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University of Ben Boulaid Moustafa, Batna-2 Algeria
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
Department of English



**THE QUEST FOR THE SELF IN BECKETT'S PLAYS:
THE BECKETTIAN VIEWS OF TIME AND SPACE**

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Submitted by:

Badra MENOUEUR

Supervised by:

Mr. Omar GHOUAR (Professor University Batna 2)

Jury members:

<i>President :</i>	<i>Prof. Mohamed Salah NEDJAI</i>	<i>University of Batna-2</i>
<i>Supervisor:</i>	<i>Prof. Omar GHOUAR</i>	<i>University of Batna-2</i>
<i>Examiner :</i>	<i>Prof. Hashemi ABOUBOU</i>	<i>University of Batna-2</i>
<i>Examiner :</i>	<i>Dr. Mohamed KHELADI</i>	<i>University of Tlemcen</i>
<i>Examiner :</i>	<i>Dr. Salah DAIRA</i>	<i>University of Tebessa</i>

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Dedication

To the memory of my father.....

To my mother that God protect her.....

To my husband and my children Asmaa, Imad, Hichem and Moncif.

To my brothers and sisters.....

To all my relatives and friends..

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First of all I have to thank Allah.

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Abstract

The Twentieth century has been the age of the outbreak of two world wars that caused spiritual disillusionment. These two world wars caused profound destruction and loss of ultimate human certainties and definitively created a world without unifying principles, a world without meaning, disconnected from human life. This hastened the advent of nihilism and accentuated the widespread feeling of futility where the self is transformed into a meaningless abstraction. These obsessions have been demonstrated in the works of 20th-century writer Samuel Beckett in his dramatic art ranging from existentialism, psychology, and the absurd which were applied in the description of a dominant trend in the twentieth-century theoretical barrel. The goal of the present study is to examine Beckett's use of the experience of waiting and struggling with a pervasive sense of futility, anguish, and loss, as well as the attainment of timelessness as a strategy for getting closer to the self, have been examined as key components of Beckett's approach in the search for self's identity. Using Proust "A la recherche du temps perdu", Heidegger's "Being and Time", and Sartre's "Being and Nothingness" as theoretical platforms, this thesis will concentrate on the manner in which "Waiting for Godot" and "Endgame" presents the self as a phenomenological construction based on cumulative past experiences inserted into and spread throughout Time and Space. Changing one's perceptions of a memory-time continuum, based on this premise, is to change the self that emerges as a result of this dynamic. The main concern of this thesis is to explore how Beckett as an artist and philosopher deals with the notion of time and space, Beckett's own personal perspective on time, space, and identity while taking into account the contribution of critic, philosophers, academics and literary figures have made in dealing with this human condition, being in time and space represented in the Theatre of The Absurd. The Beckettian vision of the world does not focus on identity, the other-elusive self, but it conveys a struggling attempt to recall past events as a means for the quest for the authentic self based on a decisive detachment, this sum of mnemonic experiences lived through time and space. This philosophical perception of the self is further complicated if we are to study the way in which this self is perceived not only by the subject/object but also by the external world. For example, how does Beckett's character proclaim his identity through his interaction with the external world, the world of the other? Does Beckett's character modify memory so as to conform to the idealistic vision he has created of himself? Does this image, perceived as the desired Other gives him an image of the authentic self?

Keywords: *Absurdism – Beckett – Self – subject/object – Time/Space.*

Abstract in French

(Résumé)

Le vingtième siècle a été l'ère du déclenchement de deux guerres mondiales qui ont provoqué une désillusion spirituelle. Ces deux guerres mondiales ont provoqué une destruction profonde et la perte des ultimes certitudes humaines et ont définitivement créé un monde sans principes unificateurs, un monde sans sens, déconnecté de la vie humaine. Cela a accéléré l'avènement du nihilisme et accentué le sentiment généralisé de futilité où le moi se transforme en une abstraction dénuée de sens. Ces obsessions ont été démontrées dans les œuvres de l'écrivain du 20ème siècle Samuel Beckett dans son art dramatique allant de l'existentialisme, la psychologie, et l'absurde qui ont été appliqués dans la description d'une tendance dominante dans le canon théorique du 20ème siècle. L'objectif de la présente étude est d'examiner l'utilisation par Beckett de l'expérience de l'attente et de la lutte avec un sentiment omniprésent de futilité, d'angoisse et de perte, ainsi que l'atteinte de l'intemporalité comme stratégie pour se rapprocher de soi, ont été examinés comme des éléments clés de l'approche de Beckett dans la recherche de l'identité de soi. En utilisant Proust "A la recherche du temps perdu", "Être et temps" de Heidegger et "Être et néant" de Sartre comme plateformes théoriques, cette thèse se concentrera sur la manière dont "En attendant Godot" et "Fin de partie" présentent le soi comme une construction phénoménologique basée sur des expériences passées cumulatives insérées et répandues dans le temps et l'espace. Changer ses perceptions d'un continuum mémoire-temps, en se basant sur cette prémisse, c'est changer le soi qui émerge en tant que résultat de cette dynamique. La principale préoccupation de cette thèse est d'explorer la façon dont Beckett, en tant qu'artiste et philosophe, traite la notion de temps et d'espace, la perspective personnelle de Beckett sur le temps, l'espace et l'identité, tout en tenant compte de la contribution des critiques, philosophes, universitaires et figures littéraires qui ont traité de cette condition humaine, l'être dans le temps et l'espace représenté dans le Théâtre de l'Absurde. La vision beckettienne du monde ne se concentre pas sur l'identité, le soi insaisissable, mais elle traduit une tentative laborieuse de remémoration des événements passés comme moyen de la quête du soi authentique fondée sur un détachement décisif, cette somme d'expériences mnésiques vécues à travers le temps et l'espace. Cette perception philosophique du moi se complique encore si l'on étudie la manière dont ce moi est perçu non seulement par le sujet/objet mais aussi par le monde extérieur. Par exemple, comment le personnage de Beckett proclame-t-il son identité à travers son interaction avec le monde extérieur, le monde de l'autre ? Le personnage de Beckett modifie-t-il sa mémoire afin de se conformer à la vision idéaliste qu'il a créée de lui-même ? Cette image, perçue comme l'Autre désiré, lui donne-t-elle une image du soi authentique ?

Abstract in Arabic

الملخص

كان القرن العشرين عصر اندلاع الحربين العالميتين سببا في خيبة الأمل الروحانية. لقد تسببت هاتان الحربان العالميتان في دمار عميق وخسارة لأقصى حد من اليقين الإنساني، كما خلقنا على نحو حاسم عالما بلا مبادئ موحدة، عالما بلا معنى منفصل عن الحياة البشرية. وقد عجل هذا ظهور العدمية وسلط الضوء على الشعور واسع الانتشار بعدم الجدوى حيث تتحول الذات إلى تجريد لا معنى له. وقد تجلت هذه الهواجس في أعمال كاتب القرن العشرين صامويل بيكيت في فنه الدرامي الذي كان يجمع بين الوجودية وعلم النفس والعبث الذي طبق في وصف الاتجاه السائد في البرميل النظري للقرن العشرين. إن أهم ما يقلق هذه الفرضية هو استكشاف كيفية تعامل بيكيت كفنان وفيلسوف مع فكرة الزمان والمكان، ومع وجهة نظر بيكيت الشخصية عن الزمان والمكان والهوية مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار الإسهام الذي قدمه النقاد والفلاسفة والأكاديميين والشخصيات الأدبية في التعامل مع هذه الحالة الإنسانية، حيث يتم تمثيل الزمان والمكان في مسرح العبث. الرؤية البيكيتية للعالم لا تركز على الهوية، الذات المراوغة الأخرى كما يقول العديد من الكتاب، لكنها تنقل محاولة متصارعة لاستنكار أحداث الماضي، والرفض وليس فقط الشكوك المعاصرة حول استقرار الهوية البشرية بل أيضا، وبمعنى أكبر عدم الثقة بالتجربة نفسها والافتناع بأن العناصر الملموسة في هذا العالم هي في نهاية المطاف غير مهمة، وقد توهمت بعيدا إلى عدم ثبات حيث أن الأفراد يبحثون عن معنى شامل وراء اللمسة فقط، وراء الواقع الأرضي الذي أصبح غير ذي صلة بهذه المخاوف الأساسية حول وظيفة البشرية في الكون والغرض النهائي من العيش. هذه الوسائل الجديدة هي البحث عن الذات الأصلية المبنية على مفترق حاسم هذا المجموع من التجارب الرمزية عاش عبر الزمان والمكان.

List of Abbreviations

Being and Time (BT)

Being and Nothingness (BN)

Endgame (E)

Fin de partie (FdP)

Waiting for Godot (WG)

Theatre of the Absurd (Th. Abs).

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

Life is indeed nothing but a succession of turning points, of change, of movement from past to future to past moments and selves. And the change is meaningless and serves only to prevent us from experiencing ourselves as stable egos existing in this time rather than that. Perhaps the eternal interest in the self signifies our inevitably rooted philosophical nature: the constant desire to know who and what we are. But regardless of the source of our interest in the self, cultural, philosophical, and psychological factors all play an important role in its current fascination.

In the past when faith rode high, the self functioned as a controlling center, a power within the organism that sifted and structured the streaming mass of sensory impressions from the external world. Not only philosophy and psychology required the presence of a mediating self. Religion, too, needed a self, endowed with a conscience, that would act out on earth the drama of sin and salvation, guilt and repentance. This self was supposed to persist not only in this life but in the next, whether in heaven or hell.

The modern writer looks within and finds no essence that he can identify as the self, no stable, coherent entity to which he can refer all decisions and which remains unchanged through all the vicissitudes of time. He is a bundle of memories; he cannot and none of his characters can annul the past. His perceptions are apperceptions, but he can discover no unitary, enduring self. He is forever changing, his moods running the gamut from one end of the spectrum of feeling to the other.

The self that is delineated in the work of Samuel Beckett is not integrated, it is like a ghost that dissolves when it is caught in the focused light of consciousness. Hence a number of writers as they explored this complex problem of selfhood came independently to the conclusion that the self per se does not exist; it is a psychological phantom, no more than that,

a metaphysical spook. To Beckett, the self is so nebulous that cannot be defined and one of his solutions to approach the self, to quote Ross, is that “the self must be attained in a non dimensional place, outside time and space, something dimensionless, and something which, because it is dimensionless exists outside the world of time and space and is by definition unattainable within that world.”(Ross 153-154)

The search for the self is a common theme in literature, usually involving major characters who will find their own identity after experiencing continuous development. Hence, the modern concept of self-quest is manifest in the character's shrinking and internalizing of the self. Therefore, "the self is itself correspondingly, reduced and demeaned, an obstacle to self-assertion"(Hoffman 43). Such a reduction or inaction, as Reid believes, makes "the transcendent realm a welcome escape from life."(Reid 616)

The Twentieth-century drama as Nor believes, undertakes the metaphorical journey or the pilgrimage of that grand route into the very depth of the self. “It is probing, excavating, and descending into the psyche or into the dark regions of the self to gather knowledge of the real Being” (Nor 45). An excavation to regain the real existence man has lost and is in the quest to meet his spiritual liberty and his individual soul. This kind of inward quest is seen in Beckett’s characters of the Absurd Theatre in their “eventful immobility or movement around a still center” (Borny 195). While drama is generally able to bring about self-realization due to its interchanging and communicative experience or the aesthetic nature which acts as a personal call, tragedy's specific structure is to elevate, rectify and psychologically heal the wounded emotions and the disturbed minds through enacting the hero's progression from divided selves into a wished-for coherent self. According to Mansour:

Drama, especially, from ancient time contains an inexhaustible treasury of underlying themes relating to man's constant and urgent need to ascent his

identity, or rather, to provide an acceptable answer to his question who am I?"(Mansour 85)

The horrors of World Wars imposed a shell where people had to face their destructive relentless self; which urged a brand new ways of thinking and perceiving the world. This resulted in what is called Western self-perception and experience, though, the most inspiring thing is the determination to question the basic assumptions of our lives and their relationship with art. From how we think, to what kind of world we should live in, from the influence of new sciences, to what role artists should play in contemporary life, everything is worth trying.

From the romantic outburst in Paris of the 1830s, the problems in Germany created by the breakdown of the religious tradition, social revolution, bourgeois liberalism, and Hegel's proposals, to the desperate voices of Kierkegaard, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche to the faith in progress and the idea of individual success that flourished, and thus, anxiety or existentially considered tragedy accompanied them. Its outgrowth was solitude and this solitude is what characterizes the fundamental condition of modern man. People had lost their belief in the existence of a divine being, "God", owing to the wars and losses in these wars. Hence, the answer to the question "Who am I?" can no longer be found in defining man's place and destiny within "the primal community of being." This what has deeply influenced authors and philosophers. "But I, detached from all other human beings and from everything - what am I myself?" (Fraser et al. 452) This is how Jean-Jacques Rousseau had formulated it when he was almost at his life's end. It is the question of the modern self.

This alongside the relativity theory of Einstein, which had been developed in 1916 to the point where "every reference body had its own particular time." (Kelly 10), the Darwinist theory, the disclosure of fascism's horrors, existentialism philosophy principles, and many more changes to be discussed later on contributed to the emergence of the sense of frustration and

alienation which grow rapidly among people in Europe. The human necessity of unifying the explanation of the world has always been satisfied by religion and creators of the philosophical systems who made human life meaningful.

To guarantee the meaningful contingency of human life, the religious dogmas about the existence of God fulfilled the natural desire to get to know and understand the world in its most hidden spheres but from the time of Zarathustra, the old everyday certainties of life began to lose their certainty since the two world Wars caused deep destruction and loss of human ultimate certainties and definitely brought about a world missing any unifying principle, a world senseless and disconnected with human life as Albert Camus judges (human life) to be absurd because of the incompatibility between the human desire for rational order and the silence of the world:

I said the world is absurd, but I was too hasty. This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world.¹

If one realizes the absence of sense, which is the ultimate paradox of the epoch, in which the Theatre of the Absurd is rooted, the world becomes irrational and the conflict between the ζ and the human being begins to be estranged from it arises here. The twentieth-century predicted the absurd in the failures of the Western world during the turbulence of the thirties and the forties to solve unemployment, to rein capitalism, to curb nationalism and to help spread democracy.

¹ *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 1958, p.21, translated by Justin O'Brien.

Literature has got to mirror this view of a modern man. Literature has been greatly influenced by these obsessions which were well manifested in 20th-century writers of prose fiction including Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Genet, Andre Gide, Simone de Beauvoir, Franz Kafka, and Samuel Beckett to name but a few by highlighting this modern sense of human purposelessness in a universe without meaning or value. But with the advent of the twentieth century and its peculiarities, man turns to the most passive of all, bewildered, disillusioned, dislocated, and purposeless. His ultimate solution is death. Philosophers, intellectuals, and even ordinary people are all confronted with simple questions: Who am I? What am I? Why am I here?

Of the many literary genres of literature that proved to be more promising in providing answers to these questions is drama, which has lent itself to create a vacuum between the play and the audience, so that the latter is committed to experiencing something itself. Dramatic art has been and throughout history, one of the contributions to the construction, reappraisal, and critique of the nation through the sites it occupies, the stories it tells, and the representations it offers. Since the story of the theater is a story of rebellion and reaction, in which new forms defy the old ones, and the old ones, in turn, provide the basis for all that is new in which the stage is a great deal much more than a mirror that reflects life and nature. So a dominant trend in the twentieth-century theoretical canon has been described by such a theatre that enjoyed labels ranging existentialist, nihilist, and absurdist which were applied, however, and commonly associated with dramatists such as Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter , and Arthur Adamov to name but a few.

The writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Camus, and many of their contemporaries were applied firmly and delicately during the post-war period, and this is what is called "Existentialism", this philosophy which could and greatly contributed, though unintentionally, to the birth of a new theatre, called "The Theater of the Absurd". Hence, Beckett is one of

these playwrights that has well introduced existential problems of a modern man's obsessions in his theater inspired from this school of philosophy that forms the building block of the theatre of absurd and which is the dominant form of drama in the 20th-century. Nineteenth-century precursors to this school of thought include Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

Samuel Beckett, as a profound playwright of the post-modern era, has been able to revolutionize the theater in all its aspects to provide a bed for the revelation of the existential problems of modern man, which of which is the question of the self, which is elusive, unfathomable and ambiguous. Unlike philosophical debates hanging in abstractness, he crystallizes the manifestations of existentialism philosophy in his oeuvre through his idiosyncratic theatre and his specifically created characters to deal with one of the great obsessions of modern man that is his estranged, dislocated, and dispossessed self. He has introduced this through successions of characters of one single character or pseudo-couple characters, or turning the characters to their sheer blurred invisible voices. He introduced, and manifested one of the abstract existential obsession of modern man regarding his self and philosophy of existence that no one has ever been that much assertive and promising in its revelation. The main reason for the displacement and estrangement of self, no doubt, in his theatre originates from the absurdity which has dominated man at the post modern era which Beckett has crystallized in his existential philosophy via his idiosyncratic theatre of Absurd. The only way to get rid of this state of self fluidity that Beckett has wished to illustrate in his plays is through the sheer awareness of the audience to come to their own understanding of their own perceived and stabilized sense of their selves.

Some of the most important theatrical experiments of the past few decades have been stimulated by Beckett's refusal to subscribe to the conventions of plot and character. Hence, what makes Beckett the dominant figure of this theater is undoubtedly the idiosyncratic deployment of certain characteristics such as his exploration of new structural principles as

the use of repetition and difference as well as his foregrounding of verbal games and non sequitur rather than "meaningful" dialogue, his violation of all the principles of drama: theme, setting, characterization, and, more precisely, language, allowed him to consummate his predecessors' attempts concerning the question of self and identity as per the conception of time and space to pinpoint the theme of this self that was not once-promising in its revelation.

Beckett, one of the most influential figures that had carved their names in the history of literature, made his works classical pieces of art that no one can ever forget. It has been years and years, yet they still aspire, they still astonish readers, they still line up on the shelves of every library and are still discussed in classrooms between bearers of knowledge and warriors of education. A decade after his death, he is still recognized as one of the cornerstones in twentieth-century literature and drama. He was a writer that broke the chains and tied the minds to traditional thinking. Because of his unprecedented influence on postwar drama, Beckett's images have pervaded popular culture. His stage images have a visual and concrete dimension that modernist poets and novelists probably do not have. Furthermore, his plays are not regarded as prohibitively highbrow, that many of them have not become repertory theatrical staples.

Thus, the lack of specificity in his plays, the uprooted settings, and the absence of geographical or temporal certainty reinforced the idea, especially among Beckett's early critics, that his work had a worldwide resonance, expressing something fundamental and trans-historical about life and human existence. His unnamed narrators or stripped-down stages seemed to be shorthand for everywhere and everyone. Existentialist ideas, which were prominent in the 1950s, were read insofar as Beckett's work was perceived as a generally dreary and bleak universal vision of human existence. Though praised for his ability to convey a 'timeless' human condition, Beckett is considered the most authentic voice of a ravaged post-war society. The bewildered and dying old narrators of his novels, or the skeletal animals and bare sets of his plays, are seen as the ideal artistic embodiment of a world devoid of ultimate hope,

devoid of God, morality, value, or even security of a stable identity. With its aura of artistic integrity, elemental truth, and existential courage, the Beckett myth must now be avoided by the vigilant Beckett reader. Reading Beckett, like reading Shakespeare (despite all the differences), involves participating in a complex network of cultural associations and literary reputation.

As an author, Beckett has inspired an impressive range of critical studies to date. The impressive amount of critical material testifies to the richness of his writings, which present a multitude of themes and techniques. His plays concentrate on an essential problem that derives from Beckett's earlier writings: it is that of the self and the being in time, a purgatory state, the fate of humanity, and of the characters of Beckett, who represent it. However, there is something much more fundamental to be taken from Beckett's works which is the idea that his theatre explores the torture, for consciousness, of being in time; that his characters are forced to inhabit de-narrativised time, their panic generated in large part by the sense that there will not be an ending.

The intense experimentation that characterized fiction and poetry in the twenties was not to reach the theatre until later. It is, therefore, appropriate that Beckett, who began his literary career as a novelist and poet amid the radical experiments of the earlier part of the century, should also be one of the great theatrical innovators of the modern period.

Beckett turned to the literary medium of drama after nearly twenty years of poetry and fiction, he finds it comforting to work in such a medium that requires an artist to submit to certain rules and constraints, no matter how much he may seem to challenge them². He has stated that he turned to the theater as a respite from the ordeal of writing novels, where "on s'avance dans le noir." (Hale 18) One of the inescapable realities of the theater that Beckett

² Beckett, as quoted in Paul-Louis Mignon, "Le Theatre de A jusqu'a Z: Samuel Beckett," *L'Avant-Scene*, 313 (15 June 1964), 8.

has had to confront is its visuality. As Hugh Kenner points out, “The drama is a ritual enacted in an enclosed space into which fifty or more people are staring.” (Kenner 133)

Beckett's drama has much more to say than that of a simple spectacle created uniquely to make the audience laugh. His work draws much of its power and appeal from its success in formalizing in its own field certain concepts that cut across interdisciplinary boundaries in modern thought. His writings are very successful not only as literary structures, verbal forms, and images, but also as documents of humanity, and because they focus on human existence and on the experience of human existence. For the reader, they are richer and more direct than the writings of philosophers who only strive to illustrate their philosophies via a literary medium.

Unlike Sartre, for example, Beckett does not force a philosophical system in order to adapt it to a literary form or force a literary form to make it illustrate a philosophical system. His work is situated on a level of artistic intensity that shows no trace of invasion by a philosophical system. For Beckett, there is no one philosophy, no single well-packaged message, only a series of attempts to give shape to the void. The external world has lost its positive and uniform outlines, and as a consequence can only be shown in a fragmentary way, through the extremely varied existential experience of the individual. However, Beckett's vehicle of expression changed, yet his deeper concerns did not: like his earlier works of poetry and fiction, his later drama deals with man's condition in the universe. As he turns from novel to drama, his characters turn from Logical Positivism³ to Existentialism in order to convey human dread and despair in a world of doom, disorder, and absurdity as we'll see in chapter II.

We may think of his plays as the fulfillment in the theatrical form of a revolution introduced into modern literature by writers who, dissatisfied with the abstractness and lack of

³ ...a 20th century philosophical movement holding that all meaningful statements are either analytic or conclusively verifiable or at least confirmable by observation and experiment and that metaphysical theories are therefore strictly meaningless.

vitality that they found in their inherited literary language, tried to revitalize language by restoring to it some of its original relationship to the concreteness of physical gesture. Such a literature often highlights the limitations of language as a form of communication where many of its protagonists are confused about how to best express themselves. Though highly reduced, Beckett's world of the stage nevertheless deals concretely with its themes and is physically present before its audience.

Unlike poetry or fiction, the theatre allows its author to actually shape not only the language but also the period of time, re-enact the time experience fully. For, the theme of time is not merely described but in fact, lived and acquires in this way a metaphysical reality. Time, as we know, has been injected into the field of science by the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which has taught humanity that the universe is mortal. This law challenged the long-accepted notion of the reversibility of physical processes by describing a universe where all the energy put into a system cannot be recovered. It was discovered that all elements and particles that were thought to be permanent were unstable and existed in a continuous process of transition. The laws, order, and rationality of the universe are no longer self-evident, and scientists have turned their attention to the study of transitions from chaos to order. With the loss of belief in the reversible world of equilibrium, thermodynamics has made it possible to realize that there is a limit to our control over nature.⁴

In his formulation of the well-known principle of indeterminacy, Heisenberg made imprecision and uncertainty one of the cornerstones of modern physics. Galileo, on the other side, constituted the object of observation independently of the subject and posited the existence of a spatiotemporal domain whose reality and conditions were identical to all observers. Scientists thus worked under the assumption that a unique system of natural laws

⁴ Ilya Prigogine, lecture delivered at the international Symposium on *Disorder and Order*, Stanford University, 14 Sept. 1981.

regulated the universe and that these laws acted independently of human beings and could be discovered by them⁵. Once the stable, external position of the observer was called into question, it became impossible to speak of isolated or separate phenomena, and the very notions of observer, observed, and observation became imprecise and undefinable. It may no longer even be possible to speak of a single universe, since the reality described by contemporary science has become a reality composed of many different worlds.⁶ (Hale, p.9)

The twentieth century has also witnessed both the revolutionary impact of Planck and Einstein's discoveries on the world of science and Freud's discovery of the unconscious on the Western conception of the mind of human beings, their behavior and their perception of the universe. For his part, Freud recognized the potential importance of his theory in a lecture given in 1916: "I can assure you that the hypothesis of the existence of unconscious mental processes opens the way to a decisive new direction in the world and in science".⁷ The logic of human consciousness is losing its once privileged position of observing and deciphering reality and giving way to a complex interaction between the conscious and the unconscious. The functioning of the latter is invisible and not directly accessible to the human observer:

"Human megalomania will have suffered its..... most painful blow of current psychological research which seeks to prove to the ego that it is not even master in its own house, but that it has to be content with little information about what is happening unconsciously in its mind "⁸

If Freud's psychological theory was born from his treatment of patients suffering from obsessive neurosis and hysteria, the most typical psychological disorder of our time is that of

⁵ Corneille Castoriadis, "Science modern et interrogation philosophique," *Encyclopaedia universalis*, 1977 ed., XVII, 45

⁶ B. S.de Witt, "The Many- Universes Interpretation of Quantum Theory," *in Foundations of Quantum Mechanics*, ed. B d'Espagnat (New York: Academic Press, 1971), p. 226, as quoted in Castoriadis, p. 49.

⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton-Liveright, 1977), p. 22.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 285

schizophrenia. In his pioneering work in this area, *The Divided Self*, R.D. Laing notes the specificity of schizophrenia for the western world in the 20th century and calls on psychologists to recognize the interdependence of psychological phenomena and the essential characteristics of the society in which they occur. (Laing 180-81) Laing characterizes schizophrenia as an expression of "ontological insecurity" and notes its manifestation in the works of modern authors such as Kafka and Beckett and in the paintings of Francis Bacon. He describes the ontologically insecure person as one who feels more unreal than real, more dead than alive. Such a person finds it difficult to feel autonomous and to differentiate from the rest of the world. He lacks a sense of his own temporal continuity, coherence and cohesion and may feel partially divorced from his body. Lacking certainty about his own identity, he is unable to share his experience with others. (Laing 39-43) Laing's approach is defined as "existential psychology",

All this hastened the advent of nihilism and accentuated the widespread feeling of futility where the self is transformed into a meaningless abstraction. And as Beckett's characters frequently express similar longings for a long-lost vision of the world, as it must have been in a calmer and more beautiful time when it was still possible to perceive things as real, stable, and orderly, so the self that is delineated in his work is not integrated. It is like a ghost that dissolves when caught in the focused light of consciousness. This is why a number of writers who have explored this complex problem of personal identity have independently come to the conclusion that the self in itself does not exist; it is a psychological ghost, nothing more, a metaphysical spook. (C. I. Glicksberg 17)

However, Beckett's works are about the suggestion that the source of man's troubles lies in his being born, and the very fact of his birth means that he must atone for this birth and that he must cope with the existence, both on physical and mental planes. The irony of this

fate is that he is incapable of so doing, from external as well as internal factors, both of which point to man's finitude.

All of the literary and philosophical ramifications of Beckett's writings seem to derive from his notion of the finite condition of man, who is not so much tragic as absurd, even ridiculous, because he uses faulty material in his efforts to overcome the fundamental anguish of his existence, resulting in a series of paradoxes. Where he seeks independence, his dependency becomes still more acute. Where he strives for rational explanations, the inadequacy of his reason hinders him. When he tries to communicate he fails. All efforts at systemization fall into disorder. His memory, which entails his sense of time and identity, is defective and chaotic. His body, the vehicle of these activities, is not only unreliable and in a state of constant decomposition but even makes demands upon him that interfere with his effectiveness. Social institutions, products of his own faulty nature, are no better as mechanisms for dealing with the problems with which his life confronts him. Suicide would be the only logical solution, and yet this is apparently not an alternative. Rather, man must continue to play the games that fill the emptiness of his existence until he is finally overcome by death. As Beckett wrote in *Waiting for Godot*, there is "nothing to be done" except to give himself the illusion, in one way or another, that he is "doing something" which generates habit, one of the sources of man's boredom and of his inability to change his pattern of behavior. These meaningless activities may also give rise to false hope, which in its turn feeds habit. Due to these limitations, tedium and deterioration are the unsurmountable lots of man. He is hopelessly trapped.

All of the foregoing elements are found in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, and *Endgame*: plays considered to be focal in his work where characters are involved in situations that are devised to cope with 'what to do'. These games and situations ultimately only serve to illustrate the futility and the inefficacy of such efforts. They reach an impasse, not only

because of the ineffectiveness of the by-products of these tools. In dealing with their physical and social environment, these characters demonstrate the conflicts between body and mind and point up the inadequacies of reason, the senses, memory, and all the extensions of these mechanisms as they are found in societal behavior.

Hence, Reading Beckett is to break with our reality, to desert our every day and the commonplace world, with its propensities, its points of interest, its certainties, and its little reassurances to venture into a resolutely another world, not very human and too human at the same time. Bodies are perpetually divided or paralyzed, minds aggravated or troublesome, logorrhea is as undermining as quiet, extraordinary depression remains mystifying and, at long last, passing is omnipresent. A dull world, upside down, but a world that unusually takes after our own to the point where one seems to say that Beckettian composing plays at creating the "negative" of our world, - a term taken within the photographic sense. By mobilizing and challenging the reader's fantasies and tensions in this way, Beckett is one of those awesome craftsmen who, in Winnicott's terms, "à l'aptitude et le courage de garder le contact avec des processus primitifs que la plupart d'entre-nous ne peuvent plus supporter d'atteindre"⁹(Winnicott 49)

Samuel Beckett in his plays *Waiting For Godot* and *Endgame* gives a clear image about the variation of human life after the second world war. It might seem as plays with no clear message, events, or even a purpose. However, it is a highly meaningful pieces of art that portray the meaninglessness of human life instead. In the latter plays, Samuel Beckett dives deep into significant philosophical, psychological, and mainly religious aspects of mankind.

⁹ Cf. D.D.Winnicott, « Nosographie: y a-t-il une contribution de la psychanalyse à la classification psychiatrique ? », cité par Anne Clancier, Jeannine Kalmanovitch, *Le Paradoxe de Winnicott*, Paris: Payot, 1984, p.49. L'article se trouve dans D.D.Winnicott, *Processus de Maturation chez l'enfant* (1965). Trad. J. Kalmanovitch, Paris: Payot, 1970, p.93-114.

Samuel Beckett is highly interested in the existentialist view of human reality, and their relationship with the world they inhabit. He tries to show that the purpose of human life is an unanswerable question, in which our existence is almost an imposed unknown burden. The surrounding world is meaningless and full of suffering, in which people are lost with no clear aim or destination. Therefore, humans find it preferable to distract themselves from it, since their life is based on chance and extension. The latter plays show the absurdity of the world in which actions are with no meaning, and communication fails between individuals. Consequently, a lack of truth occurs. This is shown through how the characters are uncertain of where they are, whether they are acting appropriately, in *Waiting for Godot*, for example whether Godot will come, and even whether Godot does really exist due to the uncertainty of consequences. Moreover, Beckett tries to paint the philosophy of life as uncertain, suffering, and repetitive since characters keep on turning aimlessly on the same circle all along the plays. It is like he wants us to figure out that suffering makes part of life but making choice instead of waiting helplessly is the only brake to stop the hardship of life. Furthermore, time appears to be cyclical during which Vladimir and Estragon or Hamm and Clov keep on waiting for the unknown as the only option, since they have nothing to do meantime. It is more linked to their ability to endure, showing that as their time is meaningless, so is their memory and life.

Waiting For Godot and *Endgame* represent the unconscious expression of the desires and dreams of mankind. As for example in Estragon's nightmares that are full of flashbacks and images of terrific events in his and Vladimir's life. However, Vladimir does not pay attention to them, which denotes the Second World War and the post-war time. These nightmares and how Vladimir does not care show how people were stuck in their past and alienated, and at the same time how they wanted to forget their pain. This pain is deeply rooted in the characters' surrounding society which makes them more dependent on each

other. Estragon cannot be without Vladimir, they even think of suicide together, and each time they build hope to live more. On the other hand, Pozzo and Lucky as the master and slave are highly dependent on each other. So Hamm is Clov's master in *Endgame*. These relationships are what enable the characters to bear pain and misery and lessen their burden. On the psychological level of these characters, there is the appearance of an inability to act, move, or think in a significant way while waiting for Godot, or waiting for death as in *Endgame*; they mainly cannot translate their decision to leave their place or to suicide into physical real acts. This denotes their problem of consciousness and awareness of their freedom. They live in a prison of their own making, whereas Lucky who is a slave is the free person among them since he knows what he is doing as he is always told of it by his master. He even thinks for his master and makes decisions, unlike the real free other characters.

In these pieces of writing, religion stands in comparison with a reason as those who try to understand it based on logic are left behind. For religion is concerned with uncertainty, since there is no way of knowing God in person as characters try to do. Therefore, Godot never appears to them which makes them uncertain of his existence. Mainly, because they find that religion is the key to stop their sufferance and save the world especially after the event of the world wars. Based on this, they believe that if God appears, they are safe. Whereas, God is without space occupation which means if Godot appears, then he is not a real God. In addition to that, the characters' tragedy is determined in their lack of uncertainty with continuous suffering physically and mentally. Therefore they seek answers for their questions and a solution to their tragedy through meeting Godot. In this way, the interference of the Mighty God would put an end to their chaotic confusion and paralysis. This indicates that it is a matter that goes beyond human ability, it demands God's presence. The individual can find no firm foothold for the dislocated being he has found himself to be in the shifting, the

uncertain world around him, no stable ground from which even to begin his quest. Vladimir's cheerful greeting, 'So there you are again,' prompts Estragon's hesitant response, 'Am I?'

Our self-identity extends out through the space between ourselves and others in an attempt to touch, to know, the other's uniqueness while also revealing, pushing forth, our own. Many critics have investigated Beckett through the philosophic influences they find reflected in his work, assuming Beckett's uniqueness. The very essence of philosophy presupposes, correctly, that these works address the nature of existence in some way. Homan briefly examines the effect of existentialism on Beckett and philosophers such as Descartes, Vico, Geulincx, Malebranche, Bishop Berkeley, and Schopenhauer (11) in his discussion of Beckett's aesthetics. The expressionists are added to the list by Theodor Adorno (119). Linda Ben-Zvi examines Beckett using Fritz Mauthner's theories ("Samuel Beckett" 193). Many writers have also mentioned Proust's influence on Beckett, based primarily on Beckett's early work on Proust. All of the works that seek to explain Beckett's canon's many influences are relevant and insightful, but I want to restrict the concept of identity and the self and look for it inside the texts themselves and in the characters that inhabit those texts. Identity as a subject in modern literature dates back to the Romantics, and Robert Langbaum's view about Beckett and identity is best summarized by the title he gives this chapter, "Beckett: Zero Identity" (120). If Eliot was concerned with the fall of civilization, Beckett is concerned with life after the fall (4-5): "Time flows cyclically, as we can see from the repetitions [in Beckett's plays], yet the cycles cannot be seen because memory fades" (124). Beckett's "characters are only symbolic in a negative sense because they signify the lack of life" (his emphasis) (127). "Identity approaches zero in Beckett, with the distinction between life and death practically unnoticeable" (128).

The main concern of this thesis is to explore how Beckett deals with the notion of time and space, Beckett's own personal perspective on time, space, and identity while taking into

account the contribution critics, philosophers, academics and literary figures have made in dealing with this human condition, being in time and space represented in the *Theatre of The Absurd*. Rather than simply lamenting loss (which is evident in Beckett's work), I believe Beckett confronts us with what is left and challenges us to work with it, to accept the whims, inconsistencies, and contradictions that at times become the focal points of our existence and move on, to continue with what we do have, our basic need to be individuals while remaining at the same time.

What is significant for my purpose is the central role that depictions of space and time play in this scaled- back search for the self.

Part of the answer may simply be that Beckett had pursued his previous abstractive path as far as it would go.

On the other hand, we'll shed light on Beckett's use of the loss of control that Killinger mentions as one reason why the theories of Heidegger and Sartre are so crucial to the readings of modern drama. The ideas of these existential philosophers can greatly explicate otherwise difficult texts because of their focus on meaning creation in a world in which meaning is difficult to acquire focusing on how Beckett's characters, mired in their wretchedness, can look back to better times when hopes were realized.

Taking into account the nineteenth-century philosophy of selfhood to seek for a "totality whereby man might regain contact with his deepest personal and communal selfhood" (Knight 280). We should focus on the idea manifested in the individual's strife for a perfected self-integration advocated by Nietzsche's Zarathustra (Thus Spoke Zarathustra 58).

Using the quest as an authority and dualism well known for being characterized by its repetition with variation, and this is how we conceive of these themes as manifesting from work to work. As Vladimir and Estragon return over and over again to dwell on their shoes,

their place by the road, their meetings with others, each time with slight variation, slight degradation, so the works navigate the themes of the quest repeatedly and differently.

Quantitatively and qualitatively each work alters these themes. The sections below, divided according to separate chapters, discuss in different ways these themes/variables as they occur in each chapter. As a flashback to the concept of self in philosophers' viewpoint paving the way for the way the concept is treated in Beckett's plays.

Beckett, with this regard, through writing his works explores the notion of the self. From his work, we come up with the idea that the self is able to produce the text, but it is in turn subject to being produced by text, even more, in the end, reduced to nothing more than the text itself. From a philosophical viewpoint, Descartes ultimately is able to give form to the subject through self-reflection and the production of footfalls. Whether they are, what they are "not quite there" is the status which the majority of Beckett's characters suffer.

The aim of this thesis is to make clear some "new philosophical conceptions" in the quest for the self and this according to Beckett's perception of the concept of time and space. It is difficult to choose a particular critical stance in respect to Beckett's work, or in relation to any text. After examining a variety of critical theories, I realized that making this choice was akin to adopting a new way of thinking or processing information. I was clear, however, that my theme would be self. Fortunately, rather than pushing me to adopt a new way of processing information, I discovered that phenomenological theory coupled with the philosophical one taught me how to recognize my own style of processing and how to expand my horizons from there.

In this sense and in a very specific Beckettian vision many questions could be set forward; questions which actually deserve thorough scrutiny.

- How does Beckett crystallize the manifestations of existentialism philosophy through his idiosyncratic theatre and his specifically created characters?

- How are the idiosyncrasies of time and space involved in Beckett's characters?
- How do the correlations of time and space affect the quest for the self in two of Beckett's plays "*Waiting for Godot*" and "*Endgame*"?

In addition to these questions, some sub-questions are to be taken into consideration to handle the thesis either in a phenomenological and a philosophical matter.

- Does Beckett's character occupying a world mapped out by nothingness?
- Is Beckett's character immediately present or infinitely removed from presence?
- How does the character affect the audience if the form of the play itself has no sense?
- How does the character's subjectivity be fully incarnated within the spatiotemporal actions of the play?
- How did Beckett introduce and reveal the abstract existential obsession of modern man through his alienated character?

Writing a thesis on Beckett is not something new because many critics and philosophers and even researchers have done it before in different ways and different places in the world.

In this case, my choice of Beckett is not only based on an eager desire for a philosophical or psychological notion but as I have already mentioned, I believe he has broken out new ground in terms of the way he deals with the self under the lens of some philosophical concepts such as the concept of time and space.

Beckett, as a playwright, novelist and poet is one of the most important modern and postmodern writers of all time. Therefore, it saw prerequisite to arrange my ideas and my discussion under four major headings which are as follows:

Chapter one, entitled *The Historical Development of the Absurd* is devoted to the discussion of theoretical and critical writings of the period where the Existential philosophy has emerged that serves as the theoretical basis for the absurd: A primary and fundamental

theory to be applied to Beckett's works, and so it appears in various forms, since most critics have their own version of it, although all versions have in common the sense of loss of meaning and value. We will be using as our starting point Albert Camus' formulation. However, we will note that the absurd, as a theoretical framework, is unable to really capture the play in terms of meaninglessness and what it implies. His discussion also focuses on the two plays as theatrical, physical and visual works. Hence the need to consider the movements that led to the emergence of the theater of the absurd leading thus to the discussion of the theory of the Absurd as well as the Beckettian Drama.

