THE MAIN CHARACTER'S ILLUSIONS LEADING TO HIS DOWNFALL IN ARTHUR MILLER'S DEATH OF A SALESMAN



A Thesis presented to the English Department. Faculty of Letters

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DEDICATED TO:

My parents: Imam Ghozalie and Kuntriyah
My grandmothers: Kasiyatun and Nasoba
My grandfathers: Djanan and Asim
My sisters: Renny Andayani, Wiwit Insasi, and Dwi Kurniawati
Classmates and friends
Alma Mater

MOTTO:

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" (Proverb)

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Jember, March 2005

Robby Affandi



1.1 The Rationale

Literature is truly related to life because it is the reflection of human life in general. Literary works are used to portray human's life. Jones defines (1968:1) it in his book Outlines of Literature as "simply anothe: way in which we can experience the world around us through our imagination". This definition proves that literature deals with life and human beings. It is able to arouse our thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, Hudson (1965:10) states in his book An Introduction to the Study of Literature that:

Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about these aspects of it, which have the most immediate and enduring interests for all of us. It is thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language.

Therefore, by reading literary works like poetry, novel, short story or drama, some information and experiences will be achieved, which can be a basic view of life. Of course, everything in real life is not well organized in literary works that are more interesting. In addition, the functions of literary works not only give enjoyment but also give various kinds of knowledge, especially concerning with our lives. Jones (1968:5) also states that:

Good literature lives not only because it gives pleasure, but also because it applies the truths, facts, and style to the basic emotions of man, those emotions all men everywhere share pity, fear, anger, pain, hope, joy, and sorrow.

As a form of literary work, drama portrays human life, which is designed to be performed on the stage. Reaske (1966:5) states in How to Analyze Drama that a drama is a work of literature or a composition, which delineates life and human activities by means of presenting various actions and dialogues between groups of characters. This definition shows us that drama differs from the other literary works because its dialogues and actions perform on the stage although drama is in a written form.

In analyzing a play and understanding the massage of the drama, the readers are forced to know some elements of drama such as the main character. Stanton (1964:17) in An Introduction to Fiction states that the main character is the same as the central character and is one who is relevant to every even; in the story; usually the events cause some changes either in him or attitudes toward him.

Arthur Miller is one of some greatest playwrights in America. He writes a play Death of A Salesman which becomes his masterpiece. He is also known as a writer who is more interested in criticizing the aspects of American Society. Most of his works have themes concerning with the relationship between the society and the individual. He cannot imagine writing a play just to tell a story. His effort is to find the chain of moral being moving in a hidden way.

Death of A Salesman is one of Arthur Miller's plays which seems to present the human dreams and struggles in the American condition in thirties. Illusions lead them to their downfalls and become cures of frustration for many people at that time, especially for Willy Loman as the main character in the play. A number of illusions fulfill his own lack of success and lead him to his downfall. He fails to become a rich man and to get much money as a symbol of power, which becomes the goal for each person at that time. He also fails to reach his ambition and dream to achieve a good position in his career. Unfortunately, he fails not only in his business career, but also in his family. He fails to bring up his

sons not only in business, but also in education. Willy's failures depress him and disturb the peacetulness of his mind. Dixon (1986:47) in Working with People in Crisis states, "Depression is caused by failure to meet internalized standard values or goals". Thus failure can be dangerous to human beings because it can lead them to negative actions if they cannot handle it. Failures can cause them to act irrationally and to destroy their lives, like Willy Loman. In other words, he gets his downfall. He cannot achieve his desire; ideas or reasons and he comes to despair. He loses his fortune and cannot change his destiny. He also loses their prominent power that makes them so proud. So, his illusions lead him to his downfall and his illusions are the causes of his downfall in his tragic life. In relation with the above description, the main character's illusions leading to his downfall become the main reason to choose the topic and to discuss in this thesis.

1.2 The Problem to Discuss

Reading drama not only gives moral teachings to the readers, but also leads them to study about human life. To get a valuable experience and a deep impression from studying drama, tragedy generally offers comfortable choice for it deals with problems of life.

Tragedy is a common phenomenon that frequently happens in the one's life. In general, a tragedy is indicated by an unhappy life in a family or often it is indicated by the death of the family members. Tragedy presents some problems of life such as, sufferings, conflicts, blunders, dilemmas, and failures.

