

S A M U E L
B E C K E T T

A COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS

Edited by
Martin Esslin

Prentice-Hall, Inc.  *Englewood Cliffs, N.J.*
A SPECTRUM BOOK

Contents

✓ Introduction, by <i>Martin Esslin</i>	1
✓ Three Dialogues, by <i>Samuel Beckett and Georges Duthuit</i>	16
The Private Pain and the Whey of Words: A Survey of Beckett's Verse, by <i>John Fletcher</i>	23
✓ Samuel Beckett: Humor and the Void, by <i>Maurice Nadeau</i>	33
✓ The Beckett Hero, by <i>A. J. Leventhal</i>	37
✓ The Cartesian Centaur, by <i>Hugh Kenner</i>	52
<i>Watt</i> , by <i>Jacqueline Hoefler</i>	62
✓ Samuel Beckett and Universal Parody, by <i>Jean-Jacques Mayoux</i>	77
✓ Failure of an Attempt at De-Mythologization: Samuel Beckett's Novels, by <i>Dieter Wellershoff</i>	92
Samuel Beckett, or "Presence" in the Theatre, by <i>Alain Robbe- Grillet</i>	108
Reflections on Samuel Beckett's Plays, by <i>Eva Metman</i>	117
✓ Being without Time: On Beckett's Play <i>Waiting for Godot</i> , by <i>Günther Anders</i>	140
Beckett's Brinkmanship, by <i>Ross Chambers</i>	152
Philosophical Fragments in the Works of Samuel Beckett, by <i>Ruby Cohn</i>	169

Being without Time: On Beckett's Play *Waiting for Godot*

by Günther Anders

1. *The play is a negative parable.*

All commentators are agreed on this: that it is a *parable*. But although the dispute about the interpretation of the parable rages with the utmost intensity, not one of those who quarrel about who or what Godot is, and who promptly (as though it were the ABC of nihilism) answer this question with "death" or "the meaning of life" or "God," has given the least thought to the mechanism by which all parables, and hence Beckett's parable too, work. This mechanism we call "*inversion*." What is inversion?

When Aesop of Lafontaine wanted to say: men are like animals—did they show men as animals? No. Instead they reversed—and this is the peculiarly amusing alienation effect of all fables—the two elements of the equation, its subject and its predicate; that is: they stated that animals behave as men. A quarter of a century ago Brecht followed the same principle, when, in the *Threepenny Opera*, he wanted to show that bourgeois are thieves; he too turned the subject into the predicate and presented thieves behaving as bourgeois. It is this process of substitution which one must have grasped before starting to interpret Beckett's fable. For Beckett too uses it—in an extremely subtle way.

In order to present a fable about a kind of existence, which has lost both form and principle and in which life no longer goes forward, he destroys both the form and the principle so far characteristic of fables: now the *destroyed* fable, the fable which does not go forward, becomes the adequate representation of stagnant life; his meaningless parable about man stands for the parable of meaningless man. True: this fable

"Being without Time: On Beckett's Play *Waiting for Godot*" by Günther Anders [Original title: "Sein ohne Zeit. Zu Becketts Stück *En attendant Godot*"]. From *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen. Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1956). Originally published in *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* (January 1954). Translated by Martin Esslin and revised by the author. Copyright © 1956 by C. H. Beck'sche Verlagbuchhandlung. Reprinted by permission of the translator and the publisher.

no longer corresponds to the formal ideal of the classical fable. But as it is a fable about a kind of life that no longer has any point that could be presented in the form of a fable, it is its weakness and its failure itself which becomes its point; if it suffers from lack of cohesion this is so because lack of cohesion is its subject matter; if it renounces relating an action, it does so because the action it relates is life without action; if it defies convention by no longer offering a story, it does so because it describes man eliminated from, and deprived of, history. That the events and fragments of conversation which constitute the play arise without motivation, or simply repeat themselves (in so insidious a manner that those involved do not even notice the fact of repetition), needs to be denied: for this lack of motivation is motivated by the subject matter; and this subject matter is a form of life without a motive principle and without motivation.