Chapter two, entitled *Beckett's Journey Toward Philosophy* is rather to expose the different existential philosophies. In this chapter, the terms of existentialist views to be used throughout this study will first be defined in relation to the related philosophers. To better understand Existentialism as a tool for uncovering meaning in literature, with which the Beckettian drama will be related throughout the study, the history of this philosophical approach and its main concerns will be explained first, followed by an analysis of the ideas of some Existentialist philosophers such as Sartre and Heidegger who are the exponents of the Existentialist philosophy. This will lead to a thesis statement about existentialist aspects like dread, anxiety, and thrownness, which will be examined through a close reading of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. We finally shed the light on Heidegger's *Being and Time* as well as Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* within the plays chosen, the focus should be on Beckett's approaches to the body/mind established by Sartre and later cultivated by Merleau-Ponty.

Chapter three, entitled *Beckett's Odyssee Through Time and Space*, I'll suggest a new reading of the concepts of time and space and their influence on Beckett's drama with an emphasis on Beckett's reconfiguration of the conventional idea of time and space normally found in theatrical performance, I'll then introduce the paradox of time and death as well as

the paradox of space to end up with the theme of temporality in Beckett's two plays we've chosen.

Chapter four, entitled *The Quest for the Self*, is rather devoted to a philosophical reading through which I'll try to underline the essence of human being and the question of the self, in so far as it is linked to the theories of time and space. In this chapter, I'll explore the paradoxical relation to the embodiment in Beckett's drama, with particular reference to the philosophies of Sartre, Heidegger and other philosophers. In this sense, I'll try to define the self as a complex of matter itself, in its several extensions, as these, are associated with the human body and memory involved in exercises of self-determination; and the consciousness of self as body related to objects arranged in the space-time it occupies and second, the experience of waiting and struggling with a pervading sense of futility, anguish and loss, and finally the attaining of timelessness in the pursuit of identity. I consider chapter four as a recapitulative chapter since it reproduces all what we've seen in the previous chapters.

**CHAPTER I:
THE HISTORICAL
DEVELOPMENT
OF THE ABSURD**

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Introduction

“Art... is shaped by the way space is perceived.”(Marshall MacLuhan). Painting, sculpture, architecture, mime, and other visual arts are dominated by visual space, while music is shaped by acoustic space. Dramatic art, however, takes place at the intersection of visual and acoustic space. Theatre, Eugene Ionesco reminds, “appeals as much to the eye as to the ear.” (Catron and Shattuck 115)

Throughout history, the theatre has been one of the contributions to the construction, reappraisal, and critique of the nation through the sites it occupies, the stories it tells, and the representations it offers. The story of the theatre is one of rebellion and protest, with new forms challenging the old, and the old forms, in turn, providing the basis for the new, in which the stage is much more than a mirror reflecting life and nature. The absurdist philosophy is mainly read through its various influences ranging from Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* to Sartre’s *Nausea* to Camus’ *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Beckett is one of these playwrights that has well introduced this absurdist philosophy in his theater.

In this sense, the present chapter will be divided into four parts. The first part will focus on the development of the absurd from the 19th Century through the 20th Century putting under the lens the problematic era following World War II. The period where the Existential philosophy has emerged, I’ll then turn in the second part to deal with the major movements that influenced the development of the theatre of the Absurd. The third part will draw the theory of Absurdity where I will provide an overview of the theatre of the absurd, drawing heavily from Martin Esslin’s famous 1961 book that coined the phrase, taking into account Martin Esslin’s leading attempts to provide a detailed study of the common characteristics

unifying the works of a group of playwrights as Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco and Samuel Beckett, all sharing the view that man is inhabiting a universe with which he is out of key, and finally, in the last part, I will discuss the Beckettian Drama.

I.1. The Development of the Absurd

"At any street corner the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face" (Camus 9)

After the Second World War, many certainties about the world have been collapsed such as Marxism, religious beliefs, faith in the inevitable upward progress of humankind, and the consequent questioning of the very basis of human existence: human identity, language, "The Meaning of Life" itself. Immediately after the Second World War, Paris became the capital of dramatic art in the west and French theatre was soon associated with a short-lived eruption of surrealist drama that came to be known as 'New Theatre' in which interests were carried towards new subjects and to those of actuality sometimes disguised in the traditional forms and uses. By and by though, without any showy manifestation, another theatre appeared. In the 1950s, it was imposed on large audiences, which consisted of intellectuals and students searching for something new, in different theatres. The development of this New Theatre owes much to the successful performance of Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, and Arthur Adamov's second play *Invasion*.

The Theatre of the absurd is at first characterized by a deliberate refusal of realism. Although there are traces of realist works at some moments, realism has never been a basic principle. The main principle is to search, on the contrary, in a fundamental unreality that manifests itself as much in the Framework as in the intrigue of the characters who oscillate between the lack of feeling and nullity and the improbability of the most fantastical sort. The main interest of the playwright is neither to reveal a society, and its problems, nor a psychological study, and their refinement is none of their concern either. To create a spectacle, they usually tend to be an effect of totality which reveals its obsessional interior world through 'gests, songs, light, and colors.

It has been critically acknowledged that the development of such a 'New Theatre' has marked one of the most significant trends in theatre in the 1950s that continued and raised its lead in the form of such literary movements as Expressionism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Existentialism, as well as in the fiction, written in the 1920s of Franz Kafka. This theatre has

established its place as a distinct form of literature. However, the existential philosophy of such men of letters as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus gave final shape and structure to the 'literature of this movement' more especially to its content. This movement of 'Absurdism' had a sudden emergence after the horrors of World War II as a rebellion against beliefs and values in traditional culture and literature..... The assumption that humans are quite rational creatures...That they are a part of an ordered social structure and they may be capable of heroism and dignity even in defeat"¹⁰ .

The 'New Theatre' of the 1950s, soon to be known as 'the theatre of the absurd', a term that applies to a corpus of literary texts defined in France, this designation for the theatre is only referential. at the time, this drama did not make up a literary or theatrical trend per se but grouped together the dramatic texts disseminated by a limited number of authors, works that could be grouped under this name by virtue of certain intrinsic characteristics relating to the implemented character, the themes raised, the speech or verbal language of the protagonists, the spatiotemporal conditions illustrated and the way in which these plays were structured overturned twenty-five centuries of tradition by rejecting all rules and by facing the chaos head-on where the artists helped to construct meaning out of that same chaos, at creating order out of disorder, at giving shape to what is shapeless. 'When our forebears recognized that the world was in a state of chaos, and they often did'. (Martin et al., p.464). Such theatre has some affinities with the mime, the clowneries (down-plays), improvisation, the cabaret, and it is like the ritualistic performances of the old Greek plays, such as those of Aristophanes. Besides the comedy and parody of Aristophanes, *Commedia dell'Arte* and vaudeville lies in its background.

France was an area that had suffered the deepest distress and humiliation in the war, and had, for a focus of intense intellectual creativity, produced the philosophy to cope with the

¹⁰ Ibid.

moral and practical problems of humiliation, loss of identity, alienation, and resistance – Existentialism. ‘It was the decade of the “cold war” and the extreme tension between the nations of the East and the West’. (Stayn 125). Then, the ‘Theatre of the Absurd’ movement was a Paris-based movement and such Absurdist, like Genet, Tardieu, and Boris Vian were born in France. Many of them were elsewhere, but came to live in France and wrote in French. Those playwrights working in Paris and thought of as absurdist during that time, however, were never a school sharing a common cause or a common philosophy but express a certain sensibility, a certain attitude to the world which arose from the times in which they lived. They come from a category of people who are particularly displaced and intensely exposed to the problems of loss and alienation: exiles: Adamov, a Russian-Armenian; Ionesco, a Romanian; Beckett, an Irishman, and Genet, an outcast of society everywhere as a criminal. All these dramatists partake, in one form or another, of “the Tradition of the Absurd” which proves to be very far-flung indeed, incorporating devices from the circus, mimes, clowning, verbal nonsense, and the literature of dream and fantasy that often has a strong allegorical component (Esslin 318).

Like the Irish Dramatic Movement, the "Theatre of the Absurd" was a writer's theatre, not a director's. The sudden outburst of French Absurdism may in part be explained towards the acme of Existentialism, this philosophical movement directed towards two different themes, the way human existence is analyzed and how human choice is centralized.

"The Theater of the Absurd bravely faces up to the fact that for those to whom the world has lost its central explanation and meaning, it is no longer possible to accept art forms still based on the continuation of standards and concepts that have lost their validity; that is, the possibility of knowing laws of conduct and ultimate values, as deducible from a firm foundation of revealed certainty about the purpose of man in the universe."(Hinchliffe 29)

The Theatre of the Absurd revealed the negative side of Sartre's existentialism and expressed the helplessness and futility of the world which seemed to have no purpose. It quickly imposed a flagrant rupture with dramatic traditions, at all possible levels of text and staging. This kind of theatre is neither realistic nor illusionistic theatre. It is a theatre in which its plays tend to hover in a borderland between dream and reality. It is far beyond realism or the theatrical illusion which is the mainstay of the traditional theatre of the nineteenth and twentieth century. It parallels the Brechtian "epic theatre", which also insists on being non or anti-illusionistic, while it took a long time for critics to agree on the official name for this type of drama, the basic features scattered throughout the works thus grouped are sufficient to define precisely what constitutes the "New Theatre". The absence of a plot serves to reinforce the monotony and repetitiveness of time in human affairs. In addition, the language itself is different from the traditional realistic theater. We think there is no real communication at all. As plays, they did not discuss the human condition, but only portrayed the human condition in the worst images, which were chosen to deceive the innocent and shock the complacent. It is said to be a theatre of images, of metaphors: images in the widest sense - a landscape.

Unlike the traditional theatre, the "Theatre of the Absurd" relies on the richly charged images as a primary element around which a narrative plot is formed. And in order to hold the attention of the audience, absurdist playwrights adopted stylistic methods such as farce, laughter to be the most successful device in disarming a wary audience so that to erect a kind of screen through which the statement of the play could be filtered, and to reduce the resistance of the spectator. The "Theatre of the Absurd" then is essentially a theatre of three-dimensional metaphoric images unfolding in time and space, where the world is shown as an incomprehensible place. The spectators see the events on stage completely from the outside, without ever understanding the meaning of these strange patterns of events, as newcomers may see life in a country where the language is not yet mastered. Basically, this kind of

theatre seeks to express the feeling that the world cannot be explained or reduced to a system of values-and there are times when such a theatre seems to be an invention of Martin Esslin.

The Theatre of the Absurd, therefore, which has been unfolding over the past has always appeared in various forms, and the list of dramatists contains some unlikely names. Grossvogel, in his book *Four Playwrights and a Postscript* (1962) uses Absurd Theatre to link Brecht, Ionesco, Beckett, and Genet together, but Robert Brustein in *The Theater of Revolt* (1965) restricts the dominance of "existential revolt" to such diverse dramatists as Williams, Albee, Gelber, and Pinter (Hinchliffe 27).What absurd playwrights do, however, is to match the philosophy with the aesthetic: "... the Theatre of Absurdity strives to express the inadequacy of the absurd human condition and openly adopting rational methods. Give up rational means and discourse thinking." (Esslin xix-xx)

In other words, Esslin considered philosophy and aesthetics to be "ridiculous." What happens in the theater itself and/or on the stage Life itself. Esslin believes that the Theatre of the Absurd is much better at expressing the artistry and philosophy of Sartre and Camus than Sartre and Camus have succeeded in their own theatre (they only explore here their philosophy). (Esslin xx) In addition to the quote about "other" writers who have written about the senselessness of life, this is the second time that Esslin broadly conflates the philosophies of Camus and Sartre.

I.2. The Theatre of the Absurd and Esslin's Definition

I.2.1. The Theatre of the Absurd

Let us now consider the way in which the author of the Theatre of the Absurd applies Camus's concept of absurdity to artistic practice. It is naturally an almost impossible task to determine Camus's work as a conscious source and inspiration, but Schevill believes Godot's absurdity has a special side to Camus. (Schevill 1977, 236). As mentioned earlier, the authors involved do not themselves constitute a literary movement. Since their plays seemed to reflect the same attitude, they were collectively referred to as a loose collection, an attitude that was central and even fundamental even in the twentieth century (Esslin 1985, 23). The similarities that make up the movement are mainly accidental and mainly due to Every writer in the theater since each of them is "an individual who regards himself as a lone outsider, cut off and isolated in his private world" (Esslin 1985, 22). Alongside Beckett, according to Esslin, Arthur Adamov, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter belong to this theater.

The absurd world becomes meaningless, and the reaction that the theater is eager to portray is to borrow Esslin's words, a "sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition". (Esslin 1985; 23-24, 409.) As Grossman argued, this is a special version of the absurd that Camus proposed in his essay (1967, 473-474). Comparing this with the Camus concept is still very important and useful, especially because of its broader scope, For all the basics of absurd thought, and as mentioned earlier, it is clearly related to "Waiting for Godot".

The theater presents its audience in an absurd world, a world that has lost its unified center, purpose, and most importantly its meaning (Esslin 1985, 411). As we have already seen, and from Camus's own views on absurd consequences to some extent, meaninglessness and uselessness, devaluation of ideals and goals, and most importantly, the human condition arising from the absurd experience has been removed. To him, the absurd man is a rational

creature in an irrational world, and the consequence of accepting the absurd as one's own reality is the personally engaging revolt, freedom, and passion (Camus 1991; 64, 85). This Helplessness and frustration, Esslin, after accepting the absurd position, found that it was in stark contrast to Camus's attitude, who called the absurd sweet wine (1991, p. 52).

Perhaps partly due to the absurd nature of the absurd theatre, absurdity is impossible and contradictory after all, it has the opposite characteristics of the traditional theater (Camus 1991, 29; Esslin 1985, 28; Knight 1971, 184-185). These characteristics can easily be regarded as inconsistent and unacceptable for an appropriate dramatic work: it has no linear or sensible plots, does not rely on isolated comical plots, has no relevant or rational features, and the fundamental destruction of language usually appears as meaningless dialogue and unusual or incoherent symbolism (Esslin 1985, 398; Hurley 1965, 634-637). However, there is no reason to think that these functions are unique. Indeed, this is just a combination of previous attitudes, the unique literary modes of theatre and their themes, the philosophy of the absurd, rather than the artwork itself, that make them unique (Esslin 1985, 398; Oliver 1963, 224). Therefore, the theater is not discussing the absurdity of the world and the human condition, but merely presenting them, and for the absurd creator, asking how to solve the problem of absurdity seems naive and superfluous (Esslin 1985, 25; Hurley 1965, 636-640). For Esslin, this is a more true and accurate statement than Camus, because Camus clarified absurd irrationality in a neatly structured way (Esslin, 1985, 24). However, it can be said that Camus used specific Beckettian language to explain his theory, and even absurdists abandon rationality not as pervasive or open as Esslin wants to see it (Brater 1975, 198; Cornwell 2006, 7-8).

The theatre of the absurd though, tends to all what is poetics, which is based on images on the stage when the image exceeds or contradicts the words of the characters, there will be conflicts between words and images (Esslin 1985, 26). Indeed, absurd playwrights strive to

convey their ideas through indirect means, through complex images and unusual symbols, in order to awaken the audience's perception of absurdity (Oliver 1963; 227, 229, 234).

According to Esslin, the theater is anti-literary because it avoids clichés. This is particularly evident in character dialogues, which are usually composed of "incoherent goos" (Esslin 1985, 22), suitable for the meaninglessness of the world. The theater is eager to give up the Communication function from voice to gesture. (Esslin 1985; 26, 384.) Theatre concern is expressed by objectifying the mental states of the super-individual into concrete and complex stages or poetic images. The gradual completion or expansion of these states is the main source of suspense and drama in the play. These images are complex, so as not to frighten the audience with the heavy themes of the plot, and the only reason they appear in order is that they cannot represent them instantly, they must be decomposed into individual elements, and then they must be decomposed into different elements. The unified image serves as the progress of time. (Esslin 1985; 361, 405, 416; Haney 2001, 39-40; Oliver 1963, 229.)

Perhaps this act of expressing the absurdity of the world and seeing the theater as anti-literary is what prompted Esslin to believe that the absurd theater is fundamentally realistic. Esslin believes that theater presents us with a world that is more real than reality: it is the world, the absurd world, reflected in the individual's consciousness as an inner reality, and Oliver also believes that absurd dramatists tend to create drama Drama. The physical and sensory experience is not a naive imitation but a deeper realism (Esslin 1985, 353; Oliver 1963, 227-228). Esslin followed James Joyce's career development, from the description of things on the surface (so-called classical realism) to the way the world appears in personal experience, which Esslin calls "even more comprehensive Reality". The theater did propose an attempt to portray reality in its own way. (Esslin 1985; 353, 404.)

I.2.2. Esslin's Definition

At a surface level, the term has been collectively used to identify an eclectic production commonly understood to be one which focuses on what Martin Esslin coined as '*the theatre of the absurd*' for the title of his study of post-Second World War French theatre, which came into vogue in the 1960s at a time when the so-called 'absurd' dramatists had written their main works and were already experimenting in other directions. However, it is precisely on evaluating such eclecticism that one is faced with a problem. "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose . . . Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless"¹¹. (quoted from Esslin, *Th. Abs.*, 23)

The above quote was taken by Martin Esslin from an essay in French by Eugene Ionesco on a short story by Franz Kafka. Martin Esslin's 1961 classic *The Theater of the Absurd* neatly sums up this sensibility and the new form of theatre to which it gave rise in which the word absurd was first used to depict Beckett's works and some of his contemporary peers. The notion of absurdity has been used and misused regularly since that time. Beckett is absurd, not in the modern connotation of ridiculous, not worth noting, but in an earlier denotation of "out of harmony" (Esslin 5). Recently used in a musical sense, out of harmony is, Esslin suggests, the use meant by Camus and Kafka. It opines that the audiences applauded the absurd plays "fully aware that they could not understand what they meant" (Esslin 3). He goes on to declare in his essay that the absurd portrays the picture of our own world which is "a world without faith, meaning, and genuine freedom of will" (Esslin 6).

"Absurd" has been subjected to varied definitions. As Esslin points out, this kind of theatre was less the result of a conscious movement than the manifestation of convergence of

¹¹ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961),
xix

surprisingly similar styles. However, it does not even seem to have a social objective, and in the plays that Beckett produced - and, for example, Ionesco and Adamov - and what Esslin calls absurd is that poetry which lies in the action of comedy and not in that language deliberately kept flat and unpoetic. The relatively few remaining problems such as "life, death, isolation, and communication involve this theatre which by its nature can only communicate "one poet's most intimate and personal intuition about the human situation, his own sense of being, his individual worldview" (Esslin, pp. 392-3).

This vision takes a form, according to Esslin, similar to that of a symbolist or imagist poem seen previously in which, the language is only one component, yet, not necessarily the dominant one. Fundamentally, this type of theatre seeks to make us express the feeling that the world cannot be explained or reduced to a value system, and there are moments when this theatre seems to be an invention of Mr. Esslin.

Esslin turned to Albert Camus, the pillar of the philosophy of the Theatre of the Absurd, to comment on the feelings of the time and even to "diagnose him in a world of broken beliefs". Quoting a passage from *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "In a universe suddenly deprived of illusions and light, man feels like an outsider... This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his stage, is really the feeling of the Absurd" (Albert, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. Transl)

From this passage, however, Esslin introduced and defined the idea of absurdity as: "the human condition as being" has completely been ceased to be discussed in the theatre of the absurd, but he does present it through terms of concrete scenic images of the absurdity of existence. Thus, Esslin argues that absurd playwrights portray a world without meaning and purpose, an absurd world. This absurd idea is expressed both in the philosophy and the aesthetics of his works. The playwrights in question - Ionesco, Beckett, Adamov, and Genet - did not see themselves as part of a common enterprise and each of them favored their own

individualism and their own unique and personal vision of the world and the theatre. This experimentation was focused on Paris, whose cultural life - in particular, its hospitality to immigrant artists such as Adamov, Beckett, and Ionesco - allowed great creative freedom. Despite the individual experiences of isolation and marginalization that these writers shared, the works of these "absurdities" presented striking similarities.

At the root of their coincidence was a concern for the absurd, a concept previously identified by Albert Camus and discussed by existentialist philosophers. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus has defined the Absurd with that: "divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, which is properly the feeling of Absurdity." (Camus 6) Stuck between his homeland, to which he cannot return, and the promise of a new home, which he cannot find, this situation of exile, is the absurd itself, and he adds, it is the "absence of correspondence or congruity between the mind's need for coherence and the incoherence of the world which the mind experiences" (Cruickshank 41). And for the absurd, this experience which many of them, especially Ionesco, Adamov, and Beckett, have experienced first-hand was the essential and immutable human experience. A world without God, without roots, without reason to exist, this is the situation of modern man, in which everything is permitted and nothing is forbidden. In other words, the form of the absurd works is a direct reflection of their content: the conventional narrative structure is abandoned in favor of metaphor and poetic imagination; well-developed characters are replaced by interchangeable bodies and caricatures; pedagogy is rejected in favor of provocation; the reason is replaced by sentiment, and the logic of everyday life is usurped by the alternative logic of the unconscious world of dreams and its surreal experience. Sartre, on the other hand, defines absurd as "[t]hat which is

meaningless. Thus man's existence is absurd because his contingency finds no external justification"¹².(Barnes 550)

The theatre of the absurd is a proto-postmodern theatre, a place where the real is defined exclusively by the subject, where human agency is constantly questioned, where meaning is contested everywhere, and where "it is not there", in the sense that the boundary separating the real from fiction is completely erased. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, the absurd is defined as the "divorce" between "the actor and his environment" which is absurd for Camus. Man is not absurd, nor is the world: the absurd is his union. The absurdity comes from the fact that the world cannot offer man what he wants: "I know what man wants, I know what the world offers him." "The feeling of the absurd can strike anyone on any street corner," wrote Albert Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* ([1942] 1975, p. 17). For Camus, "the feeling of the absurdity of the world" stems from the comparison between man's conscience, his thirst for rationality, and the inert, irrational and unknowable world.

The essential characteristics, which are reflected in this drama, are a concern for failure, fear, and death. Different figures such as Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, Rilke, and Kafka seem united in the perception of the absurdity of man's condition: "in a world where everything seems to be illusion and fiction, where human behavior tells only the absurd and the story of absolute uselessness; everything seems to lose its articulation whether it is reality or language, everything disintegrates and collapses, so what remains possible to react when everything has ceased to matter but to laugh at it all?"¹³

¹² Barnes, Hazel. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Vol. Volume 7, Maynooth, C. B. Daly, 1957.p. 550

¹³ JUNTUNEN, HANNE. *Emerging from the Margin – Absurd, Grotesque, and Meaningless Meanings in Waiting for Godot*. Huhtikuu, 2015.

In Camus' book *The Myth of Sisyphus*; the absurd hero is punished with futile and hopeless labor. As well as Camus, Esslin turns to translate a quote Ionesco had written on Kafka in 1957 as seen above "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose.Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless." (quoted from Esslin, *Th. Abs.*, 23). This feeling is echoed in another quotation from Ionesco:

"Of course this state of consciousness is very rare; this joy and wonder at being alive, in a universe that troubles me no more and is no more, can only just hold, more commonly the opposite feeling prevails: what is light grows heavy, the transparent becomes dense, the world oppresses, the universe is crushing me. A curtain, an impassable wall stands between me and the world, between me and myself; matter fills every corner, takes up all the space and its weight annihilates all freedom; the horizon closes in and the world becomes a stifling dungeon. Language breaks down in a different way and words drop like stones or dead bodies; I feel I am invaded by heavy forces, against which I can only fight a losing battle." (Cole 2001)

If everything in the universe is absurd, then the "boundary line between what is probability and improbability, what is fantastic and what is factual, what is truth and what is imagination, what is real and the so-called unreal, breaks down"¹⁴, as it does in the literature and art of the grotesque. The law of identity is abolished paradox reigns. The artist of the absurd is no longer concerned with any "isms" that promise reform or redemption. By ordering his material in the light of the ironic vision, he safeguards himself against the vice of seriousness. He gives birth to the characteristic art of tragic farce, which projects a world oppressively real and fantastically unreal, both solid and ethereal, transparent and opaque by fusing comedy and tragedy.

¹⁴ Glicksberg, Charles. *The Ironic Vision in Modern Literature*. New York-United States, United States, Springer Publishing, 2012.

In those moments of insight when everything is seen as an illusion and even words seem a meaningless succession of sounds, the writer of the absurd dissolves in laughter at the ridiculousness of his situation. The revolt against the traditional forms of literature had its inception in the nineteenth century. The production of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* exploded in the face of the respectable middle class. The absurd playwrights went further against the conventions of the theatre. Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco looked upon man not as a biological creature "*determined*" by his heredity and his environment but as a metaphysical being who must somehow discover if he can, his relation to the universe. The absurd dramatists used the art of the circus, Commedia D'ell Arte, slapstick, pratfalls, some surrealistic devices, and dream techniques to shadow forth a reality that is mysterious, ineffable, and non-rational in their rebellion against the techniques and traditions of the past.

“We find it very difficult to identify with characters in Absurd drama, thus, their situation is often painful and violent, the audience can laugh at them” (Hinchliffe, p.12): but, where Brecht hoped to ‘activate the audience’s mind’ (Esslin, p. 402). It challenges the audience to make sense of non-sense, to face the situation consciously rather than feel it vaguely, and perceives with laughter, the fundamental absurdity. (ibid)

I.2.3. Absurdist’s plays:

Absurdist plays have some characteristics that oppose those of the traditional theatre (Camus 1991, 29, Esslin 1985, 28; Knight 1971, 184-185), seen as neither harmonious nor acceptable for an adequate play to have: it has no linear or sensible plot but is based on disconnected farcical situations, no relational or rational characterization, a radical weakening of language, usually in the form of meaningless dialogues and unusual or incoherent symbolisms (Esslin 1985, 398; Hurley 1965, 634-637). Yet, due to the absence of plot, there is a reinforcement of the monotony and repetitiveness of time in human affairs. Moreover, the

language itself differs from the traditional realistic theatre. We feel that it is devoid of real communication. Absurdist plays fall within the symbolist tradition, and they have no logical plot or characterization in any conventional sense, they tend to be less easily ‘‘decoded’’ at first sight. We do never quite clearly know who the characters really are or where they come from, and endings tend to be inconclusive. Because of the lack of motivation found in realistic drama, their characters emphasize their purposelessness. However, it cannot be said that these characteristics are unique; in fact, only the combination of pre-existing literary attitudes and modes is exclusive to the theatre, and this is its subject, the philosophy of absurd, and not the works of art that distinguish them (Esslin 1985, 398; Oliver 1963, 224).

Absurdist plays are compared to Cubism and abstract paintings (Cavell 2002; Esslin 1985; 26, 392). This comparison between the Theater of the Absurd and abstract painting seems appropriate: both seek to show concretely the sense of rupture of the subject's epistemology, i.e. how the deformation of temporal and logical structures is experienced. Instead of presenting a linear sequence of events, the Theatre is more interested in presenting basic life situations that are static, and above all situations that arise from the author's personal subjective awareness. (Esslin 1985; 403).

The dramatists of the absurd do not debate or even contemplate the possibility of an Absurd world: they take it as fact and merely hold up a mirror to this reality. However, if the reality is Absurd, as Esslin argues, the aesthetic will be, as well. Therefore, these plays of the Absurd,

[tend] toward a radical devaluation of language, toward a poetry that is to emerge from the concrete and objectified images of the stage itself. The elements of language still plays an important, yet subordinate, part in this conception, but what *happens* on the stage transcends, and often contradicts, the *words* spoken by the characters. (Esslin, 1961; xxi)

Esslin adds that "the theme of the plays of the theatre of the Absurd is their sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition" and this what led to the sense of the purposelessness of life.

Absurd drama, as Esslin states, poses:

... a radical devaluation of language, towards poetry that emerges from the concrete and objective images of the scene itself. The element of language plays a great role in this conception, but what happens on stage transcends, and often contradicts, the words spoken by the characters. (Esslin,1961; xxi)

Yet, as plays, they do not discuss the human condition, but simply portray it at its worst in outrageous images chosen to undeceive the innocent and shock the complacent. It is said to be essentially a theatre of images, of metaphors: images in the widest sense - a landscape. Unlike the traditional theatre, the "Theatre of the Absurd" relies on the richly charged images as a primary element around which a narrative plot is formed and in which the element of time is imported to their construction.

And to hold the attention of the audience, absurdist playwrights adopted stylistic methods such as farce, laughter to be the most successful device in disarming a wary audience so that to erect a kind of screen through which the statement of the play could be filtered, and to reduce the resistance of the spectator. The "Theatre of the Absurd", therefore, is essentially a theatre of metaphorical three-dimensional images that unfold in time and space. Therefore is essentially a theatre of three-dimensional metaphoric images unfolding in time and in space. Moreover, Esslin, in an essay on Beckett's ethics, states the following, keeping the idea of the absurd in the background of the conversation:

No course of action is ever recommended, no course of action ever discouraged. These texts are wholly descriptive, never prescriptive; and whenever anything resembling an opinion as to a recommended course of action is voiced, it is always immediately withdrawn . . . This absence of good or bad, right or wrong, must result in an absence of goals, of purpose in life¹⁵

For Esslin, the meaning of the plays came from the aesthetic incongruity that marked the philosophical incongruity of life. The theatre of the Absurd is a phenomenon, highlighting Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (originally written in French as *En attendant Godot*, 1952).

According to Enoch Brater, discussing the *Theatre of the Absurd*, one must start with Beckett, not only because others do, but especially because that is where Esslin starts his book with the now famous staging of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in 1957 at San Quentin penitentiary. Beckett has had a huge influence on other writers, as Brater and others have pointed out: The plotless play, the use of discontinuous dialogue, the set empty but filled with mysterious suggestion, the denouement that never comes, the effects of silence and the tension that builds in a pause, the sheer theatricality held by the actor's voice in extended monologue, or the dramatic opportunity that lies in standing stock-still, have become so characteristic of our theater that we hardly notice them all.

Already we gather that existentialism and purposelessness feature strongly as key concepts, while Sartre, Camus and Beckett are seen as leading exponents in thought and literature. Such a theatre, then, presents anxiety and despair, a sense of loss at the disappearance of solutions, illusions, and purposefulness. In his last chapter, Esslin suggests that Absurd Drama has been absorbed, but still shows itself 'in the manifold strivings of a protean avant-garde'.

¹⁵ Martin Esslin, "What Beckett Teaches Me: His Minimalist Approach to Ethics," *Samuel Beckett Today* 2 (1993), 13

I.3. Movements that influenced the theatre of the absurd

It has become common to trace the history of the absurd to the old stages of Greek theatre or even beyond as stated by Martin Esslin (Th. Abs., 327), “the Theatre of the Absurd is a return to old, even archaic, traditions”

Anyone who has followed the history of theatre will recognize that although the dramatic arts, as a mirror of society itself, are as capable as any other art of adapting both form and content to reflect changes in public beliefs, tastes, and ways, they are generally the last of the arts to do it.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, both in Europe and America, the theatre itself seemed to triumph in self-confidence, its future existence threatened simultaneously by the erosion of its ethical foundations internally and by a challenge hitherto unimaginable from the outside. The threat from outside has increased rapidly with the advancement of optical science compared to that from within. The inside is insidiously born of the erosion of moral values which, for 150 years, were the basis of the "sentimental" drama of the merchant classes in the 18th century, and then of popular and romantic melodrama in the 19th century. Philosophers and scientists began to question not only the strong concepts of virtue and vice that still in the 1850s were at the basis of all theatre, opera, and ballet but also the very existence of the Christian God who for two centuries had rewarded the virtuous and punished the vicious.

Elements of the theatre of the absurd can be also traced to the medieval theatre, in the form of allegorical farces, which “represents a world gone wrong; social institutions and people in general are in the grip of vicious folly from which no one is able to break free...

often peopled with wise or benign fools, clowns, and acrobats, whose function is to reveal, ridicule, and censure the folly around them” (Knight 80) are closely related to the travelling clown shows that were very popular in the Middle Ages.

The Theatre of the Absurd has even been influenced by other forms such as *Commedia dell'Arte* which was absorbed into legitimate theatrical drama. The *Commedia dell'arte* used different types of humour, including prepared jokes, physical gags, but also improvised and practical jokes, which in any case parallel the theatre of the absurd. Absurd elements also abound in Shakespeare's tragicomedies, where dramatic elements are mixed with comic elements in such a way that they often produce an ambiguous effect. Shakespeare's devotion to meaningful names, where a name is a label for a person's character, is also typical of the theatre of the absurd, which led to the creation of low and crazy characters, characterized by a colorful humor ranging from bastards to madmen, which later became an illustration of the drama of the absurd. Tom Stoppard's reference to Shakespeare also underlines the potential absurdity of Shakespeare's characters. The works of Shakespeare and other Jacobin playwrights are often, like the works of the absurd, illogical and unrealistic.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, with the flourishing study of human psychology led by Sigmund Freud, there was a new and heightened sense of human interiority. Many of the avant-garde movements wanted to represent outwardly human's inner life. Expressionism, with its German origins, which had an influence on the semi overlapping movements of Dadaism and Surrealism which had a much greater influence on French writers such as Genet, Ionesco, Adamov, and Beckett and thus on the plays of the "Theatre of the Absurd", largely born in Paris as stated in an interview in *The Paris Review*, by Eugene Ionesco who was very clear about the influence these movements had on his (and Beckett's) writing: “None of us would have written as we do without surrealism and Dadaism. By

liberating the language, those movements paved the way for us...I was bowled over [by Tristan Tzara]...Then I read all the other surrealists – André Breton, Robert Desnos.”

In addition to these movements, the Theatre of the Absurd has been inspired by other forms of European popular theatre, plus pantomime, music hall and vaudeville, and thence into the twentieth century popular artistic form of the silent movie. The latter was to become ‘without doubt one of the decisive influences on the Theatre of the Absurd’ (Esslin, *Th. Abs.*, 335), as well as on certain other avant-garde artistic movements.

The greatest philosophical influences come from the writings of the Existentialists, especially from the interpretations of Camus and Sartre. Camus' starting point is an "all or nothing" dichotomy: life has meaning, or continuing to live is pointless. This formulation of the question stems from existence, characterized by a deep sense of despair and the inability to find purpose in the everyday moments of life.

I.3.1. Commedia dell'Arte

"Commedia dell' Arte" is a term that can be traced back to the 18th century, if not earlier, depending on what has been circulated. In the medieval and Renaissance period an “arte” was an economic and political corporation organized by one of various crafts or professions, and thus the term primarily designates the most striking aspect of certain actors from around 1545 on relative to their medieval predecessors.

Commedia Dell' Arte appeared in the sixteenth century as a form of popular Italian theatre in which actors were creating stock characters, some in half masks improvising dialogues from plot scenarios, Commedia saw the light and flourished throughout Europe into the eighteenth century.

The strength of the Commedia Dell' Arte between 1545 and 1625 lay in its omnivorous capacity to absorb widely diverse forms, practices, and cultural strains. Historically, the theatre emerged in a transitional period: the print revolution was distributing writing to an increasingly wider public, but many oral techniques and habits of mind persisted, even in the ways that people read and wrote. In the case of this improvised theatre, the dramatic composition was in turn based on the actor rather than the playwright.

Dario Fo goes so far as to assert that it was: "through a truly revolutionary approach to theatrical creation and the unique role assumed by the actors" (Fo 1991: 13) that made the Commedia stand out from other forms of theatre and not the use of masks or fixed stereotypes. All attempts to depict the Commedia as a comic form that is eternal and immutable, a form that captures the essential archetypes of humanity, and a form that reveals man's eternal essence, runs counter to the spirit of the age.(McGehee 5)

The tradition of the Commedia Dell' arte is kept alive by French playwrights, in particular Moliere and Marivaux. Debureau used pantomimes to keep the tradition alive. English playwrights used harlequin, which later served as the basis for the English pantomime when Grimald's clowning reached its peak. The Commedia dell' arte influenced Keystone's silent comedy film Cops, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and a group of other immortal artists. These films were silent, and the roles in the films came directly from clowning, vaudeville and music hall acrobatics.

This influenced the Theater of the Absurd. It has the dreamlike strangeness of a world seen with incomprehensible eyes and isolated from reality. It has the quality of a nightmare and shows a world in a constant and total movement without purpose. It repeatedly demonstrates the profound poetic power of action without words and without purpose.

Furthermore, Commedia dell' Arte resurfaces in other artistic fields. The theatre of the absurd has been directly influenced by its characters who have survived in the puppet theatre as well as in Punch and Judy's shows. The Commedia dell' Arte that created the clown in the 16th-century drama has been replaced according to Esslin by the 18th-century popular drama. Likewise, the Austrian theatre has given rise to a new type of development. It was a baroque representation of the Jesuit allegorical drama, to produce a genre that combined the clown with allegorical images that prefigured many elements of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Der Bauer als Millionaire (The Peasant as Millionaire) by Ferdinand Raimund presents the human condition with a concrete image that has become a basic element on the scene with tragicomic sequences. Among the allegorical works based on the absurd, the writings of Johann Nestroy (1801-62) with a great mastery of language, as well as the German playwright Buchner (1813-1837) who was the pioneer of the theatre of the absurd. His comedy renounced the comedy of autumn clowns. His works show a tormented creature, almost weak in mind, afflicted by hallucinations...

I.3.2. Expressionism

Expressionism has meant different things at different times. When we speak of "German Expressionism", especially in the sense in which we use the term today, we are referring to a broad cultural movement that emerged from Germany and Austria in the 20th century. However, expressionism is complex and contradictory. It includes both the liberation of the body and the excavation of the psyche. Within its heterogeneous ranks, there is political apathy, even chauvinism, as well as a revolutionary compromise. This term was generally used to describe progressive art in Europe, especially in France, which was different from Impressionism or even appeared "anti-impressionist" until 1912. However, in Germany and

Austria "Expressionism" has gained wide acceptance in the arts. It was first applied to painting, sculpture, and printmaking, and shortly afterward to literature, theatre, and dance.

Among the literary and philosophical sources that have formed the way Expressionism has developed, it was Nietzsche's writings and Nietzschean ideas that exerted the most seductive appeal. His writings proposed the idea that there were men of superior action who could rise above the crowd. His vitalism and his ecstatic "Dionysian" affirmation of life, which included the extremes of joy and pain, fed the passion of Expressionism, while his condemnation of conventional morality drove him to rebellion.

Expressionism was a self-consciously youthful movement. Faced with the moral pressure of the conventions of thought, speech and behavior inherited from the 19th century, expressionism has been the way many artists and writers have tried to give free expression to the instinctive and genuinely misguided psyche - to get out of the straitjacket, so to speak. Sigmund Freud's research into the unconscious and the processes of repression, in which painful memories or unacceptable impulses are delivered to the unconscious, was the route in which the artist's work is done – only appeared to confirm the existence of a powerful and conflict-ridden "inner life".

Expressionist art, literature, theatre, dance, and music tended to focus on what was unruly, violent, chaotic, ecstatic, or even demonic, seeking to express the repressed aspects of the psyche. For many, Nietzsche's embrace of expressionism as a life force, his ecstatic explosiveness, his pathos, his bombardment, his political naivety, and his egocentric subjectivity seemed at best immature. In 1919 there was much talk of the "death of expressionism". It was in the context of the First World War that the sharpest criticism of expressionism emerged from the ranks of expressionism - Dada.

Questioning the integrity of Expressionism, Dada seemed convinced of the corruption of European culture, and this in a context of war. In 1920, Richard Huelsenbeck wrote in a "Dadaist Collective Manifesto" and a group of Dadaists signed it accusing the expressionists with the anger of apathy, impetuosity, of making "propaganda for the soul", of "preferring their armchair to the noise of the street" and of betraying the ideals of an entire generation.

I.3.3. Dadaism

In the 1910s, the air was full of idiosyncratic posters for the reform of the arts, those of Cubism, Futurism, and many others. Everyone was looking for an audience, but few discovered the dramatic talent. Tristan Tzara (1896-1963) and André Breton (1896-1966) are credited with the invention and promotion of Dada, a movement designed to show its disciples' disgust with the senseless values of modern society, represented above all by the terrible trench warfare of the First World War, such as the Franco-German battle of Verdun.

Huelsenbeck recalled discovering the word by leafing through a dictionary with Ball and was moved to exclaim that "the first sound of the child expresses primitivism, the beginning of zero, the newness of our art". It is significant that Ball emphasizes the international mobility of the concept, seeing it as a kind of cultural Esperanto, while Huelsenbeck emphasizes the notions of rupture and renewal. Both attitudes were the key ingredients of Dada. Beyond that, the word paradoxically meant everything and nothing. It was a kind of absurd mixture of affirmation and negation, a kind of pseudo-mystique. Art was a dead religion. Dada was born.