In the play, psychological aspects are presented clearly by Miller through Willy Loman's problems and attitudes. Willy Loman, as the main character of the play, is described as an old exhausted man who undergoes an unhappy life. He has a strong desire to be a good salesman who is like Dave Singleman. Dave is so popular that makes Willy take this job and reach much money. He thinks that material success is the road to his happiness and popularity. In his whole life, he tries to imitate that salesman and he believes the idea that a man should have personal attractiveness and being well liked to get success. He also forces his own ideas upon his sons. He orders his sons to stop their studies that have spent a lot of money in order to get a job. Unfortunately, he fails in his effort, therefore, he gets downfall in his life. When he cannot bear the burden of his life, he comes to a tragic decision by committing suicide

Based on the description above, the discussion of the thesis focuses on Willy Loman's illusions leading to his downfall in his life.

1.3 The Goals of the Study

There are objectives of writing the thesis. The first objective is to explore the psychological aspects, especially illusions and downfall of the main character in building a structure of drama. It is able to improve knowledge that psychological aspects can be the pivotal ingredients of drama.

The second objective is that it is aimed at giving readers another way to appreciate the drama, which is analyzed. It is an important duty because most readers read drama just to find out how the story runs. It is only evidence that readers of the drama can find so many things inside what happened in the drama.

At last, this thesis will enrich creativities and knowledge. Moreover, It can be helpful for the readers and provide a reference for the other researchers who are interested in the American Drama, especially in Arthur Miller's Death of A Salesman.

1.4 The Scope of Study

It is necessary to limit the scope of the study just to focus on the topic of this thesis. This thesis discusses the main characters illusions leading to his downfall, especially about illusions and downfall as the part of the main character in this drama and not to analyze them further as a study of psychology. The thesis takes the supporting theory from psychology, which has relation with the analysis. The discussion is started from the main character's illusions, and ended by the main character's illusions leading to his downfall.

1.5 The Hypothesis

After reading the play, Willy Loman is known to be the main character that has a number of illusions in his life. His illusions influence his peacefulness of mind and lead him to his downfall. He wants to be a great salesman. Moreover, he forces his sons to follow his idea in business. He does not realize the real situation and condition at the time. He often fantasies his glorious past time and thinks hard how charges his life and family better in the future. Unfortunately, he has a false idea, belief or impression about his life; therefore, it leads him to his downfall.

Before coming to the real study, there is a hypothesis to show what things that will appropriately be studied in this thesis. The hypothesis of this thesis is whether or not Willy Loman's illusions lead to his downfall.

1.6 The Approach to Use

Psychological Approach is used as the basis data cultivation because the study in this thesis is close to psychological matters. Scott (1962:71-72) states in his book Five Approaches of Literary Criticism that:

There are three applications of psychological knowledge to art. The first application provides more precise language, which discusses the creative process. A second application goes back to the study of life of the authors as means of understanding their arts. Third, psychology can be used to explain fictitious characters (1962: 71-72).

It means that using the theory of psychology can approach the character in the literary work. This thesis focuses on the third application because in *Death of A Salesman*, Loman's attitudes and emotions toward himself and the other characters cannot be explained from one side. The actions which are performed by Loman could be causally explained because it is concerning with motive, reason, and intention which produce action as the effects. In *Dictionary of Sociology and Related Science*, psychology is defined as:

Systematic knowledge of psychic phenomena, including what is called, sensation, perception, imagination, memory, though, judgment, voluntary behavior, the self, beliefs, attitudes, desires, and the psychology also deals with relationships between psychic and non psychic phenomena (1964; 239).

Further, this analysis is applicable to get a knowledge that this study concerns with psychological aspects. Thus, the acceptable approach to use is the psychological one.

1.7 The Method of Analysis

In writing this thesis, deductive method is applied to analyze the data. The deductive method refers to a manner of drawing a conclusion of certain knowledge from the general cases to the particular ones (Hadi, 1995:42). The discussion of this thesis is started from the general assumption that someone has illusion in his life. The assumption is that there is a possibility that the main character's illusion in Arthur Miller's Death of A Salesman leads to his downfall. Next, some facts in Arthur Miller's Death of A Salesman are explored, which indicate the truth of the assumption. Then, descriptive method is also necessary in analyzing the data. Descriptive method means the way of discussion, describing or depicting the situation of the subject, for instance person, institution; society that based on the visible or available facts is also used (Suryabrata, 1993:18-19).