Although it is, so to say, a *negative* fable, it nevertheless remains a fable. For despite the fact that no active maxims can be derived from it, the play remains on the level of *abstraction*. While the novels of the last one hundred and fifty years had contented themselves to *narrate* a way of life that had lost its formal principle, this play represents *formlessness as such*; and not only this—its subject matter—is an "abstraction"; also the characters are "abstractions": the play's "heroes," Estragon and Vladimir, are clearly *men in general*; yes, they are *abstract* in the most cruel, literal sense of the word: they are *abstracti*, which means: pulled away, set apart. And as they, having been pulled out of the world, no longer have anything to do with it, the world has, for them, become empty; hence the world of the play too is an "abstraction": an empty stage, empty but for one prop indispensable to the meaning of the fable: the tree in its center, which defines the world as a permanent instrument for suicide, or life as the non-committing of suicide.

The two heroes thus are merely alive, but no longer living in a world. And this concept is carried through with such merciless consequence that other attempts at representing a form of life that has lost its world—and contemporary literature, philosophy, and art are by no means poor in such representations—appear cosy in comparison. Doebelin's Franz Biberkopf,¹ after all, still stood in the center of that bustle of worldly life that no longer was of any concern to him; Kafka's surveyor K. still tried to get into his *castle*, not to mention the forerunner of them all, Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas, who still did battle with the world, even though he treated it as if it were Kant's domain of morality. Somehow all these still partook of the world: Biberkopf had too much of the world and hence no world of his own; K. still hoped for a world that he might reach; and Kohlhaas still knew the world—to him the world had become identical with the perfidy against which he fought. None of them had yet quite arrived in a

¹The hero of the novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) who loses contact with the city around him when he becomes unemployed.

"non-world." Beckett's creatures have. In their ears even the thunder of the world's bustle which had deafened Biberkopf has died away; they have forgotten even to try to penetrate into the castle of the world; they have renounced even the attempt to measure *this* world by the standards of *another*. That this real loss of a world requires special means if it is to be represented in literature or on the stage goes without saying. Where a world no longer exists, there can no longer be a possibility of a *collision with the world*, and therefore the very *possibility of tragedy has been forfeited*. Or to put it more precisely: the tragedy of this kind of existence lies in the fact that it does not even have a chance of tragedy, that it must always, at the same time, in its totality be farce (not, as in the tragedies of our forebears, merely shot through with farce): and that therefore it can only be represented as farce, as *ontological farce, not as comedy*. And that is what Beckett does.

We know from Don Quixote how closely abstraction and farce are connected. But Don Quixote had merely abstracted from the actual condition of *his* world; not from the world as such. Beckett's farce, therefore, is more "radical": for it is not by placing people in a world or situation which they do not want to accept and with which they therefore clash that he produces his farcical effects, but by placing them in a place that is no place at all. This turns them into clowns, for the metaphysical comicality of clowns does, after all, consist in their being unable to distinguish between being and non-being, by falling down non-existing stairs, or by treating real stairs as though they did not exist. But in contrast to such clowns (like Chaplin) who, in order to create ceaseless laughter have to keep themselves ceaselessly busy and who collide with the world almost on principle, Beckett's heroes are *indolent or paralyzed clowns*. For them, it is not just this or that object but the world itself that does not exist, hence they renounce altogether any attempt to concern themselves with it. Thus the *fabulae personae* whom Beckett selects as representative of today's mankind can only be *clochards*, creatures excluded from the scheme of the world who have nothing to do any longer, because they do not have anything to do with it.

2. *The proposition: I remain, therefore I am waiting for something.*

Nothing to do any longer.—Ever since Döbblin, more than twenty years ago, had described in Biberkopf a man sentenced to doing nothing and therefore deprived of a world, "action" has become more and more questionable; not because the number of unemployed has increased—it has not—but because millions who are in fact still active, increasingly feel that they are *acted upon*: that they are active without themselves deciding on the objective of their action, without even being able to discern the

nature of that objective; or because they are aware that their activity is suicidal in its objective. In short: *action has lost so much of its independence that it itself has become a form of passivity, and even where action is deadly strenuous or actually deadly, it has assumed the character of futile action or inaction*. That Estragon and Vladimir, who do absolutely nothing, are representative of millions of people, is undeniable.