In 1916, Tzara devoted himself to the invention of senseless art forms with the sole aim of scandalizing his public. Through dada he proclaimed the necessity of chaos; nothing was sacred; every order, every system, every social convention, and every mode would be abolished. In dada's second manifesto it was stated that the main purpose of the dada's

exhibition was to provoke the highest degree of misunderstanding between the performer and his audience. All the dada artists, especially poets and painters, let the world know that art must be shaken violently.

The movement has been treated, at best, as a big joke. However, from this distance, we can see that Dad was not totally nihilistic, as many believed. Rather, he gave a necessary shake to the art of the 20th century, preparing it for further growth and development. If politically the dada wanted to change the establishment, aesthetically it wanted to change the way people perceived the world around them. Its ultimate goal was to break down the barricades of forms and ideas that art and tradition had erected between the artist and the public. Tzara has tried to be simpler and more spontaneous by valuing the personal and the subjective. And in so doing, he must have confused the spectator, and perhaps even the artist.

Dada's claim to a positive virtue is, paradoxically, that was a thoughtful movement: it takes some efforts of the intellect to upset rational thinking, and to recognize what is completely an incongruity in nature and art does not require a small amount of ingenuity.

Built on contradiction, Dada, which was more an attitude than an aesthetic, tried to awaken modern art from its torpor, replacing it with random sculptural objects made from the debris of civilization and collages of paper, only to destroy itself, as many of his devotees did by committing suicide, Dada's last act.

The Dadaists denounced and ridiculed both the rot of bourgeois society responsible for the recent end of the Great War and the artists who were accomplices, including themselves who benefited from and defended it.

Dada's roots were planted before the war. Tzara, who avoided and denounced the war as meaningless, is widely credited with Dada's origins through his maniacal vaudeville

performances at the Café Voltaire in Zurich his founding and drafting of Dada magazine and its transfer to Paris in 1919.

Tzara's Dadaist work, *The Heart of Gas*, was probably the most significant for the development of Surrealism. Its characters, named after facial features and representing surreal synecdoches, anticipate the common representation and animation of body parts in both Surrealist art and Beckett's writings, perhaps also due to the rhetoric of body loss and fragmentation that became common cultural currency in the years following both world wars.

I.3.4. Surrealism

What was this Surrealism that Beckett inherited?

It is commonly believed that surrealism started *ob ovo* in Paris in reaction to the bloodshed, ruin, and futility of the Great War, as well as chauvinism, "rationality", religion, and hypocrisy that triggered the war. It was one of the most important and wide-spread of the "ism" movements as Caws writes, "No movement in French Modernism has had a greater impact on culture life". Apollinaire was the first to use the word surrealism in 1917 in a context that associated avant-garde art with technological advances. But it had deeper and older roots. Among his recognized forerunners are the nightmare paintings of Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516), who was called the first surrealist; the writings of Gérard de Nerval (1808-55); the French symbolist poetry of the late 19th century (especially Charles Baudelaire, Jules Laforgue, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Valéry and Paul Verlaine, and the Dadaist comedy by Alfred Jarry *Ubu Roi* (1896), which Apollinaire praised for its new and ridiculous form of humor and lyricism; in addition to Strindberg, a Symbolist and Mystic who established a small theatre in Stockholm, called the Intimate Theatre, where his plays were produced without props or scenery.

Strindberg's play, *A Dream Play*, depicts a character who, like Godot, waits (a tree that loses, suddenly recovers, and then loses its leaves again, before becoming a hat tree and then a candelabrum) for something that never happens. Deeply affected by the early and gratuitous death of Apollinaire, the Dadaists came to react strongly against the criminal futility and senseless devastation, chaos and absurdity of the Great War, in which to their subsequent regret, many of them (including Louis Aragon, Breton, Paul Eluard, Max Ernst and André Masson,) had served.

In November 1922, Breton stated: You know, what I and my friend mean by Surrealism. This word, which is not our invention and which we could have abandoned the vaguest critical vocabulary, is used by us in a precise sense. With it, we want to designate a certain psychic automatism that corresponds more to the dream state, a state that today is extremely difficult to delimit".

In mid-1922 Paris Dada, the last incarnation of the movement had become bogged down in its negativity. Its disappearance was reported by Breton's organization of a "Congrès de Paris" which indicates the general direction of the avant-garde activity, tacitly stated that Dada was "what it wanted to avoid becoming: another movement in art history". Breton's propensity for the cultural policy was evident so that he paved the way for Surrealism.

Surrealism, Dada's artistic heir, was officially born in 1924 and practically became a global phenomenon when it disappeared in the late 1940s.

Committed to the idea that human nature is fundamentally irrational, surrealist artists such as Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and André Masson had an often turbulent relationship with psychoanalysis, with the aim of probing the mysteries of the human mind.

If Dadaism sought above all to denounce art by disturbing it, Surrealism refined the application of Dadaist principles by exploring through the arts all the mysteries of the

irrational mind. The rational control of our perceptions was to be disturbed and questioned by all possible means, and for this reason, the surrealist artist would use elements of surprise, the involuntary and the unconscious. The pure dada had only wanted a chance to govern human activity, surrealism was more determined and wanted to organize the imbalance of the senses.

André Breton's first manifesto was published in 1924, and his version of surrealism soon replaced the dada of Tzara. A former medical student, Breton injected Freudian psychology into his arguments and defended his brand of artistic anarchy, made of words and images taken from free association. Breton called for surrealist art to be a window through which the viewer could contemplate an inner landscape of the mind, as he stated: "Surrealism is not a poetic form. It is a cry of the mind that turns to itself, and is determined to break its chains, albeit with material hammers! Her approach has given new importance to dreams, fantasies, and hallucinations. At this point, surrealism had become more than a movement in modern art: it could be seen almost as a way of life. Surrealist connections to the stage are necessarily somewhat uncertain, illogical, static rather than dramatic, and cannot have a final role. Surrealism in the theatre has emerged especially in Paris, particularly in the works of Apollinaire and Cocteau.

Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) can justifiably be included in a listing of influences on the Theatre of the Absurd. He found the cubist school and used surrealism. He wanted a work of art that seemed more real than reality and that expressed essences rather than appearances. For him, the theatre would be "modern, simple, rapid, with the shortcuts and enlargements that are needed to shock the spectator"(Esslin, 1961; 260)

In his comedy, *Les Mamelles de Tiresias*, which appeared in 1917 Apollinaire defined surrealism in the preface he labeled "drama surrealiste" as:

To characterize my drama. ..I have coined the adjective "surrealist" which does not mean symbolical ... but rather well defines a tendency of art that, if it is no newer than anything else under the sun, has at least never been utilized to formulate an artistic or literary creed. The idealism of the dramatists who succeeded Victor Hugo sought likeness to nature in a conventional local color that corresponds to the *trompe-l'oeil* naturalism of the comedies of manner. ... To attempt, if not a renovation of the theatre, at least a personal effort, I thought one should return to nature itself, but without imitating her in the manner of photographers. When man wanted to imitate the action of walking, he created the wheel, which does not resemble a leg. He had thus used Surrealism without knowing it ... (Esslin,1961; 259-260)

Apollinaire presents an image of life in which a woman wants to become a male figure since she wants to occupy a certain male position. Later she exchanges sex with her husband and the husband becomes a wife. After this, they produce 40049 children. In the end, the wife returns to him. In the play, everything seems confused. That's why Apollinaire says the following in a vision of his surrealist thinking:

For the theatre should not be a copy of reality. It is right that the dramatist should use all the mirages at his disposal...It is right he should let crowds speak inanimate objects if he so pleases and that he no longer should reckon with time or space. His universe is the play within which he is God, the creator who disposes at the will of sounds, gestures movements, masses, colors not merely in order to photograph what is called a slice of life but to bring forth life itself all its truth. (Esslin,1961; 260)

Apollinaire defends and propagates the Cubist movement together with his friend and colleagues Matisse, Braque, and Picasso. They want to transcend the concept of the art of mimesis. The Theatre of the Absurd is indebted to the schools of Picasso and Juan Gris, and Klee's paintings, as well as the works of his literary ancestors.

Surrealist plays were composed of quick scenes introducing characters wearing masks and moving like mechanical robots. They tried to bring order and reason into their language

of performance, deploying surrealistic devices to reveal, even morally, what they considered the reality of life and what was important in it.

Harpo, Marx Brothers, and W.C. Field did contribute to the theatre of the absurd, they belonged to the surrealist tradition and to the group of the silent film comedy.

I.3.5. Silent Film Comedy

Three fundamental factors have influenced silent film comedy, throughout its history, the technology with which it was produced, the culture and mentality of the filmmakers, and the desires of the target audience.

Silent film comedy thus provides 'a staging round for cultural struggle, both an area of resistance to the dominant culture and a site that the dominant culture seeks to appropriate for its ends'. According to King, the slapstick is, on the one hand, a plebeian overthrow of authority and order and on the other a Freudian model of displacement and sublimation. (King, 2009, p. 7), whereas the central point of all this, according to Eileen Bowser, is the notion of burlesque comedy as a dreamlike form of collective anxiety, a form of "vernacular modernism" or, according to Georg Luckás, "compensatory spectacles of disorder" (King, 2009, p. 48).

When André Breton and his surrealist colleagues roamed the streets of Nantes and Paris in search of 'merveilleux' in the early 1930s, looking for chance encounters in cafés, liberating foreign objects from flea markets and junkyards, and cutting absurd stories out of newspapers and advertisements, they also drew up strict rules for what Breton called "magnetic" cinema.

For the group, silent comedy, more than any other film genre (and certainly more so than the artistic or poetic films that the Surrealists hated), seemed to uniquely subvert the

spatial, temporal and logical conventions of narrative cinema, with gags that freed themselves of any apparent plot function to claim its scandalous autonomy. Breton sees that such celluloid objet 'trouvé' proved that the status of cinema is "the only absolutely modern mystery": intrigues that stubbornly make no sense, cinematographic missteps that produce uncomfortably bizarre compositions, extravagant and exaggerated movements (Hammond, 1978, p. 43).

The attraction of early film comedies lies precisely in their rude, unhousetrained craziness, their anarchic physicality, gravity-defying leaps and falls, the Keystone's aggressive meaninglessness.

The shock strategies of Dada – the calculated outrages, meaningless surprises, sudden jolts – all find their corollary in silent film, which likewise 'hits the viewer like a bullet', tactile, immediate: the film is something that happens to you (Benjamin, 1992, p. 230), the spirit of Dada reborn in the sunny back-lots of California. a dreamlike feeling of destructive absurdity - a meaningless anarchic universe that pulverizes and dismantles its unfortunate victims - fits perfectly with the noise and speed of the modern city and (especially for later European commentators) the devastating effects of the First World War. To get rid of the narrative, by replacing the logical plot with the absurd discontinuity of the gag, according to Durgnat, Breton and the surrealist, is indeed the key to these films. Durgnat sees; the protagonists react more like amoebas to every kick or cake that falls on them. They don't choose to move on to the next scene but are simply propelled there, bodily

Silent films are well immersed in grim opium dens and impenetrable white Oriental slave traders, swarthy Italian gangsters, comically backward Orthodox Jews, and rural hillbillies of all tendencies and ethnicities.

The best example of slapstick Comedy is the one exemplified by Chaplin, traditionally seen as the humor of the dispossessed, who mock pomposity, power and all the agencies of moral government: drunken judges, marriage reformers, pious clergymen (one immediately thinks of Charlie wiping the shit off his shoes during the pastor's homily in *The Tramp*).

Actors Chaplin and Keaton are the perfect embodiment of human stoicism. However, they lost their touch when they confronted the world with a mechanical device and lost their rhythm and imagination. Although it influenced the Theatre of the Absurd with actors such as Laurel and Hardy (as in *The Three Stooges*), Field and the Marx Brothers, it paved the way for other aspects of the ancient tradition of vaudeville. In the cinema of the 1960s, only Jacques Tatis *Monsieur Hulot*, a heartless figure of the mechanical civilization of the time who was active and conscious of a sophisticated art with him.

I.4. The Theory of the Absurdity

One of the most prominent philosophical questions reflected seems to be the human desire to impose meaning on an invariably meaningless universe.

Religious Dogmas on the existence of God having guaranteed the significant contingency of human life had satisfied human natural desire to understand deeply the world in its most hidden spheres. In the light of what existentialists call the human condition, this desire has been disappointed and annulled, a condition for being thrown into an arbitrary and superfluous universe without having a choice in the matter.

With Nietzsche's publication of his opus *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in (1883), and with the postulation of both Camus and Sartre that the absurd is impregnated with humanity, old everyday certainties of life started to lose their certainty.

The two World Wars caused deep destruction and loss of human ultimate certainties and brought about a world senseless and disconnected with human life. The feelings of the Absurdity of man in a world where the decline of religious belief has deprived man of his certainties led Camus to address the problem of absurdity and how it arises.

What then is Absurd? And what is its philosophy?

I.4.1. What is Absurd?

Absurdity is a philosophical concept that refers to man's attempt to find reason in his life, frustrated by his human limitations. Many existentialist philosophers of the 20th century have tried to define the absurd. Their efforts are similar, as they all describe how individual struggles to relate to the world around him.

Miguel de Unamuno called it "the tragic meaning of life", while Jean-Paul Sartre called it "nausea". Richard Wright perceived it as the shame, fear, and terror that minorities feel within dominant racist society, making them feel disinherited and disinherited as if they were living in a "No Man's Land". Walker Percy identifies it as "an alienation", "an everyday life" and "homelessness". Another prominent philosopher associated with the writing of the absurd is Soren Kierkegaard. He focuses on the individual and his experience and that's what made his philosophy very personal. He believes that the great philosophical questions only make sense when they are experienced individually by each person and that no set of reasoned calculations or heavenly commandments can give us an answer as to how we should live. The individual is left alone in this world, without any supreme authority to become and create what he wants to be.

The most complete essay on the absurd is undoubtedly *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus, the French philosopher, and Nobel Prize winner. Camus intended to analyze the

feelings, notions, and consequences of the absurd to provide readers with a practical definition of the term. Camus' definition of the absurd is "that divorce between man and his life, the actor and his environment". (Camus)

According to Camus, the world is not inherently absurd, nor is it specific to the individual. The absurdity itself is the lack of communication between the two parties. The interaction between the individual and the world gives rise to absurdity because neither can be reduced to the reality of the other.

In addition to defining the absurd, Camus gives six examples of how the absurd is found in everyday life. The first example is what he describes as feeling emptiness. This happens when you don't think about anything. The second example is described as mechanical life. The repetition of daily work can foster a feeling of futility and this is when the inner consciousness awakens.

In the third situation, a person becomes aware of the passage of time and begins to make plans for a better future, but this is absurd and meaningless because people are trapped in time. As far as the fourth example is experienced, people perceive a familiar object differently because they have a different understanding of it. Camus says that this means that we feel alone in a world where we have nothing in common with others.

The fifth example is when we have a strong sense of isolation between ourselves and our fellow human beings, and we get confused when we perceive human beings as non-human. The last instance is death and the emotional response it evokes within us. It's because we're all mortal, that the fact to want to live forever is ultimately absurd...

According to Camus' interpretation of the absurd, human beings seek meaning in their lives and this can lead to one of two conclusions: either that life has no meaning, or that a

higher power/god has created an essential purpose within life for humanity to find and follow it. Within these two conclusions, there are several different options for the activity.

For example, someone might commit suicide by concluding that life is meaningless and not worth living. Camus rejects this concept by saying that if life can be absurd, it is even more absurd to fight it - so we must dedicate ourselves to living even if it is a pointless activity. According to Camus, suicide is just another way to avoid the absurd.

An alternative option is for people to try to find some beauty in their lives that create personal meaning for them. People may be able to find a reason to live, even if it is not the universal meaning of life. However, if someone has reached this stage, they should remember that the meaning they have invented for life is not the true meaning of life, because this reconciliation is in itself, according to Camus, absurd. Thus the absurd word, according to Camus, denotes something impossible and, above all, something contradictory. It is not a single entity, but a relationship between two extremes; the absurd, as Camus lyrically says, "arises from the comparison between a naked fact and a given reality, between any action and the world in which it is transcended". (1991, 30) In the experience of an individual when facing the familiar world made strange, the absurd is a shock, an incessant struggle, a world without reason or explanation, in short, a world without meaning. (1991; 6, 14, 29.) The absurd, therefore, is an experience more than a physical phenomenon.

Camus argues that the absurd is felt when the human need for coherence and unity meets the inconsistency and strangeness of the world. Since the only link between the mind and the world the absurd is a "divine equivalence born of anarchy" (Camus 1991, 51), he is restless and contrary; 28-31, 35, 51.) The absurd can only be denied or accepted completely, since the shock that creates the absurd cannot be reconciled (1991, 48). A sort of relationship that can exist between two distinct components, not their indistinct fusion. According to

Camus, the absurd has more meaning than mere irrationality and is not a statement about the world itself. In fact, it can be seen as a statement about how human beings relate to the world. Camus himself described it as a combination of two things: an irrational world and a person looking at it to make it rational.

Camus describes the negation of the absurd as being asleep, the analogies between being intentionally ignorant and being unconscious are obvious and how the negation of the absurd is obvious, necessarily, even denial of a part of the human mind. The acceptance of the absurd situation is described, on the contrary, as awakening, consciousness, and lucidity. (1991; 6, 13, 44, 15.) Because of its nature of consciousness (also understood literally), and since the absurd is delimited on both sides by the extremes of which the collision is created, it is "*lucid reason that indicates its limits*" [italics added] (1991, 49). As for the duality night/day that derives from sleep/wake, Camus describes the absurd as "light without effusion" (Camus 1991, 5) and commits suicide because the absurd cannot be borne is the flight of light (1991, 5). In a meaningless world, full of struggle, without explanations, Camus asks himself: "The Absurdity dictates death"? We are strangers in a hostile world, exiled without memory, and without hope of a homeland, divorced from our own lives. Should we kill ourselves because nothing makes sense anymore? (1991, pp. 6, 9) As the metaphors of light and awakening simply, the experience of the absurd is in no way negative for Camus, as Neil Cornwell and Clyde Manschreck point out (Cornwell 2006, 115; Manschreck 1976, 92). To accept the absurd, or to live in reconciliation with it, is to take responsibility. The world suddenly receives a "poetry of shapes and colors" (Camus 1991, 52). The void where meaning suddenly disappears becomes eloquent, and indeed the absurd is a progression towards this void. (Camus 1991, 12; Cornwell 2006; 12, 115.) Moreover, if the absurd teaches that all experience is meaningless, it also requires that life be lived fully and for a long time since human life is the only necessary good in this meaningless world. (Camus 1991, 62-63.);

Cornwell 2006, 117). The will to live the present moment, the will to experience the world, is the consequence of accepting the absurd because nothing matters more than being aware, "the purest of joys" (Camus 1991, 63). "I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death by the simple activity of consciousness - and still I refuse suicide." (Camus 1991, 64) Acceptance of the absurd has other consequences, deeply personal, of which we will speak later: revolt, freedom, and passion (Camus 1991, 60).

The feeling of Absurdity, Camus says, could strike any man in the face at any street-comer. The Absurd, for Camus, is an absence of correspondence between the mind's need for unity and the chaos of the world the mind experiences, and the obvious response is either suicide or, in the opposite direction, a leap of faith.

I.4.2. The Absurd Philosophy

The notion of absurdity has been made more famous, and more relevant, by Albert Camus, for the absurd literature, especially with his book, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. But Camus was not the first to express philosophical ideas about the absurd. Søren Kierkegaard focused significantly on the absurd many, many years before Camus, as did Léon Chestov and Benjamin Fondane later, writing in the 1920s and 1930s. It is also important that there is a widespread misunderstanding about the claims of Camus' philosophy of the absurd.

Kierkegaard's philosophy, which was the basis for reinvigorating the Christian faith, is no longer a philosophy of the absurd aimed at increasing the Christian faith, a concept of freedom and choice that became entangled with the rise of nihilism in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. It is in the face of Kierkegaard's "absurdity" - the paradox that God is infinite, but Jesus was finite - that humans must renew their faith "in virtue of the absurd", which is beyond reason. Furthermore, *The Philosophy of the Absurd* by Leon Chestov, a Russian émigré living in France in the 1920s, being nothing more than an existential critique

of rationality: "revealed the subtle affinity between Russian nihilism and Nietzsche's philosophy".

As Ramona Fotiade points out, Chestov's philosophy on the absurd is very similar to the nihilistic rejection of conventional art by the Dada and the surrealist avant-garde. Furthermore, Camus' myth of Sisyphus is "a barely disguised polemical response to Chestov's arguments on the absurd."

Camus' belief and trust in reason distinguish somehow his absurd from that of Chestov and Benjamin Fondane who were critical of a rational method of inquiry and/or knowledge. Camus' philosophy of the Absurd as explored in his collection of essays, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, published in French in 1942, has commonly been read as an existential outcry of the absurdity of the human condition: humanity lost in a world without God, never getting what is wanted, with human's only escape being suicide. Camus begins by asserting that the fundamental problem in philosophy is suicide; that is, judging whether life is worth living. Camus argues that this is the most urgent of questions. He goes on to state that the realization that the universe is devoid of meaning leaves one feeling alone: an alien and a stranger (p. 6).

Camus argues that such a realization is without a remedy because one finds oneself "deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land" (p. 6). In sum, people cannot unlearn what they have discovered, but they can choose to abandon that knowledge and deny it by committing suicide.

Camus acknowledges that man lives in an "absurd situation", but neither the world nor man is absurd: it is only their union that is absurd. In other words, the absurd situation is that the world refuses to give us what we want. And instead of succumbing to a false illusion of meaning, Camus suggests that it is better to live as if there is no intrinsic meaning to the world so that human beings can contemplate the absurd and rebel against it to give meaning to their

lives. It is through contemplation and rebellion - and especially through the use of reason (and reason has been considered an imperfect method of investigation and acquisition of knowledge by existentialists) - that human beings, like Sisyphus, can create their own purpose and meaning in the world.

Martin Esslin quoted in Nelson (1993, p. 68) says that absurd is that dramatic genre that presents a vision of the absurdity of the human condition by the abandonment of usual or rational devices and using unrealistic tools...Conceived in spiritual anguish as well as perplexity, the theatre of the absurd represents a set of images presenting people as disoriented beings in an incomprehensible universe rather than a series of related incidents telling a story.

So according to Goodwin:

.. Man becomes lost and detached and without any sense within absurd conditions, it is this senselessness where one gets “conscious realization that there is no final resolution---no final synthesis---but only a kind of social game whose purpose is to create theses that will eventually destroy themselves.(Godwin, 1971, p. 45)

In the absurd, death is considered the most-awaited and indeed the most important moment in life and therefore celebrated. Now, one wonders why death is so welcome, besides the fact that it is the most difficult aspect of life. The answer to this question is evasion, that is, escape from the very source of the absurd, which is life.

All this means therefore that the absurd is despair, that is the disparity of life and actions in which man is forced to seek some remedy, and therefore death is considered as the opium that can help in escaping from this absurdity.

And thus, we can conclude that the philosophy of the absurd also comes up against contradictions as soon as it expresses itself because any expression of this type presupposes a certain coherence at the center of the incoherence that it proposes to analyze.

I.4.3. Beckett's Theatre of the Absurd

One of the most emblematic playwrights, famous for the development of the Theatre of the Absurd, is the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett. He spent much of his life in France and from 1946 to 1950 he wrote many of the works for which he is famous, especially in French. In 1953, in a small theater in Paris, Beckett staged what is known as the most influential play of the 20th-Century, "*Waiting for Godot*".

As an author in both English and French and as the author of the page and the stage, Beckett has been at the center of a treatment specializing in each of its many facets, but there have been few attempts to provide a conspicuous point of view. Samuel Beckett's worldwide reputation is due to a combination of high academic esteem and immense popularity. An innovator of prose fiction that rivals Joyce, his works have been the most influential in the history of modern theatre. Beckett's famous refusal to "explain" his plays, combined with his indifference to celebrity rewards, made him seem a "difficult" author. When pressed, however, Beckett's emphasis fell on the "fundamental sounds" he sought to express.

The writings of Samuel Beckett have always posed stubborn problems to critics and literary historians. His extraordinary inventiveness and the bizarre nature of his inventions; the mixture of anguish and elegance - speaking of the first and the last through the masks of wandering clowns - have made his work extraordinarily difficult to describe and evaluate; and his movements through countries, languages, and genres make a brief and comprehensive report on his career that is almost impossible to write.

Before turning to Beckett's plays, and in particular to his major achievement, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, it is important to establish, in broad terms, the nature of the theatre which he entered with such a flourish.

1950, especially, has been characterized by renewed vigor and activity. In the front rank are such contemporary dramatists as Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, and Samuel Beckett. These playwrights among others with such an important production are only the interpreters of modern reality. Their socio-psychological awareness has led to the creation of new and serious works that comment on particular aspects of the social and human condition. Their works transcend national boundaries and become meaningful commentaries on a universal scale. These playwrights discard all the conventional standards by which drama has been judged over the centuries. Their plays are not structurally well made with a beginning, a middle, and a desirable ending. These plays start arbitrarily and end arbitrarily, thus reflecting the irrational nature of life. These 'absurdist' express the senselessness of life by abandoning rational devices. They do not see any possibility for the solution of problems they preset in their plays. Stage-setting is generally austere in the case of these playwrights quite in time with what they want to present. Their protagonists are not kings, heroes, and princes but common men and even tramps.

Much of the sensationalism, melodrama, and sentimentality associated with earlier plays have been suppressed through improved control over dramatic structure and technique. Beckett's theater is often referred to as the theater of the absurd. It has some foundation in Camus' view of life as absurd, for example, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

Beckett as an absurd playwright explores the anguish and helplessness of modern man in an attempt to impose rational order on an incomprehensible world. Beckett's work is ridiculous because it exhibits "the metaphysical anguish of the absurdity [lack of harmony] of human conditions" like existentialism (Esslin, *Theatre* 5). Like Adamov, Ionesco, and Genet,

Beckett's absurdity goes beyond the support of existentialists who came up with their theories, No matter how ridiculous, it is expressed in a "highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning" (Esslin, Theatre 6). The dramatic absurdists took a step further, "trying to achieve unity between the basic assumptions of [absurdism] and the expression of these assumptions" (Esslin, Theatre 6)

At odds with his fellow man and especially with himself, he thrashes about searching for an understanding of the world and the human condition. He is often limited to plays with two characters, a technique that allows a more careful examination not of motivation and psychological development, but of the irrationality of the frustrated and desperate man-animal - anti-heroes instead of the traditional heroic figures.

Most of Beckett's work has something to deal with some existentialist and absurd ideas. In fact, Beckett's vision of human existence is a constant force of despair and disappointment. It's actually his play "Waiting for Godot" that gave rise to the idea of the theater of the absurd. He has been considered as the father of the theatre of the absurd due to his great contribution to the latter. In "Waiting for Godot" there's a sense of absurdity when both characters are waiting for a certain Godot, which seems to be their savior. "We're still waiting for Godot, and shall continue to wait. When the scenery gets too drab and the action too slow, we'll call each other names and swear to part forever – but then, there's no place to go"¹⁶!

But what happens is that after a long waiting he doesn't come and so they despair without Godot's help. This sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition is found consistently in Beckett's work and can be likened to Camus's *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* where the figure of Greek mythology, condemned to repeat the same meaningless task of pushing a boulder up a mountain only to see it roll down again, is related to man's

¹⁶ *San Quentin News*, 28 November 1957

futile search for meaning, unity, and clarity in the face of an unintelligible world devoid of God, eternal truths, and values¹⁷. Such *Waiting for Godot* was introduced to the English stage, and the English public, a kind of theatre that Martin Esslin called "Theatre of the Absurd".

Beckett's characters are in greater despair than Camus's "l'homme absurde" or *révoltés*. Physically and psychologically disproportionate, they are less distinguishable as individuals, thus enhancing their ability to express the struggle of our common human condition. They are either vital and complex, multi-faceted creations that function simultaneously on different levels. They challenge the recognition of the faith of existential commitment and the stubborn maintenance of their devotion to principles. As Robert Bolt has observed:

"... , I find for example in *Waiting for Godot* a kind of bitterness and pain and resentment expressed by this play and by these characters about the absurdity of life which seems to postulate that some reasonable expectation has not been met-otherwise, why the bitterness, why the pain, why the protest?"¹⁸

Although a violent death (suicide or murder) may be the result, this is not necessarily tragic; the real tragedy is to live out a meaningless existence without goals or principles. The determining factor is the search for authentic existence, for personal liberty, and for the dignity of the individual above the oppressive denigration and the anonymity produced by society.

Fragmentation occurs in many areas, in the disintegration of personality, with the same character assuming a new identity, as well as in the distortion of language so that rational and sequential dialogue frequently ceases to exist; in the distortion of relationships in time and space relationships; and the disintegration of traditional dramatic structure, so that short (one-

¹⁷ Camus, Albert, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1942). See also Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. Robert Pippin, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). The work deals with ideas such as the "eternal recurrence of the same" and the parable on the "death of God"

¹⁸ Robert Bolt, interviewed in *Plays and Players* (December, 1963), p. 11.

act) plays are common and act and scene divisions accommodate, in Brechtian fashion, the spirit of the work. First, let's take a look at Samuel Beckett's life.

I.5. Beckett's Life and Works.

It will not be enough to find the stream's source to map the river. There should be no total association between Beckett's life and work, even if there is no absolute separation. The work will always generate interpretations outside its biographical or contextual comments. If there is any coherence in Beckett's life, it should not be allowed to compensate for the incoherence. Both Beckett's life and works are the product of tumultuous times. Beckett is a critic, a playwright, and a Nobel Prize winner. It seems almost too good to be true that the most famous playwright of 20th-century suffering and desolation would have been born on the day of the crucifixion but Samuel Barclay Beckett was undoubtedly born in Good Friday, April 13, 1906, to a bourgeois family of Anglo-Irish Protestant origin. He was the second son of William Frank Beckett, a successful surveyor, and his wife Maria, known as May and raised as a Protestant in the village of Foxrock, eight miles away South of Dublin, a Dublin suburb, His childhood was mostly marked by his tough relationship with a puritanical and unsympathetic mother. He was the youngest son of a well-to-do Protestant family. Beckett attended Portora Royal School in Enniskillen (County Fermanagh) in 1920, where he excelled in French. He enrolled at Trinity College in Dublin in 1923 to study French and Italian.

Beckett, at 22 years old, was sent as an English reader to the Ecole Normale Supérieure in October 1928. He studied languages at Trinity College from 1923 to 1927, where he graduated, paving the way for a teaching career in Paris and meeting the self-exiled Irish writer James Joyce. This influenced him to write several short stories and poems, but they received no credit and were not successful.

In 1929 he authored the classic essay "Dante... Bruno... Vico... Joyce," which is still considered one of the best introductions to Joyce's work today. Beckett quit as a lecturer at Trinity College in Dublin in 1932. He could not bear to work as a teacher because he thought that daily routine and habit were the cause of the anxiety, living death and loss of creativity that led him to travel from Dublin to Paris and London, Germany, and back to France, where he settled permanently and began working as a worker and volunteer in the Red Cross unit.

He fled to London in 1933 after his father died suddenly. Following acute attacks of melancholy, Beckett collaborated with W.R. Bion on an analysis that will be halted at the end of two years in Paris, where Joyce was enthroned (an overwhelming paternal figure). In retrospect, Beckett's experience with analysis appears to have been profoundly healing. At the very least, it permitted him to declare himself a writer (Rabaté 1984, p.7). He fled to London in 1933 after his father died suddenly. Following acute attacks of melancholy, Beckett collaborated with W.R. Bion on an analysis that will be halted at the end of two years in Paris, where Joyce was enthroned (an overwhelming paternal figure). In retrospect, Beckett's experience with analysis appears to have been profoundly healing. At the very least, it permitted him to declare himself a writer (Rabaté 1984, p.7). Even if Beckett hasn't fully grasped his relationship with his mother, his analysis is insightful. He published *More Pricks than Kicks* in 1934. In 1935 Beckett wrote his first novel, *Murphy*, and in 1937 he met Joyce and his circle in Paris. Back in Paris Beckett, once again frequented the Joyces, though he made a living from translations (including one, quite remarkable, Apollinaire's poem "Zone") as he wrote in French his first texts and short poems published after the war.

During World War II, Samuel Beckett joined the French resistance as a French citizen against the German Nazis; he fought with them until 1942 when most members of the resistance group were arrested by the Gestapo, which led him to flee for his safety to the war zone. After World War II, Samuel Beckett was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* for his courage

for his contribution to the French resistance. He installed in Paris and started his most prolific period as a writer. The experiences of World War II shaped Beckett's view of life and his perspective was a pessimistic view of humanity. In January 1946, he resigned from his position as an interpreter at the Irish Red Cross Hospital in Saint-Lô to settle permanently in Paris with Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil, whom he would marry a few years later. The years 1945-50 were decisive for Beckett in many ways: he adopted and integrated French into his work while opening it to the theater. This moment of passage and openness is for Beckett a moment of reinvention, who through French and the theater will move away from Joyce. After the war, Beckett's extraordinary literary output would convince Alfred Simon that he "est né à lui-même" (Simon 1986, p.71). In the five years between the end of the war and the death of Beckett's mother in 1950 (the so-called creative period), Beckett wrote *Eleutheria*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, the novels *Malloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*, and *Mercier and Camier*, two books of short stories, and a book of criticism.

Most of his works have been translated into French as *Endgame* and his play *Waiting for Godot*. With the latter work Beckett became known as a playwright. He was associated with the "Theatre of the Absurd". He received the Nobel Prize in 1969 and died in 1989.

Beckett is one of the most innovative and difficult writers of the 20th century. It is tempting, in the face of the often elusive meanings of his work, to seek refuge in verifiable facts that correspond to his life. The scholar of his work can, therefore, replace the task of interpretation with that of simple notation - explaining the origins of a reference, allusion, character, or event, instead of wondering what they might mean within the logic of the text.

Finding the origin of the flow will not in itself be a trace of the river. Although there is no absolute separation between Beckett's life and his work, there should not even be an absolute identification.

One way to understand Beckett, according to his friend and doctor, Dr. Geovrey Thomson, was in his relationship with his mother. She was both loving and dominant, attentive, and severe, and Beckett's love-hate relationship is at the center of his intense feelings of anxiety and guilt. Later he wrote of her "savage... love ", and it seems that his subsequent decision to settle permanently in France was as much an escape from the mother as from the homeland as Knowlson states: "her savage loving" was an ultimate reason to him to flight from Ireland (Knowlson 180).

Beckett once described his childhood as an 'Uneventful and very ordinary. You might say I had a happy childhood . . . although I had little talent for happiness. My parents did everything that they could to make a child happy. But I was often lonely' (Bair 14)..

As Anglo-Irish critic Vivian Mercier, reflecting on the similarity between his own background and Beckett's, discerned:

The typical Anglo-Irish boy . . . learns that he is not quite Irish almost before he can talk; later he learns that he is far from being English either. The pressure on him to become either wholly English or wholly Irish can erase segments of his individuality for good and all. 'Who am I?' is the question that every Anglo-Irishman must answer, even if it takes him a lifetime as it did Yeats' (Vivian Mercier 26)

His difficult and melancholic personality was admitted by his school teacher who often labeled him moody and withdrawn. No wonder that loneliness, alienation and solitude become dominant themes in his works. Hence, Beckett's art becomes an art of negation, emptiness, and nothingness. It belongs to the great melancholic tradition of night and abyss literature, which includes Swift, Nietzsche, Hölderlin, Baudelaire, Nerval, Poe, and Mallarmé, as well as Kafka, Musil, Faulkner, Céline, and Artaud from the twentieth century. Unlike Joyce, for whom myth represented an inexhaustible paradigm of creation and invention, or Proust, for whom the search for memory and lost time was a metaphor for literature itself,

Beckett felt the need to proceed differently. Perhaps this legacy of fractured identity, this search for the self, may have left its mark on Beckett's subsequent concern for a painful indetermination of subjectivity. The question "Who am I?" is constantly asked by his creatures.

Throughout his career, from his essay on Proust (Proust) to his texts on abstract painting in the 1940s, to his famous letter in German to Axel Kaun in 1937, Beckett defended the idea of a literature of emptiness, a kind of work of digging out the negative where:

The only fertile research is excavator, immersive, a contraction of the spirit, a descent. The artist is active, but negatively, shrinking from the nullity of extra circumferential phenomena, drawn into the core of the eddy (P, p.65-66).

And preferred:

The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express (P, p.103).

Beckett thus represents himself as a writer whose work is uncompromising and without complacency. What leads neither to a humanism nor to nihilism, but, to quote Jean-Michel Rabaté, « sur une exigence toujours accrue de vérité » (Rabaté 1984, p.154). To read then Beckett is to break with our reality, to abandon our daily and familiar world, with its habits, its references, its certainties, and its small consolations to venture into a world resolutely other, not very human and too human at the same time. Bodies are invariably fragmented or paralyzed, minds disturbed or disruptive, logorrhea is as threatening as silence, great loneliness remains inexplicable and, finally, death is omnipresent. A dark world, upside down but a world that strangely resembles ours to the point where one could say that Beckettian writing plays at developing the "negative" of our world, a term taken in the photographic sense.

By mobilizing and by interpellating so the reader's fantasies and anxieties, Beckett is one of those great artists who, in Winnicott's terms "a l'aptitude et le courage de garder le contact avec des processus primitifs que la plupart d'entre nous ne peuvent plus supporter d'atteindre."¹⁹(Winnicott 93-114)

However, Beckett's world is in one sense ours as much as his. Beckett's words according to Herbert Blau: "austere, hermetic, and constrained, like a vow of poverty" (Blau 128) refer to aspects of ourselves and our world that we perpetually cover, and to an inner and surrounding reality that is not even part of our selves and world linguistically constituted. Like Freud, Beckett usurps the defense.

Waiting for Godot and *Endgame* are Beckett's masterpiece. His experience of life and soul is poured into these two works. Pain and suffering throughout his life drove in him this strong desire for death which is implicitly inscribed in several elements of his plays

I.5.1. Beckett's plays: *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*

There's always a question of a preverbal Nothing in Beckett's plays. While the pre-war Beckett subject's exploration of negation leads him to the very edge of self-dissolution, the post-war one strives to think the void, to reappropriate "his" emptiness, so to "play" in the "space without a place" as is *Waiting for Godot and Endgame's* theatrical scenes.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon opens with "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes It's awful". Vladimir joins him and is in perfect agreement with him. The setting is a barren country road and a dull gray sky reigns throughout; the time near dusk. The only prop is a tree, which according to them is a willow tree, probably because of the willow weeps.

¹⁹ Cf. D.D.Winnicott, « Nosographie: y a-t-il une contribution de la psychanalyse à la classification psychiatrique ? », cité par Anne Clancier, Jeannine Kalmanovitch, *Le Paradoxe de Winnicott*, Paris: Payot, 1984, p.49. L'article se trouve dans D.D.Winnicott, *Processus de Maturation chez l'enfant* (1965). Trad. J. Kalmanovitch, Paris: Payot, 1970, p.93-114

Vladimir and Estragon, two tramps, are there to wait for Godot who never appears -. Godot's structure could be described as circular, with the emphasis on similarity, monotony, and endless repetition. Each of the two acts could be considered complete in itself, but the first without the second would not be definitely hopeless, as one could still hope that Godot will arrive. Act II shows that this monotony will last forever.

While waiting for Godot Vladimir and Estragon hope that some supernatural person will come and take their problems out of their miserable existence as Christ did before giving meaning to life. Or in other words, they are waiting for the second coming of Christ.

In the play, there are two friends Vladimir and Estragon who spend their time discussing their past, quoting the Bible, arguing in the nearby tree, speculating about Godot, telling jokes, dreams eat and pee. Another couple of characters is Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo is a master and Lucky is his slave. In the second act, Pozzo goes blind. This means that human beings become blind to faith in God's existence. People who once believed in the existence of God become fools. This has put them in an irrefutable situation.

In *Endgame*, an extension of *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett points out the conditions of civilization and human beings where Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell, the four characters of the play are considered to be the only survivors after an explosion of a dreaded bomb in the community. Nell and Nagg, the aged parents; Hamm, their aging blind and immobile son, and Clov the dull, grandson lack a motive for survival, the motive to build a new life; there is no hope. The play starts with Clov's first words, "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished," which indicates the futility of continued attempts at survival.

When both civilization and human beings go together, it is a civilization that makes human beings spiritually and cosmically stronger. However, civilization did not provide any "cycle and painkiller". Nagg and Nell are represented as the past while Hamm and Clov

represent humans and civilization. All movement in *Endgame* revolves around the stages of dying.