The study is conducted completely by means of books and references that are called a library research. The data and information that support the study are obtained from the library research.

1.8 The Organization of The Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one presents the rationale, the problem to discuss, the goals of the study, the scope of the study, the hypothesis, the approach to use, the method of analysis, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter two explains the biography of Arthur Miller, his works, and the synopsis of the play. Chapter three is concerned with the meanings of the terms. The main discussion is placed in chapter four which explains the main character's illusions leading to his downfall. At last, Chapter five is the conclusion of the whole discussion.



CHAPTER II THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR AND THE SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

2.1 The Short Biography of Arthur Miller

Arthur Miller was an American playwright. He was born on October 17, 1915 in Manhattan, New York. The Miller's family was the Jewish immigrant from Austria who moved out on Manhattan in 1929. His father was a manufacture and shop owner. After finishing school, Miller worked for his father, but it could not contribute his life, then he tried to find another job. When he was nineteen years old, he went to the University of Michigan, becoming a journalism and switching to English. He also joined the Federal Theatre. He married a fellow student from Michigan, the doctor of insurance salesman and a Catholic. They settled in Brooklyn and worked in a publishing company and from a series of radio plays.

From the beginning of the career, Arthur Miller has seen the individual being deeply flawed but capable of resisting the fact of that imperfection. Miller's central theme is the problem of relating one's deeds to one's conception of oneself (Bigsby, 1984:244). He started his career as a writer at the moment of economic, social, ethical and private degradations. His early works: Honors at Dawn, They Too Rises, The Half Bridge, The Mcn Who Had All the Luck, All My Son, depicted social problems and human nature. In these plays, he never proposed a fundamental change in the economic or political structure of his society, but he merely efforted to find the chain of moral being moving in a hidden way. In writing plays, Arthur Miller chiefly writes theme concerning with the relationship between the individual and the society. His unfalingly serious

subject matter often gains dramatic intensity from conflict within individuals, in which enabling person of personal integrity may be pitted against human weakness and outside pressures, social, political, or economic.

Miller's debut in the theatre, The Man Who Had All The Luck (1944), was a failure, but he was more successful with Situation Normal (1944), a series of interviews with American serviceman which emerged out of a movie project. At first, Focus was conceived as a play but it turned out to be his only novel. It was not until All My Sons open in January 1947 that he could think of himself as a writer. In many ways it was especially appropriate that Miller chooses to adapt Ibsen's An Enemy of The People. It was the natural transition between All My Sons and The Crucible. In the former, he is emphasizing the later he asserts the need to resist the demands assault the integrity of the self.

Death of a salesman, the story of an old salesman, dominated by a life time of failure in a society which apparently values only success, Miller has said, is a love story between a man and his son, and in a crazy way between both of them in American (Bigsby, 1992:36). It ran for 742 performances, won the Antoinette Perry Award, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Beyond that, it is undoubtedly one of the finest plays ever written by an American.

The other Miller's plays are The Price, After the Fall, The Archhishop's Calling, Some Kind of Love, Elegy for A Lady, The American Clock, The Misfits. The Price reflects Miller's concern with crucial relation public responsibility. After The Fall has a further intriguing dimension in that it offers an insight into Miller's sense of his own role as a successful playwright.

In November 1982, two one-act plays were performed, Some Kind of Love Story and Elegy for A Lady. The former concerns an attempt of a detective to arrive at the facts about a murder that committed some five years earlier. In the later reality becomes even more problematic.

The American Clock first produced at the Harold Clurman Theatre in New York City on November 20th, 1980. Set in the 1930s and 1940s, this play continues Miller's attempts to psychoanalysis America and to trace the origins of trauma.

