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# Samuel Beckett's waiting for Godot: A Study of Religious Symbolism, Salvation vs. Damnation

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**Received:** 02 June 2023

**Accepted:** 18 August 2023

**Published:** 01 October 2023

*Abstract: This paper attempts to highlight the several ways to interpret the play's absurdity, which results from how existence is portrayed but nevertheless has a strong religious undertone. Samuel Beckett, an Irish author, also produces plays and poems. James Joyce's writing had an impact on this modernist author. Samuel Beckett's earliest and most well-known play, Waiting for Godot, is regarded as his greatest achievement. The play's original French version was eventually translated by Samuel Beckett into English. The play is a reaction to the ruthless expansion of capitalism, rabid individualism and the resulting loss of community life, the widespread destruction of the World War, the loss of human insight, and the predicament of the average person following the horrible some world war. The play also examines the dramatic literary changes brought on by post-world war effects, the uncertainty surrounding the existence of God, and the predicament faced by the average person in the wake of the brutal conflict. A noteworthy work of English literature from the twentieth century, the play, subtitled "A Tragicomedy in Two Acts," is a prime example of the threat of the ridiculous. There are several ways to interpret the play's absurdity, which results from how existence is represented but nevertheless has strong religious connotations.*

**Keywords:** *Absurdity, Human Insight, Dramatic Literary Change, Tragicomedy in Two Acts.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The tragicomedy in the play demonstrates the existentialism thesis extremely effectively. The drama is related to religion since it uses a metaphor. For instance, the play has dialogue that summarizes biblical scriptures, mentioning topics like waiting for Jesus Christ's second coming as the only means of finding redemption, repentance, being cleansed of one's sins etc. The idea that redemption by way of divine grace is dependent on luck is reiterated by Beckett. When given the opportunity to reflect, Lucky demonstrates his mental capacity and



names numerous terms, such as "apathia," "athambia," and "aphasia." This is not mere rigmarole; it has philosophical significance since apathia signifies divine indifference, athambia divine dread, and aphasia divine Speechlessness. In other words, God has the capacity for dread as well as passivity and silence. God's love and salvation are only available to a select few.

### **Objectives**

1. To examine the use of religious iconography in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* to juxtapose redemption with damnation.
2. To analyze the biblical allegory used in *Waiting for Godot*.
3. To examine the Existentialism in the play.

### **Review of the Literature**

"The Themes in Samuel Beckett's Play *Waiting for Godot*" by Dr. Samer Ziyad Alsharadgeh, According to this analysis, the play poses numerous issues without offering any answers. As the play's title suggests, it is about waiting as two guys wait for a third person to arrive but they never do. Near the end of the play, one of Beckett's tramps queries his companion, "And if he comes? The other replies, "We'll be saved," but so many other details, including the nature of that salvation, are still unknown. Both the viewer and the characters in *Waiting for Godot* are forced to endure waiting.

Abdul Bari Khan, Hafiza Sana Mansoor, and Huma Alia "The Impact of Absurdism In *Waiting for Godot*" by Samuel Beckett emphasized that the "Waiting for Godot" is entirely on the life of a modern man and his worthless existence, the essay examines the impact of absurdism in the play. According to the absurdist, "life has no purpose. There is no man, but there are men everywhere. Earthly existence resembles a bubble".

### **Relevance of the Research**

Additionally, the play *Waiting for Godot* underlines the theme of false promise owing to uncertainty, oppression, pain, vanity, the cliché "nothing to be done," and man's hope for a better tomorrow. It also serves as an expressive picture of the human condition.

### **Findings**

Regarding the religious, redemptive, and themes present in the drama *Waiting for Godot*, the researcher has gleaned some insightful data. The play has many other philosophical ideas that the researcher will be able to study, such as the idea of nothingness, vanity, pitifulness, state of emptiness, and never-ending yearning for hope, light, and salvation. In this endeavor, the descriptive and exploratory methodologies will be beneficial.

Themes of Salvation vs. Damnation and Religious Symbolism in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*.

The willow tree is regularly shown in the first play, although it has few leaves in the second half of the performance. Additionally, the tree of life is mentioned in the first and last chapters of the Bible (Genesis 2-3 and Revelation 22). The tree of life is a symbol for God's



sustaining power and the abundance of eternal life that is possible in God. God places the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the Garden of Eden, according to the book of Genesis. The tree of life in Revelation represents the restoration of God's life-giving presence. In Genesis 3:24, God shut off access to the tree of life by setting up strong cherubim and a burning sword to block the path. However, in this chapter of Revelation, the tree is accessible to everyone who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. "Those who wash their clothes are fortunate. (NLT, Revelation 22:14) They will be permitted to pass through the city's gates and eat from the tree of life.

The cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified might also be represented by the tree without leaves. Jesus Christ, "the second Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:44-49), paid the price for the sins of the entire human race by dying on the cross, allowing us to once again reach the tree of life. Those who seek forgiveness of sin via the shed blood of Jesus Christ are welcome to the tree of life (everlasting life), while those who remain in disobedience will be excluded. Because the tree of life symbolizes the eternal life of God made available to reconciled humanity, all who eat from it have continuous, eternal life.

## **2. CONCLUSION**

The play's other important themes are emptiness, vanity, futility, and nothingness. An excessive love for or pride in one's own achievements or appearance is referred to as vanity. Biblical definitions of vanity include existence without God and having no ultimate meaning, being empty, or having no value. Focusing exclusively on one's own accomplishments or attractiveness but lacking the humility to see the value of others, especially God, is the definition of vanity. When one allows their religion to be centered on God, they find true meaning and joy. Claiming to be pious while engaging in rebellious behavior is pointless. It is vanity to pursue wealth and to compete with others. The peril of vanity must be completely avoided. Mirrors have a repulsive propensity to cause harm. They have the ability to keep you coming back to see yourself. While men idolize their muscles, you spend hours in front of the mirror adoring your hair, face, body, and outfits. I've done it before, so I know how easy it is to develop a body obsession. Mirrors should be used with caution. Remember that God created everything. He gave us life and gave us a variety of abilities. We must never boast or elevate oneself. Following after worldly pursuits like money is risky and pointless.

## **3. REFERENCES**

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