I.5.2. Beckett's Universe

To live free is to be conscious of oneself and one's presence in the world, the space of its existence. Samuel Beckett's universe reveals protagonists who wonder about their environment, an increased need they feel in order to be able to account for the enigma of their existence, which, once solved, will enable them to understand and get along with themselves. These dramatic entities confronted with the mystery of their lives will discover very quickly and brutally, in the "New Theatre", that the universe into which they have been thrown is an encounter with the absurd: it is an enigmatic, opaque and hostile world, which forces them to move in agonizing uncertainty and chases them to death, building a wall of incomprehension that condemns them to an absurd condition and at the same time overwhelms them with pain. No matter how the protagonists that Samuel Beckett brings to the scene approach the question of their being in the universe, their consciousness is constantly trapped by the strangeness of contact with a reality that they do not understand, that stubbornly refuses to reason.

Moreover, the dramatic entities that evolve on the stage of the "New Theatre" soon realize that they can only leave the stage of this absurd world, overflowing with all categories of reason, at death, thus discovering themselves as beings for death. Then they realize that to live is to live the primitive hostility of the world, which is ready to cruelly annihilate life at any moment. This world that is beyond their control brutally sends Beckett's beings into the fragility of their existence, ready, at any moment, to be irreparably swallowed by the darkness of an absurd death, an experience that fills them with anguish and plunges them into deep alienation. Faced with this incomprehensible and indecipherable world, full of a multiplicity of possible unknowns and absurdly persistent in denying them any freedom by locking them

up in oppressive and suffocating places, the dramatic entities of Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett and Arthur Adamov will find their way, assume unconditionally and lucidly the difficulty of their alienating and absurd condition and take the leap that allows them to build a meaning to their existence, choosing a possible one that makes them accept and overcome the absurdity of this world in which they should evolve and the alienation that it generates, or will they fall into depression, remain in denial and therefore abdicate their original freedom?

To the well defined space of classical theatre, Samuel Beckett opposes "placeless" places, always anonymous, indeterminate, spaces of infinite potential, often enigmatic, obscure, ambiguous or unreal, rationally unthinkable. Constantly questioned, disconcerting for their strangeness, these places without reference points escape man's control, depriving him of any possibility of orientation and dedicating him to navigating in ambiguity and uncertainty, prisoner of an eternal senseless and absurd wandering.

I.5.3. Reading the Absurd in Beckett

Existentialism and the theater of the absurd as movements share a common ground each of which implicitly and explicitly announces certain visions of the world where the later is condemned as being non-rational and the former as strictly rational. While existential writers such as Camus and Sartre present their sense of humanity's irrationality in the form of highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning, the theatre of the absurd "strives to express the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought". (Esslin)

It has been inducted that the authors of the Theatre of the Absurd depict the absurdity of life and the human condition - and since Samuel Beckett, with his plays *Waiting for Godot*, and *Endgame*, is a great defender of the absurd, and presents a vision of modernity that is

unquestionably absurd (Cornwell 2006, 3; Dubois 2011, 113). We will try to decipher the types of forms that the absurd features discussed in the previous section take in this play.

Fundamentally, pain and suffering throughout his life gave rise to a strong desire for death that is implicit in several elements of his plays such as his two masterpieces, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* in which the experience of his life and soul is poured.

In the first play, *Waiting For Godot*, a play called by Esslin a "strange and tragic farce" (1985, 39) and is in the spirit of the Camusian absurd, doomed to seek the answer to the question of suicide in the absurd world posed by Camus (McLuckie 1993, 423-430) holds this existential stamp since it bears the seeds of existential work for its portrayal of the human condition that is central and critical to the integrity of the work in addition to the work's preoccupation with the idea of the absurd. One of the main themes that prevail and are common in existentialism and in the theatre of the absurd is death and suicide, both of which are the predicaments of the human condition as a 'being unto death'.

And this is seen at the beginning of Beckett's play in the 1st Act when :

ESTRAGON: Ah stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing.

VLADIMIR: Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were respectable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up. (Estragon tears at his boot.) What are you doing?

This attempt explains and demonstrates that Vladimir and Estragon live in a world without reason, which echoes the thought supported by Camus: "what is called the reason for living is also a reason for dying"(Camus), Camus is confronted with this alienation from the world where the psychological implications have an effect on the human psyche: A world explained for the wrong reasons or even a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe

suddenly devoid of illusions and lights, man feels alienated from himself. His exile is without remedy since his memory is deprived, his home is lost, without hope of a promised land. This divorce, as Camus has rightly pointed out, between 'man and his life, the actor and his setting', is strictly giving a feeling of absurdity. Since all healthy men have thought of their own suicide, we can see, without further explanation, that there is a direct link between this feeling and the desire for death.

It is difficult to avoid the absurd, especially when it makes its presence and reveals itself in becoming more tangible, and an adopted state of mind. *Waiting for Godot* depicts the two tramps helpless efforts towards the end.

Several lapses can be included in the list: "Nothing to do" (1), "I thought you were gone forever" (2), "in a ditch" (2) ... You're still waiting for "the last moment" (3) "Our birth" (4) "Idiot. Of death" (5) "And if we hang ourselves" (10) "I remain the darkness" (11) "by all means, nothing could be simpler. It is the natural order." (33) could clearly be recognized as the compulsion to repeat the idea of death. The association of these words intersected with Samuel Beckett's desire to die or return to an earlier stage of being human.

The same idea is seen in his second play *Endgame* full of guilt and sense of loss and somehow similar with the first one in which Beckett separated human being from their happiness with their lack and powerless in the opening of the story, with Clov speech when he said "finished" four times. Metaphorically, Beckett apparently kills his play from first line. He attempts to emphasize the story's aim by describing the setting about nothing and just corpses everywhere which clearly reflects the death idea of Samuel Beckett. Though, in this one-act play, death-wishes is one of the expressions of the internally directed death drive.

Let us now turn to the other characteristics of the Theatre, and how they do manifest in these two plays such as the absence of a linear or sensible plot, rational or relatable characters, and the devaluation of language.

On the first page of *Waiting for Godot*, we feel in the first dialogue a certain absurdity and lack of meaning in life between Estragon and Vladimir:

ESTRAGON: (giving up again). Nothing to be done.

VLADIMIR: (advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart). I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. (He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to Estragon.) So there you are again. (p-1)

A dialogue that brings out the absurdity of the play in which Estragon discusses his problem of taking off his shoes, which symbolizes the entire human existence where man is disappointed and disillusioned by the very fact of existence that brings despair and therefore an absurdity. It means that the human situation cannot be changed. All he can do is to exist and suffer. This repetition of the expression "nothing to do" four times in this work (pp. 1, 3, 4, and 15) underlines the powerless nature of man as well as the word "again" in the above extract refers makes life monotonous and boring. In the same way, Vladimir's state of action is also symbolic in nature, since he suffers from a prostrate illness as a result of which he moves with his legs apart and with rigid steps which represents man's suffering in this universe where life is nothing but absurd. The word "again" in the above extract refers Elsewhere, despair in life is discussed as:"

VLADIMIR: (gloomily). It's too much for one man. (Pause. Cheerfully.)

On the other hand,

"What's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties. (p.2)

Here again, Vladimir's actions are absurd. We notice that he's tired of the routine of life saying "it's too much", which signifies that life is a burden in which to live has no motivation or purpose and is therefore completely absurd. Vladimir starts to be gloomy and after a break, he is happy when he says that it is useless to cry over spilled milk. Though, after losing all that he had, Vladimir's life is completely absurd.

The two characters of the play invite each other to death. They can no longer bear this absurd life where there is neither purpose nor goals. They both invite to kill each other to escape this absurd life. This fact becomes evident in the dialogue that follows.

VLADIMIR: You always say that, and you always come crawling back.

ESTRAGON: The best thing would be to kill me, like the other.

VLADIMIR: What other? (Pause) What other? **ESTRAGON:** Like billions of others.

VLADIMIR: (Sententious.) To every man his little cross. (He sighs.) Till he dies. (Afterthought.) And is forgotten. (p.57).

On the other hand, The lack of action is seen as a symptom of the absurd world represented in the play: it is a half-lived life, in a "twilight world" (to use Metman's words), reduced to the barest essential, which the strangeness of the characters and the bleakness of the stage setting make concrete (Manschreck 1976, 93; Metman 1965, 122).

As far as time in the play has stopped (Beckett 2006, 29). Though, the cessation of time takes the form of circularity, as nothing can begin or end in the absence of linear time, including a linear plot. The lack of linear time progression is evident when we look at the beginning of Acts I and II: both begin with only Estragon on stage, playing with boots (though in Act I Estragon wears them, and in Act II they are on the floor), Vladimir entering, and the characters talking about being together (pp. 1-2, 48). The endings, however, are even more revealing: both show Estragon and Vladimir discussing parting ways (without actually

doing it), and end with exactly the same three lines: “Well, shall we go?” “Yes, let's go.” and the stage directions indicating, “[They do not move.]” (pp. 47, 87).

In addition to this, the non-movement of time can also be seen in the waiting. Vladimir and Estragon are sure that their waiting is in vain, without purpose: "We are waiting for Godot" is repeated throughout the play as if they needed to re-establish the reason for their existence. But to establish the meaning of Godot's final arrival, they need to restore temporality in a world where there is none. Moreover, The character of Godot is often symbolized as death, and total meaninglessness would be just that, but death is absent, both in the form of Godot and a real ending (Cornwell 2006, 230; Cronkhite 1969, 48; Haney 2001, 44; Ionescu 2013, 75-76; Manschreck 1976, 93). The resulting deathlessness, the eternal life in the now, is a curse for the characters. It is an absurd cycle from nothingness to nothingness. (Cornwell 1973, 41; Dubois 2011, 118; Metman 1965, 120.)

So what is the relation between the characters and their stripped-down world? There must be something happening, as it produces what Esslin calls a movement from action to a static pattern, and which Haney calls movement from activity to non-activity that dislocates personal identity (Esslin 1965, 12; Haney 2001, 43-44). This leads us to the non-rational or unrelatable characterization of the play. The expectation of characterization is denied in Godot: characters have no clearly defined individuality or essence, their condition is suddenly changed, this what happens to Pozzo between Act I where he is strong and proud, and Act II where he is inexplicably blinded and helpless (Beckett 2006, 69). The characters are moved by the quest of their ever-changing self, their dislocated personal identity, but one thing is constant, there is a kind of alienation from themselves and the world.

In *Endgame*, the characters seem like imperfect, mentally and physically ill, Nagg and Nell are legless. Hamm is blind and unable to stand. Clov can't sit and has disabilities to be independent.

NAGG: Do you remember---

NELL: No.

NAGG: When we crashed on our tandem and lost our shanks (*Endgame* 12).

CLOV: I can't sit.

HAMM: True. And I can't stand (8).

Beckett here, separated human being from their happiness with their lack and powerless. This is definitely one of the effect of the Absurd. Moreover, describing the setting, Beckett in a conversation between Hamm and Clov,

Hamm commands Clov to see what happen out of their area. Then Clov takes the ladder, and observes with microscope.

CLOV: Let's see. (He looks, moving the telescope.) Zero...(he looks)...zero...(he looks)...and zero.

HAMM: Nothing stirs. All is---

CLOV: Zer---

HAMM (violently): Wait till you're spoken to! (Normal voice.) All is... all is... all is what? (Violently.) All is what?

CLOV: What all is? In a word? Is that what you want to know? Just a moment. (He turns the telescope on the without, looks, lowers the telescope, turns towards Hamm.) Corpsed. And this what really reflect the absurd world in Beckett's play.

To conclude, we would say that Beckett is so famous for his absurdity, so his present works show absurdity because of the meaninglessness of actions, sterility of the characters, and strangeness of the setting. Furthermore *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* are plays that have contributed enormously to understanding the absurdity of the human condition and the

notion of despair that people felt after the world war, give a clear picture of the current situation and how ridiculous human efforts to try to live in this world are.

Conclusion

In the entire modernist form of literary expression, the modernists faced the sense of despair that they could not give humans a priori meaning to reason, and they were coordinated with the same intensity.

Modernism emerged as the dominant intellectual, artistic, literary, and cultural movement at the outbreak of the two world wars during the twentieth century. It emphasizes the birth of a new unconventional theatre created by Martin Esslin called the Theatre of Absurdity, which he established with the work of four pioneers of this particular genre: Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, and Jean Genet. The point of this artistic playwrights is to explore the human mind and conditions at its worse, the sense of despair that left by the world war impacted the entire world and left them confronted with loneliness and isolation, it left them with the job of facing the meaning and absurdity of life and death and the objective of human existence.

In addition, the Theatre of Absurd expresses this feeling and transforms it into a playwright with his own language. The failure of language to convey meaning is among the major theme in the theatre of the absurd, language is either separated from any interpretation that can be agreed upon by all characters or it is minimized into complete gibberish, the language that we see in the theatre of the absurd is a language that gives no meaning and the characters do not want to communicate with each other meaningfully, but it rather aims at exposing the absurdity of the situation they are in. Characters of this theatre tend to undermine the dignity of each other; aiming at hurting and misusing one another. Though, language serves to express the breakdown, the disintegration of thought, and life. Beckett

succeeded in devaluing the language in his play by the use of pauses and silences during the conversation between the characters.

Both readers and critics detect in Samuel Beckett's way of writing that he is influenced to a great extent by the post-war cultural atmosphere of a disappointment thus, religious belief and also faith in the continuous development of humankind had been seriously eradicated by the war experience, this led to the loss of metaphysical certainties and the lack of belief in the meaning of human existence, moreover, Beckett was also influenced by the argument of Albert Camus that human existence is absurd in its core, due to the lack of any intelligible evidence which suggests a meaning or a purpose for human life and there is no higher authority that can prove otherwise nor any human being knows about it, because it's beyond his limits as it can be seen in the play: the waiting for a person named GODOT that does not seem to come or appear and it is out of the limit of the two tramps to reach this person nor have any knowledge about him. Through its constant emphasis on the uncertainty of the appointment with Godot, the unreliability and irrationality of Godot, and the repetitious demonstration of the futility of the hopes placed in it, the act of Godot's anticipation is absurd. However, as the final solution, we solved one way to get rid of the absurdity of the world, and that is suicide.

Albert Camus believes that the absurdity of life can be dealt with before actually suiciding and this can be seen in *Waiting for Godot*, where characters engage in a meaningless conversation or occupying their time by indulging themselves in trivial things, and last but not least, the option of suicide is always on the table, to hang themselves from the tree. However, it is important to note that suicide can only be seen as a form of freedom to get rid of meaningless habits in daily life, not as a freedom to get rid of the sense of absurdity. Since suicide is considered a man's defeat, when human beings acknowledge the absurd nature of life, which undoubtedly leads to death, he starts his journey towards freedom. As the ultimate

goal of human existence, the ability to accept death provides us with an opportunity to get rid of the trivial and habitual struggles of daily life.

The confrontation with concrete projections of the deepest fears and anxieties, only vaguely experienced on a semi conscious level, constitutes the process of catharsis and liberation analogous to the therapeutic effect in psychoanalysis of the confrontation with the subconscious content of the mind. This is the moment of liberation from the habit of death, the moment of confrontation with the suffering of survival. That's what led to the widespread success of Beckett's works, though the Theater of the Absurd can be seen as a search for a reality that lies behind mere reasoning in conceptual terms. Language is devalued as an instrument of communication of the ultimate truths, but Beckett is a great master of language as an artistic medium.

All in all, the features of the Absurd discussed earlier are but a glimmer of hope to trigger the philosophical study of Beckett's theatre that made him so popular in the post-war era. It for this reason that I have chosen to entitle my second chapter *Beckett's Journey Toward Philosophy*.

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BECKETT'S
JOURNEY TOWARD
PHILOSOPHY**

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Introduction

Modern man no longer views himself as part of a great, ordered hierarchy of cause and effect, having witnessed elements of irrationality and absurdity in himself and the universe. However, such witnessing is frightening, and man is tempted to reject his insights and retreat into the less scary world of self-deception. Man's nature is to reject reality and embrace illusion and self-deception, flee from being to non-being, and escape from knowing to not knowing. This human feature has become the central theme of Samuel Beckett's drama. His theater appears illogical, if not totally nonsensical, to those who never penetrated this level of human psychology. He has been labeled avant-garde for pioneering the literary expression of man's flight from reality; however, awareness of man's inclination to renounce his being is not new to certain other intellectual disciplines, such as philosophy and psychology. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the basic theories of existence as developed by existential philosophy and psychology and to relate these new insights into the nature of Being to Samuel Beckett's two plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*.

Many critics deny the existence of a philosophical meaning in Beckett's work and then proceed to produce such a meaning, even if, as in the case of Esslin, they claim to derive it from absences or negations in Beckett's oeuvre. The latter argues that Beckett's writings have no philosophical meaning: "an artist like Beckett does not concern himself with abstract and general verities . . . no universal lessons, no meanings, no philosophical truths could possibly be derived from the work of a writer like Beckett."²⁰ And who goes on to assert that they "constitute the culmination of existential thought itself, precisely because they are free of any abstract concepts or

²⁰Martin Esslin, "Introduction" in Martin Esslin, ed., *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 1-15, p.4.

general ideas."²¹ Despite all the opposite protests, Beckett works on the same ground as philosophers. As Vivian Mercier apparently confirms that Beckett uses philosophical ideas for purely literary purposes, is his claim that: I take no sides. I am interested in the shape of ideas. There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine: "Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned." That sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters"²². As far as John Butler asserts that "despite all protestations to the contrary, Beckett works on the same ground as the philosophers."²³ L.A.C. Dobrez, on the other hand, believes that it can be argued that "Beckett's work as a whole represents nothing less than a literary recapitulation of an entire tradition in philosophy from Descartes and his contemporaries to the present day . . ."²⁴

It would be unproductive to deliberately exclude, for example, Zeno simply because he is mentioned by Beckett. Whatever the truth, one thing is certain Beckett spread freely among the writings of philosophers, where he found confirmation and justification for the metaphysical obsessions that haunt his work: the gulf between body and mind and epistemological uncertainty. His genius succeeded in transforming these speculative problems into art.

Beckett seems to recognize our existential uncertainty and anxiety, as Esslin and others have shown. The writings of such philosophers were once applied to Beckett's canon to make it fit firmly into its post-war historical context, and the so-called "French existentialists"

²¹ Ibid., p.5.

²² Vivian Mercier, *Beckett/Beckett* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.163. Originally quoted by Alan Schneider, "Waiting for Beckett", in *Beckett at 60: A Festschrift* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1967), p.34. See note 4 on p.245 of Mercier.

²³ Lance St. John Butler, *Samuel Beckett and the Meaning of Being: A Study in Ontological Parable* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p.2.

²⁴ L.A.C. Dobrez, *The Existential and its Exits: Literary and philosophical perspectives on the works of Beckett, Ionesco, Genet and Pinter* (London: The Athlone Press, 1986), p.51.

contributed greatly, albeit unconsciously, to the birth of the now rather outdated conceptual framework we know as "The Theatre of the Absurd".

Beckett was constantly read as a particularly "philosophical" writer. From early readings placing him in the context of post-war French existentialism, to the later sense that his works capture, perhaps even put into action, the dynamics of poststructuralist theory, to the recent movements, spurred by the publication of the "*Philosophical Notes*" and "*Psychological Notes*" of the 1930s, to read Beckett's writings in light of his philosophical influences and commitments. Beckett's drama is part of a set of ontological and epistemological problems that form the core of phenomenology that has remained an oblique presence, a spectrum that emerged with Sartre's connection and obsessed later stories while receiving surprisingly little attention as it has continued to be revised and re-articulated. Like the history of phenomenology itself, Beckett's drama represents an evolutionary and increasingly complex response to a series of essentially phenomenological questions concerning subjectivity, corporeality, perception, and time-consciousness.

In this chapter, I try to abord this core of Beckett's work by associating it with philosophy. This will demonstrate a way of reading Beckett and at the same time show how philosophical analogy can enlighten a writer. Based on the theories of existential philosophies, this chapter is to review and revive some key thinkers' philosophies, in particular , Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Paul Ricoeur, and to combine them with historical and contemporary theory and criticism, to launch a new phenomenological investigation into the forms and the meaning of being in Samuel Beckett's two plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* outlining some key themes that pervade Beckett's relationship to phenomenology in such a way that an ontology of Beckett's character can be established. My main aim is to try to illuminate the Beckettian gloom with the philosophical lamps that seem to work best. This has led me to choose a major work by each of the two

existential authors, Heidegger and Sartre, and to experiment with a less obvious source of illumination: Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.

II.1. Beckett's world and philosophy

The Beckettian world as Dermot Moran recently suggested is an austere world, a world that cries out for philosophical interpretation²⁵. As a writer, Beckett firmly resists any attempt to philosophically or meaningfully explain his works, because his works are full of vague allusions and deliberate suggestions of philosophical intentions.

His writings call for hope despite their apparent darkness and absurdity attempting all the time to separate themselves from the carnal, from experience, from history, and theatricality. The pessimistic atmosphere, the post-apocalyptic gloom of the landscapes, the desperate characters exult with endless metaphysical arguments, useless but amusing, and the irresistible feeling of the lack of purpose and meaninglessness of life which fully captures the collapsing world, masterfully conveying its most intimate essence of decay, the "issueless predicament of existence"²⁶ as Beckett himself said, has led many critics to try to define the overall philosophical position Beckett is supposed to subscribe to.

As an author, he firmly resisted any attempt to impose a philosophical interpretation or meaning on his work. Beckett's response to philosophy was to reject it, to "kick his ass." His use of ideas is always accompanied by reluctance, ambiguity, and an amusing deflationary counterpoint. The ideas are somehow presented as magnificent buildings that stand out from the miserable narrowness of the human condition. Ideas console, construct, disconcert and

²⁵ Dermot Moran, "Beckett and Philosophy," in *Samuel Beckett: 100 Years*, edited by Christopher Murray (Dublin: New Island, 2006), 94. Despite merely seeing many philosophical allusions in Beckett's work as simply "a kind of arbitrary collection or *bricolage* of philosophical ideas," Moran nonetheless astutely continues: "Beckett's relation to philosophy is difficult to complex. He was not a philosopher; if he had been, he would not have needed to engage with art" (94).

²⁶ Samuel Beckett in his review of McGreevy's *Jack B. Yeats. An Appreciation and an Interpretation* (1945), quoted in Gerry Dukes, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 58

amuse, but they are also always distortions, illusions, exaggerations, winks, deviations that happily take us beyond the real and pathetic circumstances of our own condition. The thought is a pleasurable distraction, but it is deceptive.

Beckett worsened this refusal to interpret his work philosophically by stating that he does not understand philosophers: "Never understand what they write. And once again he wrote, "I'm not a philosopher. You can only talk about what you have in front of you, and it's just a mess "²⁷.

In his published letters and in his reported conversations as well as in the few interviews he has given, Samuel Beckett states that there is no hidden philosophical argument or system to be found in his literary works. Nevertheless, he often expressed this with some ambiguity, as when he did not specifically rule out the possibility that he was asserting "a general truth" in his own work in a conversation with Hugh Kenner: He suggested that over interpretation, which seemed to trouble him more than misinterpretation, stemmed from two main assumptions, namely that the writer necessarily presents an experience he has had, and that he necessarily writes to assert a general truth²⁸. Beckett may differ here from writers like Kierkegaard and Sartre, who used novels as vehicles for expressing philosophical ideas, but the ambiguity remains. Even his assertion, in an interview with Gabriel D'Auberède, that "There's no key or problem. I wouldn't have had any reason to write my novels if I could have expressed their subject in philosophic terms"²⁹ which lead to an opening question of whether the subject matter of his work can be expressed by others in philosophical terms, even if Beckett believed himself incapable of doing so, although it is likely that he believed the "subject matter" of his work was by nature inexpressible in such terms.

²⁷ Patrick Kavanagh, *Collected Pruse* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1967), p. 266.

²⁸ Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study* (London: John Calder, 1962), report of conversation with Beckett in spring of 1958, p.10.

²⁹ Gabriel D'Auberède, "En attendant . . . Beckett", trans. Christopher Waters, in Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, eds., *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage* (London, Henley and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), pp.215-7, p.217. Original published in *Nouvelles Littéraires* (16/2/1961) 1, 7.

How, then, can we classify Beckett among certain philosophers, and what then is the key to the relationship of his writings within the modern European philosophical tradition in general?

As this chapter shows, the relationship between Beckett and philosophy has many aspects and many meanings as Dermot Moran points out:

“Beckett’s work in one way or another undoubtedly engages in the great themes of philosophy – the meaning of life in the absence of God, suffering, the nature of hope and disappointment, human nature, the condition of embodiment, the experience of being born, dying and just living, the search for value, the human capacity for thought and action or inaction, the nature of time, the poverty of language, the failure of art, and so on.”(Moran 102)

Beckett's writings contain a kind of collection of arbitrary or tinkered with philosophical ideas. His work exudes an atmosphere of existentialism...Anguish, despair, and human abandonment in the relentless course of the world. Beckett's characters depict an uprooted, homeless and alienated humanity. A person who is no longer at home in the world, a person lost in a meaningless void. This raw Beckettian world cries out for a philosophical interpretation.

Yet Beckett's relationship with philosophy is difficult and complex. He was not a philosopher; if he had been, he might not have engaged in art and this considering his own statement:

"When Heidegger and Sartre speak of a contrast between being and existence, they may be right. I don't know," but their language is too philosophical for me. I am not a philosopher. One can only speak of what is in front of him, and that now is simply the mess."
(Chambers 154)

Many western philosophers have some light to shed on Beckett. e.g. Nietzsche's nihilism, Sartre's existentialism, Camus' sense of Absurdity, the sublime Kantian/Lyotardian

in which the imagination is engaged in the impossible effort of giving visibility to an Idea, Wittgenstein's relentless formalism and modernism, Heidegger's Angst in the face of nothingness and the conception of man as existence (Dasein), Blanchot's and Derrida's dissections of the failure of language. But Heidegger, Sartre, and Hegel to name few offer a wide range of the concepts that apply substantially to Beckett. Yet the outcome of this hopeless task is only a decoy; the real goal is the never-ending struggle through a range of the theatrical and literary works of Samuel Beckett and According to Antonin Artaud the theatre is the ideal place to remind us of the true meaning of life: "Nous ne sommes pas libres. Et le ciel peut encore tombé sur la tête. Et le théâtre est fait pour nous apprendre d'abord cela." (Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty.)

As this chapter shows, the relationship between Beckett and philosophy has many aspects and many meanings. Indeed, Beckett's writings are imbued with the intellectual mood of their time, but they also seem to foretell a dark human destiny. Beckett, of course, witnessed many of the major events of the twentieth century, the post-war period, including the end of the Cold War and the birth of the New World Disorder after 1989 which have witnessed banality shot through with atrocity, questioned the meaning of being.

To give too much emphasis to Beckett's philosophy would diminish his deeply serious aesthetic commitment, his interest in Dante ("Dante is damned"), his admiration for poets such as Rimbaud and Apollinaire, whom he translated, his deep admiration for surrealism, for André Breton and Céline, and, of course, Alain Robbe-Grillet's new novel where objects can be described in a neutral, flat tone for the end pages. Beckett's paradigm of the great artist was James Joyce, whom he considers to be the greatest living craftsman of prose and whom he knew in Paris. These two Irish, exiled, living for their art, shared an austere aesthetic "from art to art" which elevated the artist to the rank of a quasi-divine craftsman whose work must be autonomous, independent of the world, independent of daily preoccupations, matching his

nails, as Joyce used to say. Both were dedicated to the elaboration of perfect forms, the law words in the right order; or, in Beckett's case, fewest words and those who show their inadequacy. There's an extraordinary formal rigor in both Beckett and Joyce.

The Perspective issue identified Beckett as an important figure in English literature; and moreover, it introduced the notion that the Beckettian universe was governed by rules that were, at bottom, philosophical [...] English criticism in the 1960s linked Beckett not only to existentialism, but to Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, and, most decisively of all, to the work of the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes and his philosophical disciples.³⁰

In the course of our study, we will bring some of these concepts together under a critical gaze and examine how this questioning of traditional philosophy is related to Samuel Beckett's drama.

II.2. Beckett's Existentialist Stand

Existential philosophy is linked to all preceding thought, either via contrast and subsequent rejection of certain concepts or through acceptance and subsequent expansion from others. Since the time of the Greeks, the basic tenet of western philosophy was that Truth lies beyond the world of man and things, that it is absolute and unchanging, and that the intellectual pursuit of that Truth is the purpose of man's life.

Despite rare claims that man finds the meaning of life within himself and that Truth is a condition of Being that can be lived and not some abstract absolute that can be discovered, the mainstream of Western philosophy has remained largely unchanged to this day. However, since Nietzsche's dramatic declaration of God's death (which encompassed any entity outside

³⁰ (Gontarski, *Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett and the Arts Edinburgh Companions to Literature Series* 338.)

of himself to which man looked for the meaning of life), an increasing number of philosophers have turned away from their philosophical heritage and reconsidered the meaning of Existence in its totality.

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that denies the existence that the universe could provide any direction about how humans should live and instead focuses on individual survival, freedom, and choice. It has had its effect on many intellectual disciplines—theology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, education, art, and literature, not to mention the influence that it has had on the lives of many individuals. It essentially appeared as a response to the Age of Reason. The rationalists of that age like Spinoza, Leibniz, Hobbes, Hume, Locke, Voltaire, Bacon, and Rousseau, viewed reason not just as man's most noteworthy workforce which is fit for tackling all issues and furnishing him with complete information eventually yet it was likewise seen as totally sure, with which the nature of being immaculate is implied. All in all, the explanation was viewed as absolute, which clarifies why those philosophers, who were proud of being reasonable and rational, exaggerated their case.

In his book *From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophic Quest* Lavine says:

"There is now a widely accepted definition of existentialism. Existentialism is a philosophical point of view, which puts existence above essence. What is meant by this is that existentialism gives priority in significance to the existence, in the sense of my existence as a conscious subject, rather than to any essence....."

Existentialism affirms the ultimate meaning, the primacy of my existence as that vacillating point of consciousness of myself and the objects of which I am conscious, my existence as a conscious being against all efforts to define myself, to reduce me to a platonic essence, or to a Cartesian mental substance, or to a Hegelian bearer of the spirit". (Lavine 328)

Existentialism is this philosophical movement that is directed towards two different themes, the way human existence is analyzed and how human choice is centralized, as

Kaufmann states: "Existentialism is a timeless sensibility that can be discerned here and there in the past; but it is only in recent times that it has hardened into a sustained protest and preoccupation". (Kaufmann, 1956, p. 11)

Existential philosophy found its first profound expression in Kierkegaard and earned its popularity through the philosophies of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Jaspers, and Gabriel Marcel to name a few. Its literary expression can be found in the literature of Dostoevsky, Camus, Kafka, and Sartre. [1, p. 9] However, existentialism has become no more than the once-popular, historically-situated face of phenomenological philosophies that Beckett and other philosophers are charged to explicating the facets of existence constituting human experience; our being as both mind and body; our presence in temporality; our religious and/or spiritual being; our sense of "self" and "other"

II.3. Major Existentialist philosophers that Influenced Beckett.

Existentialism as a specific philosophy was born of Kierkegaard's passionate revolt against Hegel's absolute idealism. Its origin can be traced back to the works of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. It emerged as a movement in 20th Century Sartre and Camus's literature and philosophy, foreshadowed most notably by 19th Century philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, though it had forerunners in earlier centuries.

From its very beginning, existentialism has had as its fundamental characteristics: to remain close to the concrete and to shun abstractions; to resist any and all attempts at becoming a system; and to be, for the philosopher, a mode of being far more than a mode of thinking. Hence, the major Existentialists are Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

II.3.1. Søren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard and at the beginning of the nineteenth century appeared as a figure defending his faith and his belief in an ethical self, in the reality of moral law handling the notion of truth within the developing self. He asserted that subjectivity is reality, which prefigures the existential concept of authenticity. As far as he might be concerned, subjectivity should begin from the individual to explain the individual experience, and he alludes again to the individual planning to achieve the right type of subjectivity. In contrast, the vast majority of the non-existentialist scholars start from things and afterward include the individual as an abstract thinker so as to gain objective knowledge. Along these lines, Kierkegaard obviously shows the distinction between the traditional philosophy of the time and Existentialism.

Notwithstanding, proposing a particularly extraordinary methodology caused the birth of the “absolute paradox” (Roubiczek 9) in European thought whose trust in an absolute reason has remained the major element of their thought system. According to Kierkegaard the “absolute paradox” can be best seen in this way: Trusting reason alone prevents people from understanding God and keeps them away from the feeling of grasping this faith.

Along these lines, as far as he might be concerned, it's about time that individuals had a jump into the obscure first forsaking dependence on reason. “Without risk, there is no faith, and the greater the risk the greater the faith; the more objective security the less inwardness (for inwardness is precisely subjectivity), and the less objective security the more profound the possible inwardness” (Kaufmann 117).

According to Kierkegaardian thought, "Existentialism is a dismissal of all purely abstract thinking, of a purely logical or scientific philosophy; in short, a rejection of the

absolute reason" (Roubiczek 10). All things being equal, Existentialism, in its crucial and unique significance, requires interfacing reasoning with the individual's own life and experience. It endeavors to have the option to be lived by people instead of being simple collections of theories. In other words, for Kierkegaard, the individual experience ends up being genuine. For instance, what an individual knows isn't viewed as of the outer world, however, it is acknowledged as the internal information on their own insight. He assaults certain originations of Christianity, which were underestimated. To outline, he contends that the supposed Christians of Christendom are really living in the method of the "heathen1," which is the method of void mimetic selfhood.

II.3.2. Friedrich Nietzsche

Among the philosophers that opposed existing philosophical systems and perceptible dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy, which is considered superficial and remote from life, Nietzsche, resembles Kierkegaard's views and clearly linked to existentialist philosophers such as Heidegger and Sartre. He is known to replace the God of Christianity with the "will to power" which, according to him, is the soul of the world and is scattered among men. Each man is a center of the "will to power" and his existence can be represented as the will to rule the entire universe. The man knows no obstacles, there are no limits for him. However, if for Kierkegaard, existence appears as a philosophical problem in the struggle to think about the paradoxical presence of God, for Nietzsche it emerges from and in the reflections of his frequent statement "God is dead; we have killed God; God has died". This is apparently not an atheist statement. It is rather about the loss of faith. According to him, the disappearance of faith must necessarily leave a void at the very heart of the European civilization since the latter had been based on the Christian concept of God; instead of God, there is nothing ... (Roubiczek 39). Nietzsche, though, ponders over the reasons why this sense of nothingness is

fraught with danger. He shows that this feeling of void, which continually grows, annihilates man by discarding more and more values, beliefs, convictions, and concepts. Indeed, Nietzsche's main concern was to find a way to take the measure of human life in the modern world. What Nietzsche teaches us is an understanding of why Kierkegaard was desperate at the starting point of his positive philosophy. Thus, Nietzsche arrived at Kierkegaard's idea that the so-called autonomous and voluntary individual is nothing since he conforms to the universal norms of morality.

Existence arises as a philosophical problem, for Kierkegaard in the struggle to think the paradoxical presence of God; it develops as a philosophical problem for Nietzsche in the reverberations of the phrase "God is dead," in the challenge of nihilism.

As a result, Nietzsche came to Kierkegaard's conclusion that "the mass is untruth": the so-called autonomous, self-legislating individual is nothing more than a herd animal that has trained itself to docility and unfreedom by adhering to "universal" morality standards. The normative is nothing but the normal. However, for Nietzsche, as for Kierkegaard, this is not the conclusion of the story. Even if the autonomous individual has always signified herd mentality—if moral standards developed precisely to produce such conformists—the individual still has the potential to become something different; the sick animal is "pregnant with a future."³¹

Thus, in Nietzsche's distinction between moral autonomy (as obedience to the moral law) and autonomy "beyond good and evil," existence arises as a philosophical dilemma. But if autonomy, meaning, and value are to be discussed at all, the mode of being beyond good and evil cannot simply be a lawless state of arbitrary and impulsive behavior. If such an

³¹ "Existentialism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 9 June 2020, plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism.

existence is to be envisaged, there must be a standard by which success and failure may be measured.³²

In Nietzsche's view, the tragic suffering of the hero opens the way both for himself and the audience back to 'primal unity' or the 'true existence' (*The Birth of Tragedy* .12). He considers such an experience as "the mystery doctrine of tragedy" which leads to the recognition of a great being (14). According to Nietzsche's epistemological mystical view of tragedy, Dionysus, the original tragic hero in order to become a great being, embodies the spirit of losing one's individuality. Tragic suffering and the Dionysian concept of self-loss lead to tragic heroes' final approximation to a higher self. The hero's resting on an underlying substratum of suffering effectively leads to the epiphanic moment of self-recognition where s/he unites primordial unity, infinity, and the divine in Nietzsche's 'epistemological' concept of tragedy.

It can be recognized while adapting Nietzsche's idea, modern tragic heroes' extreme involvement in an ongoing process of self-renunciation is the sole basis for their existence. It is through this approach that they consciously place themselves in the ongoing process of loss and suffering to gain a greater self.

The Dionysian concept of the whole self is emphasized explicitly in Nietzsche's "Übermensch." Individuals are supposed to achieve the whole self by uniting with nature in order to be redeemed and saved from the moral beliefs of the time, which restrict their instincts, according to Nietzsche's concept. As Nietzsche (1999) points out in the prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the Dionysian individuals thus promote the "natural body" (p. 1). Nietzsche's naturalized individuals who seek a higher self via intoxication, madness, art, love,

³² Ibid

literature, and ecstatic endurance of suffering embodies Nietzsche's idea of the unification of body and spirit, joy and sorrow, creation and destruction.

Dionysian individuals, on the other hand, are those who have reconnected with humanity's essence as well as whatever is passionate, irrational, and chaotic inside them. They joyfully and tragically demolish the ego in order to merge with nature's humanizing spirit and "experience an ascent-up" into a high and free naturalized self (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 120).

II.3.3. Martin Heidegger

Another leading figure of the existentialist movement besides Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, is Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) perhaps the most divisive philosopher of the 20th century. He is a philosopher who tried to justify the absolutism of existentialism, the exclusion of essence and objectivity, the attempt to make the subjective method inclusive by trying to break down the barriers between the objective and the subjective in a different way than Nietzsche.

Heidegger has always denied being an existentialist since he is mainly interested in the nature of being, i.e., fundamental ontology. In his seminal book *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger boldly asserted that Western thought, since Plato, had forgotten or ignored the fundamental question of what it means for something to be. His life project was to answer the question of Being. In his *Being and Time*, in order to understand the Being, Heidegger argued that man must first understand his Dasein, that is "Being-there". For his part, Heidegger is mainly interested in the description of existence and then he tries to make people question the simplest things and acts that have already been taken for granted. He emphasizes that men are what men can become. Therefore, for him, becoming is a process towards the future, which

subordinates the past and the present and that unauthentic existence is uncritical participation in the world; whereas, authentic existence³³ involves an analysis of self.

Obviously, Heidegger asserts that human existence cannot have a relationship with being if it remains in the midst of nothingness (Heidegger, 1993:93-110). This sense of nothingness associates ultimate insight with anguish i.e., the dread of nothing specific, and in the book *Basic Writings* he details the definition of anguish. Heidegger sought "a particular mood that would reveal something essential about the existence of man as a whole" (Heidegger, 1993:90) Eventually, "... he [man] found it in anxiety, ...an unease that was both less identifiable and more oppressive" (Heidegger, 1993:90). He adds: "In anguish, I realize that I have been 'thrown' into the world andIn anxiety, Dasein finds himself face to face with the nothing of the possible impossibility of his own existence" (Heidegger, 1993:90).

II.3.4. Jean-Paul Sartre

After the end of the Second World War, Jean-Paul Sartre was widely regarded as the father of existential philosophy. His writings set the tone of intellectual life and the foundations of the existentialist vision in a significant way. In addition to making existentialism accessible to people around the world through his stories, novels, and plays, Sartre also created a large number of serious non-literary philosophical works.

Sartre seeks to describe and analyze the relationships between different modes of being. He portrays three modes of being, being-in-itself, which is a self-subsistent being, being-for-itself, which is a conscious being, and being-for-others. To illustrate, a person being-for-others' is how he appears to other people. For, Gregory McCulloch Sartre considers modes of being to be strongly interdependent and adds: "Being for others requires being for

³³ Authentic existence, or living authentically, is a conscious return to oneself, which dissolves into nothingness. In Heideggerian existentialism, nothingness surprisingly does not have a negative task; "by destroying that which exists, the actually existing things, it produces a clearing through the wood of these things and in this clearing existence can lay bare essentially and reveal itself" (Roubiczek 131).

oneself, being for oneself is 'based' on a relationship to the being-self, and the being-self, in turn, has at least some of its characteristics experienced by virtue of that relationship" (4). And under this interdependence, the emphasis is on the nature of consciousness, so it is necessary to dwell on Sartre's view of consciousness. First of all, Sartre's investigation of consciousness has been considered the existential situation of modern man, and one often asks "how could consciousness become an object of philosophical research" (Ellis 2). Then, conscience is condemned for being nothing more than "an absurd hope to endow the being with necessity and thus save man from contingency" (Ellis 8).