2.2 The Synopsis of The Play

Death of A Salesman stories an old man who works as a salesman in the Wagner Company for thirty-four years. Willy Loman has two sons, Biff and Happy, and his wife, Linda. Suddenly, he comes back home, because he could not keep his mind on driving. His wife Linda worries that scmething has happened to her husband. Willy tells her that he is all right, but he did some troubles with the car and suddenly he found himself dreaming.

Linda realizes that Willy is too cld. He is sixty years old. Linda wants Willy to transfer his job to New York, but Willy decides to stay in New England, the state that he has been working in for many years. Willy says that he believes in his own power. He could have changed if things had gone away. Willy asks about his sons, Biff and Happy who have been out of dates. He does not understand why Biff, in his age, cannot find himself a job. He thinks Biff does not posses so much personal attractiveness.

Linda suggests that they take a ride in the country on Sunday and open the windshield, but he tells her that the windshields not open the new car. Then, he remembers that he was thinking about the old Chevy that he had in 1928. Biff and Happy talk in the bedroom when their parents are talking in the living room. They are discussing the situation between them. Biff wonders why Willy often mocks him all time, although he thinks he cannot be near with Willy. Happy says that he can get anything, but he feels still lonely. Biff suggests Happy to get a job in open air, and Happy agrees with his idea. As long as they are talking, they hear his father talking to himself and Biff-resents it because his mother can hear it.

Willy, in his talking to himself, imagines of the time in 1928 when he has come back from a trip and the boys cleaning the car. Willy explains to young Biff that he must be careful with the girl. Willy brought him a punching bag and the boys very pleased about it Happy says to his father that Biff finds some trouble with his coach. But Willy thinks, it is not a problem. Willy says that he will travel in his business and promises to them that someday he will take them on his trip.

Then the young Bernard comes, he reminds Biff that they are supposed to study, because the math teacher has threatened to flunk Biff. Willy thinks that it is unnecessary for Biff. Biff then explains that Bernard is well known but he does not have personality attractiveness. Willy tells the boys that the good rank in school is not a problem in their lives. The important thing is personal attractiveness.

Linda joins them and tells Willy how much they owe, and Willy realizes that they owe more than he made. At that time, Linda needs some silk stockings and assures Willy that he looks so good. Willy worries about his personal appearance, but Linda tells him that Willy is still handsome. Suddenly, in Willy's mind, Linda appears her face to laugh him.

Still in Willy's mind, Bernard looks for Biff to study. Willy is very angry with Biff and threatens to whip him. Suddenly, he changes it because he thinks that Biff has personality.

To scene back to present, Willy has been talking to himself and Happy comes to check his father. Willy is still talking to himself and wonders why he did not go to Alaska with Ben, his brother. Afterwards, Charley, his neighbor, comes and asks Willy to play cards. Charley offers Willy a job, but he refuses it. As he and Charley are talking, Ben appears in Willy's mind. Willy talks to both of them, as a result, Charley leaves Willy alone.

Linda comes to Willy who is still talking with Bcn. Biff also checks his father and asks his mother what happened with Willy. She tells Biff that his father is all right until Biff writes a letter to go home. Linda tells Biff that Willy tries to commit suicide. She tells that Willy's life is in his hand.

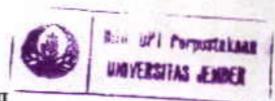
Afterwards, Biff and Willy argue about the job. Happy tells that Biff wants to see Bill Oliver. Actually, Linda tries to say something, but Willy debates her and because of that, Biff is angry with Willy.

In the morning, Willy finds that Biff has already left to see Bill Oliver. As Willy is about to leave, Linda tells him that he is supposed to meet Biff and Happy for dinner. Willy comes to see Howard asking a job in New York, but he does not give a job for Willy. Willy gets angry because Howard says that he cannot be received in the firm anymore. In his leneliness, Ben appears and offers a job in Alaska, but Linda disagrees because Willy has a good position in his job. Then, young Bernard rushes in. Charley also appears and tries to kid Willy, but it makes him mad.

While Willy has been thinking of past events, he walks to Charley's office to ask for a little money. He offers Willy a job, but Willy refuses.