But they are so fully representative only, because, in spite of their inaction and the pointlessness of their existence, they still want to *go on*, and thus do not belong to the tragic class of those who consider suicide. They are as far removed from the noisy *pathos* of the desperado-heroes of nineteenth-century literature as from the hysteria of Strindberg's characters. They are truer: just as untheatrical and just as inconsistent as the average mass man actually is. For mass men, after all, don't give up living even when their life becomes pointless; even the nihilists wish to go on living, or at least they don't wish *not to be alive*. And it is *not despite* the pointlessness of their life that the Estragons and Vladimirs wish to go on living, but, on the contrary, *just because* their life has become pointless—by which I mean that, ruined by their habit of inaction or of acting without their own initiative, they have lost their will power to decide not to go on, their freedom to end it all. Or, ultimately, they go on living merely because they happen to exist, and because existence doesn't know of any other alternative but to exist.

It is with this kind of life, with man who continues existing because he happens to exist, that Beckett's play deals. But it deals with it in a manner basically different from all previous literary treatments of despair. The proposition which one might attribute to all classical desperado figures (including Faust) might have been expressed as: "*We have no more to expect, therefore we shall not remain.*" Estragon and Vladimir, on the other hand, use "inversions" of this formula: "*We remain,*" they seem to be saying, "*therefore we must be waiting for something.*" And: "*We are waiting, therefore there must be something we are waiting for.*"

These mottoes sound more positive than those of their forbearers. But they only *sound* more positive. For it cannot be said that the two tramps are waiting for anything in particular. They even have to remind each other of the very fact *that* they are waiting and *for what* they are waiting. Thus, actually they are not waiting for anything. But exposed as they are to the daily continuation of their existence they can't help concluding that *they must be waiting*; and exposed to their continued waiting, they can't help assuming that they are waiting *for something*. Just as we, seeing people at night waiting at a bus stop, are forced to assume that they are waiting, and that what they are waiting for will not be long in coming. Thus, to ask who or what the expected Godot is, is meaningless. *Godot is nothing but the name for the fact that life which goes on pointlessly misinterprets itself as "waiting," as "waiting for something."* The positive attitude of the two tramps thus amounts to a double negation:

their inability to recognize the senselessness of their position. As a matter of fact, this interpretation is confirmed by the author himself, since Beckett has told us that he is not so much concerned with Godot, as with "Waiting."

3. *Beckett does not show nihilistic men, but the inability of men to be nihilists.*

To characterize this mode of life in which man continues to wait merely because he happens to be, French commentators have used Heidegger's term "*Geworfenheit*" (the fact and state of having been "thrown" into the world). Quite wrongly. For while Heidegger, in using this term, designates the contingency of each individual's being just himself (and demands that each take possession of his contingent being in order to make it the basis of his own "design") the two heroes of Beckett's play do neither, like the millions whom they represent. They neither recognize their own existence as contingent, nor think of abolishing this contingency, of transforming it into something positive with which they can identify themselves. Their existence is far less heroic than that meant by Heidegger, far more trustful, far more "realistic." They would be as little likely to deprive a chair of its function and attribute to it a mere functionless reality, as to regard themselves in that light. For they are "metaphysicists," that is to say *incapable of doing without the concept of meaning*. Heidegger's term represents an express dethroning of the concept of "meaning of life." Vladimir and Estragon, on the other hand, conclude from the fact of their existence that there must be something for which they are waiting; they are *champions of the doctrine that life must have meaning even in a manifestly meaningless situation*. To say that they represent "nihilists" is, therefore, not only incorrect, but the exact reverse of what Beckett wants to show. As they do not lose hope, are even incapable of losing hope, they are naive, incurably optimistic ideologists. *What Beckett presents is not nihilism, but the inability of man to be a nihilist even in a situation of utter hopelessness*. Part of the compassionate sadness conveyed by the play springs not so much from the hopeless situation as such as from the fact that the two heroes, through their waiting, show that they are not able to cope with this situation, hence that they are *not* nihilists. It is this defect which makes them so incredibly funny.

