

A Sartrean Analysis of *Endgame* Under the Light of Sartre's Concept of Being-For-Others

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Abstract

The idea that existence is a kind of anguish is expressed by French author, Jean Paul Sartre whose existentialist philosophy can be associated with Beckett's plays in which characters are substantially in need of one another to realize their existence. For example, in Beckett's *Endgame*, the fact that each character needs the other as his mirror to prove his existence can be discussed with reference to Sartre's book, *Being and Nothingness*, in which Sartre puts forward the concept of 'being for others' in order to clarify the problem of 'the existence of the Other'. However, there is also another aspect of being-for-others concept, that is, making object the other of one's gaze. This is inevitably resulted in conflicts in relationships which are based on interests. Sartre suggests that one should be aware of the fact that the other is also a free consciousness just like the one who looks at the other. Then, the relationships between individuals turn into one that includes mutual respect and understanding. In these sorts of relationships, people can become the mirrors of each other and help each other in realizing their existence.

Key words: J. Paul Sartre, *Endgame*, being-for others.

ENDGAME OYUNUNUN SARTRE'İN 'BAŞKASI İÇİN VARLIK' KONSEPTİ İŞİĞİNDA ANALİZİ

Öz

Beckett oyunlarında, karakterler kendi varoluşlarını gerçekleştirmek için büyük ölçüde birbirlerine ihtiyaç duymaktadırlar. Bu durum, Fransız yazar Jean Paul Sartre'ın varoluşu bir tür ıstırapla özdeşleştiren varoluşçu felsefesi ile ilişkilendirilmeye müsaittir. Örneğin Beckett'ın *Endgame* oyununda her karakterin varlığını kanıtlamak için bir diğerine ayna olarak ihtiyaç duyması, 'öteki'nin varlığı' sorununu açıklığa kavuşturmak için Sartre'ın 'başkaları için varlık' kavramını ortaya koyduğu *Varlık ve Hiçlik* adlı kitabından hareketle tartışılabilir. Ancak 'başkası için varlık' kavramının bir başka yönü daha vardır. Bu durum ise kişinin bakışının ötekini nesneleştirilmesi şeklinde açıklanabilir ve bilhassa çıkar üzerine şekillenen ilişkilerde kaçınılmaz olarak çatışmalara neden olur. Sartre, kişinin tıpkı karşısındakine bakan gibi bakılanın da özgür bir bilinç olduğunun farkında olması gerektiğini öne sürer. Ancak bu şekilde, bireyler arasındaki ilişkiler karşılıklı saygı ve anlayış içeren bir ilişkiye dönüşür. Sadece bu tür ilişkilerde insanlar birbirlerinin aynası olabilir ve varoluşlarını gerçekleştirmede birbirlerine yardımcı olabilirler.

Anahtar sözcükler: J. Paul Sartre, *Endgame*, başkası için varlık.

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Sartre thinks that one consciousness obtains the proof for the existence of the other through the gaze. The gaze phenomenon reveals the existence of other people as free subjects. A consciousness perceives objects in the world according to the organization of these objects' being at a certain distance from his/her own body on the basis of their instrumentality and of forming an objective field in a certain situation. Thus, consciousness becomes the only center of the world it creates for itself through its gaze. However, when another human being becomes the object of consciousness, consciousness can no longer see itself as the center of the world. Because the other who is the object of his gaze, is another consciousness and this consciousness also claims to be a center of the world from his point of view. Sartre (2003) explains the decentralized consciousness as follows:

I am in a public park. Not far away there is a lawn and along the edge of that lawn there are benches. A man passes by those benches. I see this man; I apprehend him as an object and at the same time as a man...Perceiving him as a man, on the other hand, is not to apprehend an additive relation between the chair and him; it is to register an organization without distance of the things in my universe around that privileged object. (p. 254).