In a restaurant, Happy meets Biff and Willy for dinner. Happy and Biff make some conversation about Bill Oliver. Biff tells his brother that he had stolen Bill's pen. Willy joins and tells them that he is fired. While Biff wants to talk to his father about his failure, the young Bernard appears in Willy's mind and reminds him that Biff have flunked math. When Biff tries to show Willy that he is no good, Happy picks up the girls and it makes Willy hear woman voice. He leaves the bathroom, then they leave Willy alone.

In his mind, Willy feels with a woman in a hotel room in Boston. The young Biff is at the door and tells Willy that he has flunked the math. Afterwards, Biff knows that his father has an affair with a woman. It makes Biff say to Willy that his father is a liar and a fake. To scene back to present, Willy asks to the waiter if there is a seed store, then he leaves to look for some seeds. Willy is planting carrots in his garden and talking to Ben. Biff comes to him and says that he will leave home and will not come back. Willy refuses to shake hand. Biff becomes angry, and then he frustrates and tries to make Willy understand the truth. Willy astonishes that Biff has turned to him and cried. Again, Willy is talking to Ben about the planning and Ben agrees to his idea. Linda calls Willy, but she just hears a car at full speed. At Willy's grave, Linda wanders why no one comes. Biff mentions that Willy had all the wrong dreams.



CHAPTER III THE MEANINGS OF THE TERMS

It is necessary to understand the detailed meanings of the terms which related to the title of the thesis in order to get the appropriate and complete meanings of the terms. It also enables the readers to avoid unexpected misunderstandings of certain ideas.

There are three terms to be defined. Those are main character, illusion, and downfall. The recognition of the meanings of the terms is very useful to lead the readers to the curiosity of the discussion in this thesis. It will also help the readers to avoid the unexpected misunderstandings of such ideas as well as to make them get precise understandings of the thesis as a whole. Therefore, this chapter discusses the meanings of the terms related to the title of this thesis.

3.1 The Meaning of Main Character

Understanding the meaning of character leads us to comprehend clearly the exact meaning of the term of main character. As Shaw (1972:70) in *Dictionary of Literary Terms* mentions that:

This term has several meanings, the most common of which is "The aggregate of traits and features that form the nature of some person or animal." Character also refers to moral qualities, ethical standards and principles. In literature, character has several other specific meanings notably that of a person represented in a story, novel, play, etc.

He indicates that the commonest meaning of a character is the attitude or the behavior of a human being or an animal as well. Then, he argues that character also refers to principles of what is right and wrong. The last meaning that is especially confined to literature is a person represented in a literary work. The meaning which is employed in this thesis is the last one.

Whereas Abrams (1971:21) in Glossary of Literary Terms defines the meaning character as:

Character is the person, in a dramatic or narrative work, endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say - the dialogue - and what they do - the action. The grounds in a character's temperamental and moral nature for his speech and actions constitute his motivation.

From the above quotation it is concluded that a character is a person in a literary work, which has certain moral qualities and dispositions. In the work of literature, the character can be seen from the dialogue and the action in which his motivation is also known as well.

There are several types of characters among the types such as the main character. Stanton (1964:1) in An Introduction to Piction states, "The main character is the same with the central character and is one who is relevant to every event in the story; usually the events cause some changes either in him or attitudes toward him".

Based on the explanation, a main character refers to the most important person in a story, in which he or she says, does and appears continually. In other words, the main character is the important person who is portrayed in a literary work and he plays an important role to the progress of the story.

3.2 The Meaning of Illusion

To know more about the meaning of illusion, it is important firstly to understand the word illusion. Pei (1974:477) in his book The New Groller Webster International Dictionary of The English Dictionary states that:

Illusion is a false impression or belief; a delusion; false perception or conception of some objects of sense; a perception of a thing which misrepresents it, or gives it qualities not present in reality; something that deceives by producing a false impression; the act of deceiving as by legerdemain.

Hornby (2000:640) in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Currents English also states that illusion is a false idea or belief, especially about somebody or a situation; something that seems to exist but in fact does not, or seems to be something that it is not.

The definition above explains that illusion is a false idea, belief or impression possessed by somebody. Moreover, it leads somebody to do certain attitudes or actions in order to apply them in a real life. As a result, he gets success or failure to gain his desire.

It is also better in this chapter to know the meaning of illusion from a psychology book. Saleh (2004:114) in his book *Psikologi Suatu Pengantar* gives a brief explanation about illusion. According to him, Illusion is a false perception; gaining a false impression about some objective facts which received by senses.