That nothing is funnier than totally unjustified total confidence, writers of comedy have amply proved in more than two thousand years—for instance by their predilection for the character of the cuckold who, despite all evidence to the contrary, remains constitutionally incapable of distrust. Vladimir and Estragon are his brothers: they resemble those "*maris imaginaires*" of the French fairy tale who, despite their living on a desert

island and never having been married, continuously expect the return of their wives. And in Beckett's eyes we are all like them.

4. *Demonstrations of God's existence "ex absentia."*

No. That "Godot" exists and that he is going to come, nothing of all this has been suggested by Beckett with one single word. Although the name "Godot" undoubtedly conceals the English word "God," the play does not deal with Him, but merely with the *concept of God*. No wonder therefore that God's image is left vague: what God does, so we read in the theological passages of the play, is unknown; from hearsay it appears as though he does nothing at all; and the only information conveyed by his daily messenger boy, brother to Kafka's Barnabas, is that, alas, Godot will not be coming today, but certainly tomorrow—and thus Beckett clearly indicates that it is precisely Godot's *non-arrival* which keeps them waiting for him, and their faith in him, alive. "Let's go."—"We can't."—"Why not?"—"We're waiting for Godot."—"Ah."

The similarity to Kafka is unmistakable; it is impossible not to be reminded of the "Message of the Dead King." But whether this is a case of direct literary indebtedness does not matter, for both authors are *des enfants du même siècle*, nourished by the same pre-literary source. Whether it is Rilke, or Kafka, or Beckett—their *religious experience springs*, paradoxically, always from *religious frustration, from the fact that they do not experience God, and thus paradoxically from an experience they share with unbelief*. In Rilke this experience springs from the inaccessibility of God (the first Duino elegy); in Kafka from inaccessibility in a search (*The Castle*); in Beckett from inaccessibility in the act of waiting. For all of them the demonstrations of God's existence can be formulated as: "*He does not come, therefore He is.*" "*Parousia does not occur, therefore He exists.*" Here the negativity we know from "negative theology" seems to have affected the religious experience itself—thereby intensifying it immensely: while in negative theology, it was merely the *absence of attributes* that was being used to define God, here *God's absence itself* is made into a proof of His being. That this is true of Rilke and Kafka is undeniable; likewise that Heidegger's dictum which he borrows from Hoelderlin—"for where danger is growing, rescue is growing, too"—belongs to the same type of "*proof ex absentia*." And now the same applies to Beckett's characters. To his characters, though not to Beckett himself. For he occupies a special position: although he puts the conclusion that the non-arrival of Godot demonstrates his existence into the mouths of his creatures, he not only doesn't share this conviction, but even derides it as absurd. *His play* therefore is certainly *not a religious play; at most it deals with religion*. "At most": for what he presents is ultimately only a faith that believes in itself. And that is no faith.

5. *Being without Time*

When we try to find out how such a life, despite its aimlessness, can actually go on, we make a most strange discovery. For although continuing, such a life doesn't *go on*, it becomes a "life without time." By this I mean that what we call "time" springs from man's needs and from his attempts to satisfy them, that life is temporal only because needs are either not yet satisfied, or goals have already been reached, or objectives reached are still at one's disposal. Now we have seen that in Estragon's and Vladimir's lives, objectives no longer exist. For this reason in the play time does not exist either, life is "treading water," so to speak; and it is for this reason, and quite legitimately, that events and conversations are going in circles (just like figures on a stage who represent passers-by and who walk off on the left only to re-enter on the right pretending to be other people); before and after become like left and right, they lose their time character; after a while this circular movement gives the impression of being stationary, time appears to be standing still and becomes (in analogy to Hegel's "bad infinity") a "bad eternity."