As it is seen, perceiving a person cannot be like perceiving the trees and the benches which are a few meters away from his/ her. To perceive a person in the park is to perceive this person as a new center of distances. The objects in the park open themselves to the other with their invisible aspects and create a new objective space in which the other becomes the center. According to Sartre, what we grasp in the other as an object is someone who sees what we see and is a subject for other objects. Therefore, we become aware of the fact that we can be objects for the other as we can be seen by the other. That is, Sartre (2003) wants to tell us that just like the other is an object for a consciousness who is a subject, this consciousness becomes an object through the gaze of the other by stating that

This position allows us at the same time to define the way in which the Other appears to me: he is the one who is other than I; therefore, he is given as a non-essential object with a character of negativity. But this Other is also a self-consciousness. As such he appears to me as an ordinary object immersed in the being of life. Similarly, it is thus that I appear to the Other: as a concrete, sensible, immediate existence. (p. 236)

For instance, if the man I saw in the park looks at me, I become the object of his gaze and I lose my claim to be the center of the world. However, this situation in which I am objectified leads me to know and accept him as a free, being for itself. This is a very important point in human relations in the sense that Sartre describes relations between individuals on the basis of the phenomenon of 'looking/looked at'. This leads one to realize that the other who objectifies him/her is also a subject and also realizes his/her own freedom.

The metaphor of the gaze refers not to the beholder but to the vulnerability of the person being looked at. Sartre (2003) speaks of certain emotions that constitute the meaning of being seen and that are the origin of one's being for others. Shame is one of these feelings:

Let us imagine that moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice I have just glued my ear to the door and looked through a keyhole. I am alone and on the level of a non-thetic self-consciousness. This means first of all that there is no self to inhabit my consciousness, nothing therefore to which I can refer my acts in order to qualify them...My consciousness sticks to my acts, it is my acts; and my acts are commanded only by the ends to be attained and by the instruments to be employed. My attitude, for example, has no "outside"; it is a pure process of relating the instrument (the keyhole) to the end to be attained (the spectacle to be seen), a pure mode of losing myself in the world, of causing myself to be drunk in by things as ink is by a blotter in order that an instrumental-complex oriented toward an end may be synthetically detached on the ground of the World...But I am this jealousy; I do not *know* it. If I contemplated it instead of making it, then only the worldly complex of instrumentality could teach it to me...But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone 'is looking at me. What does this mean? It means that I am suddenly affected in my being and that essential modifications appear in my structure-modifications which I can apprehend and fix conceptually by means of the *reflective cogito*...It is shame or pride which reveals to me the Other's look and myself at the end of that look. It is the shame or pride which makes me *live*, not *know* the situation of being looked at. (pp. 260-61).

When the person peeking through the keyhole realizes that he has been looked at, he suddenly becomes self-conscious by grounding himself outside himself. Since the other's gaze objectifies the spying person, that person will have the knowledge of his own self as the image he has made through the other's gaze. One realizes him/herself in shame as humiliated by the other. The feeling of shame comes from the fact that being for itself being has fallen into the world and in the midst of things and needs someone else's mediation to become what he is. Through the feeling of shame, I both have the awareness that I am an object for the other, and I realize the freedom of the other (the other who cannot be an object for me). Therefore, the look metaphor cannot prevent beings for itself to exist as a consciousness because beings for itself are objects not for themselves but only for the others as of the fact that beings for itself have the capability of choosing being another one (Akgündüz ,2013, p. 83). In other words, beings for itself are what they are not as they have the chance of transcending themselves through making choices. Sartre emphasizes that one can learn what human reality is only through the mediation of the other. It is an interesting fact that one cannot escape from being looked at and in fear, embarrassment, anger, the individual feels herself as being for other in a certain place and can no longer control the situation. The gaze always haunts beings for itself even when the other is not present. That is, being for itself has an objectivity for others, and always carries this objectivity within himself in the dimension of being threatened by its freedom by the freedom of the other. However, this does not mean that I am not free with my choices because of the fact that me who is objectified by the other is always at a certain distance from the other who cannot control me with which he/she is alienated (p. 84). Therefore, the relationship of human reality with other subjects turns into a relationship of understanding and recognition rather than a relationship of knowing. Human beings need the other in order to know and understand him/herself as a person. Consciousness, which is an object for the other, regains its subjectivity by looking and objectifying the other. However, objectification

of the other through gaze by consciousness does not mean the collapse of the other. It can be taken as a self-defense of consciousness. Nonetheless, there is always the possibility of the other making himself a subject. Therefore, the relationship between consciousnesses always continues in a conflict between being a subject and an object. In this sense, Sartre (1989) even mentions that hell is other people (p. 26), which is explained by Sartre (1974) as follows:

I wanted to convey here that many people are engulfed in a series of habits and customs that cause their suffering, but which they have made no effort to change. So I wanted to show the absurdity of freedom, the importance that we can change our actions by acting differently. From the phrase "others are hell", people often thought that I understood from this that our relationship with others is always broken and distorted, but I understand something different from this: if our relationship with others is distorted and distorted, then the others have to be hell. (p.99).

ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY IN A SARTREAN PERSPECTIVE

In Endgame, the audience is welcomed to the sparsely decorated stage under grey light and two men as the curtain rises. There is a prison-like area with two windows that provide views of an almost-dead world and can only be accessed by a step-ladder. Two garbage containers are revealed in the front of the stage. Hamm, blind and paralyzed, sits in an armchair on castor wheels, covered with an old sheet, and Clov stands immobile at the door, staring at Hamm. Clov climbs the step-ladder and stands beneath the windows, one on the left and the other on the right, drawing back the curtains with the step-ladder. He walks to Hamm and removes the sheet covering him. Hamm appears "in a dressing-gown, a stiff tonque on his head, a large blood-stained handkerchief over his face, a whistle hanging from his neck, a rug over his knees, thick socks on his feet" seeming to be asleep (Beckett, 1958, p. 93) after being removed from the sheet and handkerchief. Clov chuckles every now and then. He does everything mechanically, his actions are methodical, and his first words are "(fixed gaze, tonelessly.) Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished" (p. 93). As seen, he acts like a slave, doing the duties because he knows his master Hamm will punish him otherwise. From the beginning to the end of the play, Hamm sits. He whistles whenever he needs Clov, and Clov appears, carrying on a fast-paced dialogue. Clov usually answers Hamm's questions. Conversations can get heated at times, demonstrating that Hamm is the cruel master and Clov is the slave. Even Clov understands his status as a slave, as seen by his choice of demeaning phrases for himself, such as "whelp," which refers to a female dog giving birth to puppies: "Hamm: I thought I told you to be off. Clov: I am trying. Ever since I was whelped" (p. 98).

As it is seen, there is an interdependent relationship among these characters due to the fact that they need reactions from each other to confirm their existence. It is this necessity which prevents Clov from leaving although he repetitively says that he wants to leave:

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 won't leave you. (*Pause.*)

HAMM: Why don't you finish us? (*Pause.*)

I'll tell you the combination of the cupboard if you promise to finish me.

CLOV: I couldn't finish you.

HAMM: Then you won't finish me. (*Pause.*)

CLOV: I'll leave you, I have things to do. (Beckett, 1958, p. 27)

Clov neither leaves nor finishes Hamm because he needs Hamm as 'the Other' in a Sartrean sense to prove his existence. On the other hand, not only Hamm needs Clov but also Nagg and Nell need each other in the same sense. It will be more applicable to look at the relationships among these characters after clarifying the Sartre's concept of 'the other'.

According to Sartre, to perceive the existence or the reality of 'the other' means to accept the existence or the reality of 'the other'. In this sense, individuals provide mirror function for themselves. If a person is alone, then he may not have a chance to get reactions from his environment to define himself. He needs someone else as his mirror to prove his existence. Sartre (2003) expresses this necessity as follows: "When I am alone, I cannot realize my "being-seated;" at most it can be said that I simultaneously both am it and am not it. But in order for me to be what I am, it suffices merely that the Other look at me." (p. 262) Therefore, being seen by somebody gains importance for people because they justify their existence with the help of the Other's look.