Despite these, Sartre argues that consciousness cannot be studied in isolation; the only way to study it is in and through its relation to the object of which it is conscious. According to Ellis "Sartre calls the being of which consciousness is conscious the 'being-in-itself'" (13). And "consciousness in itself is pure intentionality" (Ellis 11).

Thus, for Sartre, all consciousness is the consciousness of something, and that is because, the things that we think about, see, imagine and hear are intentional objects. Sartre described in his book *Being and Nothingness* how the consciousness of ourselves has undergone a fundamental transformation due to the recognition of other conscious beings besides ourselves. The awareness of another person's gaze marks a fundamental change in our consciousness leading to an intentional consciousness, which is aware of other conscious beings. Sartre also described the consciousness of things as a kind of disgust, which arises from the recognition of the contingency of the existence of things and the absurdity caused by this situation.

According to Golomb "we are condemned to be free because, from the moment we exist, we are, and cannot escape being, makers of choices" (Golomb 150). Besides, according to Sartre's philosophy, intentionality, the possibility of interpreting one's existence, deserves to be mentioned because it is of great importance. In *Existentialism and Humanism*, Sartre

says that "... man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself"(28) and ends up taking responsibility for himself: "... man is responsible for what he is" (29). But for Sartre, there are not many people who have the courage to take the risk of reaching for in itself, or to authenticate their existence. "Few are therefore capable of authenticating their existence: the great majority reassure themselves by thinking as little as possible of their impending death" (1948: 14, 15).

Moreover, for Sartre, "what we choose is always better" (1948:29). Therefore, the existence of choice precedes the choice of existence. However, for man, the choice is to face his existence, because there is no reason to choose, because it is still unreasonable and unfounded to choose in a universe without God, so there is no reason to choose anything we do. Sartre found that the essence of human existence is in freedom- in the duty of self-determination and the freedom of choice and therefore spent much time describing the human tendency toward "bad faith", reflected in humanity's perverse attempts to deny its own responsibility and flee from the truth of its inescapable freedom. He first dealt with existentialist themes in his novel *Nausea* published in 1938 as well as in his major philosophical statement, "*Being and Nothingness*" in 1943.

II.3.5. Albert Camus

The playwright and novelist Albert Camus proved to be a spokesman for existentialism when he wrote his famous essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which paints a striking picture of the absurdity of human existence based on Sisyphus' useless work accepted as a source of inspiration by many existentialists because it has become the prototype from this point of view. Camus, like many others, rejected the existentialist label, and considered his works to

be concerned with people facing the absurd. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus used the analogy of the Greek myth to demonstrate the futility of existence. In the myth, Sisyphus is condemned for eternity to roll a rock up a hill, but once he had reached the summit, the rock rolled to the bottom again. Camus believed that this existence is pointless but that Sisyphus ultimately finds meaning and purpose in his task, simply by continually applying himself to it.

Nevertheless, death in the form of suicide seems to be the subject of Sisyphus. The means of the latter discovers that essences are non-existent; absolute, nowhere to be found. Desperately, he searches throughout the world in quest of “the good”, “the true” and “the beautiful”, and constantly he is disappointed. The world, to all his pursuits, reveals itself only as pure, brute facticity, devoid of any inherent value. Despair seems imminent, yet, in a moment of contempt, and revolts. In defiance of his situation, he perseveres in this absurd relation to the world.

Albert Camus and Sartre were friends, whom the Second World War brought together. They shared the same ideas and beliefs. First of all, they both affirmed that the universe is cruelly separated from reason. Moreover, there is no God. In this brutal universe without divinity, freedom translates into fundamental despair. As one of the playwrights of the absurd theater, Camus had his own comments on this subject. For Camus, absurdity was not synonymous with ridicule, but with a true state of existence. He accepted that life was absurd and that the absence of absolute universal logic reigned.

For Camus, existentialism is not only a philosophy but also a literary trend that devalues abstract theories that seek to conceal the disorder of present-day human life and emphasizes the subjective realities of the existence, choice and freedom of the individual. He had a great respect for Nietzsche who considered him as his spiritual ancestor. Yet, he built upon a Nietzschean foundation, altering, modifying, and rejecting elements of his thought. Moreover, Camus's position has transfigured Nietzsche's traditional Greek tragedy with its

systematic structure of conflict, climax and denouements which has given him and other author's way to unclimatical, unresolved works of revolt and rebellion.

“Existentialism is a timeless sensibility that can be discerned here and there in the past; but it is only in recent times that it has hardened into a sustained protest and preoccupation”. (Kaufmann, p.11).

From all these existential philosophies the perpetual human reality and the unbearable pain of existence are best expressed in Beckett's plays. Thus, Samuel Beckett's literary works are full of absurdity and tragic emptiness of the human condition. His drama is haunted by an absence of meaning at its center.

In this absence of meaning, Beckett's characters struggle desperately to find meaning in their lives. They are born into an irrational world. They live their lives waiting for an explanation that will never come, and even that explanation may be a product of their imagination. Beckett's drama is based on his perception of the human condition, that is, being born and living mainly in pain, suffering, hardship, a short, harsh, and unpleasant existence. Man's needs and desires are all reduced. Thus, “All Beckett's work comprises a unity in which certain attitudes are expressed in different ways with much force and rare imagination: life is cruel and painful; failure is no worse than success because neither matters; what is important is to avoid giving pain to others and to share misfortune” (Chambers 78).

In other words, for Beckett, there is neither meaning nor explanation. There is nothing but nothingness, which brings him closer to existentialism. In this case, and due to repetitive themes surrounding birth, death, and human emotions (such as anxiety, despair, and physical discomfort). Beckett's human relationships in his plays are reduced to cruelty, hope, frustration, and disillusionment.

What we notice thereby in Beckett's characters is the experience of a total lack, or loss, of ultimate meaning to one's existence. The consequent void, the state of inner

emptiness, is referred to as "existential frustration," or "existential vacuum" as Viktor. E. Frankl states it. "Beckett's characters are taken out of the neurological space and leveled down into the psychological plane that entails no less than the loss of a whole dimension". (Frankl 18-50). Moreover, what is lost is the dimension that allows the man to emerge and rise above the level of the biological and psychological foundations of his existence. This is an important question for the act of transcending these foundations and transcending one's own existence. Self-transcendence, according to Victor.E. Frankl is the essence of existence, which in turn means a specific way of human existence. As far as this exceeding the psychological frame of reference, the appropriate and adequate approach to existence is not psychological, but existential.

Due to the extreme richness of its heritage, Beckett's work could be examined in the light of classical phenomenology, namely the work of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, despite the relatively endless ramifications of Existential philosophy.

II.4. Philosophers and the Phenomenological approach

Throughout history, phenomenology has remained an oblique presence, a specter that emerged with Sartre's connection and which has haunted subsequent accounts while receiving surprisingly little attention in its own right. Beckett's interest in and engagement with philosophy in general, convincingly arguing that phenomenology for Beckett "marked the conclusion of his search for philosophical answers" (Ulrika Maude, Matthew Feldman 22) by offering a provisional solution to his concern with the subject-object division and to provide a phenomenological account of nothingness; and that his writing pushes phenomenology to a kind of crisis.

Because of the richness of the phenomenological tradition, Beckett's work could be examined in the light of classical phenomenology, namely the work of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

The phenomenological approach - with its dual perspective of the perceived and inhabited world and its emphasis on the embodied subjectivity that has characterized the work of some of its practitioners (particularly Merleau-Ponty and those influenced by his work in philosophy and medical phenomenology) - can illuminate uniquely the experiential duality of the stage. On the one hand, the field of performance is the scenic space, given as a show to be elaborated and consumed by the perceptive eye, objectified as a visual field for a spectator who aspires to the detachment inherent in the perceptive act. On the other hand, this field is the environmental space, "subjectified" by the physical actors who give body to the space they inhabit (Garner 3). In perspective, the theatrical space is a phenomenal space, governed by the body and its spatial concerns, a non-Cartesian dwelling field that undermines the stance of objectivity and in which the categories of subject and object give way to a relationship of mutual involvement. Merleau Ponty writes: "Experience discloses beneath objective space, in which the body eventually finds its place, a primitive spatiality of which experience is merely the outer covering and which merges with the body's very being. To be a body is to be tied to a certain world. Our body is not primarily in space: it is of it." (Merleau-Ponty 171)

Beckett's character's consciousness has often been placed in stark contrast to the substantial self on which it is reflected. In so doing, he presents subjectivity as a problem of self-consciousness. The Sartrean view of subjectivity according to Beckett is a trap from which one can escape, if at all, only through a kind of self-violence that leads to self-dissolution. However, Sartre conceives the subject-object relation in terms of exteriority, where one sees while being seen and where it is only while being seen that the gaze actualizes a relation that remains external to oneself. Indeed, there is no escape from the Sartrean gaze,

from the hell of others³⁴, and for Beckett, this condition can only be resolved by the dissolution of subjectivity itself.

I intend here to address this core of Beckett's work by associating it with the discipline that, by definition, operates in the same field - philosophy. This will demonstrate a way of reading Beckett and at the same time show how philosophical analogy can enlighten a writer.

Beckett further effaced his relationship with philosophy by claiming an ignorance many critics have found difficult to square with his art. And indeed, even if the specifics of his remarks are broadly accurate, the strong implication that Beckett was a philosophical novice must be regarded as untenable:

To historicize the work of Beckett and his contemporaries, the "French existentialists" were particularly revolutionary and/or original, and their teachings provided scholars with the philosophical evidence they needed. In the case of Martin Esslin, they deem them "Theatre of the Absurd"³⁵.

An early "phenomenological" reading of Beckett that avoids the "absurd" label in as much as they serve as stepping stones from which one could say that the following discourse is obvious.

These writings are very topical, and my intention is to reintegrate Heidegger, Sartre and his contemporaries (as well as some philosophical predecessors and successors) into literary analyses that avoid focusing on the undeniable misery, trauma and human suffering caused by the two world wars, and in this sense, my work is much more closely aligned, as it should be, with recent studies on Beckett and the phenomenology/body he does with his existential ancestors.

³⁴ Refers to Sartre's *No Exit*, wherein Garcin recognizes that he has been eternally condemned to end (...)

³⁵ Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Methuen, 2001). This work was first published in 1961

Beckett's protagonist is becoming less physically capable and more mentally agile, and thus widens the field of discussion of a Cartesian discord between mind and body, or of a Berkeley refutation of the existence of matter independent of mind. However, this work, although "paralyzed" in various ways, continues to focus on "... embodied subjects "³⁶ whose various levels of physiological incapacity do not make them immaterial but contribute to situate the relationship that human consciousness maintains with the external world that is presented to it at any given moment under the microscope. The "just-thereness" that Butler emphasizes is as an elusive awareness of Beckett's creation, which, in *Endgame*, becomes visible in his way of being, as he denigrates himself, to differentiate himself from what he sees as an opposite way of being, natural or corporeal, which would hold him hostage and subject him to biological processes. Hamm, who is blind, has closed his external biological eye to see inside... his own consciousness and, in fact, it is this problematic interior that can generate the physical components of the work itself. Adorno does much to illustrate what might be called Hamm's Berkeley "ownership" of both the playing space and its contents in his description of the Endgame scenario³⁷: Endgame "inner..... "³⁸is mutable in its neutrality and acts as a palimpsest, on which to project our subjective imaginations, as well as those of Hamm, our protagonist, and Clov, who acts as his/our eyes. The views that Clov claims to have of land and sea beyond the remains of the (scenic) world, come from "...two small windows.... "³⁹ at the top of the back wall, and as William Demastes boldly asserts: "Easily interpreted as eyes on top of the wall, the whole thing literally becomes an arrangement "in

³⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 236

³⁷ Adorno, "*Towards an Understanding of Endgame*", pp. 110-111

³⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, p. 92

³⁹ Beckett, *Endgame*, p. 92

your head", and *Endgame* becomes, like all of Beckett's works, a study of how the brain/mind works to reach out the world before our eyes, even those that are sometimes closed.⁴⁰

When it comes to consciousness, one must "reach out" to a world that may or may not exist beyond it as being extended, Alain Robbe-Grillet reminds us that the landscape outside the windows, or under Hamm's metaphorical eyes, is invisible to the public, and "...uninhabitable in the strict sense of the word: unlivable as black cloth, on which one could paint water or sand"⁴¹. The outside world of *Endgame* offers no refuge or anchorage for subjectivity; it is as inhospitable as the interior decoration of the room, and thus constantly distracts our attention, by turning it inwards. The curious mind searches inside and outside for an "entrance" into the world of *Endgame*, only to discover that Beckett has closed the internal and external doors.

Providing so little in a recognizable environment or in certain external circumstances, *Endgame* constantly reminds us of our own which is guided by the narrative of an idealistic central character whose skull is perhaps represented by an image (Hugh Kenner, like Demastes, talks about "...the great decoration in the shape of a skull..."⁴²...the decoration beyond which nothing tangible exists. We could, therefore, say that *Endgame* acts, at a certain level, as a Berkeley comment on the primacy of subjective experience and on the indeterminacy of what may or may not exist outside it; this comment, however, comes to us ironically through a concrete and intrinsically *physical* means.

We could consider the physical setting of *Endgame* as a mere technicality, a need to "stage consciousness", so to speak, "present subjectivity", or allow the being to stand out.

⁴⁰ William W. Demastes, *Staging Consciousness: Theater and the Materialisation of the Mind* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), p. 59.

⁴¹ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), p. 123.

⁴² Hugh Kenner, "Life in the Box", in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame*, p. 54.

Robbe-Grillet writes about the theater's innate propensity for ontology in what we recognize as essentially phenomenological terms:

The human condition, Heidegger says, is *to be there*. Probably it is the theatre more than any other mode of representing reality, which reproduces this situation most naturally. The dramatic character *is on stage*, that is his primary quality: he is *there*.⁴³

The human condition, Heidegger says, is to be there. Probably it is the theatre more than any other mode of representing the reality, which reproduces this situation most naturally. The dramatic character is on stage, that is his primary quality: he is there.⁷

According to Robbe-Grillet, this quality of theatre is particularly important for Beckett. Traditional theatre characters like Ibsen or Shaw's are mainly vehicles - they go somewhere, they do something - it's only later that one can think that "*he is there*". Beckett's characters, on the other hand, don't go anywhere and do nothing, they are just "there" with a certain vengeance. A quality that goes beyond the desired qualities of traditional characters bringing us closer to human reality. When we watch the tramps for example in *Godot*, we watch the Beckettian man and we see the man because we have emphasized for us his quality of 'being there', and so we look at *Dasein*⁴⁴. And this might seem like a special case for Beckett's theater.

No philosopher, in any case, in particular, and that every major Western philosopher has something to contribute to every other philosopher and, perhaps, to Beckett. But Heidegger, Sartre, and Hegel are closely related to each other and offer a wide range of

⁴³ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel*, p. 111. The italics here are Robbe-Grillet's own.

⁴⁴ Gunther Anders, in his essay in the Esslin volume already cited, calls the characters in *Godot* 'abstractions'; Cormier and Pallister, in *Waiting for Death* (University of Alabama Press, 1979), go further and say 'It seems more accurate to say that the play's four characters, taken together, portray universal man.' (p. 5)

concepts that are essentially applicable to Beckett. All three take up, develop, and sometimes reject the major works of their predecessors; all three assume, for example, the decisive character of the works of Descartes and Kant. This places them in a position quite similar to that of Beckett - he too has worked on philosophy up to and including the XVII Century, but he does not refer in his published work to any philosopher after Berkeley. It is almost as if there are two parallel evolutions here: the evolution of philosophy since 1800 on the one hand and the evolution of Beckett's mind since he stopped reading philosophers on the other.

My attempt first is to explain Heidegger's *Being and Time* as well as Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* within Beckett's two plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. In addition to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty that would be valuable in our study in addition to Language Philosophy and Beckett which has been suggested by several critics.

So what does this have to do with Beckett? For Robbe-Grillet, it's a way to get close to Beckett's theater. Beckett's "presence on the stage" then opens up, and according to Heidegger: Man's condition is to be 'there':

II.4.1. Beckett and Sartre's Existentialism

Philosophy and literature are not so different that they are completely intertwined. It would be quite relevant for philosophy to show and develop its concepts in literature; Philosophy enlightens literature while literature brings philosophy into the open and enlightens it. Therefore, by analogy, Sartre tries to find a voice for his opinions in plays as well as in novels in order to inquire about his concepts.

Traditional philosophy sets foot on the subject of thought and develops epistemologically, while existential philosophy starts from the existing subject; a particular subject that is involved in a particular situation and develops ontologically.

The content of Beckett's plays with existential elements may be absurd, but stylistically, they have almost the same structure as classical plays. The characters are always confronted with inner conflicts accompanied by contradictions and oppositions; characters and death are *sit tête-à-tête*. They commit crimes, they are alone and they survive by rebelling against the values of the world. In this insignificance, they seek the means to realize and justify themselves. Problems are dealt individually, yet they all belong to humanity. They sometimes appear in certain patterns as if they are the pioneering voices of philosophical expression. In order to become more interesting and persuasive, the characters are assailed with allegories and grotesques. Nevertheless, the figurative narration does not corrupt the sense of the reality of events. The relationship between Beckett and Sartre can be summed up in their striking similarities and considerable differences.

II.4.2. Sartre's Consciousness in Beckett's Drama

It is useful to turn now to the existentialist characterization of human consciousness as proposed by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* in which Sartre distinguishes two modes of being which he calls the "for-itself" (*pour-soi*) and the "in-itself" (*en-soi*). At the risk of oversimplifying, one could define the "pour-soi" as the mode of being of human consciousness and the "en-soi" as the mode of being of things or objects.

Sartre approaches all the possible relationships of a human being with the world in terms of the "pour-soi", or consciousness, which is at the origin of these relationships. In relationships with things, for example, consciousness is always the subject and calls things into existence by differentiating them and establishing relationships between them.

The purpose here is to "set in place" the idea that we discern consciousness as a mode of being that is, in many ways, in conflict with the body and the material world in the works discussed here, while being intrinsically linked to it in spite of itself. We will illustrate the

plight of Beckettian consciousness as it strives to differentiate itself from the material being from which it cannot escape, for it is, by nature, embodied or obliged to take form in order to become visible. By so doing we'll focus on how consciousness separates us from non-thinking being, or inert matter; how consciousness sustains and presents itself to be by appealing to higher levels of being; how other consciousnesses shape, inform, limit, even torture our own; and how consciousness adapts to such a recognition of the body? Once examined the existential relationship between mind and body in Beckett's work, we try better to consider the writer's treatment of human consciousness in its temporal mode of being.

Through Beckett's work, one could argue that we see a dualism of landscapes; the external objective and materialistic landscape (detailed in its scenic directions, and realized by the physiological and inanimate properties of its environment), and the landscape, drawing or mapping of the mind which forms the world as it is subjectively and ideally known through consciousness. In addition, the bodies that inhabit Beckett's performance space, very often demonstrate or account for, a radical discordance between their physical situations and their psychic activities. In an overview of the vast field that is "Beckett and philosophy", Dermot Moran suggests that: "The characters [of Beckett] actually live through the Cartesian divorce of body and mind⁴⁵. So here we do focus on Beckett's approaches to the body/mind established by Sartre and later cultivated by Merleau-Ponty.

In Sartre *Being and Nothingness*, the consciousness, instead of being an entity completely separated from the body, can be considered as an elevation of the psychic from a fissure, or nothing, in the core of the physical being. Sartre describes consciousness as a fissure in material being then, and reveals the "nothingness" that underlies the presence of consciousness to itself.

⁴⁵ Dermot Moran, "Beckett and Philosophy" in Samuel Beckett: 100 Years, ed. Christopher Murray (Dublin: New Island, 2006), p. 97.

Consciousness or knowledge of being constitutes, in part, what Sartre would call the way of being for itself of human reality (being-for-itself). Without this consciousness of being, human reality, as Sartre would have it, is absent to itself – it is different from the world of objects that surrounds it and that it surrounds, and it is always already different from itself, as the present continually defers the past and the future– it cannot make an object of itself and it cannot stop the endless flow, the dispersal of itself across the temporal dimensions, that characterizes it, until death, whereupon, devoid of consciousness, the body becomes a thing in the world, and the events of a life become “fixed” as history, their totality coming to rest as a thing complete at last. And thus would have no knowledge of its own existence, nor of the existence of other entities, and would become an inanimate and meaningless being in itself (being in-itself), which "... has no *within* in itself to oppose a *without* exterior...." ⁴⁶ And "...does not refer to itself as self-consciousness." ⁴⁷

Being in itself enjoys a complete and total being and immediate coincidence with being. In short, there is, according to Sartre, a region, or a path, of concrete "being" (being-in-itself, which would include, for example, objects such as rocks, tables, and vases), and a region, or way of being, which constitutes the "nothingness" of consciousness (being-for-itself); it is important to note, however, that these, rather than forming a Cartesian dualism, are intrinsically linked when it comes to humanity's unique way of being. Thus, if one can hear the echoes of Descartes in Sartre's philosophy, which also mentions two distinct regions for Sartre, they are united in the human body, since the body is a "...totally 'psychic' entity..." ⁴⁸ Sartre recognized before Merleau-Ponty developed his philosophy in body subject, that "...the relationship of consciousness with the body is an *existential* relationship" ⁴⁹. you will see, in

⁴⁶ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 22. The italics here are Sartre's own.

⁴⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 21.

⁴⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 329.

⁴⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 353. The italics here are Sartre's own.

certain Beckettian worlds, "...the consciousness *exists* in its body"⁵⁰ and must rely on it as the only vehicle of expression, more or less as one could say that thought relies on language and creativity in an organized and transmissible way. While many of Beckett's characters seem to yearn for a disconnection from physical bodies, which would have a negative impact on their lives, if they take refuge in complete identification with their conscious thought processes, they remain slaves of being formed as incarnate beings who cannot, while they live, separate their minds from their tormented biologies.

In *Endgame*, for example, Hamm seems to want the absolute destruction of the physical world, so that he can retreat even further than the central figure of mime in subjective introspection. Hamm's struggle to establish himself as the sole occupant of an esoteric realm is fraught with complications, as he is forced to confront nature (in the form of his parents), and inert matter (his toy dog, for example), in all corners of a world that can be read, paradoxically, as the inside of his own mind. Hamm's character, a void at the center of the physical world which is, without doubt, the ruler, if not the creator, can be used to illustrate Sartre's birth of the consciousness of the annihilation of the material being for Hamm is a consciousness that wants its own end, an end that can only come when its anchorage to the physical and biological is totally broken.

On the other hand, relationships with other people are more complicated because, unlike things, people have consciousnesses that exist independently of the perception of any given observer and therefore do not wait for the perception of an observer to give them existence. Moreover, other people are capable of transforming an observing consciousness into an object of their own perception. The consciousness can thus feel both subject and object, but never simultaneously. Thus, Sartre characterizes the relationship between

⁵⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 353. The italics here are Sartre's own.

individual consciousnesses as a continuous struggle for dominance in the master/slave mode according to Hegel: Who will be subject? Who is opposed to it? -

Consciousness is constantly striving to reach an inaccessible state of "en-soi- pour-soi", i.e., consciousness to itself, which is another relationship examined by Sartre. That is, a permanent and timeless state of being that is conscious of its own existence. However, the self will never be able to attain the distance and separation from itself necessary for such an observation, and therefore it is impossible for us to become objects for ourselves.

Sartre also brilliantly addressed the problem of perspective. For him, there is no such thing as pure and total perspective. For Sartre, "la perception ne conçoit jamais en dehors d'une attitude vis-à-vis du monde"⁵¹, whereas for Planck, whatever the scientific procedures, they imply the adoption of a limited and limiting perspective. Sartre supports the idea that geometrical space - that pure reciprocity of spatial relations (i.e. the concept of space that inspired the linear perspective) - is contrary to human reality. Sartre seems quite traditional, in style if not in content.

Beckett has translated Sartre's ideas into new dramatic forms that convey with greater immediacy and aesthetic power many of the same philosophical concerns developed by the great master of the existentialism.

We try here to use Sartre's philosophy as a window through which the mechanisms of consciousness become visible in the variety of forms and media used by Beckett in his plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*.

⁵¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 533.

II.4.2.1. Waiting for Godot

Waiting for Godot (1948-49) is a work that "always strives to avoid definition" (Graver and Federman 10). We do not reach a certain conclusion, just as Godot never arrives at the place of the meeting. In the same way, Godot and the work itself have the same function: to postpone any end. In this state of suspension, two vagabonds want to be sure of the existence of the other: that is, Vladimir or Estragon in his infinite existence: they are condemned to exist in their free choice of waiting. Estragon justifies their existence with the help of his speech and movement. Beckett seems to be influenced by Bishop Berkeley, who is an 18th-century philosopher and who states that "Esse est percipi - To be is to be perceived" (Worton 72). This can be openly observed in character discourse. Vladimir presents his joy in waiting for Godot:

Vladimir: So there you are again.

Estragon: Am I?

Vladimir: I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone forever.

Estragon: Me too.

Vladimir: Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? (He reflects.) Get up till I embrace you (Beckett 2)

They need each other in their desperate suspension since their appointment with Godot is never updated in both acts. Ironically, they have no idea who really Godot is. He's supposed to have a white beard and have sheep and goats like the boy said. However, he has a certain function even if he doesn't have action throughout the play: Vladimir and Estragon are endlessly waiting for Godot's arrival. This is the purpose of their life: a life that ends in futility. The self is made of shattered pieces of itself. Once the desire for oneself is satisfied, comes the desire for the other. Apparently, it is a journey without end. To illustrate, the boy doesn't give an answer when Vladimir says, "You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me tomorrow that you never saw me!" (Beckett 473).

Also, Estragon does not recognize Pozzo and thinks he is Godot. Therefore, we are always faced with layers of identity, of himself or of beings. This makes our future-oriented lives even more pointless and useless. Vladimir and Estragon, starting with their individual anxiety, speaking on behalf of humanity: we are always waiting for our desires to come true and during our waiting, we fill our days with meaningless routine. However, Godot will not reach our meeting place, the reality from which of which we avoid confronting. Unconsciously, we kill ourselves as we watch the time passing. The flow of time is felt in the act of waiting, otherwise, we forget that time passes if we are busy with something. Death is an inexorable fact that affects us from the first moment of our death.

Neither Vladimir nor Estragon are aware of this fact. They're already uncertain of anything but Godot, anyway:

Estragon: We came here yesterday

Vladimir: Ah no, there you're mistaken.

Estragon: What did we do yesterday?

Vladimir: What did we do yesterday?

Estragon: Yes.

Vladimir: Why . . . (*Angrily.*) Nothing is certain when you're about.

Estragon: In my opinion we were here.

Vladimir: (*looking round*). You recognize the place?

Estragon: I didn't say that.

Vladimir: Well?

Estragon: That makes no difference (Beckett 377).

Their problem is how they get there on time. Death, as an event, is impossible in the play, but death, as a process, occupies the play because it is our only reality. Pozzo says:

One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born,..... we shall die,..... the same day.....the same second.... is that not enough for you? (*Calmer.*)

They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (He jerks the rope.) On!" (Beckett 470)

Concerning the ideology of Sartre, Vladimir and Estragon exist and they are aware of Godot, especially for Vladimir who expresses the hope that Godot will come and that his coming will change their situation, but Estragon remains skeptical throughout and sometimes even forgets the name of Godot" (Esslin 27).

Nevertheless, they are complementary figures and they must stay together since they are obviously dependent on each other. Godot being the positive and self-sufficient being, alias the *en-soi*. If Vladimir and Estragon are aware of their encounter with Godot, they cannot be a being at the very moment they become aware of Godot. If they were a being, they would not be waiting for Godot of whom they are conscious. Now that the negative of the being is nothingness, Vladimir and Estragon end with nothingness just like their lives. They wait for Godot whose self-sufficiency makes them wait, hence their attempt to survive with their self-insufficiency:

Estragon: Well, shall we go?

Vladimir: Yes, let's go.

They do not move (Beckett 427).

Their free choice leads them to an almost inert action, which is called waiting. To live as the *pour soi*, their fear of coming out of stasis implies that they rely on the *en soi*

It is moving that neither death nor Godot ever seems to come even closer, so that no transition from the *pour soi* to the *en soi* is achieved. They are holes of being and their void will never be filled.

II.4.2.2. Endgame

Like *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* (1957) a so-called play of the diminishing cycle, also involves the desperate desire for a death that will never come. Death is suddenly outside but does not stop at the "claustrophobic inside" (Esslin 40).

Like Pozzo and Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*, Hamm appears as the king of the world and a ham player while Clov is the pawn. There is a tension that centers on whether Clov leaves Hamm or not even if Hamm is the owner, a socially superior. Clov is much stronger than Hamm because it is Clov that makes Hamm's existence possible. Hamm's anxiety and fear of Clov's absence are implied in his apprehended questions:

HAMM (violently): Then move!

(Clov goes to back wall, leans against it with his forehead and hands.)

Where are you?

CLOV: Here.

HAMM: Come back!

(Clov returns to his place beside the chair.)

Where are you?

CLOV: Here.

Loquacity demonstrates an undisguised need to receive and to give an embrace under which the notion of pity is implicit.

HAMM: ... One day you'll know what it is, you'll be like me, except that you won't have anyone with you, because you won't have had pity on anyone and because there won't be anyone left to have pity on you.

Because of their inevitable dependence on each other, friendship seems to include a necessity in which both parts surrender to each other: Clov has nowhere to go while Hamm has no one to keep. As a result, they remain together with hopeless hearts. The fact that time exists it is undoubtedly agreed that over time the characters become decrepit.

However, the notion of time as a continuum is not sufficiently perceived in the plays. Every day is like the other without feeling finality with a desire for an end. Godot is expected to arrive at some point, which never happens. Endgame is not expected to end with an impasse but with the arrival of death and the abandonment of Clov. This creates a need for the invention of a constructed past with which the characters find a chance to look to the future. Without the past, present or future, there can be no existence and the characters build up their own past and remember it with nostalgia:

NELL: Why this farce, day after day?

(Pause.)

NAGG: I've lost my tooth.

NELL: When?

NAGG: I had it yesterday.

NELL (elegiac): Ah yesterday.

(They turn painfully towards each other.)

The problem is that they do not talk about their past experiences, but rather build a past that they fill with their imagination. Ironically, they themselves do not believe that their story happened once. To illustrate his point, Hamm calls his story "He told himself all his days", "my column". It is not a question of memory but of reconstruction. Communication becomes impossible with all this suspicion in the chronicles told.

A torrent of words or sentences that have no meaning, and yet they are a means of passing on the truth. Time, filling it with voices. But what determines the present is not the past they build, but the freedom of the present to which the future gives way. Sartre reminds us that man is free. Freedom means consciousness, which is void. This void is nothingness, and in this vicious circle, nothingness comes again to freedom. However, the facticity of freedom creates a barrier against their freedom: the fear of being alone. Nevertheless, neither Hamm's silent cry nor Clov's hesitation about his eventual departure gives meaning to their

present. We return back to Sartre's world of futility. Even a little kiss is impossible, let alone a finality:

NAGG: Kiss me.

NELL: We can't.

NAGG: Try.

(Their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again.)

The *pour soi* is never transformed into *en soi* unless death intervenes. So Hamm and Clov are forced to sit and walk in this room. Clov's promised departure never took place, and death never came. And since each day is the same, they no longer have a sense of time as a continuum. If time repeats itself in a decreasing circle, the end never comes. Repetitive mechanical moments reveal the harsh reality of the impossible end."As Clov says, "something is taking its course; what implies according to Worton that our lives are a series of passive repetitions and that we are just cogs in a slowly lowering machine" (Worton 79).(see Chapter VI).

II.5. Heidegger's "Being and Time"

Being and Time (1927), Heidegger's great book which gloriously culminated in a philosophical itinerary that was the result of deciphering of life which for the young Heidegger is considered as an enigma waiting to be understood. Heidegger responds to this problem from a completely new angle: an analysis of human life and its special ability to cope with its inherent tendency to fall. In his *Being and Time*, Heidegger faced the challenge of reflecting deeply on the dilemma that is present in traditional philosophy in particular by re-examining the fundamental problem that has permeated Western thought: the problem of being. But he does so in a particular way, by bringing together the fundamental concerns of the contemporary period: the disillusionment of the modern world, the conflict of traditional

values, the decline of metaphysics, the fields of technology, the hegemony of instrumental rationality and the search for new symbolic resources for humanity. In this sense, *Being and Time* becomes a precise seismometer capable of detecting with surprising precision the slips and falls of the contemporary age, offering us an exact sweep of the ethical and moral consciousness of our time.

Being and Time has a short foreword that haunts the rest of the work with its depth and directness. It opens with a quotation from Plato, namely that in the Sophist, he became perplexed by the expression "being" and Heidegger continues: "Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word 'being' ? Not at all. So it is fitting that we should raise anew the question of the meaning of Being. (BT.19) (Heidegger's emphasis).

From this point of view, I would like to consider the reading of *Being and Time* as an aesthetic of existence, that is, as an analysis of a series of Heidegger's concepts and how to connect them to similar points in Beckett's two plays, since Beckett and Heidegger are linked by a certain common ontology. Beckett, and Heidegger are wary of metaphysics, but their interest in ontology seems to be identical, or rather, like two sides of the same coin.

Heidegger, whose concept of Dasein was the basis of Existential philosophy, has since evolved into one of the most influential currents in Western thought. Since his philosophy of Dasein has been so influential on the philosophy underlying the avant-garde theater and since it has revolutionized Freudian theories of psychology, which are likewise key elements in this theater. Moreover, we have here a reflection of the link Heidegger makes between man (*Dasein*) and Being (*Sein*) that we shall first examine in detail.

Through *Being and Time*, Heidegger uses the word Dasein to designate entities that "are there", as the etymology of Dasein indicates. For our purposes, we need only assimilate

this term to man", but Heidegger's decision to use it instead of "man" reveals his first category: man "*is there*" in a certain way, while other things are not. Dasein is the entity for which Being is a "matter" and the understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of the Dasein Being. (BT, 32).

Being and Time raises "the question of the meaning of Being" (BT, 1) and does so by making "an entity - the claimant - transparent in its own Being". (BT, 27) "This entity that each one of us is himself and that includes investigation as one of the possibilities of his Being, we will designate it by the term "Dasein". (BT, 27)

Thus, the analysis of Dasein will lead to all possible answers about the meaning of being in general. And Dasein is a man, but a man with an accent, the man as the entity that "is there". Moreover, man is also the entity that "is oriented towards the question of Being":

Dasein is the questioner as well as the questioned - Dasein is the entity for which Being is a "question" and the understanding of Being is itself a well-defined characteristic of the "Being of Dasein". (BT, p. 32)

Dasein refers to man's relation to, standing-in for, and essence in a world of things. Man, like any other material object, occupies space, but his spatial nature is not the key characteristic of his relations with objects and other individuals. The basis of this relationship, according to Heidegger, is the phenomenon of human care (Besorgen). Man has two possibilities of relating: authentic and inauthentic existence, according to Heidegger. When Dasein's relationship to objects is drawn from the total structure of who he really is, this is authentic standing-in. Dasein's concern for the necessities of life leads him to disregard his full potentialities, resulting in inauthentic standing-in. Dasein cannot always standing-in authentically due to the finite nature of man, whose understanding of his potentialities is always somewhat limited.

In fact, inauthentic standing-in is as basic to Dasein as is authentic standing-in. "The discovery of self as already in the world (Befindlichkeit), understanding (Verstehen), and discourse (Rede)"⁵² is how Heidegger develops his ideas about authentic existence. Other feature that distinguishes characteristics of inauthentic existence include "ambiguity (Zweideutigkeit), curiosity (Neugier), and prattle (Gerede)."⁵³

Man's life is dominated by survival concerns. To move around in society with as little friction as possible, he loses looking honestly and openly at the "things-that-are"⁵⁴, at others, and at himself, and instead adopts the attitude of "They say..." as justification for his actions. To the degree that Dasein looks outside himself for answers, his existence is inauthentic, Heidegger speaks of this condition, of the "everyday Dasein" as his 'Verfallensein': "This not-being -itself functions as a positive possibility of Dasein, resulting from the Dasein's concerned involvement in the world"⁵⁵, Dasein can become so involved in obtaining "things" and in orienting his existence in terms of what "they" say that he loses sight of what he really is and comes to think of himself as the roles he plays, Dasein can become so enmeshed in the "they-ness" of the world that its catch-words and pat-formulas can no longer be distinguished from the discourse of original thinking, "The self that loses itself inauthentically, ..., substitutes for the personal affirmations of an 'I', who knows the profound secrets of its own Being, the 'they say that. , .' of the crowd's rumor"⁵⁶.

In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger argues that a deliberative, reflective I-awareness is "only a form of self-apprehension but not the mode of primary self-

⁵² Thomas Langan, *The Meaning of Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 23.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

disclosure."⁵⁷ This self-awareness; has been filtered by social media behaviors. Dasein is always found in objects, immersed in the environment and surrounded by other people since it "gives itself over to the world immediately, and passionately, and its own self is reflected in things."⁵⁸ On the other hand, the "I" who is reflected in this way is "the who" of everyday Dasein, and this, according to Heidegger's existential analytics, is an inauthentic Dasein; it is not the "I myself."⁵⁹ Heidegger adds; "the self of everyday Dasein is the one-self."⁶⁰ The one-self is described in the same way, indicating that it understands itself with a third-person perspective. For an appropriate account of self-awareness, Heidegger's concept of ontologically primal self-awareness as a "reflection back" from the objects in which I am practically engrossed is insufficient. Without a doubt, this is one of the major gaps of the description of self-awareness in Division One that Heidegger attempts to fill in Division Two.

The collapse of the one-self allows for the discovery of ourselves, mostly in a negative way. i.e. it creates a condition for authentic selfhood towards being conceivable.

The self-discovery in the call of conscience; is a dimension of its being that is not determined, by the one-self, in this existential modification of our average existence.

Heidegger elucidates the link between an individual's anxiety and his quest for the real self. His special type of Being (Dasein), which literally means "being-there," as shown earlier, emphasizes the fact that there is no authenticity of being without experiencing existential loss. Heidegger argues in *Being and Time* that humans have a 'Being-in-the-World,' Dasein which can exist in two modes: inauthentic and authentic (117). This 'being in',

⁵⁷ Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, GA 24, p. 227. Therefore, Heidegger explicitly rejects what Dreyfus plastically has described as the "Cartesian cabinet of consciousness" with its mental representations that are supposed to be foundational for our access to the world (see Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, pp. 12 and 74-75).

⁵⁸ Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, GA 24, p. 227.

⁵⁹ See Heidegger, *SuZ*, p. 114/BT, p. 112.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 129/BT, p. 125

according to Heidegger, is an existing state for the authentic being since this anxiety and fear that exists in the world trigger individuals to view all of the elements of inauthentic existence, prompting them to ask for authenticity. Thus, the condition of 'falling away' or 'cadence into decline' (Verfall), according to Heidegger, is a positive situation in which the person feels compelled to climb to the authentic Being:

Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away (abgefallen) from itself as an authentic potentiality for being in itself, and has fallen into the world. 'fallenness' into the world means absorption in being with one another, in so far as the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. Through the interpretation of falling, what we have called the inauthenticity of Dasein may not be defined more precisely. On one account, however, do the terms 'inauthentic' and 'non-authentic' signify 'really not', as if in this mode of Being, Dasein were all together to lose its Being."(p.182)

According to Heidegger, human beings' fallenness into mundane existence is a positive state since it makes them aware of their inauthentic self and encourages them to strive for an authentic Being. He goes on to say that in order to elicit a sense of the uncanny and emptiness that is required for self-awareness, humans must keep such a frantic state under control by habitual everydayness and talk. As a result, the feeling of presentness in this fallen state must maintain the anxiety of this bitter recognition. What gives us anxiety is not something specific, but rather being-in-the-world as such;"we have angst about Dasein's own potentiality for Being."⁶¹ According to Heidegger, "anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its ownmost Being-thrown and reveals the uncanniness of everyday familiar Being-in-the-world."⁶²

⁶¹ Harman, Heidegger Explained, 70.

⁶² Heidegger, Being and Time, 393.

