide resonates with Camus's (1975) statement of an "inhuman show in which absurdity, hope and death carry on their dialogue" (p. 17). This "show," as Camus calls it, entails characters playing their roles, a fact which takes expression when Clov says to Hamm: "Let's stop playing!" (Beckett, 2006, p. 130) in an imploring tone. This suggests that he has had enough of the role that he plays in an absurd world which he does not accept. Moreover, the imploring tone shows how much Clov has become weary. In response of paramount significance, Hamm replies with

determination: "Never" (Beckett, 2006, p. 130)! Such a response ascertains again that an escape from the absurd is totally out of the question.

Hamm accepts the invariable game of the absurd life as it is. The play ends with Hamm's significant statement:

> "Since that's the way we're playing it . .. (he unfolds handkerchief) ... let's play it that way . . . (he unfolds) ... and speak no more about it . .. (he finishes unfolding) ... speak no more about it" (Beckett, 2006, p. 133).

Hamm shows that he is conscious of how the absurd goes on and is determined to proceed in its way. He has deemed enough all that he has stated and implied about the absurd and the absurd man's way of life in his dialogues and interactions with Clov throughout the play. Now, time has come to proceed living the absurd man's lifestyle without much ado. In this manner, he resembles Sisyphus who proceeds living the absurd without ado. He just shows up as an illuminating example who lives life with its absurdity rather than merely speaking or complaining about it. Hamm seems to say yes to life. Meanwhile, the audience can see Clov standing motionless in the background as he is dressed for his presumed departure that is not fulfilled as usual. Clov's position at the margin of the stage implies that he has chosen to relegate to the margin or backyard of life and has refused to get involved in it since living life necessitates living its core absurdity, which he conclusively refuses. Clov, on the contrary to Hamm, seems to say no to life.

From a dramaturgical point of view, it is in the relationship between the two characters Hamm and Clov that the concept of the absurd man achieves its ultimate expression since it is better conceptualized when opposed by the non-absurd man. The play derives its dramatic energy from human relationships (McDonald, 2007, p. 45), including that between Hamm and Clov. To this bond, Beckett applies Hegel's first dialectical law of the unity and struggle of opposites in that the non-absurd-man character produces the absurd-man character. From the outset of *Endgame*, we are introduced to the non-absurd man, as represented by Clov, who

hopes for the end of the absurd, as he presumes it to be almost "finished" (Beckett, 2006, p. 93) and keeps talking about his will to leave the absurd behind. Such oblivious attitude of the non-absurd man, which stands as the thesis of the dialectical relationship, gives rise to the conscious attitude of the absurd man, which stands as the antithesis, as represented by Hamm. Hence, it becomes clear that the absurd man's attitude is a natural development that stems from the non-absurd man's. In this sense, the concept of the non-absurd man is self-contradictory, for it subsumes and produces its opposite and vice versa. However, these two characters of the absurd man and the non-absurd man are interrelated and dynamic, as they are in constant interaction, as seen in the enlightening dialogues between Hamm and Clov. In this sense, the two antithetical characters give rise to one another as oblivion triggers consciousness, and consciousness of the absurd is so harrowing and penetrating that the non-absurd man clings to his oblivion. As one character subsumes and gives rise to the other, one could deduce that they are not separable entities and, thus, their dialectical relationship proves unbreakable. This contradiction between Hamm who chooses to accept the absurd and gets involved in the midst of life on one side and Clov who chooses to deny the absurd and gives up living life is meant to show the differences between the absurd man and the non-absurd man which Beckett intends to build up according to Hegel's dialectical law of the accumulation of the struggle between the opposites. Eventually, Beckett resolves the problematic dramatization at the final scene in which Hamm, the absurd man, centres on the stage while Clov, the non-absurd man, relegates to the margin. Through such positions, Beckett applies the last law of Hegel's dialectics, namely the negation of negation. The absurd man, as represented by Hamm, takes the lead onstage in a domineering way that negates the non-absurd man, as represented by Clov.

In conclusion, from the analysis of the relationship between Hamm and Clov, one can deduce that the two characters are

contradictorily united to clarify the concept of the absurd man. The non-absurd-man character, Clov, triggers the consciousness of Hamm, the absurd man, as he speculates on the absurd and gets into a dialogue about it. Here, Beckett applies the first law of Hegel's dialectics, that is the unity and struggle of the opposites. Then, he moves on to apply the second dialectical law, that is the accumulation of struggle. He achieves this through the dramatic elements which exhibit how much oppositional the two types of characters are. Dialogue, as a dramatic element, has an illustrative function that reveals the different mindsets of the non-absurd man and the absurd man. Besides this illustrative function, dialogue also fulfils an enlightening function since it is used as a catalyst that enlightens the non-absurd-man characters and the audience as to the absurd. Beckett also uses stage props that differentiate the non-absurd man from the absurd man. While Clov uses the alarm clock to imply his belief in the possibility of escaping from the absurd in the foreseeable future, Hamm touches the bricks of the wall to imply his consciousness of the limitations of the absurd life which cannot be escaped. All these differences between the non-absurd- man characters and the absurd-man characters accumulate till they reach the point of negation of negation, which is the third dialectical law in which the problematic is solved. As Clov sticks to his non-absurd man's mentality, he gets negated as a result of his choice to deny the absurd and he gets relegated to the margin of life, as symbolised by the stage, while Hamm takes the central position to show the empowerment of the absurd man. The appearance of the boy near the end implies the emerging consciousness of the absurd that negates the non-absurd man. As the absurd man gets empowered and the non-absurd man gets negated, Beckett creates a stage with minimal details in order to magnify the absurd man in his confrontation with the absurd. It becomes clear, then, that Beckett does not portray a bleak vision of life. Instead, he simply depicts characters, such as Hamm and Clov, that unravel its absurdity as it is. He also envisions the rise of consciousness and the empowerment of the absurd man in the midst of all-engulfing absurdities.

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