On the other hand, Sartre draws a parallelism between being seen and being ashamed because if a person makes an awkward gesture, he may not realize the vulgarity of his gesture until this gesture is seen by 'the Other'. The probability of being judged by 'the Other' irritates him as soon as he notices the Other's look. In this sense, the role of 'the Other' in defining ourselves is explicated by Sartre (2003): "The Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other. By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself as on an object, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other." (p. 222) Therefore, shame causes a kind of recognition: "I recognize that I am as the Other sees me" (p. 222) In other words people are inclined to believe the impressions of 'the Other' about themselves.

In *Endgame*, the characters Hamm and Clov use each other as a mirror to assert their existence. They successively become 'the Other' of themselves in Sartrean sense. Clov is 'the Other' with whom Hamm repeatedly defines himself and proves his existence:

CLOV: I'll leave you.

HAMM: No!

CLOV: What is there to keep me here?

HAMM: The dialogue. (*Pause.*) I've got on with my story. (*Pause.*)

I've got on with it well. (*Pause. Irritably.*) Ask me where I've got to. (Beckett, 1958, p. 41)

As 'the other', Clov is obliged to maintain the dialogue with Hamm. Since Hamm justifies his identity whenever Clov replies him, he wants Clov to keep on talking. For this reason, Hamm manipulates Clov with the direction, "ask me where I've got to." Clov replies as if he is highly interested in the issue:

CLOV: Oh, by the way, your story?

HAMM (*surprised*): What story?

CLOV: The one you've been telling 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!

CLOV: You've got on with it, I hope. (Beckett, 1958, p. 41)

Hamm forces Clov to —give more willing reactions just like the reflections of a mirror through which Hamm proves his existence. In the dialogues, whether the reactions are sincere or not is not important. The important thing is just to be replied by 'the Other' because this reply is sufficient for the characters to define their existence.

From the Clov's perspective, the situation is not different. He also needs Hamm as 'the Other' to feel his existence. He cannot leave Hamm even though he always complains about Hamm:

HAMM: Go and get the gaff. (*Clov goes to the door, halts.*)

CLOV: Do this, do that, and I do it. I never refuse. Why?

HAMM: You're not able to. (Beckett, 1958, p. 31)

Clov is not able to refuse owing to the fact that he realizes his existence with the help of the directives and callings of Hamm. Hamm's each attempt to communicate with Clov gives Clov the chance to remind his existence.

For some characters, creating a sense of gratefulness by giving reference to past is another way to define themselves. For example, as the father of Hamm, Nagg uses his son and their past as a mirror to justify his existence while he says: "Whom did you call when you were a tiny boy, and were frightened, in the dark? Your mother? No. Me." (Beckett, 1958, p. 40) With the last word of his sentence, me, Nagg underlines his existence as the father of Hamm. The same relation is seen between Hamm and Clov while Hamm wants to remind Clov of the first day of his coming to Hamm's home:

HAMM: Do you remember when you came here?

CLOV: No. Too small, you told me.

HAMM: Do you remember your father?

CLOV (*wearily*): Same answer. (*Pause.*) You've asked me these questions millions of times.

HAMM: I love the old questions. (*With fervour.*) Ah the old questions, the old answers, there's nothing like them! (*Pause.*) It was I was a father to you.

CLOV: Yes. (*He looks at Hamm fixedly.*) You were that to me.

HAMM: My house a home for you.

CLOV: Yes. (*He looks about him.*) This was that for me. (Beckett, 1958, p. 28)

Just like what his father does to Hamm, Hamm causes Clov to feel gratitude with reminding him the past. Although Clov replies him in a very mechanic way, Hamm asks these questions repetitively in order to confirm his identity.

At last, as to the relationship between Nagg and Nell, they also use each other as a mirror to define themselves. For example, they realize their ageing with the help of their reactions:

NAGG: Can you see me?

NELL: Hardly. And you?

NAGG: What?

NELL: Can you see me?

NAGG: Hardly.

NELL: So much the better, so much the better.

NAGG: Don't say that. (*Pause.*) Our sight has failed. (Beckett, 1958, p. 11)

Moreover, Nagg gives reference to the past and tries to refresh their memories in order to remind their existence since they are very stationary, and their movement area is very limited to feel their presence. For this reason, Nagg refers to the days when they were happy:

NELL: It was on Lake Como. (*Pause.*) One April afternoon. (*Pause.*) Can you believe it?