In his brief explanation above, he depicts illusion as a process or called further as mental process which concerns with psychology. A false perceptions and points of view will cause illusion. This concept gives an underlined illumination to the repressed wishes which are gratified indirectly in illusion.

3.3 The Meaning of Downfall

Someone, who cannot achieve his desires, ideas, or reasons, usually comes to despair or even downfall. Some definitions of downfall are clarified below.

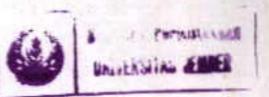
Morris (1971:395) in American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language states that the word downfall is special evidence or unexpected one, which causes a sucden loss of wealth, rank reputation, or happiness.

Pei (1976:299) in his book Lexicon Webster Dictionary gives the definition of downfall that it is a sudden descent or fall a position of power, honor, wealth, fame or the like; ruin; destruction; the thing causing a downfall esp.; one that is heavy or sudden, of ruin or snow.

The definition above explains that downfall is a special evidence which causes a sudden descent from a certain position, so the people undergo downfall will get a suffering and even they feel that their lives are worthless. They may lose their riches, happiness, and their steps or grade in advancement. The downfall also leads them to lose a position of power, esteem, and reputation then they set a ruin.

While in another dictionary, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Currents English, Hornby (1986:261) states that downfall is a heavy fall of rain etc, fall from fortune or power.

Referring to the above meanings and definitions, downfall makes matters worse. Downfall can make people lose their fortune. Thus, they cannot change their destiny. They also lose their prominent power that makes them so proud. Moreover, downfall can be described as a sudden loss of the good condition to the worse. It makes people ruined or destroyed and they have to accept it to be their destinies in the uncertain time.



CHAPTER V

Illusion sometimes happens to human beings because it cannot be separated from them. Not all human beings are easy to view a reality because they are surrounded by a world of illusion. They prefer to create dreams and expectations than to accept a reality of life. Actually, reality is the most important and the priority for locking this world. It does not mean that dreams and expectations are forbidden. They are still important, but human beings should not follow all dreams and expectations that precisely will ignore a reality. In other words, love of truth should be bigger than efforts to realize dreams and expectations.

Death of A Salesmar, is one of Arthur Miller's plays. It is a modern play telling about the life of a salesman who has dreams and expectations in his life in America in thirties. Willy Loman, the main character of this play, experiences illusions in his life because of his false perception of reality and his self-delusion. He wants to become a great salesman, to force his sons to become a salesman, to imagine his glorious at past time, to worry and think hard his life in the future. Unluckily, he fails to achieve his desires and ideas. He cannot become a great a salesman because he has no capability to run his business and no skill on selling. He only imitates the successful Dave Singleman by taking his idea of personal attractiveness and well liked. Moreover, he knows that his oldest son, Biff, fails not only in his education, but also in business. He seems to realize that his illusions about a better life of his family never come into reality. After he knows his failures because of his illusions, he gets pessimistic about his future life. He tries to solve the problem with the Illusion again, but he does

not realize it. He brings himself into negative action by committing suicide. He hopes his family will get insurance from the accident to solve his financial problem of his family.

Actually, it is difficult for him to accept the reality, but he cannot change it. From time to time, his failures that caused by his illusions bring him to his downfall. Willy Loman's ideal of a successful business cannot be realized. In the way, he experiences a downfall because of his failures to reach his idea and success in his life. It is terribly hard for Willy Loman to face the reality that he has lost his honor, power, reputation, and fortune.

From the discussion above, it is true that the main character, Willy Loman experiences downfall from his illusions. Besides, this play gives messages that human beings should be able to know and identify the reality in their lives in order to get out from the world of illusion. If the realities can be accepted whatever they are, the illusion will be disappeared. Decreasing illusions from life make human beings more effective to face many problems of lives which based on rational though. This is also an advice for human beings that they should not experience a downfall, if they can relate a red thread from negative events to get some useful experiences. Experiences decide how human beings view this world whether they use a right or false perception about the objective facts and events. So at the end, the habits to face reality and strong right beliefs lead human beings to reach their success and to avoid illusions from their lives.

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