The phenomenon of anxiety brings one back to Dasein's thrownness as something possible which can be repeated.⁶³ Both phenomena, fear, and anxiety, tend to coincide where the entity by which both structures are filled is the same – that is, Dasein.⁶⁴

Heidegger believes that to meet complete self-fulfillment, anxiety forces human beings toward the freedom that death suggests. Anxiety is replaced with a sense of certainty, which foreshadows the final attainment of the authentic self. Heidegger finally states: "With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being."⁶⁵(p.219)

The phenomenal falling's self-releasing nature, as well as the forlornness, anguish, and despair of mankind advocated by twentieth-century existentialism, may be positively interpreted in light of Heidegger's Dasein's 'Being-in-the-World'. Heidegger's paradoxical notions of emptiness and fullness are identical to Nietzsche's paradox of self-forgetfulness and self-liberation in this regard. This kind of negative affirmation mirrors the negative teachings of apophatic theology and mysticism, as shown in Dionysian self-suspension and Heideggerian severe self-reduction and non-relation.

In Heidegger's theory, the idea of death offers freedom from the uncertainty and anxiety of the inauthentic being. Therefore, Heidegger believes that to meet a complete self-fulfillment, anxiety forces the human beings towards the freedom that death suggests. Such an opportunity changes anxiety to a feeling of certainty which foreshadows final attainment of the authentic self. Hence, the transformation of inauthentic Dasein to authentic Being is accomplished through the ego's own state of loss which mystically turns to transcendence. In Heideggerian theory then, self-transcendence takes place through dissolution of the ego by putting itself in the process of gradual loss.

⁶³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 393 – 394

⁶⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 393.

⁶⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 219.

In a nutshell, Heidegger distinguishes between two senses of self: one is the everyday I, and the other is the authentic way of existence as anticipatory resoluteness. Both of these ways of being in the world are forms of selfhood. The real self – existentially understood as care – is the self-unifying temporality that allows for any experience, whether inauthentic and every day or genuine and authentic. Selfhood is based on temporality, according to Heidegger. The temporality that generates itself is more fundamental than the personal ego or the rational subject (*sichzeitigt*).

II.5.1. Dasein As Being-Toward- Death

Heidegger refers to Dasein as Being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*)⁶⁶

The factual Dasein exists born, and is dying already as born, in the sense of "thrown" as "Being-toward-death." In the full "now" of authentic existence, all projections are made in view of my radical thrownness, with death before me as the ultimate conditioning possibility, so that existence becomes a self-extension from birth to death lived in the dense moment of caring projection. Because the Dasein knows the course it is taking and resolutely wills it, the historical motion is not a passive undergoing such as the material living thing experiences, but an active "letting itself happen," the free shouldering of a destiny.⁶⁷

Man, more than any other creature, is aware of his death. His greatest anguish stems from his awareness of his destiny. Dasein frequently escapes from the painful realization of his finite nature; yet, by denying the reality of his future, he condemns himself to inauthenticity:

Consider how I must grasp my death for it to become the reality that can introduce me to the whole structure of my existence and, consequently, open the possibility of authentic projection. It does not suffice to see someone

⁶⁶ Langan, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

else die, nor even to take cognizance, more or less vividly, that I am going to die someday. This kind of realization is incapable of rendering any special meaning to the present moment. It is only when I come to realize that my every moment and my every act share the same fate, all destined to the same all-dissolving end, all capable of being swept up and fixed in the complete picture of a terminated existence, that the reality of my finite destiny reveals the meaning of the moment.⁶⁸

That says Dasein obscures its authentic self because it is unsettling and uncomfortable. The phenomenon of death, a disruptive possibility to which Dasein seeks to pay no attention, illustrates Dasein's unsettled and disoriented character. In order to disturb the ordinary daily perception of Dasein's temporal structure, this propensity for Dasein to be inauthentic necessitates what Heidegger refers to as "doing violence." Heidegger was forced to move beyond the conventional concept of time into a non-sequential, non-successive form of time by this disruption.⁶⁹ In addition, originary temporality is the form of time needed to explain Dasein's care structure, as will be made clear shortly. Temporality is the meaning of care, and care is the Being of Dasein. Each moment in the care- structure is grounded in a moment of temporality.

Because death is a feature of Dasein that cannot be assimilated to a sequential temporality, it is considered necessary for a non-sequential manifold of originary temporality.⁷⁰ This understanding of death is in line with the thesis that originary temporality is a modally indifferent phenomenon because death as well is modally indifferent. It is neither authentic nor inauthentic. Authenticity and inauthenticity, on the other hand, are simply modes that exist in relation to Dasein's reaction to a death. Simply put, the inauthentic form of death is when Dasein refuses to face death, turns away from it, and succumbs to the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

⁶⁹ Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism*, 93.

⁷⁰ Hubert L. Dreyfus and Harrison Hall, *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992), 112.

tranquilizations of the "they." Alternatively, if Dasein faces its finitude in a courageous manner, do not pay heed to the idle talk of the "they," and presses ahead with its life, then this is the authentic form of death.⁷¹

Within time and space, both authentic and inauthentic existence exists; nevertheless, the former embraces the totality of time, when past, present, and future collide in the ever-present Now. Dasein discovers: "The 'where-from' and 'where-to' present constantly recurring dimensions rooted in the 'where-now' of the self-unfolding Dasein,"⁷² Heidegger often speaks of Dasein being "thrown" into the world. He is stating that man is not responsible for his birth. This concept is expressed by Sartre as existence preceding essence: "Qu'est-ce que signifie ici que l'existence précède l'essence? Cela signifie que l'homme existe d'abord, se rencontre, surgit dans le monde, et qu'il se définit après. L'homme, tel que le conçoit l'existentialiste, s'il n'est pas définissable, c'est qu'il n'est d'abord rien .Il ne sera qu'ensuite, et il sera tel qu'il se sera fait . . . l'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'il se fait. Tel est le premier principe de l'existentialisme."⁷³

Dasein, as care, is the thrown basis for its death, rather than death being an add-on to it at its end.⁷⁴ Dasein has been thrown into its most drastic possibility: death. The state of mind known as "anxiety" reveals itself to Dasein when thrown into death. Anxiety towards death is anxiety "in the face of" one's own potentiality-for-Being, which is non-relational and cannot be outstripped.⁷⁵

“ For factual existing is not only generally and without further differentiation a thrown potentiality-for-being-in-the-world, but it has always likewise been absorbed in the ‘world’ of

⁷¹ Blattner, Heidegger's Temporal Idealism, 99.

⁷² Langan, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁷³ Sartre, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

⁷⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 354.

⁷⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 295.

its concern."⁷⁶ This is what Heidegger calls facticity, which is the second item in the structure of care. The last item is about falling. By fleeing in the face of death, Dasein covers its ownmost Being-towards-death. In fact, Dasein is dying as long as it exists, but it will do so by falling.⁷⁷ Being-towards-the-end is characterized by existence, facticity, and falling, and therefore, constitutes the existential concept of death. Ontologically, death is grounded in care.⁷⁸ Founding an authentic world involves care (Soree) and anguish (Angst), which enable man to see reality as a united whole. As Heidegger states it "I see for the first time clearly, that the Seienden als Ganzen⁷⁹ could not 'be' without my Dasein, and at the same time I realize that the apparent solidity of that 'world' of things offers no lasting thing upon which I can depend as a projection from the dissolution of the world in death"⁸⁰. Thus man is a uniting force.

Thus, Dasein progresses from Nothing to a future that will inevitably end in death and, as a result, Nothingness. In order for authentic standing-in to occur, Dasein must live fully present in the now, yet ever aware of the understanding of the past and the unfulfilled potential of the future. Dasein's inauthentic existence occurs when he isolates himself from either his past or future, resulting in a fragmented series of "nows." Only when Dasein is fully present with the past, present, and future can self-discovery occur. One is now paying off a debt of limitations inherited from the past. Man must struggle to overcome his past limitations in order to engage in authentic existence.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 296.

⁷⁹ Being as a whole

⁸⁰ Langan, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

II.5.2. Heidegger's Temporality and Spatiality

Among the subjects that have intrigued philosophers from Plato and Augustine to Henri Bergson, William James, and Martin Heidegger, not to mention writers such as Proust, Joyce, and Virginia Woolf is the experience of temporality: One of Beckett's great *topos* which is the experience of time. For Beckett, time is daily, empty, and repetitive. It leads neither to the Paulinian nor Heideggerian moment of perspicacity and decision. It just goes on.

According to Heidegger, time could of itself function as a criterion for distinguishing the 'non-temporal, the 'temporal', the 'supra-temporal, rather than being 'the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it.'⁸¹ For Heidegger, time and the temporal mean what is perishable, what passes away in the course of time.

Despite his claims to have set philosophy on a fresh and stable footing, Heidegger believes that Descartes ignored the issue of the links between time and the existence whose certainty he thought he had established. The supposedly timeless concept of 'being' really comprehends entities in terms of a specific mode of time, the 'Present.'

The Greeks then treated time as if it were just another thing, attempting to comprehend its nature, oblivious to the fact that their whole understanding of Being is 'naively and inexplicably oriented towards time.'⁸² It is a limitation, according to Heidegger, that goes through the entire legacy of philosophical conceptions of time, from Aristotle through Bergson and much further. As a result, the common concept of 'being in time' is an inauthentic understanding of temporality as a leveled-off, harmless, infinite sequence of 'nows' with no essential relationship to consciousness.

⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 39

⁸² Heidegger, *op. cit.*, 48.

The way the past, present, and future coexist and codetermine one another is crucial to Heidegger's temporality. This does not imply that temporalizing occurs as a result of the three terms coming one after the other.⁸³ Heidegger's temporality is not based on the chronological order of events.⁸⁴ Temporalizing does not imply that ecstasies occur in sequential order. The future is not later than having been and having been is not earlier than the present.

Temporality temporalizes itself as "a future which makes present in the process of having been."⁸⁵

According to Heidegger:

In every ecstasy, temporality temporalizes itself as a whole; and this means that in the ecstatic unity with which temporality has fully temporalized itself currently, is grounded the totality of the structural whole of existence, facticity, and falling –that is, the unity of the care-structure.⁸⁶

Not the only temporality is crucial for Dasein, but spatiality also plays an important role in it. In *Being and Time*, being discussion is mainly on its temporality and spatiality, which seems inseparable from being. Space is characterized neither as a subjective nor objective entity, but it contains actions and movements. Being and spatiality “appear inseparably intertwined” (Vallega 58). The meaning of being for Heidegger is as the meaning of existence, or life instead.

The embodiment of man is considered as a central theme in Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's-philosophy, where they distinguish between the "situation" of embodiment and the "position" of things. They believe that an embodiment's "situation" is more fundamental than the position of things. Furthermore, they argue that the embodiment' space, which acts underneath the position of things, reveals a more corporeal and fundamental spatiality than

⁸³ Keller, Husserl and Heidegger on Human Experience, 188.

⁸⁴ Wheeler, "Heidegger," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/>

⁸⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 401.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Heidegger's concept of spatiality, which is primarily concerned with explaining the meaning of Being. Heidegger, on the other hand, emphasizes that the spatiality of "Situation" should not be confused with the anthropological idea of space.

Heidegger's spatiality of "Situation" is not concerned with the peculiar feature of the anthropological concept of space, as in the case of the French phenomenologists; he goes one step further. What he really wishes to convey with "Situation's" spatiality is how it differs from the inauthentic spatiality of "they."

In general, two different approaches define the traditional concept of space. The first one conceives of space as something receptacle of things that are out there in the world (Newton), whereas the second one sees space as a form of sensibility that is situated in subjectivity (Kant). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger rejects and seeks to replace these traditional approaches in his existential concept of space.

Space, he claims, is neither found in the objective world nor subjectivity, but rather based on "Being-in-the-World": "Space is not in the subject, nor is the world in space. Space is rather 'in the world, in the sense that space has been disclosed by that Being-in-the-World that is constitutive of Dasein.'"⁸⁷

Heidegger suggests a third term, "Being-in-the-World," in his existential concept of space, which goes beyond the traditional dualisms of "space in the subject" and "the world in space." It is now necessary to define the "Being-in-the-World" to understand the existential concept of space. Dasein is not a worldless ego; it is immersed in it. However, when Heidegger refers to the world, he does not mean the objective world as conceived in a theoretical sense; rather, the world is a place "'wherein' a factual Dasein as such can be said

⁸⁷ M. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, translated by M. Anderson and H. Freund (New York: Harper & Row Publisher, 1969), 146

to "live."⁸⁸ The world, in this ontological meaning, refers to the environment (Umwelt) in which Dasein dwells. Heidegger emphasizes that "to dwell" is an essential aspect of "Being-in-the-World" since Dasein first lives in the world before it thinks. Heidegger discovers a new ground for space in this dwelling environment of Dasein. Dasein's closest world is the environment. Furthermore, Heidegger claims that the word "environment" (Umwelt) implies that it is founded on space: "The word 'environment' [Umwelt] has a spatial suggestion in the 'environ' [um]."⁸⁹

However, this spatiality of the environment is neglected in the traditional concept of space because the traditional concept is only concerned with the thematic space. In contrast to the traditional concept of space, with its spatiality of environment, Heidegger seeks to set up the non-thematic space: "Per its Being-in-the-world, Dasein presents space as already found, even if it is not thematically [unthematische]."⁹⁰ Dasein comports itself toward the non(pre)-thematic space in the spatiality of environment, which is before to the theoretical world. And this pre-thematic space has its own distinctive character that is not found in the thematic space. To close this chapter, let's take a look at the philosophy of Schopenhauer and its impact on Beckett's art.

II.6. Schopenhauer Point of View.

Early in the history of Beckett studies, it was noted that Beckett's literary work is sometimes referred to be "pessimistic," and in this sense portrays attitudes, characters, patterns of action or, rather, non-action that show some affinity with Schopenhauer's pessimism. 6 Of course, it has been noted that Proust's essay draws heavily on Schopenhauer's

⁸⁸ Ibid., 92.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 94.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 146.

philosophy 7, not just on his pessimism but also on his art theory. It is less obvious, and many critics have missed it, but Beckett's essay on Proust may also be seen as an attempt to interpret Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* as a metaphysical endeavor undertaken by an artist, not a philosopher.

When space and time have lost their binding force, when the causal order of things has been abandoned, when the aesthetic object is perceived in isolation from other parts of the world, Schopenhauer believed that true reality may emerge, the archetypal, everlasting Gestalt of what we experience as a distorted, untrue phenomenon under 'normal' conditions. If one takes Beckett's allegiance to Schopenhauer seriously, as the notebooks and his Proust suggest, it becomes a need to learn how Beckett's literary world relates to Schopenhauer's philosophical vision of true human reality and life in general. Time, space, causality, and frequently even identity have become empty patterns in Beckett's postwar works, referring to primarily pro forma. It would only be significant if the reality that emerges after these traditional tools of human orientation have become corrupt reflected Schopenhauer's metaphysical view of life and the world. There is a philosophical shift here from aesthetics to metaphysics. As shown in Proust's study, Beckett reinterpreted Schopenhauer from the start in his own way. He dismantled Schopenhauer's idealist world of "Platonic Ideas" and replaced it with a timeless image of what it actually means to have to live.

Schopenhauer's thing-in-itself, the metaphysical base of the world, is not immediately perceptible, according to his view, but manifests itself in living beings and the natural world in general. However, certain phenomenal characteristics demonstrate the objectivity of the thing-in-itself more clearly than others. These characteristics are most prominent in Beckett's postwar literature, and they are central to his dramatic characters' communication.

Estragon: (*violently*). I'm hungry.

Vladimir: Do you want a carrot?

Estragon: Is that all there is?

Vladimir: I might have some turnips.

Estragon: Give me a carrot. (*Vladimir rummages in his pockets, takes out a turnip and gives it to Estragon who takes a bite out of it. Angrily.*)

It's a turnip! (20)

The timeless essence of life, according to Schopenhauer, is willing and striving, similar to an "unquenchable thirst," and therefore, inexorably, "need, lack, and hence pain." (WWR I, 312; WWR) He also asserted that "there is no ultimate aim of striving," implying that "there is no measure or end of suffering" (309) According to the philosopher, life in all stages of evolution, from the most primitive plants through various species of animals to the phenomena of human existence, demonstrates "how essentially all life is suffering." (310)

Pozzo's final words about humanity have previously been quoted: "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more." In his last monologue, Vladimir expands on this depiction of life by including suffering: "Astride of a grave and difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries ..." (90 f.) Schopenhauer adds: "Awakened to life out of the night of unconsciousness, the Will finds itself as an individual in an endless and boundless world, among innumerable individuals, all striving, suffering, and erring; and, as if through a troubled dream, it hurries back to the old unconsciousness." (WWR II, 573) There is no need to go on a long search for suffering and sorrow in the lives of Beckett's characters. These features can be found everywhere, therefore they may be considered fundamental in Beckett's world. The number of people who ask for something and don't get it, or who, as if Schopenhauer had designed their course of action, do get it but then

suffer from their next desire, seems almost inexhaustible. And the next demand is either not fulfilled or, if it is, it is fulfilled in a most difficult way. After his first disappointment, Estragon gets a carrot in the passage just mentioned. It's the last one. He'll be doubly disappointed the next time he wants a carrot:

Vladimir: Would you like a radish?

Estragon: Is that all there is?

Vladimir: There are radishes and turnips.

Estragon: Are there no carrots?

Vladimir: No. Anyway you overdo it with your carrots.

Estragon: Then give me a radish. (*Vladimir fumbles in his pockets, finds nothing but a turnip, finally brings out a radish and hands it to Estragon, who examines it, sniffs it.*) It's black!

Vladimir: It's a radish.

Estragon: I only like the pink ones, you know that! (68)

In *Endgame*, Hamm keeps asking for his painkiller. Clov keeps informing him that it is not time yet. It will never be:

Hamm: Is it not time for my pain-killer?

Clov: Yes.

Hamm: Ah! At last! Give it to me! Quick!

Pause.

Clov: There's no more pain-killer. (46)

The process of *Waiting for Godot* itself is perhaps the most vivid picture that conveys a key characteristic of Schopenhauer's view of life onto the stage. Godot, whomever he is, is armed with a number of predicates, all of which are insufficient to recognize him if he ever

appears, thanks to the waiting characters' weak memory and even thinner imagination. On the other hand, the unquenchable longing to rejoin the self's essence recalls Schopenhauer's philosophy, which had an unquestionable influence on Beckett's work. The experience of separation from the essence of being, or what Schopenhauer calls the "principle of individuation," which prevents us from seeing the underlying unity, is the source of the perceiver/perceived split in the self. The "real" Beckettian self, like Schopenhauer's Will, exists outside of both space and time. But, just as Beckettian characters can never escape the oscillations of time that prevent them from being and seeing a stable self, they are also doomed to constantly change positions in an earthly space where there is no issue and no fixed point for them to occupy that would allow them to have a complete and clear view of the constantly shifting field around them, or that would allow them to remain still long enough to be the same subject from one moment to the next. Though, the self is inaccessible, because every time we change places in quest of it, we become other in terms of both space and time, and both the object and subject of our quest vanish. Therefore, the oscillations of space prevent us from experiencing what Heidegger called "Dasein," or "being there," just as the continual, unsynchronized motion of time and desire prevents us from being ourselves in the present.

Conclusion

Beckett's writings may be seen as a collection of philosophical perspectives. His works elicit feelings of existential anxiety, loneliness, and human submission to the world's merciless course. Beckett's characters depict confused and alienated humanity without a place or a purpose; a man who is uncomfortable in the world and lost in a meaningless void. Every play and piece of writing reflects and develops on this dark recognition of the human condition, resulting in a wide worldview called the "Beckettian viewpoint." A philosophical interpretation is required for the Beckettian view. In fact, coupled with the suggestions on

deliberate philosophical purpose, his plays include some ambiguous clues. Many critics have figured out the overall philosophical viewpoints to which Beckett assumed to subscribe due to the significant pessimistic atmosphere, gloomy post-apocalyptic scenes, loon characters, and the dominant sense of the confusion and meaninglessness of life, or as Beckett, himself states, the "issueless predicament of existence." However, establishing the exact relationship between Beckett and philosophy is difficult and complex. Beckett is obviously not a philosopher; if he were, he would not have been required to be involved in the art. As a writer, Beckett was adamant about avoiding any attempt to impose a philosophical view or meaning on his work. In reality, Beckett rejects philosophy, and his use of viewpoints is usually connected with silence, uncertainty, and humorous counterpoint. Viewpoints are presented as glorious symbols that stand apart from the wretched human condition. They comfort, celebrate, amuse, and entertain, but they are always also illusions, exaggerations, blinkers, diversions that lead the reader away from the real and passionate conditions of the world situation.

With the ongoing developments in science and technology, not only the socio-cultural values of societies but also the time and space perceptions changed and transformed. The constant mobility of space and time makes vision impossible in Beckett's world. Movement is a major feature of his dramatic aesthetic. In early works such as *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, the physical, often comic movement borrows heavily from the traditions of music hall and vaudeville (as seen in Chapter I), yet all of these movements are carefully orchestrated and rigidly controlled, tending to create an image that is, if not static, at least circumscribed and predictable, offering the viewer's fluctuating perceptions a measure of order. Indeed, one of the most significant aspects of the evolution of Beckett's drama over the years is the fact that, as movement on stage has been minimized and/or strictly regulated, the imaginary mobility required of its spectators has gradually increased. The characters force us

to follow their own perceptions, constantly moving from the past to the future, touching without ever resting on the stage images that serve as a springboard for their explorations of other times, other spaces, and other-selves.

Beckett's writings are very topical, and the integration of Heidegger, Sartre and his contemporaries (as well as some philosophical predecessors and successors) into literary analyses that avoid focusing on the undeniable misery, trauma and human suffering caused by the two world wars led to the experience of selfhood which is based on temporality accordingly to Heidegger since temporality that generates itself is more fundamental than the personal ego or the rational subject. Authenticity and inauthenticity, on the other hand, are simply modes that exist in relation to Dasein's reaction to a death that offers freedom from the uncertainty and anxiety of the inauthentic being. Therefore, Heidegger believes that to meet a complete self-fulfilment, anxiety forces the human beings towards the freedom that death suggests. On the other hand, since the embodiment of man is considered as a central theme in Sartre and Merleau Ponty's-philosophy, Beckett has been deeply influenced by it. Hence, without this consciousness of being, human reality, as Sartre would have it, is absent to itself – it is different from the world of objects that surrounds it and that it surrounds.

Consciousness as a mode of being that is, in many ways, in conflict with the body and the material world in the works discussed here, while being intrinsically linked to it in spite of itself. The increasingly abstract stage space of Beckett's plays contributes to the aura of indeterminacy that surrounds his dramatic situations; as the stage boundaries, for example, the walls of Hamm's rooms disappear, it is easier for us to enter the unlimited and shapeless space of the characters' consciousness. In order to best understand the relation of time and space according to Beckett view of consciousness, we have chosen to entitle our thesis' next chapter Beckett's Odyssee Through Time and Space.

**CHAPTER III:
THE BECKETTIAN VIEW
OF TIME AND SPACE**

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Introduction

There are concepts we think about, concepts we use in thinking, and concepts (usually called a priori) we think with. . . . A concept may move (not without change) from one function to another: hence there are no unique examples of each class. But allowing for this we may say that in many contexts the concepts of energy, man, social class, and alienation are concepts we think about; the concepts of quantity, function, value, and change are concepts we use in thinking; and the concepts of time, space, identity, and causation are concepts we think with. (Louis O. Mink, *Historical Understanding*, 1987)

As human beings and in the course of our lives, we are always 'running out of time': We simply do not 'have the time' to do everything that we need or want to do. We all participate in the same play; we are all active together, we play different roles, developing through time and space. Time can present itself and space can allow a new type of research in a light that illuminates the whole Being. The world we live in today is in need of a more comprehensive vision that reveals our true relationship with time and space, for it appears as if time, space is becoming unfriendly towards us, they are an integral part of our lives ... we could say they are our lives.

Time and space, although they may seem ordinary, they are essential to existence. It is precise because of their "banality" - because there is nothing more fundamental to our reality - Time and space can also serve as bridges to a new vision, they are an entity. Without Space-- as without Time--we would be unable to live and to experience.

Time and space together form the ever-present background of human experience. They are the most basic facets of human experience. They are the Being of our being as it manifests

in this world. Space allows the world of objects to appear; time makes possible the sequence of events that gives the order to our lives; they are the ordinary stuff of existence, which ordinary knowledge aims to know. When these elements of existence are brought to the foreground, they begin to reveal vital new dimensions.

Beckett's nontraditional concepts of time and space have been a new approach to modern literature. It can be seen in Beckett's plays that the theme of space-time takes a complicated and more philosophical turn for it actually points to the caged nature of the world and nothingness in time... Time and space, those perpendicular coordinates, emerge dependently but distinctly in Beckett's dramas. Time is an essential category in another related but more external approach to the problem of defining the individuality of any object. The 'principle of individuation' accepted by Locke was that of existence at a particular locus in space and time: since, as he wrote, "ideas become general by separating from them the circumstances of time and place", so they become particular only when both these circumstances are specified. In the same way, the characters can only be individualized if they are set in a background of particularized time and place.

Throughout his works, Beckett attempts to convey his deeply philosophical observations on subjects that we encounter in everyday life. Beckett addresses everything from the daily passage of time to space, to the way humans communicate, to the prevailing uncertainty that is part of every aspect of life. These themes are not only strong in one work, but Beckett addresses each idea in every piece of his catalog of great plays and novels.

III.1. Beckett's Time and Space

Beckett is considered among those successful playwrights who added a new touch in their plays, those who have made "an international mark...." His plays have a suggestive

power which is missed in the work of many contemporary dramatists, having a fascination with his own. He has given a new shape and direction to the contemporary drama.

Beckett's plays might be said to be both immediately and passionately present and disturbingly absent, unfinished even if rigorously formed. They are plays that seem to unravel the seams of the theatrical event; they involve and confound the spectator, offering both the promise of physical immediacy (for, if nothing else, the late plays are unsettlingly present; each relies for its effect on the precise delineation of a carefully crafted stage image) and the frustrating certainty that, in this world, little, if any, the conventional dramatic process is taking place. After all, the plays, from *Waiting for Godot* onwards, question the relationships that exist, unmarked, in conventional theatre: the role of the spectator in decoding the text; the status of image and text; and the relationship between the two. It has also been widely noted that Beckett's dramas, from the outset, rely on a reconfiguration of the conventional idea of time and space normally found in theatrical performance as Ruby Cohn, coined the term "theatereality," for example, a term that identifies a fundamental confusion in the plays between the time and space of the drama and the time and space of the actors on the stage [30-31]).

This, of course, raises a basic question concerning the characters' subjectivity: Does Beckett's character occupy a world defined by the text or one delimited by the stage's boundaries? Is the character instantly present or indefinitely distant from it? How can we, as an audience, make sense of these "people" (Beckett's preferred phrase) if we don't know about their precise position in what normally is considered to be the linear narrative of life?

A standard response has evolved in the canon of Beckett criticism, one that relies implicitly on how subjectivity is fixed in dramatic space and time. It is fair to say that, in most pieces of theatre, the relation of space to time follows a standard pattern: the time-space

indicated in the play exceeds the time-space of performance, but the two are sequentially related. That is, the enacted events are themselves taken from a larger number of events imagined as taking place offstage. Similarly, the play's setting is to be viewed as one of the simultaneously existing settings that together form the world described in the text.

It has been argued that Beckett's characters are simply present. Vladimir and Estragon could not remember exactly what happened yesterday, but they know that their present existence is confirmed, if only by the presence of each other, similarly, Hamm and Clov are adrift in the present moment relying on the dialogue to fix them in place. All of these characters exist in a dramatic time-space which is indistinguishable from the performance's time-space. They cannot rely on history to confirm their own existence, their own subjectivity, but they can define themselves in the actions and words they perform day after day, and night after night, even if it's only from moment to moment.

Beckett's characters are plucked out of time. Within his plays, Beckett depicts the suffering of the individual of a world in which everything is uncertain even time, a man in such a world is in a perpetual struggle with time to assert himself. He is seen as disintegrated and his society presented as increasingly deconstructing and irrecoverably fragmented. This absurd image of a man significantly engages questions of life and existence focussing on the significance of language, space and time, characters, and the question of identity.

Space and time are undeniably important aspects and the space-time theme takes a complicated and more philosophical turn in Beckett's plays- actually indicates the caged nature of the world and nothingness in time. Beckett's characters seem to have no society, no history, no occupation, no real personality or identity except their names, that helps to generate incomprehensibility and indeterminacy.

III.1.1. Historicity of Time

The nature of time has haunted man through the ages. Some conception of time has always entered into man's ideas about mortality and immortality, permanence and change, so that concepts of time are of fundamental importance in the study of religion, philosophy, literature, history, and mythology. Since the beginning of history, our perception of time has evolved through a dialectical process between man and nature, the individual and culture. For As Simone Weil aptly stated,

“Time is the most profound and the most tragic subject which human beings can think about. One might even say: the only thing that is tragic. All the tragedies which we can imagine return in the end to the one and only tragedy: the passage of time. . . . It is the source of the feeling that existence is nothing.”⁵

Unlike writers of our own day, no Greek author would have dreamt of writing a play about time. Although the Greeks are known to have used waterclocks in the law courts in order to limit speeches⁸, there is no evidence that the performance of plays was ever restricted in this way (despite a dubious reference in Aristotle's *Poetics*). Nor did they even like to show the action of time on moods and feelings. When Euripides allowed one of his characters, Iphigeneia, to change her decision in a short time, Aristotle was shocked. Since about the middle of the fifth century BC, many of the most sensitive Greek thinkers have been confused by time and tried to avoid this concept as much as possible, because it is difficult to reconcile with their strict rational views. In particular, Parmenides, the founding father of logical disputation, argued that time cannot pertain to anything that is truly real. Space exists independently as a given frame of the visible order of things, while time is only a characteristic of the order of the eternal form based on the ideal timeless archetype of the realm of static geometrical shape (eternity), which is the "moving image", dominated by the regular numerical sequence shown by the movement of celestial bodies.

Aristotle influenced by the Pythagoreans argued that time is a kind of number, being the numerable aspect of motion. Time is therefore a numbering process founded on our perception of 'before' and 'after' in motion: "Time is the number of motion with respect to earlier and later."

Life, for ancient peoples, revolved not only around the regular cycles of sun and moonrise but the movement of the heavens and the seasons. But, with the development of civilizations, time became a central topic of discussion for philosophers and scientists. According to Archimedes (c.287-c.212 BCE), understanding physics implies the elimination of time, which is then replaced by a geometric theory of nature.

Throughout the whole medieval period, there was a conflict between the cyclic and linear concepts of time. (Ratner 38) The scientists and scholars, influenced by astronomy and astrology, tended to emphasize the cyclic concept. The linear concept was fostered by the mercantile class and the rise of a money economy.

Our idea of time as linear advancement without cyclical repetition is the central feature of our current mode of thought about the nature of things.

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) seems to follow the same principle in which he represented time by a straight line in order to formulate "the law of inertia". This approach has been adopted by Isaac Newton (1643-1727) who used a geometric line to describe measurable time and supported an arithmetic explanation: "Absolute time, true and mathematical, of itself and of its own nature, elapses equitably without relation to anything external" (Newton 1952: 3).

At the dawn of the 19th century, Albert Einstein reintroduced the notion of relative time by breaking the spell of absolute time. In so doing, He observed that temporal and spatial indications are relative to the movement of the observer; hence, individual frames of reference

determine the nature of time. So according to Einstein, the human perception of time as having a past, present and future was only a function of the individual...of consciousness, of the human mind.

Since the beginnings of philosophy, Einstein's observer, the individual perspective, on which the nature of time (and space) depends, had been considered an essential factor in understanding temporality. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), for his part, established a link between time and human consciousness by suggesting that without the awareness of change and in a world where time changes, there would be no consciousness of existence since time is linked to the movement of the soul. St. Augustine (354-430) in his turn sees that time is an experience of the mind; and the true measure of time is its inner measure.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) rejected the idea that internal time has any relation to absolute reality; he explains time as a construction of experience; time is an a priori form of sensory perception. An absolute vision of time implies the existence of a "logical" sense and a sequence of temporal demarcations, which are based on a subjective, fixed, and shared understanding of temporality. Furthermore, Relative time is associated with opposite implications. In the psychoanalytical framework, time is Relative. Chronology has no relevance; the past is relived as the present, and in turn, the present is in agreement with the past; the future also, through daily wishes, anticipations, dreams, and desires, plays the role of the present. The unfolding of psychic time is subject to different rules - or no rules at all, as far as objective reality is concerned. These observations are largely based on Sigmund Freud's understanding of time, whereby time for him is to be 'a subject, which would merit the most exhaustive treatment' (Freud 1920: 28)

Even if time passes, memories are not erased nor forgotten, which makes Freud perplexed. He then detected two types of time: "time" (which he put in quotation marks), a

time associated with repetition and related to memory, and time as a conscious experience.

The temporality in the psyche was now divided.

One of the key questions, then, about time, conceptualized by existentialist thinkers of the 20th century, is how it can be both particular and universal, describing each condition appropriately. Time moves without taking into account its environment or context; at the same time it gives each image a necessary backbone.

This makes time an interesting question, perhaps the question of human existence in general, and modern experience in particular: as Reinhart Koselleck, historian of the concept of time, wrote: "Discovery or subjective historical time is itself a product of modernity".

III.1.2. Beckett's View of Time

When one sets out to write about time, one soon discovers that it is a stubborn creature rejecting all forms of characterization. However, it is impossible to say what time really is? So the question yields a multitude of answers, some of which should be explored in Beckett's two plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*.

The problem of time with all its epistemological antinomies affects the entire field of literature that has presented after the 20th century a complex and multifaceted configuration of time that is becoming deeply rooted in the very structure of language such as linguistics.

In this respect, looking at the figures of the time in Beckett's work assumes first and foremost understanding how this author arrives systematically, dismantling all that constitutes the usual expression of perceiving the human dimension of time to create a temporal dimension of its own. The fact is that time, in Beckett's case, is not a determining element in the progress of a situation, but at first sight, it seems to be a set of disjointed moments without continuity. First, we can see that Beckett is conscious of the paradoxical traditional handling

of time for time is a literary theme characteristic of this century. It is generally presented as a problem faced by man, usually not solved. Second, we might consider the Beckettian representation of time in relation to the conceptual complexity of time itself, the cluster of concepts informing the idea of time, philosophically construed which, led many critics, when treating the Beckettian representation of time, refer to the temporal analysis enunciated in Beckett's *Proust* in which the passage of time, from future to past, is considered in relation to the succession of individuals, along with the destabilizing intervals of transition between them, which, in Beckett's interpretation of Proust's art, characterize the individual lifetime.

Time, then is presented as a purely existential force, characterizing many of Beckett's plays which outlook on the nature of life and the meaning of existence. The dislocation of the temporal axis of actionality in his plays is meant to reflect the twisted existence of the characters who occupy the textual spaces of the plays. What is then the contribution of Beckett to the philosophy of time? And what is the relationship of his thought with the modern European philosophical tradition in general?

III.1.3. Beckett's Formulation of Time

A convenient way to approach the Beckettian formulation of time is to contrast it with the Kantian construction. Post-Kantian philosophy is above all, a philosophy of time. It opposes more specifically time to being, most often through a range of quasi-'subjective' temporal forms. This stance is most often associated with Heidegger (and more recently again with Bergson), but it runs through the whole tradition in different ways from Hegel and Nietzsche through Dilthey, Whitehead, and Husserl, to Lukács and Benjamin, and on to Levinas, Ricoeur, Derrida, and Deleuze to name but a few. For Immanuel Kant, time functions as an a priori condition of appearance – a 'form of sensibility that lies at the basis of the empirical,' prior to all experience and 'preceding in my mind all the actual impressions

through which I am affected by objects' (Prolegomena 30, 31). Wilhelm Windelband explains: 'the Forms of space and time. . . present a universal and necessary mode in which things appear' in perception or experience (2.541). As an a priori condition of experience, time orders or configures the contents of perception such that they conform to the cognitive requirements of the perceiving mind. Time is the form of conditioning by which the objects of perception acquire the temporal properties of coexistence and succession in terms of which we experience them. Time, on the other hand, is not a requirement for experience in Beckettian mimesis, but rather a conclusion is drawn from experience and a way of articulating that experience. Now it's up to us to dig deeper into this issue. Thus, according to Phillip Turetzky: 'Whatever things may be like in themselves, for us to experience them or have knowledge of them empirical objects must conform to the structure of our capacities to experience and know them' (86).

By dissolving the subject's boundaries into time or fracturing it by the latter, the establishment of the priority of time over being both completes the triumph of the principle of subjectivity and, at the same time, casts doubt on that concept. Thus, retrospectively, the philosophy of the subject appears more and more, in retrospect, largely as a form of philosophical management of time's disruptive force, and thus, for some, as a kind of intellectual policing of insurgent singularities. This is the terrain on which the recent Deleuzean revival of Bergsonian philosophy of time has paired with Negri's post-Marxian philosophy of revolution.

According to Aristotle: 'Time is not changing, therefore, but that in respect of which change is numerable' (Physics 4.219b2). This proposition implies that if there is no change, there is no time. Hence, Vladimir's declaration: 'Time has stopped' (WFG, p. 24). A variant formulation occurs in Beckett's *Endgame*, where time, deprived of passage, remains

standstill. 'What time is it?' says Hamm in response to his inquiry. Clov responds, 'The same as usual (E, p. 4).

III.1.4. Beckett's Mimesis of Time

The equivocation in the Beckettian mimesis of time raises a fundamental question in the philosophy of time. Is time something in itself, independent of the things that happen in time, or does it depend on what happens in it? In other words, is time substantive (subsisting independently of the events that occur in it) or relational (constructed from the series of events that happen)? The first theory is called "substantivalism" because it treats time as something real and autonomous in itself as Newton elaborates: 'Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own name, flows equably without relation to anything external (qt in Whitehead, *Process, and Reality* 70). The second theory is called relationalism because it constructs time in relation to events that occur as Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz: "instants, considered without the things [or events], are nothing at all; and that they consist only in the successive order of things. . ." (1956, 152). And so, in this context, time is simply the sequence of events or facts as Whitehead explains: 'There is time because there are happenings, and apart from happenings there is nothing' (*Interpretation of Science* 83).

The great paradox in the Beckettian mimesis of time is that temporal passage betokens temporal fixity; the more time passes, the more stagnation it accumulates: 'the question may be asked, why time doesn't pass?

Vladimir: That passed the time.

Estragon: It would have passed anyway. (WFG, p.)

Hence, time is the measure not of change, as with Aristotle, but of constancy which is clear in Hamm and Clov's speculation in *Endgame*:

HAMM: (gloomily) Then it's a day like any other day.

CLOV: As long as it lasts.

(Pause)

All lifelong the same inanities. (E, p. 30),

In this context, the invariable succession of identical units of time constitutes a single sustained interval during which nothing happens but the repetition of the same situation. In this case, temporal continuity just reiterates sameness: "Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful." (WFG, p.) Hence, unlike Aristotle, time is a measure of constancy rather than change. In these conditions, time retains its nature as "an unending uniform succession," as Whitehead describes it (Interpretation of Science 91). The dynamics of this succession, however, are very different from those in the traditional paradigm, which means, according to Turetzky, that all moments belong to a single flow, always sharing the form of transience from not-yet to no-longer now' (170).

Moments do not pass in the sense that they do not elapse once their temporary duration has expired. Instead, they accumulate and cumulatively encumber experience with their aggregation. Time appears to be a stop in these circumstances since the lack of expiration would prevent it from advancing, so that when Hamm asks the hour Clov replies, "The same as usual." (E, p.1) But in fact, the time has not stopped. It passes desperately slowly. Therefore, all the characters, at the end of the play, have moved routinely closer to the end. Clov is ready to depart.

The Beckettian mimesis, on the other hand, interprets the temporal passage in the absence of elapse. Time passes, but it does not pass quickly. That is, its continuity remains uninterrupted, but the expiration of the moments that constitute and enable it has been jeopardized. Moments pass or expire; having passed or expired, they remain where they are

and are thus compounded with those which preceded them and those which follow. In this context, the consciousness of the ordered flow of time evolves into the consciousness of the disordered redundancy of time. In contrast to the phenomenological paradigm, which sees the passage of time presupposes flow or expiration. If a given moment did not flow, there would be no temporal position to occupy for the next moment. Under these circumstances, time would stop because the absence of expiration would prevent it from moving forward.