NAGG: What?

NELL: That we once went out rowing on Lake Como. (*Pause.*) One April afternoon.

NAGG: We had got engaged the day before.

NELL: Engaged!

NAGG: You were in such fits that we capsized. By rights we should have been drowned.

NELL: It was because I felt happy. (Beckett, 1958, p. 16)

Apart from them, trying to establish a physical communication with Nell, Nagg also wants to confirm their existence. As 'the other' of Nell, Nagg proves Nell's existence by trying to form concrete interactions:

NAGG: Kiss me.

NELL: We can't.

NAGG: Try. (*Their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again.*) (Beckett, 1958, p. 11)

Nagg wants Nell to kiss him even though he knows that it is impossible to touch each other. Yet, he, in a way, reminds Nell that she exists. Similarly, he asks Nell to scratch his back: "Could you give me a scratch before you go?" (Beckett, 1958, p. 14) again in order to make Nell realize her capacity to move. Another attempt of Nagg which makes Nell feel her existence is the fact that Nagg wants to share his biscuit with Nell: "Biscuit. I've kept you half. (He looks at the biscuit. Proudly.) Three quarters. For you. Here." (p. 13) In this sense, Nagg underlines the existence of Nell especially with the words, 'for you'.

As it is seen, there are two aspects of the look phenomena. The first one is a positive one in the sense that we can know ourselves better through the judgements of others who mirror the unknown sides of us through their gaze. In this sense, individuals are in need of others. However, analyzing the relationships of the characters as a positive one in understanding themselves and other people in this play will be wrong and superficial because these characters need each other because they make each other instruments of their aims. In other words, each character makes the other as the object of his/her gaze. This may be explained as the second aspect of the look of the others, which is about making the others as your look's object. This is resulted in distorted relationships based on people's interests. Because people deny their freedom as individuals they do not see other people as free beings, that is why, relationships between human beings are based

on the interests. This is resulted in making the others as objects instead of accepting them as free consciousnesses. For instance,

HAMM: Look at the see.

CLOV: It's the same.

HAMM: Look at the ocean! (Clov gets down, takes a few steps towards window left, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, turns the telescope on the without, looks at length. He starts, lowers the telescope, examines it, turns it again on the without.)

CLOV: Never seen anything like that!

HAMM (anxious): What? A sail? A fin? Smoke?

CLOV (looking): The light is sunk.

HAMM (relieved): Pehh we all knew that. (Beckett, 1958, p. 22).

Clov is only an object for Hamm. He literally becomes the eyes of Hamm who cannot see. Hamm does not see Clov as a free consciousness like himself because of the fact that Hamm denies his freedom as an individual. He accepts the conditions under which he lives as unchangeable and a sort of fate. According to Sartre (1966), this is a mistake believed by all people. He defines true humanity as man's relationship with others and the way of being in himself, the way of being of man (p. 68). In addition, he claims that a human being is what he is not. That is, a human being is always free to choose and transform him/herself from a person s/he is not. Through his/her choices, s/he can change the conditions in which s/he lives. However, s/he should be aware of the fact that the conditions under which s/he lives may be different from the current ones accepting his/her freedom. Nonetheless, neither Hamm nor Clov is willing to accept this fact about their freedom as individuals. On the contrary, both of them consider their lives as indispensable by stating:

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, 1958, p. 5).

Both Hamm and Clov accept their situations as their fates although there are always possibilities for them as a natural result of their absolute freedom as they are creatures defined as being for itself. However, Clov does not go because he accepts this situation as his fate and hides his freedom from himself. In this sense, he is happy for staying there. As for Hammy, he is happy for living like that as he needs Clov to look after himself. These characters evade from attempting to create different selves and lives for themselves by denying their freedom. In a sense, they lie to themselves because they have to attempt to act as soon as they accept that they are free to act. Since they do not want to act and attempt to change what is given them as fates they do not leave each other. In this regard, the speech of Clov and Hamm can be a good example at the end of the play:

CLOV: There's one thing I'll never understand. (He gets down). Why I always obey you. Can you explain that to me?