Beckett carries this concept through with such complete consistency that he presents (which is probably without precedence in the history of drama) a second act which is but a slightly varied version of the first act, thus offering to our startled eyes nothing new or startling. Accustomed as we are to encounter new situations in the course of a play, we are deeply surprised by this lack of surprise, by the fact that the scenes repeat themselves; and we are filled with the horror which we feel in front of people who suffer from *amnesia*. For with one exception, none of the characters is aware of this repetition; and even when reminded of it, they remain incapable of recognizing that their experiences or conversations are merely recapitulations of yesterday's events or talk. Yet presenting the characters as victims of amnesia is absolutely legitimate; for where there is no time, there can be no memory either. And yet time here is not quite as rocklike as so often in Kafka's works. For, as Beckett leaves a rudiment of activity—of what kind this rudiment is we shall see shortly—there still remains a minimum of time. Although a "stream of time" doesn't exist any longer, the "time material" is not petrified yet, it still can somehow be pushed back or aside and thus be turned into something like a "past": instead of a moving stream, time here has become something like a stagnant mush. True, to make this mush move is possible only for seconds, at most minutes; if the tool that keeps this time moving is withdrawn only for a moment, everything flows together again and nothing remains to indicate that anything at all has happened. Fleeting, however, time has been produced and enjoyed.

The rudimentary activity which can temporarily set this time mush in motion, however, is no longer real "action"; for it has no objective except

to make time move which, in "normal" active life, is not the aim of action but its consequence. Although this formula may sound paradoxical, if time still survives here, it owes its survival exclusively to the fact that the activity of "time killing" has not died out yet. And for this reason "consequence" amounts to the mere "sequence of time" which the two tramps try to produce; no other meaning of consequence is known to them. When the two play "leaving," they remain; when they play "helping" they hardly lift a finger. Even their impulses of goodness or indignation stop so suddenly that their sudden disappearance gives the effect of a *negative explosion*. And yet the two resume their "activity" time and again, because this kind of activity keeps time moving, pushes a few inches of time behind them, and brings them a few inches closer to the alleged Godot.

This goes so far—and at this point the play achieves truly heartrending tones—that the two even propose to act out feelings and emotions, that they actually embrace each other, because, after all, emotions, too, are motions and as such might push back the mush of stagnant time. If again and again Vladimir and Estragon wrack their brains what to do next, they are doing so because "it helps to pass the time," or because whatever they do, will, as long as they are doing *something*, reduce the distance which separates them from Godot. The best way to overcome the doldrums is through the activation of their being together, through their ever renewed taking advantage of the chance that it is at least as a *pair* that they have to bear their senseless existence. If they did not cling to each other desperately, if they could not rely on the never ceasing to and fro of their conversation, if they had not their quarrels, if they did not leave each other or reunite—actions which, after all, cannot take place without taking up time—they would actually be lost. That Beckett presents us with a pair is, thus, not only motivated by his technical insight that a play about a *Robinson Crusoe of Expectation* would coagulate and become a mere painting, but also by his wish to show that everyone is the other's pastime; that company facilitates endurance of the pointlessness of existence, or at least conceals it; that, although not giving an absolute guarantee that time will pass, it helps now and then. And if the one asks: "Where have I put my pipe?" and the other replies: "Charming evening," these monologue-like cues and responses resemble the thrusts of two blind duellers who, each stabbing into the darkness on his own, talk themselves into believing that they are actually fighting each other.

Of course, in "normal life," during the interludes of leisure time, "passing the time" occurs, too. Playing games is an illustration: by simulating activity, we try to make that time pass which otherwise would threaten to stagnate. One could object that we do this only in our leisure time, that, after all, we separate "real life" from "play"; while, in the case of Vladimir and Estragon, it is just the *incessant* attempt to make time pass which is so characteristic, and which reflects the specific misery and ab-

surdity of their life. But is it really legitimate to make this distinction between them and ourselves? Is there really a recognizable boundary line between our "real life" and our "playing"?