III. 1.5. Beckett's Aspects of Time

In his works, Beckett explores many aspects of time, such as its inevitability, its end, and the overlapping of past and present; we measure time but we do not know how to define it. In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett emphasizes the point that time will always move, no matter how it is used. When Vladimir and Estragon recall how they spent their days, Estragon notes, "It would have passed in any case" (WFG, p. 31). This remark about time passing is quite important to the play, which is about wasting one's own time by waiting. Beckett tackles several aspects of time, not just the passage of time. Not only does Beckett touch on past and present times, but also what is to come: the end of time. In his play *Endgame*, once again, Beckett uses time as a major element but communicates slightly different observations than in other works. *Endgame* is a play about endings: the end of life, the end of relationships, and yes, the end of time. The play even starts with such a line: "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished".(E,p.1) As the play comes to an end, Hamm muses on various topics, including the end of the time: "Moments for nothing, now as always, time was never and time is over, reckoning closed and the story ended," he says (E,p. 83). This vague statement could be interpreted in a variety of ways, but it's obvious that Hamm is referring to the end of his own time or time in general when he says "time is finished." it must nearly be finished," (E,p.1) As a result, the terms "moments for nothing" and "time was never" can be interpreted as Beckett's

own implications that when time is finished, nothing that happened matters; it will be as if time never existed. Although time is clearly a theme in both plays, Beckett tries to use these themes to promote different ideas.

For Proust, the redemption of past time was possible thanks to involuntary memory, but its functioning was totally abandoned to chance. For Joyce, time was of a different nature, that of the infinite fluctuation of the associative world. For both, the art world was timeless and safe: life was the exclusion of a timeless inner essence, and art had to be used as a means to escape from time and rejoin that essence. This is not so for Beckett: art for him signifies a world of failure, and being an artist is having the courage to face a constant failure. The escape through art, which for Proust was a declared and joyous certainty, and for Joyce an undeclared but reassuring certainty, is, for Beckett, an impossible dream... One of man's main concerns in literature is the conflict between the temporal and the non-temporal.

From Beckett's works, we will strive to understand the author's conflict.....the view of temporality and man's place. In our century man has become increasingly aware of his isolation. As far as the individual discovers his isolation, human thought no longer feels part of life. By the very fact of thinking, it feels disengaged, it fixes itself out of things in order to reflect upon them, and in this way is no longer supported by their own endurance power. It places itself outside of the movement that is its object.

Isolated from external time, he also feels detached from the time of his mental life, from inner time. Separated from the duration of things, and even from the modes of its existence, human consciousness finds itself reduced to an existence without duration and, consequently, it is always of the present moment. Such is the essential experience of modern man, a "Time cancer", the symptoms of which are the intimate consciousness of an ever-present existence, a keen sense of the discontinuity of duration, and the dependence of a continually repeated

creation. These results in a state very close to non-existence, characterized by torpor, indolence, and indefinable anguish, the first two contributing to the emptiness of the present, the second coming from the fear of a dark future.

According to Bergson, the human being was discovered in the depths of memory, and every genuine thought was thought in the continuous becoming of things: the only reality, was the duration and Bergson equated it with the free creation of the mind.

In his treatise *Duration and Simultaneity*, Bergson states that 'no question has been more neglected by philosophers than that of time; and yet, they all agree in proclaiming it of capital importance' (Bergson, xxviii). Bergson's time theory is based on the concept that approaching the topic as an "absolute, objective phenomenon" is an error because it fails to grasp the topic's "real essence" (Bergson, DAS, p.vi).

He accounts for the scientific misrepresentation of time and the limitations it has been given in *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*; rather than addressing the subject of time as a metaphysical issue, the French philosopher criticizes the way it has been rationalized into a "succession of points and instants" within the faculty of physics (Bergson, AITM, p.12).

Several aspects of *Waiting for Godot*, however, appear to indicate a shift away from past Newtonian conceptions of time and toward Bergson's view that time is a more complex subject that science cannot fully explain.

Bergson presents the concept of duration (*durée*) in his treatise *Time and Free Will* and argues for two different interpretations of it. While the first concept of time relates to the concept of space, the second, according to Bergson, occurs when "awareness refuses to distinguish its current state from prior states" (quoted in Bergson, DAS, p.vii). In Beckett's

work, this battle to separate current states from prior ones can be seen in the shape of memory, as the past tries to isolate itself from the present.

On several occasions, *Waiting for Godot's* central characters demonstrate a bad memory of the past. In Act I, Estragon interrogates Vladimir on what they were doing the day before; despite Vladimir's assurances that they were doing anything other than waiting for Godot, he is unable to confirm what it was or where it occurred. Their attempts to reassemble a rudimentary understanding of the past and restore some sense of time are futile, leaving them disoriented in a present where they don't even know what day it is: 'Is it Saturday?' Isn't it Sunday today? [Pause.] Or is it Monday? [Pause.] Or tomorrow?' (WFG, p.7).

According to Bergson's *Concerning the Nature of Time*, "without an elementary memory that connects two moments," there can only be one and "no before or after, no succession, no time" (Bergson, DAS, p.33). With this in mind, it's possible to argue that the failure of memory in *Waiting for Godot* equals to the play's seeming lack of advancement; after all, how can time proceed towards a future if the characters can't recollect the past? As a result of the inability to affirm the linkage between the past and present, the role of memory might be established to be crucial, as it essentially maintains the play at a standstill.

Estragon's failure to recognize his own boots the next day may be interpreted as a battle to recall, which ties in with the play's precarious nature of identity. His inability to identify objects that are intended to characterize himself could be interpreted as Estragon's failure to assert his own identity in the play's universe and could explain why the two characters are having such a hard time parting ways.

As the play progresses, time becomes a more complicated subject. Although Beckett's Act II directions state, "Next Day. Same Time. Same Place," the tree that appeared to be dead in the first act suddenly displays multiple leaves, demonstrating the play's complex

relationship with time. When they meet Pozzo and his slave Lucky in Act I, he has similarly gone blind for no apparent reason when he returns to the same area the next day. When Vladimir inquires about this strange incident, Pozzo snarls: " 'Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind" (WFG, p.82). He is unable to confirm the connection between time and his unpleasant situation with Vladimir. As the play moves away from a pre-modern Newtonian notion of time and duration, neither of these two events can be properly traced back onto a stable and linear time scale, assisting the play in moving into a modern realm of literature. Act II continues Act I's foreboding of time disintegration by enabling the concept of time to entirely collapse. The next day, Vladimir hunts agitatedly for Estragon, who appears to have vanished; during this brief absence, Vladimir entertains the audience by singing a song. On the surface, this song may appear to be just another of the character's frivolous duties to pass the time, but closer examination reveals a deeper symbolic meaning. The song goes in circles, eventually ending uncomfortably before being replayed by Vladimir. When Vladimir reaches 'And dug the dog a grave,' Beckett's stage directions state [He stops, broods, resumes] (WFG, p.48). The song serves as an allegory for the entire performance, with the repeated phrase mirroring the happenings. These events, like the fate of the dog in the song, are described by Webb as leading to one eternal event: death.

Time is therefore an essential factor in a literary work, and it becomes quite evident if we consider it in one of its main aspects, rhythm. Beckett's works have their own particular rhythm, as we shall see, the rhythm of the consciousness of time, the rhythm of life. The story of one author can go through several centuries without revealing to the reader the experience of time; that of another author imposes it in a few moments. These are Beckett's plays.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett emphasizes that time always moves, no matter how we use it. When the characters Vladimir and Estragon consider how they spent time during the

day, Estragon notes that "It would have passed anyway" (WFG, p.31). This observation that time will always pass is very relevant to the play, which deals with the waste of one's own time in the meantime. The passing of time is only one aspect of time that Beckett reflects on. In his *Endgame*, Beckett once again uses time as a heavy theme, but he expresses slightly different observations than in other works. *Endgame* is a play about endings - the end of life, the end of relationships and, yet, the end of time. The play even begins with the opening line "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must nearly be finished" (E, p.1). As the play comes to an end, Hamm reflects on many things, including the end of the time he has at his disposal: "Moments for nothing, now as always, time has never existed and time is over, the count is closed and the story is over" (E, p.83). This vague proclamation could be interpreted in many ways, but it is obvious that Hamm refers to the end of his own time or of time in general by declaring "time is over". Thus, the expressions "moments for nothing" and "time never existed" can be interpreted as Beckett's own implication that when time is over, nothing that has happened matters; it will be as if time never existed. Although time is obviously a theme in all his works, it would appear that Beckett uses these themes to promote different ideas. What can be learned from the synthesis of all these ideas, however, is that although time is constantly passing, the past or present is only a perspective, and yet it doesn't matter in the end.

When one gets closer to Beckett's work one feels a sense of tension between the hopelessly temporary and the seemingly infinite, between a man's life and time, between the constantly declining nature of the material universe and the immaterial aspect of the renewing consciousness without end in self-perception:

"In Beckett's works, the more the material envelope disintegrates and strips away, the more painful the tension between the temporal and the infinite becomes.... Beckett's characters may lose their

locomotion, their senses may disintegrate, but the awareness of their own selves continues unabated and time can never stop... In *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, the final situation....imply eternal recurrence ... as the individual ...and his final moments of consciousness must remain..... eternally suspended in limbo and can be conceived as recurring through all eternity."⁹¹

From here we can understand how Beckett uses the elements of time, suffering, and death as a dramatic structure on which to build his works.

III.2. Elements of Time and Death in Beckett's Plays

The problem of time and self have always played a role in Beckett's theatre. This is apparent in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. In these two plays, the playwright tackles the problem of time and death in a different way, his own way.

In the case of *Endgame*, for example, there are many endings (no more painkillers or bicycle wheels, the rat and the flea are killed, Nell dies) but this only highlights the situation of Hamm, and who is somehow clinging on, beyond time, after all the other deaths, waiting in timelessness for nothing. The leaves suddenly germinated by the tree at Godot fulfill the same function, they are a parody of development, of a time in motion that the stasis of the play's action mocks... The only sort of positive time in Beckett is just that condition of authentic temporality stressed by Heidegger, as we have already seen (in Chapter II), Being-towards death. But in Beckett, it is no cause for rejoicing. The whole matter is summed up in Pozzo's celebrated outburst towards the end of *Godot*: "Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time!When! ... one day like any other day..... he went dumb, I went blind...one day we'll go deaf, one day ...we were born, one day... we shall die, the same day,

⁹¹ Esslin, Beckett, p. 7

the same second..... is that not enough? “They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more.” (WFG,p. 89)

The exclamation above, spoken by Pozzo, demonstrates the maddening effect time has on the pliable mind. This phenomenon is one of the many problems with time in "Waiting for Godot". It started with our two wanderers, Vladimir and Estragon, who were playing waiting games. It is a simple detail that is powered by the plot that prompts what is little action in work, but the act itself catches in a cycle of uselessness. Vladimir and Estragon’s uneasiness in waiting instead comes from dread and boredom in waiting (for Godot).

Here are all the elements. Being either infinite or infinitesimal, so Pozzo can say that life adds up to one second, On the other hand, Pozzo is also aware of the Heideggerian thesis that time for Dasein depends on finitude, Being-towards-an-end, so his examples of ‘when’, of ‘days’, are all examples of endings, the ending of speech, sight, hearing. This is just Beckett’s usual addition to Heidegger - the conditions, even of authentic existence, are hell.

However, it seems true to say that Beckett's frequently used temporal elements are a parody of the Aristotelian paradox. So Beckett rejects, by parodying it, the traditional view of time, just as Heidegger does. Further, we have seen that he stresses the Being-towards-death (Being-towards-the-end) component in Dasein’s temporalizing, again, as in Heidegger (see Chapter II). There is, for instance, the ‘passing the time’ motif which appears for instance in the ‘millet grains’ of *Endgame*. Although, time is questioned in his plays. It seems that Beckett is obsessed with what he called “double-headed monster of damnation and salvation-Time.”

Time is presented as a purely existential force characterizing his two famous plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* which outlook on the nature of life and the meaning of

existence. The dislocation of the temporal axis of actionality in these two plays is meant to reflect the twisted existence of the characters that people the textual spaces of the plays.

III.2.1. Paradox of Time in *Waiting for Godot*

Time seems to be too fast: when we try to adapt to the rhythm in life, we find it difficult to "find the right time", "on time" and to 'catch things in time'. Beckett's dramas play through continuous moments in the waiting plays; a hovering moment in the death's threshold plays; a blend of moment and continuum in the plays wrested from the void.

In "*Waiting for Godot*" what dominates is the time of expectation, of anxiety, that "stagnant mush" of which Günther Anders has spoken. Nothing to do to get rid of it. In *Waiting for Godot*, if there is relaxation, it is in another sense, that of the interlude, temporary bracketing of what makes suffer because the characters have a whole repertoire of diversions, entertainment. the expectation is renewed and will not be resolved. What is to be made sensible is precisely the unbearable character of the time of waiting which exceeds those who bear it. the antics, the cries, the ways of passing the time are there only to make us stop, we spectators, on the silences, the *vertiges* of this time of the expectation covered by micro-actions, mini-comedies, parodies chaining themselves like a mosaic of moments that try to last to counter what is plaguing them. in area, they organize a host of non-events, try to conceal what is underneath but not quite. But the fabric is full of holes and the characters are periodically brought back to the underlying, permanent time, of which nothing can be said. This sort of stereoscopy of the temporal experience makes everything that happens detach itself to a background where nothing happens, a background that gnaws away, which unresolvously cancels what is agitated above it. That's why there are so many isolated replicas: shouts, black humor, bitter remarks ...returning at intervals, arising when the tricks, the tricks to escape the suffering of the bottom exhausted, stumble on silence.

In each of Beckett's plays, time can be static, liquid, and saltatory. Vladimir's phrase describes Beckett's playwriting practice—"At this place, at this moment in time."(WFG,p.) throughout the writing process, Beckett has been deeply concerned about the aesthetic and epistemological meaning of time consciousness. In "Proust" written by Beckett in 1931, he cleverly carried out an analysis. This analysis described both the "inner chronology" of Proust's art and Beckett's own personal perspective on time.

As aforementioned, and because of the merging of past and present, as well as the forgotten, the time is meaningless in this play. There is no orderly sequence of events. A tree that is barren one day is covered with leaves the next. When Pozzo and Lucky return the second day Pozzo is blind, seemingly powerless, and has no idea that he has ever met Estragon or Vladimir before, and Lucky is now dumb. The difference between Pozzo and Lucky in Acts I and II can be explained using the same reasoning that prevented Vladimir and Estragon from taking their own lives. Beckett is conveying to the audience that since time is meaningless in this play, life is just as meaningless.

Time and life are both controlled by chance, change, and circumstances. When Pozzo is questioned about how and why he became blind, he responds, "I woke up one day blind as Fortune."(WFG, p.) When questioned further he responds, "Don't question me! The blind have no notion of time. The things of time are hidden from them too". Although Vladimir and Estragon are not blind, they are being likened to blind men because they have no notion of time as well. Beckett's point that time has no meaning is relevant to Pozzo's and Lucky's situation because the effects of aging, blindness, muteness, loss of power happened in just one night. An entire day's memory was wiped out of Pozzo and Estragon's minds. Time held no power over 'Fortune'- making both time and one's established life insignificant forces to contend with.

“Pozzo: (suddenly furious). Have you not done yet tormenting me with your accursed time!..... It’s abominable! When! When! O ne day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we’ll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (Calmer.)....They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant then its night once more”.(He jerks on the rope.) On!”(WFG, p.57)

Beckett shows us two men who are prisoners of time, victims, not manipulators of time. Day after day, their hopes are crushed, and yet they remain incapable of giving up hope. The fact that they cannot cope with the situation by ending it with their own hands shows us that they are incurably naive optimists, and makes them pathetically comical.

In this play, Beckett presents us with a treatment of time that is not homogenous but changing in relation to the characters, as we shall see later on.

According to Gunther "being without time"⁹², which means out of time, sums up the way of life of these two tramps, he would be quite right not to describe the whole play as being without time, because, as far as Pozzo and Lucky are concerned, his definition is less precise.

Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot aimlessly, despite repeated signs that Godot will not come, and in fact, will never come. Having no desire to commit suicide or even just to leave, they stay close to the tree. In spite of this, their life continues, but it does not progress and becomes suspended out of time, a life without time, as Gunther Anders puts it.

They no longer have any goals or ambitions, for them, life is a treadmill of time, a series of repetitive circular agitations that they use to pass the time, to kill time. They do this to give

⁹² Anders, "Being without Time", p.146.

themselves the illusion of actually existing in time. They are outcasts, yet, time still weighs on them, and heavily enough to protect themselves from their inactivity:

"Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful" (WFG, p. 27) groans
Estragon

In general, life is a temporal experience because goals have not yet been achieved, or because ambitions have been fulfilled, but for Vladimir and Estragon who have lost their temporal character before and after, all this is set in a dark past, from which come imperfect memories of a period of their lives when action and suicide had been possible. Estragon had then attempted to drown himself, but, having failed, somehow evolved into the most indolent and static of the two tramps:

Estragon: Do you remember the day I threw myself into the Rhone?

Vladimir: We were grape harvesting.

Estragon: You fished me out.

Vladimir: That's all dead and buried."(WFG, p.35)

Estragon's past is made up of a series of failures and frustrations that he tries to erase from his memory, but which appear in his dreams like troubling nightmares, suffering and failures that have accompanied him for so long that his past is uniformly colored grey :

Estragon: ... Recognize! What *is* there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery!"(WFG, pp.34.40)

As far as Vladimir is experiencing the same situation, except that for him, memories are clearer, being more lucid in his understanding of the situation, although he is still beset by doubts and uncertainties. He struggles to keep control of time and reality, a control that Estragon has long since lost, and he suffers more than his friend from the static state of his present life:

Vladimir: ...Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today?

(Estragon having struggled with his boots in vain, is dozing off again. Vladimir looks at him.) He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot."(WFG, p.58)

We then see that the past is relatively unimportant for both of them, even if it holds the key to what they have become, or it is a source of suffering since it provides memories of a happier time. The past is somehow suffocated by the present, by the grey and leaden duration of their suffering which they can somehow tolerate and endure because of the games they play, because of the rapidly fading glimmers of hope that Godot will come and, above all, because of the great defense mechanism of habit. They have become accustomed to failure, frustration, suffering: life can be heavy and painful, but habit is a great reliever, a great shock absorber. They are used to waiting:

Estragon: So long as one knows.

Vladimir: One can bide one's time.

Estragon: One knows what to expect.

Vladimir: No further need to worry.

Estragon: Simply wait.

Vladimir: We're used to it."(WFG, p.25)

We can see that the tramps cling irrationally enough to their hope that one day Godot will come and fix everything, and this is due to the force of habit which protects them in large part from despair. When, in the second act, they first confuse Pozzo and Lucky for Godot, one can see the changes that his coming would have initiated for them:

Vladimir: We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot, waiting for ... waiting... Now it's over, it's already tomorrow.

Vladimir: Time flows again already. The sun will set, the moon rise, and we away...

from here. "(WFG, p.50)

Vladimir and Estragon are trapped in an eternity of inexplicable waiting, where time seems to have stopped, while it moves relentlessly forward. They even believe, at the end of the play, that the future still holds the answer to all their problems, an answer that is becoming less and less accessible, but which is their only hope. They believe that the stagnant and static present would become active again, and the flow of time would begin to flow again. To show this treadmill aspect of time, Beckett presents us, as we have seen, with a second act that is only a slight variation of the first, where each small sequence of the tramps takes us back to the starting point. The action always falls back into silence and inaction, that's the rhythm of the game. The different incidents do not change the state of the two tramps in any way: the more things change, the more they remain unchanged, which gives us a circular structure of the play that corresponds completely to the content: here, the form is content, and the content is form.

And as Gunther Anders has pointed out⁹³, the fact that tramps suffer from amnesia and do not even recognize that their conversations are merely recapitulations of previous ones is not entirely accurate. Several times, Vladimir and Estragon show that they are aware of the repetitiveness of events:

Boy: (off). Mister!

Estragon: Off we go again."

Vladimir: ...There you are again ... There we are again... There I am again.

(WFG, pp.32.38)

⁹³ Anders, "*Being without Time*", p. 146

However, what makes the tramps very pitiful is that they are both aware that despite the repetitiveness of the present, the flight of time is irrevocable. Their waiting in boredom is also an insidious progression towards death.

Estragon: Everything oozes...It's never the same pus from one second to the next."(WFG, p.39)

For Estragon, the river of Heraclitus became a river of pus. His condition, as well as that of the other characters in the play, is an unhealthy decay.

The circular structure of the play is not intended to evoke - the salubrity of the cycle of days or seasons. The rhythm it imposes is not that of eternal renewal, but rather a dead-end trap, where the morbid movement gives the impression of being stationary because it leads nowhere. It is the rhythm created by the exasperated movement of the animal cage. It's a sterile parody of the fertile cycle of the seasons, a parody that leads to death. The events of the previous day repeat themselves, but the time is now, the events of today repeat themselves without change, but the time will be tomorrow, and so on, until death. Even with the passage of time, nothing changes for the two tramps, although time passes, they do exist as if without time. Nevertheless, the few changes that occur in the second act make the passage of time very clear. The tree, sterile in the first act, has burst into leaf: for him, time is that of the cycle of the seasons, fertile time. For Pozzo and Lucky, on the other hand, time is infertile and causes degeneration. Unlike Vladimir and Estragon, they have a well-defined social classification, being the master and his slave, this couple is constantly on the move, which is in contrast to the two tramps. Yet, despite their activity, they will suffer the same fate as the tramps, death, since both means of fighting time, be it active or inactive, lead to defeat and death.

The character Pozzo is a great hypocrite, being brutal with those he exploits, but affable with those he meets for the first time, while always calculating how to exploit them in some way for his own benefit. He knows how to philosophize and how to poeticize. Brutal and determined in his dealings with his slave, but can be shy and hesitant, though not sincere, in his dealings with tramps. He is bound to his slave both literally and figuratively because he shares a common destiny with him. Although luck is with Lucky, that slave, and intellect that has degenerated because of the exploitation of an oppressive force.

Under Pozzo's domain, Lucky lost all his talents and was reduced to a sub-human state. Beckett named him Lucky maybe because he's the only one character in the play who doesn't think independently. The lucky one is lucky because his suffering is limited because he only thinks when his master tells him to. When he receives the order to think, Lucky delivers a long tirade that manifests the disintegration of his intellect and at the same time gives us a parody of human knowledge.

There is a certain difference between the two couples, the first Vladimir and Estragon, who stagnate in time and their only concern is to pass the time or kill time⁹⁴. Whereas Pozzo and Lucky, on the other hand, are active in time and constantly on the move and this becomes evident during the first act, when Pozzo often consults his clock⁹⁵ and is very sensitive to the insidious passage of time:

Pozzo: ... the sky ... it begins to lose its effulgence, to grow pale... pale, ever a little paler, a little paler until ... pppfff! finished! it comes to rest. But ... but behind this *veil* of gentleness and peace night *is* charging ...and will burst upon us ... pop! like that! just when we least expect it ...That's how it is on this bitch of an earth."(WFG, p.25)

⁹⁴ Beckett, Godot, pp. 9, 31, 44, 54

⁹⁵ Beckett, Godot, pp. 16, 24 (bis), 25

And this difference is reflected in this quick exchange of the first act:

Vladimir: Time has stopped.

Pozzo: (cuddling his watch to his ear). Don't you believe it, Sir, don' you believe *it* .. Whatever you like, but not that.(WFG, p.24)

It so happens that the two tramps Vladimir and Estragon have lost all contact with the world, for them, time seems to be at a standstill, while on the other side, Pozzo (and inevitably Lucky) is very concerned by this world, and on their side, time passes much faster, as we will see later. As we've already seen in the first act, Pozzo and Lucky suffer a degeneration when the first loses his watch. As Vladimir, Estragon, and Pozzo look for it while listening to its ticking, they think at some point they have found it, but they discover that it is only the beat of their heart. Here, Beckett very subtly reminds us that for all of us, time passes, and death comes closer with every heartbeat.

Later, in the second act, we see Pozzo again, totally blind and his slave totally dumb. Besides, the rope that connects them is much shorter. They degenerated quickly, and their time is running out. When Lucky stumbles or falls, he takes his master with him, the two sharing their common destiny. Seeing them in this state, Vladimir and Estragon finally come to help them, and among the first questions Pozzo asks is about time:

Pozzo: What time is it? Is it evening?(WFG, p.55)

... and, when Vladimir tells him it's evening, Pozzo is filled with anguish, the anguish of death. Later, he confesses to the tramps that he has lost all notion of time; he has also lost all memory. Time no longer matters to him, neither does memory.

And it is only at the end of the second act, and not at the very beginning as Gunther Anders would have it, that Pozzo and Lucky reach the same condition in relation to time as

Vladimir and Estragon. Only then does time no longer matter and is out of proportion. Each of their little diversions could represent a day, a week, a month, or a year in their empty lives suspended in the void, and yet they approach death with every heartbeat.

As far as time is stagnant for Vladimir and Estragon, it first causes disintegration for Pozzo and Lucky and then stagnates as well; whereas for the tree, time is fertile and a source of life; but for Godot and the boy, there is no time. Godot is out of time, always in the wings, as is the boy, except for brief incursions on the stage, The first is really out of time, completely abstract in infinity, while the second is its extension, letting infinity appear twice concretely on stage.

To set stagnant time in motion, one can resort on the one hand to inactivity and rudimentary activities such as those of Vladimir and Estragon, As seen in both acts, Vladimir and Estragon play to fight, to leave, to help, to be Pozzo and Lucky, they even go so far as to stage feelings and emotions. All this to pass the time, to reduce in some way the distance that separates them from Godot, or from death.

And on the other hand, one can resort to the activity like Pozzo and Lucky's, but the end result is the same, they too play master and slave, and they differ from the tramps only in that, like most of us, they are not conscious of passing the time. At first, actively engaged in time, champions of time, Pozzo and Lucky did not have to wait: the master was pulled by his slave, the slave was pushed by his master. Vladimir and Estragon obviously envied them, and that's why, at first, they suspected the master and the slave of being Godot. However, when time begins to degenerate for them, Pozzo and Lucky find themselves in a situation similar to that of the tramps, because their movement becomes as futile and insignificant as the tramps' waiting.

As we get closer to Beckett's plays, we see that the situation becomes more and more gloomy and the situation of Godot's characters even more pitiful. In Beckett's universe (see Chpt I.4.2.) , man is acknowledged to be progressively physically helpless until he finds himself trapped in a useless body, only his mind is free to speculate and torture himself trying to understand the mysteries of time and life. Beckett sets the progressive concentration of the action to a static model to illustrate the tension between the temporal and the infinite. His characters lose their motor skills and sensuality until they are left with self-awareness, with which they constantly try to analyze, rationalize, and control their situation.

Analyzing through Beckett's plays, Martin Esslin⁹⁶ illustrates them as that of man in a borderline situation, a man reduced to the zero points, thrown far into the limbo of an infinitely continuous consciousness, a consciousness that cannot yet conceive the fact of his own existence; or the position of consciousness at the hour of death, and even beyond, a consciousness that cannot become aware of its own non-being. Such is the position of consciousness before the moment of birth. This interpretation is, of course, as valid as any other, especially that of the limited situation of consciousness at the moment of death, since in the plays it is clearly a mature consciousness that speaks and not a foetal one.

III.2.2. Paradox of Time in Endgame

We've already noted what Beckett said about Endgame: he writes about what he calls a local situation, in which two individuals, Hamm and Clov, operate under a given set of circumstances. They are not to be seen as abstractions or symbols, he warns, or as representing anything other than themselves. Once this is understood, if the public or critics wish to seek some kind of meaning, they must do so, at their own risk.

⁹⁶ Esslin, Beckett, p. 9.

Beckett's vision darkens and closely resembles Buchner's vision of death:

"Danton's Death" (1835), where he states:

...La création s'est faite trop large; en elle, ... c'est un foisonnement sans fin.... la création est sa plaie, nous sommes les gouttes de son sang, le monde est le tombeau ou il pourrit. Tout cela peut paraître fou, mais renferme pourtant une part de vérité. (Buchner, 1835)

Which somehow matches in mood and tone those set by Beckett's plays, *Endgame* in particular. There is only emptiness to blame, and the world of man is left to decay. In this terminal situation, a man sends his last desperate prayer and salvation to God.

As grim as the situation may have seemed to Godot..., that of *Endgame* - is much more desperate. For *Waiting for Godot*, the temporary escape was still possible through movement, manipulation of objects, and the attempt to dialogue with other people. The movement was, admittedly, a little limited for Vladimir (who suffered from bladder problems) and Estragon (who had complaining feet), but it was at least possible for them, and even more so for Pozzo and Lucky, real athletes in comparison.

Hats, boots, pants, food, bags, and other items were also present and available for handling, which always offered temporary relief. But it was above all the human element, the warmth factor, that greatly eased the burden of anxiety: not one couple, but two, inseparable and, in the case of Vladimir and Estragon, always able to cooperate in some way to create an impression of existence.

Let's move to the exterior environment, where the sky, with its sun and moon, perhaps frighten the characters at times, but its changes, and especially its expanse on the arid plain, gave at least an impression of immensity and grandeur which is quite different in *Endgame*, a claustrophobic play. The movement is very restricted, the objects become more and more

"rare", there is only one main couple, and it shares only hate bitterness and wickedness. There was something almost festive in the fact that Pozzo, Vladimir, and Estragon were talking on an open country road, with Lucky resting next to them. That is, compared to Hamm and Clov, who intend to torture another sadist behind the walls of a dungeon-like basement, outside of which lies the empty and dying world. Endgame is a stifling indoor play, all the more perhaps it's a one-act play, leaving no resting place for the reader or the audience. Let's then take a close look at the play,

Outside, everything is grey for the light is at its end: it feels the end, there are no more people, no more animal or plant life, no sun, no stars, no tides, like after a great nuclear holocaust. Likewise inside, in the refuge, life is also coming to an end, always slowly. Time moves more and more slowly as if it is coming to an end so that it seems to become infinite. Hamm, the master, is dying, paralyzed. Clov, the servant, is also dying, but more slowly, because he can still drag his legs to move. Clov observes Hamm, and sometimes the two seem to form complementary aspects of the same consciousness, the one that perceives and the one that is perceived. Everything is empty and silent, everything is dying, the world is becoming sterile, all values are abolished.

Neither spiritual nor material resources, such as bicycle wheels, paper, carpets, painkillers, coffins, function. There is a certain slow but steady evolution of the dissociation from life: entropy accumulates, and it is not possible to reverse the process. The characters express hate and bitterness, as they move towards death while producing fragments of stories and memories of their past lives. They are almost out of their lives, yet, cannot escape them completely, closer to the end than they have been able before, on the threshold of eternity, but still infinitely far from it, and therefore doomed to play the endgame endlessly. Their world is the color of Purgatory, a world of waiting, twilight. The grey half-light is that of the moment when the day is over, but has not yet turned into night, and therefore lingers, unceasingly

promising the still distant nightfall. Often, in Beckett's plays, it is the interminable evening: always purgatory, always the undecided threshold between day and night... where man is caught as Ross Chambers states: between time and timelessness, the temporal and the infinite.

"Evening, then, is the time of day when time itself is exhausted; at evening, time that ever devours but does not devour the self is running down.

Evening thus gives the promise of a night to come, when the time will stop, and the self, undevoured, will be free to enjoy the darkness of timelessness... But although at evening time is no longer the ordinary time of daylight and is on its way towards stopping, the dark of stopped time is itself always in the future ...and it is always evening." (Chambers 60)

It is this interminable twilight existence at the threshold that we see in *Endgame*, which is about the infinite process of approaching the infinite in time.

In this play, everything has passed since the curtain fell, but nothing ever ends.

As Clov says at the beginning:

Clov : Fini, c'est fini, ça va finir, ça va peut-être finir. Les grains s'ajoutent aux grains, un a un, et un jour, soudain, c'est un tas, un petit tas, l'impossible tas.

Later, Hamm echoes, a little more explicitly:

Hamm: Instants sur instants, plouff, plouff, comme les grains de mil de ... (il cherche) ... ce vieux Grec, et toute la vie on attend que ça vous fasse une vie. (Un temps. Il veut reprendre, y re(nonce. Un temps.) Ah y être, y être! (FdP, p. 93.)

Half-dead, with a goal almost achieved, yet can never be fully achieved.

Surrounded by a dying world, they are almost in the final stages of their escape from existence, but they are not there yet. Their end will be a beginning, yet the endgame is endless: "La fin est dans le commencement et cependant on continue." (FdP, p. 91)

Hamm is playing his Endgame, his life has reached its final stage, but the endgame is endless: something is still going on", and it seems likely that it will be for a long time to come, for Nagg and Nell (Hamm's parents), although a generation is closer to being "there" than he is and locked in their garbage cans living in an identical, endless stage. For all of them - Clov, Hamm, Nagg, and Nell- time passes, slowly, and they fill it as best they can, with desperately uninformed speculation, vague memories, awkward stories, long empty pauses, and sheer inaction.

'Quelle heure est-il?' Hamm asks and is told: 'La même que d'habitude'(FdP, p.18)

It's always the same time; time has stopped - or so it seems. Because, in fact, the time hasn't stopped, not quite: So time continues to advance; it's just that, because it slows down towards its standstill, it is slower and slower, and as it gets more closer, it can only go even slower, without ever reaching its Stop. Like the fragments of Zeno's millet which become smaller and smaller, time slows down gradually, and at the same time develops towards the infinity of stopped time. But just as millet can never form Clov's "impossible taste", time too extends to an infinity it can never reach.

Hamm and the others are at the impassable threshold of the infinite, at the evening of their lives when time is running out, waiting for the unattainable nightfall, when the time will have finally stopped. Instead of nightfall, there is only a curtain fall and as the curtain falls, the characters are still as they have always been, that is, on the verge of dying or leaving. They got slightly closer to their goal where we got imperceptibly close to the end of the Endgame. Hamm pushed the process of abstracting the world further by throwing his whistle and his dog, Clov went as far as putting on his Panama and tucking in his suitcase, and at the last observation, Nell seems to be dead while Nagg seems to be alive.

Even if circumstances have changed, the characters themselves have not changed: they are ready for the end as they were at the beginning of the play. Time passed, but the end was not appreciably approached. The characters are still about to die, as they were at the beginning, but only a little more than before. This whole end is conceived by Beckett with a brilliant ambiguity, as Ross Chambers calls this ambiguity brilliant because it "exactly mirrors the situation of people whose lives are over but still going on, who are part-way out-of time but cannot attain timelessness."(Chambers 160)

They are so out of time that the time- sequence of past, present, and future has almost lost its meaning for them: as time expands and slows down towards its stop, it loses its direction, its dimensionality.

In "Waiting for Godot" as in "Endgame", the characters are on the brink of entering the Nirvana of eternal self-possession. Their existence is like a Purgatory on earth, characterized by exclusion and waiting. They are suspended between their existence in time and their life in eternity, they are neither in one nor in the other, but they do possess the characteristics of both. Their lives are over, but not yet altogether ended, and so continue interminably on by means of the possibility of mutual communication (the relationship between time and moment), there is a hiatus between the real feeling of existence and the depth of it. Beckett calls this pause the void. Man measures time but does not know what it is, and is controlled by what he cannot understand. The relationships between human beings are mainly those of time: all human beings become similar due to the almost identical cadence of their beats, yet they are separated by the rhythms of their feelings and thoughts. Whether it is biological or intellectual time, it is this fourth dimension that really matters. Space is no longer relevant as a fourth dimension because in our century time has taken its place. Space is getting smaller every day with increasingly sophisticated means of communication, yet it is often the tragedy

of life to feel a small distance from those among whom we live, but separated from them by all the impenetrability of time.

III.3. Beckett's View of Space

The notion of space is very controversial... so that this term can be applied to such varied fields than the humanities or literature. We intend to use it in the context of the theatre, as space is the place of theatre par excellence. Since theatre has existed, space has given rise to several reflections.

In any case, and depending on the period, special treatment has been given to space which, as a unique place since Greek Antiquity and up to the classical theatre, has undergone changes in the following centuries, where the spatial framework has multiplied (with Romantic drama, for example) to the point of occupying a privileged place becoming one of the dramatic components of the play. This was particularly the case after the Second World War in what was called the theatre of the Absurd, Avant-garde theatre, or New theatre.

Indeed, the disruptions experienced in the first half of the 20th Century, have also affected all literary genres and theatre in particular, resulting in a dramatic upheaval both in terms of writing and in the conception of character, time, and space. The latter, now a founding element of the theater is undergoing a "deconstruction", a break-up: it is no longer the traditional space simply supporting an action, but a place without any particular connotation. Whether it is inside or outside, it remains poorly defined because from now on, one does not play in a space but "with space" that projects the distress of beings. In fact, no matter where the drama takes place, what matters is that these plays speak to Man under all skies. The task of these playwrights is to communicate the concerns of modern man to the spectators through the characters, both at the level of the didascalical text and the dialogue text.

Thus in some of Beckett's plays, being the most representative of the theatre of the absurd, the characters construct the space in which they will evolve and which, henceforth, materializes their anguish, their relationship to the world. In fact, from the very first lines, the didascalical text meticulously describes the space in which the play will take place, but, although detailed, this description remains imprecise because it is the place of "everywhere and nowhere". Where are we? In a desert? on a passing road as in *Waiting for Godot*? Do we live there? How do we live there? The characters themselves do not know where they are.

The didascalical text that opens the play, which is characterized by a lack of particular characteristics of the space from which Vladimir and Estragon cannot escape when nothing holds them back. In Act II, the place of the rendez-vous with Godot remains unchanged: "lendemain. Même heure. Même endroit" (EAG.p8), which the characters don't recognize: "I tell you we weren't there yesterday"; throughout the play, they will never be sure of the place of the rendez-vous with Godot: "Tu es sûr que c'est ici ?[...] Qu'il faut attendre ?" (EAG.p.9), asks Estragon to Vladimir. And even the « ici » ou « là », « ailleurs" that run through the text mean nothing at all because they are interchangeable and therefore do not refer to the same referent. The question of place is no longer a constraint, but a fatality to which the characters are subjected as they are to the condition that determines them.

III.3.1. The Notion of Space in Beckett's Endgame

For Beckett, space carries identical meanings otherwise exploited. In *Endgame*, space, meticulously detailed, highlights the confinement of the characters both in the didactical text and in the dialogue:[...] on the right and left walls, towards the bottom, two small windows high perched, curtains closed "(E. p.20). Inside this space, Clov will not stop pacing, going from one window to another, turning and throwing his head sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left, leaving the stage to return to it immediately loaded with a stepladder

that he will place in turn under the left window and then under the right window, draw the curtains and then climb again on the stepladder, this time looking out of the left window and then the right window. This movement of the character is not a sign of any feverishness or exaltation, but in this restricted space, it means confinement in a single, closed, suffocating place, almost suffocating to the point of asphyxiation, almost prison-like. The character is himself a prisoner of the emptiness of his gestures. The high perched windows, with their closed shutters and drawn curtains, is a way of denying the outside world: "Outside is death "(E. p.21) says Clov, and when he climbs on the stepladder and sees a child with his telescope, he is terrified and wants to exterminate him because "he is a potential procreator "(E.p.22). Now we must stop reproducing the human race because life is nothing but suffering and torment.

Moreover, the *didascalie*⁹⁷ installs a circularity: Clov goes from himself to himself in a vicious circle prefiguring the cyclical return of human existence doomed to insanity and death; therefore, even the walls that surround the character offer an ambiguous connotation: while being a refuge against aggressions that always come from the outside, they remain paradoxically illusory protection because they are precarious: wherever we are, the wall will never be able to protect us against the aggressions that come from the outside. The true scourges of humanity, which are time, disease, disease, and the old age and death.

Yet to treat space without evoking the temporal dimension would be to amputate an essential aspect, for space is also time, a time that is not chronological, but which also carries meaning. In this perspective and in order to combine the two notions of time and space, let us

⁹⁷*Didascalie*, ou *didascalie*, dans le texte d'une pièce de théâtre, est une note ou un paragraphe, rédigé par l'auteur à l'intention des acteurs ou du metteur en scène, donnant des indications d'action, de jeu ou de mise en scène. Elle remplit une fonction scénique en donnant des indications, notamment sur le comportement, l'humeur ou encore la tenue vestimentaire d'un personnage. *Fin de partie*, de Samuel Beckett, commence par trois pages d'indications scéniques, qui précisent l'espace puis le jeu.

use Bakhtin's terminology of "*chronotope*"⁹⁸(Barthin.p.30): "The clues of time are discovered in space, and space is perceived and measured according to time".(Barthin.p.31) Sometimes it is difficult to separate these two notions from the point of view of the theatre of the absurd. Playwrights of the absurd, in a dreamlike perspective, choose time as "time gap", that is to say, an eternal present.