HAMM: No... Perhaps it's compassion. (Beckett, 1958, p. 53).

Clov's question is a very striking one in the sense that he accepts his situation a sort a worker and he does not see any way out from his situation. This is a very clear example of bad faith, that is, lying to himself (Sartre, 2008, p. 149). Sartre states that a human being is what he is not. This means that as a free consciousness, there are limitless possibilities for a human being to be. Only when a human being becomes aware of the fact that he is free to choose what he wants to be, he can transform himself into the he wants to be. Therefore, human beings are responsible for what they are. They should not accept what is given them as their fates. In this regard, Hamm's answer is a very interesting one because human beings accept the values such as mercy, good and bad as their taken for granted realities. However, this is not an excuse for Sartre as human beings are the only actors of their lives even if it is easier to accept these taken for granted realities as their realities. In other words, Sartre reminds us that we have embraced the idea of a human nature that imprisons us, by persuading us to believe that change is impossible (Bernasconi, 2007, p. 34). In this sense, Hamm, even, accuses of his father by saying

HAMM: Scoundrel! Why did you engender me?

NAGG: I didn't know.

HAMM: What? What didn't you know?

NAGG: That it'd be you (Beckett, 1958, p. 35).

It is a very obvious example of denying one's freedom. Sartre accepts that being born is not our choices but, after birth, we are responsible for what we are as he says existence precedes essence and "the upsurge of freedom is immediate and concrete and is not to be distinguished from its choice; that is, from the person himself" (568). We are responsible for creating our identities and having a meaningful life. This necessitates a struggle but none of the characters seems to be willing to show a struggle to create their own lives as accepting one's conditions as indispensable is easier. For instance, Hamm is happy for making objects for everybody and everything to reach his aims. This becomes very obvious when Hamm asks about his dog from Clov:

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. (Clov looks around for the dog). (Beckett, 1958, p. 48)

As it is seen, Hamm looks for another object for himself to make use of it either for relieving himself for another reasons. If Hamm does not change his perspective towards the things and other people around him, his relationships with them will not go beyond that of master and slave. For instance, the relationship between Hamm and Clov is like the one between master and slave in the sense that they need each other as objects in order to reach their aims (Sartre, 1992). Sartre (2003) explains the relationship between master and slave as the one which is based on interests. If the master loses his/her slave, then s/he will not be master anymore. In this sense, s/he needs a slave and does not want to see him/her as a free consciousness like a master. As for the slave, his/her only aim in life is to be a master just like his/her master. In this sense, the slave is hostile to

his/her master. The common thing in both situations is the fact that neither master nor slave has the aim of realizing themselves (p. 295). According to Sartre, the motives and aims of the actions done by the individuals should be themselves, that is, transform themselves and try to be what they are not. Because they deny their freedom and want to be what they see their relations with each other becomes distorted and inauthentic in which each side denies their freedom as beings for itself. This relationship can only evolve from an inauthentic or distorted into authentic or one based on mutual respect for their individuality through accepting the other as a free consciousness instead of objects of their gazes. In this regard, Akgündüz (2013) states, "connecting to the other by fate results in the situation of not being the same with himself. This forms the basis of authentic presence. Authentic relation between the authentic and the other appears in the connection between distantness to the self and openness to the other" (p. 71).

In conclusion, the analysis of the relationship among the characters in *Endgame* with reference to Sartre's concept of 'the other' gives us a chance to see that each character in the play needs the other to assert their identities and to justify their existence. The fear of being alone prevents each character from breaking off the relations with the other one owing to the fact that these relations have an important role for the characters to prove their existence. For this reason, there occur artificial dialogues which are established not because of communication but because of affirming the existence of the characters. Another reason why they do not leave each other can be related to another aspect of the being for others concept. That is, because each of these characters sees the other one as the object of his/her gaze it becomes easy to lie his/herself about their absolute freedom. To look at the repetitive and meaningless dialogues of the play from this perspective will make the text more perceptible for readers.

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