I do not think so. The pitiful struggle they are waging to keep up the semblance of action is probably so impressive only because it mirrors our own fate, that of modern mass man. Since, through the mechanization of labor, the worker is deprived of the chance to recognize what he is actually doing, and of seeing the objectives of his work, his working too has become something like a sham activity. Real work and the most absurd pseudo-work¹ differ in no way, neither structurally nor psychologically. On the other hand, by this kind of work, man has become so thoroughly unbalanced that he now feels the urge to restore his equilibrium during his leisure time by engaging in substitute activities and hobbies, and by inventing pseudo-objectives with which he can identify himself and which he actually wishes to reach: thus *it is precisely during his leisure time and while playing that he seems to be doing real work*—for instance by resuming obsolete forms of production such as cultivating his balcony garden or do-it-yourself carpentering, etc. And this is not even the extreme case. For mass-man today has been deprived so completely of his initiative and of his ability to shape his leisure time himself that he now depends upon the ceaselessly running conveyor belt of radio and television to make time pass. The best proof, however, for the affinity which exists today between working time and leisure time is the fact that there are already situations in which the two occur *simultaneously*, for instance in millions of homes and factories where the flow of work and the flow of the radio transmission are becoming one single stream. If the silly seriousness with which Estragon and Vladimir struggle to produce a semblance of activity strikes us as so deadly serious and so fantastically symptomatic for our time, it is only because today working time and leisure time, activity and indolence, real life and playing, have become so inextricably intertwined.

True, in order to pass the time, any action, even any sham activity, will do. But no matter which action—to mobilize an action is so difficult, because to do something solely in order to make the time pass requires precisely that kind of freedom which Estragon and Vladimir, paralyzed by the passivity of their life, have already forfeited. Therefore, Beckett is wholly realistic when he makes the two fail in their attempts to play games and when he shows them unable to master their leisure time. They are all the less able to do that because they do not possess yet, as we do, recognized and stereotyped forms of leisure pastimes, neither sport nor Mozart Sonatas, and are, therefore, forced to improvise and invent their games on the spot, to take activities from the vast store of everyday actions and transform them into play in order to pass the time. In those situations

¹For instance: in the period of maximum unemployment preceding Hitler, certain workers were ordered to dig ditches and to fill them again just in order to keep themselves busy.

in which we, the more fortunate ones, play football and, once we have finished, can start all over again, Estragon plays the *da capo* game "shoe off, shoe on"; and not in order to exhibit himself as a fool, but to exhibit *us* as fools: in order to demonstrate through the device of inversion that our playing of games (the pointlessness of which is already made invisible by its public recognition) has no more meaning than his. The inverted meaning of the scene in which Estragon plays "shoe off, shoe on" reads: "Our playing of games is a shoe off, shoe on, too, a ghostly activity meant only to produce the false appearance of activity." And, in the last analysis: "Our real shoe on, shoe off—that is: our everyday existence—is nothing but a playing of games, clownlike without real consequences, springing solely from the vain hope that it will make time pass." And: "We are their brothers—only that the two clowns *know* that they are playing, while we do not." Thus it is not they but we who are the actors in the farce. And this is the triumph of Beckett's inversion.

6. Enter the Antipodes.

It is clear that the two must envy the fate of those fellow-men who do not need to keep the "time mush" moving themselves, or who do this as a matter of course, because they don't know of any alternative. These antipodes are Pozzo and Lucky.

Attempts to decipher who they are and what they symbolize have kept the commentators no less busy than the question of the identity of Godot. But all these attempts went in the wrong direction, because the pair itself has a deciphering function. What do I mean?

I mean that the two already *had* existed in the form of concepts, that they already had played a role in speculative philosophy, and that Beckett has now retranslated the two abstractions into concrete figures.

Since the early thirties when Hegel's dialectic and Marx's theory of the class struggle began to interest the younger generation in France, the famous image of the pair "*master and servant*" from Hegel's *Phaenomenologie des Geistes* so deeply engraved itself into the consciousness of those intellectuals born around 1900 that it occupies today the place which the image of *Prometheus* held in the nineteenth century: it has become the *image of man in general*. Sartre is the chief witness of this change. True, in the *Orestes* of his *Les Mouches* he still presented the typical Promethean figure (as had Goethe, Shelley, Byron, and Ibsen); but afterwards he replaced this figure by the Hegelian symbol. What is decisive in this new symbol is its "*pluralization*" and its inherent "*antagonism*": that "Man" is now seen as a *pair of men*; that the individual (who, as a metaphysical self-made man, had fought a Promethean struggle against the Gods) has now been replaced by *men* who fight *each other*

for domination. It is *they* who are now regarded as *reality*; for "to be" now means "to dominate" and to struggle for domination; and they alone are seen as the "motor of time": for time is history; and history, in the eyes of dialectical philosophy, owes its movement exclusively to antagonism (between man and man or class and class); so exclusively, that at the moment when these antagonisms came to an end, history itself would cease, too.

Now this Hegelian symbol of the motor of history steps onto the stage embodied by the figures Pozzo and Lucky, onto the stage on which, so far, nothing had reigned but "being without time"—if it can be said of such stagnation that it "reigns." It is quite understandable that the entrance of this new pair intrigues the spectator. First for aesthetic reasons: the stagnation which, at the beginning, he had rejected as hardly acceptable, but finally accepted as the "law of the Godot world," is suddenly disturbed by the intrusion of characters who are undeniably active. It is as though before our very eyes a still photo turned into a movie.

But however shy Vladimir and Estragon may feel when first facing the new pair, there is one thing they cannot conceal: that they regard them as enviable. It is evident that, in the eyes of those who are sentenced to "being without time," the champions of time, even the most infernal ones, must appear as privileged beings. Pozzo, the master, is enviable because he has no need to "make time" by himself, or to advance by himself, not to speak of waiting for Godot: for Lucky drags him forward anyway. And Lucky, the servant, is enviable because he not only *can* march on, but actually *must* do so, for Pozzo is behind him and sees to it that he does. And even though they pass the two timeless tramps by without knowing that they have already done so the day before—as "blind history" as it were, which has not yet become aware of its being history—they nevertheless, whether dragged or pushed, are already in motion and therefore, in Estragon's and Vladimir's eyes, fortunate creatures. It is, therefore, quite understandable that they suspect Pozzo (although he has never heard Godot's name and even mispronounces it as a matter of principle) of being Godot himself; for behind Pozzo's whip, they feel, their waiting might find an end. Nor is it a coincidence that Lucky, the beast of burden, is called by that name. For although he has to bear everything and spends his life carrying sacks filled with sand, he is totally freed from all burdens of initiative and if they could stand in his place they would no longer be compelled to wait about at one and the same place, they could move on, because they would be forced to move on, their hell would have lost its sting, and once in a while even a bone might be thrown to them.

Any attempt to find in this image of man and his world positive or consoling features would, after all we have said, be in vain. And yet, in *one* respect Beckett's play differs from all those nihilistic documents which mirror our age: in its *tone*. The tone of those documents usually

is of that seriousness that (because it does not yet know the human warmth of humor) could be called beastly; or it is (since no longer concerned with man) cynical, thus inhuman, too. The clown however—and that this is a clownish play we have shown—is neither beastly serious nor cynical; but filled with a sadness which, since it reflects the sadness of all human fate, creates solidarity amongst men and, by doing so, may make this fate a little less unbearable. It was no coincidence that the character who earned more gratitude in our century than any other was the pitiful figure of the early Chaplin. Farce seems to have become the last asylum for compassion, the complicity of the sad our last comfort. And although the mere tone of humaneness which springs from this barren soil of meaninglessness may only be a tiny comfort; and although the voice which comforts us does not know why it is comforting and who the Godot is for whom it makes us hope—it shows that warmth means more than meaning; and that it is not the metaphysician who has the last word.