In these two plays Beckett conveys a sense of entrapment through the characters' inability to escape their spatial boundaries. While time and space are distinct from each other, they nevertheless come together in a strange compression in Beckett's work. In *Endgame*, Hamm, the central character, stays on stage all the time, even when Clov enters and leaves. Confined to his chair, Hamm cannot move, but there is a compromise: Clov pushes him. That's why, in these two plays, Beckett describes a cycle of movements, from the tramps in *Waiting for Godot* to the confined Hamm in *Endgame*.

These images of two different phases of (im)mobility in space appear as the successive stages of a spatial paradigm in which the Cartesian concept of the body as that which occupies space, the phenomenological notion of the body anchored in the world and the metaphysics of presence are ironically integrated. Beckett integrates these philosophical frameworks and concepts into his plays, but only to subvert their authority and suggest that philosophy and the history of ideas cannot provide reliable answers about the human condition.

This mistrust of philosophy explains why the body appears on stage and at the same time does not, why there is a metaphysics of being in these works, and yet only a failed attempt at it. Both plays represent a gradation from movement to immobility, from a possible escape to a definitive absence of exit. The limitation of the body in space is the opposite of the

⁹⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin has written of this interlinking of space and time in literature under the category of 'chronotopes': 'We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are expressed in literature.' In Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin, TX, University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 84.

dilation of time, and both suggest the feeling of agony, of pure torture that, through words, the characters try to avoid. As Steven Connor indicates about these characters, the more immobile they are, the more they speak (1988: 160). Beckett's conviction that nothing happens in human existence is reflected in the visual space of his plays - encapsulated in frozen images, dominated by the immobile dimension of space - more than in the repetitiveness of their movement through time.

III.3.2. The Notion of Space in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

The protagonists of *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon, are waiting for a certain Godot who is slow to come and they think they got the wrong day: "Which Saturday? And is it Saturday? Wouldn't it be more like Sunday? or Monday? or Friday?" (WFG. p.33). The day of the rendez-vous is as uncertain as to the nature of the tree, near which they are waiting. (WFG. p. 34). But this time that underlies a place is a generator of hope, the coming of Godot coincides with the end of their torment, their wandering, with stability and well-being: "Tonight we may sleep at his place, warm, dry, with a full stomach, on the straw. It's worth waiting for. No?" (WFG. p.35) Thus the projection of the characters in time can only be done in relation to a space different from the one in which they are, guaranteeing a more tolerable life. The place itself is not arbitrary: it weighs on the character's destiny.

By dealing with spatial models, Beckett though defines a philosophical mode. His texts, which praise "impotence" and "ignorance", cry out for something beyond the lines of the spoken text to complement his theatre. While words programmatically mislead in his works, Beckett creates a living space of text and stage - a space where everything is said beyond language and sometimes against it. In his theatre, space transcends words:

Vladimir: So? Shall we go?

Estragon: Yes, let's go!

They don't move (WFG. pp. 51.87)

(Beckett, 1986: 51 and 87).

If these two lines can be and have been, interpreted as meaning many different things, the still painting can only be what it is: two human beings who "do not move".(Ibid)

Moreover, and in relation to the objects of the setting that occupy the stage and are closely related to time, we note that the tree in *Waiting for Godot*, which thrones in two acts and seems to watch over the destiny of the characters and whose symbolism is completely distorted, does not change from the first to the second act: the "four or five leaves" of the tree are more a metaphor for the passing of time than a physical symbol that can be counted which makes Vladimir say: "But yesterday it was all black and skeletal! Today it's covered with leaves."(WFG.p.36) To which his companion retorts in spite of common sense, "We must be in the spring," (WFG.p.37) making us pass in one night from winter to spring. And if Vladimir and Estragon move around and leave the stage, they always come back to the same place.

It is not the passage of time here that is signified but its effect. Thus, an element of the setting, the exploitation of space, denounces a temporal dimension: time passes without our realizing it and brings us closer to our death; life is but a series of absurd and monotonous cyclical returns.

The four or five leaves of the tree are only imperceptible changes caused by time in space. Eternity may have passed between the first and the second part of *Waiting for Godot*, but since space is almost the same, we don't notice, we don't know. "Grain upon grain" (Beckett, 1986: 93), life is a slow flow of time in *Endgame*, although the room- cell remains the same - evoking an image of the inescapable human condition.

In his two plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, the impossible end is the inextricable consequence of being there, in an oppressive space that can be neither transformed nor

abandoned and not the trap of time / in the time since in the phenomenological strategy of subversion of the *thereness* of presence, Beckett employs a very personal artistic device: the space trap. In his drama, immobility is a passage into nothingness. It is this immobility that defines the true space of Beckett's universe as a void superimposed on the text, the stage, and the audience. In *Endgame*, space becomes a medium and a message that redefines the ontology of the witness in relation to the work, in the sense that there is only one space that encompasses the universe of the author and the spectator.

In this same space, the passage of time seems to lead to no change. Since space itself doesn't change, Beckett's plays trapped in a visual mode never really end. One could evoke here not only Schopenhauer or Kant but also Zeno of Elea, "that old Greek" (Beckett, 1986, p. 126), whose paradox of the grain that makes the pile rests on exactly the same principle of immutability (Ackerley, Gontarski, 2006, p. 661).

III. 4. The Concept of Waiting in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*

Throughout the centuries, human beings have been waiting for some kind of help from an external agency or Superman. However, life goes on without such help. While waiting, and to deceive his anguished expectation, Man resorts to what Pascal calls "entertainment" and, contrary to Descartes' advice, he is unable to lock himself up in a room, alone, to meditate. He speaks, he laughs to hear his own voice, to escape his loneliness and when he is tired, after physical activities, he thinks to prove himself, and he hopes.

Beckett's two plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, are plays about the future for the waiting is the only language concerned. But they are really about the past, a past where everything and everyone has been tried and found wanting. Both plays have no goals except that of waiting. We are never certain for whom or for what they wait; Godot maybe God or a

merely secular savior, while the grotesque figures of Endgame presumably wait only for death in a world already dead around them.

A mood of suspended animation, of perpetual waiting for Godot or something nameless or some time to come, is captured by an exchange in Endgame:

Clov: Do you believe in the life to come?

Hamm: Mine was always that. (E. p.1)

So, the waiting bores and tires them. In a de-socialized society, they are just barely alive. It seems that something terrible has happened to this world as if it has become primitive and inhuman while retaining memory traces of more normal existence.

Waiting for Godot is a play that takes its point of departure from its title better seen in the french version, *En attendant Godot*, 'While Waiting for Godot'. Waiting, doing while waiting, these are the two poles of the play. As human beings, we are, by and large, waiting for the end of the week, for tomorrow, for what will be, in general for life, and while waiting, we do things, we take courses, we practice sports, we meet people, we listen to them, we help them, we ignore them, we love them, in general, we perform the habitual tasks that living requires, changing clothes and shoes, washing, eating, sleeping, walking, etc.. and all these activities are done 'while waiting'. In *Waiting for Godot*, the vagabonds waiting for Godot fight, eat, attempt to sleep, try to commit suicide, all in the fashion of such performers and the loss of dignity implicit in their caprices itself becomes an absurd image of life. Though, Beckett's heroes are therefore abstractions standing more for the nature of existence than for people. Didi and Gogo wait endlessly, Hamm and Clove wait for the end that does not come, like figures carved in time, but they do so with an aesthetic animation. And it turns out to be very fun to look at them. Beckett meliorates the situation by focusing the action of his plays not on the metaphysical but on the temporal plane, on those short bursts of activity that

usually last no longer than the few minutes it needs to complete a business on stage, tell a story, discuss the weather, sing a song, admire a tree. Time becomes domesticated; tedium familiar. As Alain Robbe-Grillet stated speaking of Vladimir and Estragon: "their situation can be summed up in one simple statement, beyond which it is impossible to go: they are there, they are on the stage" (110) from "Approaches to teaching *Waiting for Godot*" p 38.

The issues raised in Beckett's play, the materials out of which it is built, involve the quasi-philosophical concepts of time, death, identity, freedom, and suicide. But Beckett's own approach to such matters is inclined to be comic and satiric. Where Vladimir and Estragon turn the business of hanging themselves into a comic routine :

Vladimir: What do we do now?

Estragon: Wait

Vladimir: Yes, but while waiting

Estragon: What about hanging ourselves?

Vladimir: Hmm. It'd give us an erection.

Estragon : (highly excited). An erection!

Vladimir: With all that follows.....

Estragon: Let's hang ourselves immediately! (WFG.p.9)

Sartre's declaration that a human being who "is consequently abandoned, for he cannot find anything to rely on – neither within nor without" (29), can find frequent illustrations in Beckett's play. For example, Estragon suggests that while they wait, they can commit suicide by hanging themselves. In the following short passage about who should be the first, both carry on a dialog showing confusion in the minds of the characters:

Estragon: We can always try.

Vladimir: Go ahead.

Estragon: After you.

Vladimir: No no, you first.

Estragon: Why me?

Vladimir: You're lighter than I am.

Estragon: Just so!

Vladimir: I don't understand.

Estragon: Use your intelligence, can't you?

[VLADIMIR uses his intelligence.]

Vladimir [Finally.] I remain in the dark. (WFG. pp.9-10)

The idea of committing suicide "while waiting" as it is together with subsequent dialogue proves that Vladimir and Estragon literally suffer from a universal lack of any meaningful core in their existence. Their desperation also shows another important feature of the human existential condition, namely the circumstance of universal solitude.

Time and suicide are presented with no exposition or explanation, from no particular point of view; we are not invited into a serious discussion of them. Beckett may bring in philosophical references to create a particular tone or mood, to reap the dramatic advantages they might give him. But any truly philosophical conclusions must be drawn at another level.

Waiting is the crucial experience of the Beckett character. It involves enduring the world's nonsense, its absurdity without clear hope of immediate or direct help.

The world is charged with mortality: the grave-digger applies the forceps, Death succeeds Act One as irrevocably and monotonously as Gogo and Didi can predict each other's gestures and eccentricities. In his essay on Proust, Beckett had spoken about the relationship of habit and the act of "suffering" time. Vladimir says, "Habit is a great deadener". The landscape of Godot is monotonous and barren. The two tramps are forever asking 'What shall

we do now?’ or seeking diversion. When Pozzo and Lucky leave the first time, the shouting and the crying has gone once again,

Vladimir says: ‘That passed the time.’

Estragon: It would have passed in any case.

Vladimir: Yes, but not so rapidly.

Pause.

Estragon: What do we do now?

Vladimir: I don’t know.

Estragon: Let’s go.

Vladimir: We can’t.

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We are waiting for Godot. (WFG.p.31)

Along with the monotony of “waiting”, there is the inevitability of the line moving toward age and death, that “fearful descending line that ends in the grave”, as Lawrence Harvey describes it (PMLA, 141). The characters change in the time span of the play; they grow weaker. Lucky who used to dance for Pozzo’s entertainment, now can only “think” and talk. (in Act Two he has become mute.) As the play progresses, persons have increasing difficulty in standing up, sustaining themselves. Habit and familiarity grow increasingly boring and irksome.

Waiting has only two possible reliefs. Within this span of time, this lifetime, this day, this second, the Beckett hero is beset by boredom and pain. Beckett's "Waiting" avoids every point of and origin, and end, making the characters repeatedly showing gestures, dialogues, games, and failures. The heroes of his plays have a limited repertory of devices, whether for passing the time or stopping it. They weave in and out of existence, at once puzzling over its tedium and depressed with their failure to define their actions significantly.

The Beckett hero is self-sufficient only when he is starkly alone, has been disabused by the vitality of the Godot image, has brought the world to his level, and is asked uncompromisingly to endure it for what it is.

Waiting is a passive attitude towards time, a way to face time, to get rid of it, to kill it. Gunther Anders⁹⁹ describes it as a negative parable. By negative he means that, like most parables, the work conveys its message in the form of a mirror, inverted, even if it no longer corresponds to the formal ideal of the classical fable:

"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.¹⁰⁰

We notice here that this play does not present us with a definite plot, which is due to the situation of man excluded and deprived of the historical flow of time. It does not present us with action, and this is because the related action is that of a passive and inactive life. The dialogue on its side is repetitious or without motivation, and this is because the subject matter is life deprived of a motive principle and without motivation. But let's take a closer look at the play:

Throughout Act One, at the very beginning, we notice Estragon (Gogo) sitting on the floor trying in vain to take off his boot, which seems to hurt him very much. At first contact, we think we are dealing with a vagrant who is tired of walking too much and no longer has the strength to take off his boot. Estragon has difficulty breathing and has to stop fighting to catch his breath. His "Nothing to be done" (WFG.p.7) shows his intense frustration. This

⁹⁹ Gunther Anders, *"Being Without Time: On Beckett's Play Waiting for Godot"*, *Neue Schweizer* (January 1954), pp. 140-151. Also in Esslin, *Beckett*.

¹⁰⁰ Anders, *"Being Without Time"*, p. 140

remark, which Estragon makes in reference to his immediate struggles, is reinforced by his friend Vladimir (also called Didi) who is more a philosopher and likes to speculate on life. Vladimir also suffers from a physical illness, since he walks rigidly, taking small steps. They both suffer from physical and moral illnesses, and their condition seems desperate. They meet after a night of separation.

As usual, Estragon was beaten by hostile and mysterious men, either in reality or in his dreams. Vladimir is very happy to see his friend, but Estragon, irritated, pushes him away. It is therefore common that for the tramps: one person's need for affection never coincides with another's. Vladimir reflects while looking for something that irritates him in his hat, and Estragon continues to wrestle with his boot. He remembers the past possibility of committing suicide in style, which is no longer possible for him and his friend, as they have lost all will and dignity:

"Vladimir: Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were respectable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up."(WFG.p.7)

Vladimir then turns his thoughts to his hopes for salvation. Estragon hardly listens to him, too busy with his physical complaints to care with philosophizing. There is a certain lack of communication in their dialogues throughout the play, for the characters talk about everything and nothing without clearly understanding each other. After discussing their chances of salvation, Estragon proposes to leave, but Vladimir reminds him that they're there waiting for Godot.

The waiting begins, or rather, continues. They talk about the tree nearby, they quibble about the waiting place. Estragon is bored and falls asleep. Vladimir, feeling lonely, wakes him up: they dispute, and then they reconcile, and to pass the time, they consider the

possibility and the effects of hanging, but they quickly give up the idea. After eating a carrot, Estragon comes to the same conclusion as before: "Nothing to be done." At this point, the play seems to split, and we realize that we're doing the full circle.

After the first circular phase, a fearsome couple enters the stage, Pozzo and Lucky, as if summoned by the Estragon's question: "We are not tied? (WFG. p. 14) (tied to Godot). Pozzo holds Lucky with a long rope tied around his neck: they are clearly master and slave. We wonder, as do Vladimir and Estragon, if the newcomers are not by chance Godot, although they hardly look like a reassuring and complacent deity. But the problem of identity is soon solved, Pozzo and Lucky are not Godot. In the following sequence, Pozzo slaughters his exhausted slave with repeated and unnecessary orders.

Pozzo rests, eats, smokes, and chats with the tramps while Lucky waits for his orders. Estragon can't help but think enthusiastically about the remains of Pozzo's snack, but Vladimir, the more sensitive of the two, begins to show signs of indignation. After the break, Pozzo is about to leave but decides to stay. He tells the tramps that he wants to sell Lucky at the market¹⁰¹, and for that Lucky starts to cry. Estragon offers him a handkerchief and tries to console him, and in return, he gets a violent kick in the shins. Of course, the slave refuses to be pitied and is jealous of his miserable condition. The dialogue continues, and Pozzo tells of his miseries as a rich slave master. He continues to give a lyrical description of the twilight and, to entertain the wanderers, orders Lucky to dance first and think later. Once given permission to think, Lucky quickly becomes a verbal monster that others are forced to suppress.

¹⁰¹ In the French version, the market is that of the Saint Sauveur, possibly an allusion to Godot.

After much hesitation, Pozzo finally decides to go away. During the conversation, he lost his pipe, his vaporizer, and his watch. This marks the beginning of the rapid degeneration the couple will suffer before the end of the second act.

Once again alone, Vladimir and Estragon return to their state of stagnation. Their boredom is broken when a boy arrives to tell them that Godot will not come while renewing the promise of his arrival. As the moon rises, Estragon speaks of Christ's swift crucifixion in his place the infinite experience of suffering. Rejected, Vladimir offers to take shelter from the night. Having concluded that nothing is safe, they decide to leave, but remain as if rooted in the ground.

The second act is only repeating the first. In the same place, the two characters are still waiting for Godot. When they meet after the night of separation, their dialogues are on the same themes: fear of the other, friendship, physical and moral suffering, suicide, and waiting. Pozzo and Lucky reappear, one blind, the other mute, the boy returns to deliver the same message. The act ends like the first one, Didi and Gogo decide to move on, but they can't.

So both acts start in the same way, Vladimir and the Estragon, pursue a series of activities improvising to pass the time. They are interrupted by the entrance of Pozzo and Lucky, who stop for a moment and then leave again, leaving them behind to resume their waiting. At this point, the boy comes from Godot to say that his master cannot come, but that he will come the next day; once he has left, Vladimir and Estragon are again suspended in time, wanting to leave but without the will to do so.

The two central characters are clearly separated, abstract, and take on representative proportions, or in fact, they call themselves men in general:

"... at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not..."
and again,

Vladimir: "...we have kept our appointment and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?

Estragon: Billions." (WFG, pp. 51.52)

According to Gunther Anders, they are abstractions even in the literal sense of the word, for they detach and separate themselves from the rest of the world¹⁰². Not only have they become abstracted from the world, but the world has also become for them an abstraction, empty and sterile. Like most of Beckett's characters, the tramps are philosophers, because their way of being is primarily speculation. They, therefore, live in the abstract world of their thoughts, a symbolic and empty-minded landscape. A country road and a mound constitute an empty scene, with the exception of a tree in its center that reminds them of the possibility of escape from the situation, the possibility of suicide. During the play, the fact that the two tramps play on two occasions with the idea of suicide to abandon it, seem to define their lives so they don't kill themselves in the waiting. They are alive, but no longer live in the world; they are suspended in time, waiting. All they do is to wait and to prove to themselves that they really exist while they're waiting:

Estragon: "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?" (WFG. p. 44)

Throughout the play, the tramps play with lucidity, in games, diversions, farces. Their existence is moving because, despite their suffering, they don't even have the possibility of a tragedy, it must always be a farce. They are men, representative of humanity, but above all, they are lazy vagabonds, rejected, creatures excluded from the world, who have nothing left to hope for, but to wait. The object of their waiting is indeterminate: Godot can be their future employer, or it can be God, or it can represent death and the end of their suffering. They wait because they no longer have anything to do with the world. The metaphysical basis of clown

¹⁰² Anders, "Being Without Time", p. 141

comedy, according to Gunther Anders, seems to lie in their inability to distinguish between being and non-being, with the result of always falling over non-existent obstacles or treating real obstacles as if they were non-existent.

Vladimir and Estragon, however, no longer seek to concern themselves with a particular object, but simply with the world as a whole. They simply don't care anymore. We are not told what must have happened in their past. What they are before our eyes is the result of their past, and yet their past is not explained to us. They are what they are because of their past but also in spite of it.

This lack of specific causality is characteristic of Beckett's situation and serves to intensify the anguish of the present by making it inexplicable. It's a logic given the general lack of specificity of the notion of temporal structure: since the chronological sequence of days is uncertain, only the immediate present really counts. Even if Vladimir and Estragon are confronted with the inaction and emptiness of their present existence, they always go on, just like the average man would. If men do not give up living when their life becomes useless, it is because they have lost the will to end it.

Vladimir and Estragon are no exception: it is not in spite of the emptiness of their present life that they continue to live, but because of that. They continue to live simply because they already exist. Once everything has failed, the hero of the theater will get away with a lot of noise and fury, usually by committing the act of suicide. Vladimir and Estragon are so undramatic that they can't even get away with it, let alone take their lives in their own hands. Without anything, the hero of the theatre will leave; knowing that there is nothing left, on the other hand, the tramps are unable to leave and seem to say: "We are waiting for nothing. Yet, since we are unable to leave, and since we are waiting, there must be someone or something that makes us wait."

Nevertheless, the fact that they're not waiting for someone or something, in particular, seems to be quite clear. On several occasions, Vladimir, the more intellectual of the two tramps, supposedly the one with the better memory, has to remind Estragon, who is more instinctive, having only the memory of suffering, that they are in fact waiting for Godot¹⁰³. Even remembering him, Estragon is very uncertain about Godot's identity, and Vladimir cannot really help him in this respect either. (WFG. pp.14.16)

Another attribute of what Beckett calls "time cancer", in addition to habit, lies in memory or lack of memory. Vladimir often reminds Estragon that they are actually waiting for Godot, even though Estragon is very uncertain about Godot's identity. They all have some doubts about the fact that they are waiting: waiting is quite certain, and Godot as the object of waiting is very uncertain.

“The themes of waiting and forgetting, taken together, embody the oscillating structure of the trace, and function to negate determinacy, and suspend thought in an incessant search for presence. At the level of syntax, language undergoes a “neutralisation” [...] Forgetting, waiting. Waiting that assembles, disperses; forgetting that disperses, assembles. Waiting, forgetting (AwO 32).”¹⁰⁴

And yet, they have less doubt that they are waiting. The attitude is certain, but its object is not: the expectation is quite certain, whereas Godot as the purpose of the wait is quite uncertain. Once again, we are faced with the absence of a specific cause for a certain attitude, in this case, the waiting: the waiting of the tramps is without a clearly defined reason and objective. However, the suspension as they are on time, without anything happening, and are exposed to the daily and irreversible continuation of their existence, their interminable waiting, the tramps come to the conclusion that they have to wait for someone or something.

¹⁰³ Beckett, *Godot*, pp. 10, 12, 31; 39, 41, 44, 45, 50, 54, 59

¹⁰⁴ <http://arts.monash.edu.au/ecps/colloquy/journal/issue010/khatab.pdf>

To speculate on Godot's identity is, therefore -futile. Here is Gunther Anders' answer to the question:

"Godot is nothing but the name for the fact that life which goes on pointlessly misinterprets itself as waiting, as waiting for something. The negative attitude of the two tramps thus amounts to a double negation: their inability to recognize the senselessness of their position. ¹⁰⁵"

Beckett's "Waiting" avoids every point of and origin, and end, making the characters repeatedly showing gestures, dialogues, games, and failures. When time and space are not valued, concepts (ie abstractions) become the foreground.

In the mythological "Waiting for Godot", the focus is on the recurrence of the same or similar concepts (time and place have no significance). Myths tend to recycle the same elements indefinitely, just like Beckett's tramp waits time and time again. Relapse itself is related to the cycle of life and death. Blanchot wrote in (*L'Attente l'oubli*, 1962) that waiting seems to be a time paradox: the temporality of waiting includes both the deprivation and the gift of time, a lack and an Excess, and instills a fundamental temporal alienation from one's self-and a non-existent image into a state of being (the person in a waiting state is far away from the current time and place).

Waiting is an interruption-a black hole in linear time: this is the margin between the present and the future. A threshold is used to describe the atemporal, but people (while waiting) still desperately maintain time (this is the real connection with life), even if they are getting closer and closer to temporality. In the second act, Gogo and Didi at first mistaken Pozzo and Lucky for Godot. Therefore, we can see the changes that his coming will bring to them:

¹⁰⁵ Anders, "Being without Time", PP. 143-144.

“Vladimir: We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot, waiting for waiting. Now it’s over, it ts already tomorrow...

Time flows again already. The sun will set, the moon rise, and we away from here.”¹⁰⁶

Even in a clearly insignificant situation, life must have meaning for the two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon. A situation of a dreadful void, an emptiness, a wearisome threat of boredom, a desperate need to ‘fill in the holes of time’ in which time proceeds in a straight line toward death where the round song of the dog in the kitchen is available and serves Vladimir to fill in a dread space of loneliness until Estragon arrives on the second day. (WFG,p.37)

It is clear that waiting for Godot can be seen as an exploration of the waiting condition (Heidegger writes by analogy about the phenomenon of boredom). According to Dermot Moran, the waiting condition is: "that there is a phenomenon of experiencing time in a certain mode, the mode of expectation". Like the philosopher according to the critic Günther Anders. In Godot, there is a feeling that "we stay, so we have to wait for something"(Günther Anders 143-144)

Endgame which parallels *Waiting for Godot* presents us with another image of "life in the box". The four characters are locked in a world that is even more enclosed than that of *Waiting for Godot*. Living in a single sad, empty room, illuminated by the gray light of two large windows. Outside, there is only devastation; inside, as Hamm says, there is hell on the outside and - implicitly - the hell of existence on the inside. They suffer "all their life the same nonsense". Anxious, confused, idle, they wait for the end. There is no hope for new directions.

In Beckett's world, the loss and recovery of self, life, and death, joy, and sorrow are replaced by the impulse to rise, because nothingness coil is entwined in the heart of existence

¹⁰⁶ http://samuel-beckett.net/Waiting_for_Godot_Part2.html

(Sartre). This margin place, the black hole in time, is full of power, creating a heaven of hope, which Adorno defines as (kleinste Differenz) between nothingness and rest as negative.

Beckett tells us that we are passing time, waiting for the meaning that can save us—let we survive the pain, ugliness, and emptiness. Therefore, our life is a constant waiting, always basically the same, until time itself no longer has meaning or substance. The only answer given—in addition to suicide, which is reticently suggested at is to wait. Waiting is a metaphor for being alive, and what Beckett calls into the nothingness that un-anxious peering into the depths of the abyss. It postpones the painful revelation that life is meaningless (according to Beckett). In order to cover up the emptiness of his characters' constant falling and postpone the time of this emptiness, which is the infinite time of death, Beckett forces them to talk non-stop, no matter what the price is.

Spatially, Beckett's Purgatory maybe a room, suggesting a metaphor for the mind (as is the case with *Endgame*) or an ill-defined zone near a bare tree as in *Waiting for Godot*). This space functions as a refuge of sorts, an intermediate region situated between the Hell of existence in the macrocosm, from which the protagonist has withdrawn—but not entirely—and the Paradise of selfhood within the mental microcosm to which he aspires. The dynamism of his purgatorial situation will derive from the 'conjunction' of these two opposing absolutes. The Paradise that the Beckettian protagonist seeks is the void that, for Beckett (as also for Sartre), lies at the core of consciousness, outside of time and space—therein resides the essential self. But in order for that void to be attained, it must be named.

Beckett's Purgatory, like Joyce's, is also a textual space and, in a larger sense, the space of language itself. But for the protagonist to realize his goal, the space must be made to shrink: language must be purged of its relationships to contingent existence (notably space and time) so that it may say nothing that will restore the silence of the void. Trapped in his

purgatory between a past not yet present and a present hemorrhaging unceasingly into the future, the protagonist discovers that time may have slowed down—as it does the closer one comes to the Paradise of timelessness—but continues to pass, its end growing, perforce, ever more distant. The passage of time is manifested by a continuing narration, in which stories about the self are told and retold in the hope that a language of self will, at last, be found.

The color—or light appropriate to this purgatory is grey, neither the white or blue of the macrocosm nor the black of the void.

III.5. Philosophical Views of the Self

Philosophy and literature share their innermost concerns in defining the self. Where else can this self-modeling progress be most directly exposed to light than in the creative unfolding of man's existential endeavor?

In fact, it is the human being, the enigmatic situation of his existence and his destiny, that is the common ground of both endeavors; to evoke, reveal, and interpret it is the aim of the one, while to grasp it in its causes and to explain it is that of the other; yet not all that this common ground work embraces enters into the concern of one or the other or both. "Man in the flesh, the one who is born, suffers and dies - first of all dies - the one who eats, drinks, plays, sleeps, thinks, and loves; man whom we see and whom we hear, a brother, the true brother."¹⁰⁷

The contemporary discussion of the self is extremely multidisciplinary in nature, reflecting the complexity of this phenomenon: we may examine the self from a variety of perspectives, including experiential, linguistic, dialogical, embodied, social, ethical,

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Christoph Eykman, *Phänomenologie der Interpretation* (Bern: Francke, 1977).

ecological, and narrative. However, regardless of the approach, it seems that self, world, and others are closely intertwined. We may identify three fundamental perspectives on the phenomena of selfhood in the broad area of Consciousness Studies, which ranges from Phenomenology and Psychology through Neuroscience, Analytical Philosophy, and Cognitive Sciences.

Over time, we see ourselves as constructed, rhetorical beings only, rather than as deeply ontological and spiritual creatures. The truth about the self is that it is neither Inner nor Outer, neither given nor constructed, but something in between. The self is an ego, a soul, a mind, or an animating spirit, a pre-discursive, transparent originator of meaning and actions. Philosophers often characterize the Inner self as an empirical or a transcendental essence. The mind, then, interprets itself and gives rise to various degrees of self-awareness.

Some writers incorporate philosophical concepts and language into the recounting of the self and/or their lives. They explicate the meaning of existence in existential, psychological, moral, aesthetical, and spiritual terms. Their personal beliefs about self-identity and their views about the relationship between objects and artifacts shape their written texts in profound ways.

Loke had defined personal identity as an identity of consciousness through duration in time; the individual was in touch with his own continuing identity through memory of his past thoughts and actions.¹⁰⁸ This location of the source of personal identity in the repertoire of its memories was continued by Hume: ‘Had we no memory, we never should have any notion of causation, nor consequently of that chain of causes and effects, which constitute our self or

¹⁰⁸Human Understanding, Bk. II, ch. 27, sects. ix, x.

person'¹⁰⁹. Where else can this self-modeling progress be most directly exposed to light than in the creative unfolding of man's existential endeavor?

In the introduction to *The Art of Living*, Nehamas states:

The sort of self one constructs as a result of adopting certain theories is not simply a biographical matter. It is much more importantly, a literary and philosophical accomplishment. . . . It is a philosophical accomplishment because the content and the nature of the self I describe . . . depends on holding views on issues that have traditionally been considered philosophical and not on anything one pleases. It is literary because the connection between those philosophical views is not only a matter of systematic logical interrelations, but also, more centrally, a matter of style. It is a question of putting those views together so that, even when the connections between them are not strictly logical, it makes psychological and interpretative sense to attribute them to a single, coherent character.¹¹⁰

III.6. Self over Time and Space

To understand the self we must begin but not end with an understanding of the metaphysics of individuated human existence. Our responses to the question of identity vary according to the context in which we ask "Who am I?" Indeed, the question itself changes by becoming epistemologically and ethically driven rather than existentially directed. It elicits metaphysical responses rather than psychological reflections. Hence, our self-identity varies according to our philosophical conception of 'self' and political conception of 'person.'

Augustine, Descartes, and Rousseau model their self-presentations upon this view of the self. Augustine sees the self in memory, time, eternity, and creation in the latter portions of the text. According to him, the self is to be ground in the memory and not in reason or

¹⁰⁹ *Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk. I, pt. 4, sect. vi.

¹¹⁰ Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 2-3.

intellect; it's a way to search God through remembrance. Descartes negates the self at the physical but not mental level. Yet he remains ambiguous about the view he presents, creating a smoke screen to cloud whatever truths appear to emerge naturally.¹¹¹ He considered the self as a simple substance directly given in our conscious experience.

The search for the self leads neither to the Inner self nor the Outer self but to the middle self between the two. By embracing the Inner and Outer dimensions of our being—by both discovering and creating ourselves—we implicate ourselves in the process of self-knowing and artful living. We satisfy the Delphic dictum, “Know thyself,” in the richest possible sense. (Wright 175)

I have a duty against which my habits, even more the pride of my instincts, revolt at bottom, namely, to say: Hear me! For I am such and such a person. Above all, do not mistake me for someone else. —Friedrich Nietzsche¹¹²

We use ‘I’ in a logical sense, a sociopolitical sense, and a poetical sense. We invoke it to circumscribe self-knowledge: to individuate experiences, to acknowledge a particular social and political placement in the world, and to “become who we are,” as Nietzsche exhorts. This rich usage, however, creates a paradox. If the human condition is both limited, as modern thinkers suggest, and fragmented, as postmodern thinkers claim, then the ‘I’ that stands in for ourselves belies the degree to which the human condition is bifurcated.

Even if we acknowledge the fragmentation of human experience, we have no adequate language, no real lexicon, with which to express it. Even if we follow Nietzsche’s lead and affirm our fragmentation, using it to deepen our bifurcated identities and to create meaning

¹¹¹This particular articulation of Descartes’ *modus operandi* summarizes Carl Vaught’s view of Cartesian philosophy. Stanley Rosen and Anne-Marie Bowery have articulated similar views in different places.

¹¹²Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 217. Nietzsche’s expressed desire to expose his “true” self is, of course, ironic, but his intention to be heard as the man who authored a set of sometimes incongruous texts and aphorisms is honest. His analysis of his life’s work through an autobiographical form strengthens his conviction that his texts alone unify his personality, his person, and his perspective.

and identity where there is none, we are cut off from the discourse of the community around us.

The 19th century was ‘a new of kind of philosophizing: personal (even autobiographical), aphoristic, lyrical, anti-systematic. Its foremost exemplars: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein.’¹¹³

Theories intended to explain the relationship between personal action and thoughts and individual identity develop within discourses that are grounded in ideological commitments and cultural beliefs as well.

In selecting this line for his title, Nietzsche acknowledges that though we may crucify him, he aims to offer us a redeeming view of humanity. He then appropriates the Christian trinity to describe his own resurrected self: a disciple of Dionysus, a follower of Zarathustra, the Antichrist.¹¹⁴

Nietzsche’s efforts to privilege questions of identity over questions of essence offer renewed opportunities for self-examination and self-knowledge. But these opportunities come with challenges as well. For example, Augustine’s *Confessions*, Descartes’ *Meditations*, and Rousseau’s *The Confessions* correlate self representation with a pre-discursive essence either intuited or induced by a writer or thinker. Each then, ipso facto, presupposes degrees of metaphysical determinism wherein the self and thought coalesce, and self-identity either supervenes on or is commensurate with temporal and spatial continuity.

¹¹³Quoted in Schuster, *The Philosopher’s Autobiography*, 13.

¹¹⁴ Heidegger embraces Nietzsche’s concrete belief that man must mask himself. He then abstracts the insight, transforming it into his own distinctive claim: Truth must conceal itself. He transfigures Nietzsche’s fierce Dionysian artist into *Dasein*, an abstract embodiment of authentic living. Also, one cannot help but notice the religious allusions contained in *Ecce Homo*. The title is taken from the New Testament, book of John 19:5, where Pilate presents Christ to the masses and asks them to “Behold the Man.” The self-ascribed personae reflect a Trinitarian Godhead: Dionysus (the holy spirit), Zarathustra (Jesus, the son), and the Antichrist (God, the father).

Cultures that once embraced the Cartesian cogito as the paradigm of the self now energetically embrace Nietzsche's commitment to constructed and individually perceived selves. Nietzsche understood this. He knew, as Stanley Rosen argues, that "the extent to which 'I' am responsible for, or act as an agent of, my world and my life is superficial. The act of will that opens the perspective of my world is also the act by which 'I' as self-conscious ego am created."¹¹⁵

Our experiences and memories are transparent to us because they "coin here" with sensations that are introspectively accessible. These sensations and introspections shape the texts we produce both in content and in form. But they do not tell the whole story. Despite the immediacy of our sensations and memories, facts that extend beyond our own experiences shape our self-identity in equally profound ways.

Christianity provides additional examples, with its wealth of allusions and references to immortality. For example, Christians receive the sacraments as a sign of Christ's Crucifixion and resurrection, and as a symbol of Christ's continued life through and in his followers. Like reproduction and writing, the past is brought to bear on the present in the taking of the sacraments; the future is promised and consecrated in the past. Writing is an effective strategy for coping with the fear that future generations may forget our existence.¹¹⁶

If meaning is given rather than created (or affirmed), then human existence is unchanged by individual choice. Indeed, "choice" is rendered meaningless, and remembrance is futile (this is the bane of essentialist theories of the self).

¹¹⁵ Stanley Rosen, *The Limits of Analysis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 193.

¹¹⁶ Michel Foucault argues that the Greek epic was created to extend the immortality of the hero. Moreover, he claims that our own culture has "metamorphosed this idea of narrative, or writing, as something designed to ward off death." See "What Is an Author?," 101–20, 102.

Speaking ontologically, the Inner self (the writer-self) is a metaphysical entity or pre-discursive essence imbedded in the mind or soul of the human being, or a soul per se that exists apart from a body (Greek), or a soul coming led with a body (Hebraic). The Outer self “exists,” then, only in two senses: (1) as an embodied (gendered, raced) human being, and (2) as a textually embodied authorial identity.

As we speak and write about our existence, we implicate ourselves in the epistemic dimensions of existence. Our existence constitutes the world, and, as Paul Ricoeur contends, the world constitutes our existence: “Only a being that is a self is in the world. . . . There is no world without a self who finds itself in it and acts in it.”¹¹⁷

To be a self, then, is to be a linguistic creature, a point that Ricoeur may have mined from Wittgenstein. Yet the self, conceived as a linguistic creature, does not diminish the ontological ground from which language springs. Indeed, it points to the dual nature that it signifies. Ricoeur concedes, “The selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other.”¹¹⁸

Indeed, some writers who regard the self as an “ideal ego” adopt the rhetorical stance of a transcendent, impartial narrator who uncovers an authentic self to which their being-in-the-world refers. Others who regard the self as a “shattered ego” write from the position of an affected, limited narrator, a narrator who constructs a successive story from bits of information that he or she and others tell about himself or herself.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Ricoeur, *Oneself As Another*, 310–11. Ricoeur follows Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein as a being situated according to the thematic modes of being-in-the-world.

¹¹⁸ Ricoeur explains the relationship between the self and the I in this way: “To say self is not to say I. The I is posited—or is deposited. The self is implied reflexively in the operations, the analysis of which precedes the return toward this self.” See *Oneself As Another*, 3.

¹¹⁹ Goldstein’s position is most clearly described by Deborah Knight in “Selves, Interpreters, Narrators,” *Philosophy and Literature* 18 (October 1994): 282.

Rather, memory maybe, as Barnes argues, incoherent and episodic: "For just as in a dream, every figure that in bold relief stands as one thing holds nuances that say it is something else, some recollections come to me in a multicolored cluster rather than in a coherent pattern. . . . No doubt I am not unique in conjuring up this sort of medley."¹²⁰

Conclusion

Beckett's conception of time and space is treated in a different way from the socially accepted one. He introduces into his narrative the notion of relativity in man's relationship to the outside world and to the personal experience of time and space. As Richard Schechner states, "This peculiar sense of time and place is not centered in the characters, but between them. Just as it takes two lines to fix a point in space, so it takes two characters to unfix our normal expectations of time, place, and being" (Schechner 177-178).

Beckett does not seem to give much importance to social interaction, which he limits to a simple cohabitation in which the existence of one individual has almost no impact on that of the other. Both time and space are considered concepts that apply to physical and scientifically observable phenomena. While time loses its dynamism, space is deprived of its identity, i.e. the elements that make it special and to whom it can be recognized.

Beckett is gradually developing a new approach to spatial representation through the inability to recognize places and the absence of mobility. He stripped the environment of almost all its artifice to give way to a sober, impoverished, and banalized setting within which man finds it difficult to situate himself. Above all, he seeks to give an account of the suffering that man never ceases to endure at the psychological level.

¹²⁰ Hazel Barnes, *The Story I Tell Myself* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 2.

Presumably this ‘adventure of being’ becomes in Beckett’s work, the occasion for specific identification of self, though the habit is also a difficult resource of being for the Beckett hero. Security of self is in all respects difficult to maintain, and on many occasions, the act of “waiting” is a heroic function. Waiting involves not only watching for a sign of being (a repetition of something remembered, a movement in gestures that have a recognizable line or curve). The act of waiting sets critical expectations in any event when those who wait are starting to lose their sense of urgency. Their condition may not be hopeless, may even be euphoric - momentarily. The act of waiting gets both all the more energetic and direr in Act II in *Waiting for Godot*. Amidst this silly scene, Pozzo's revelation that he is blind and that Lucky is dumb, and his talk on time and the synchronization of birth and death ('They give birth astride of the grave', p. 89) echo the tones of traditional tragedy. Vladimir in his 'waking sleep' appears to recall the 'astride of a grave' image as he theorizes on a potentially limitless arrangement of observers watching each other ('At me too, someone is looking'). Both Pozzo's and Vladimir's speeches change the action into a dream-like state and add to the experience of a 'timeless time' which is pervasive in the entire play.

The final movement turns on the second coming of the Boy as a messenger. "The repetition, with variations of the end of Act I, exploits the deeply rooted human interest in patterns of anticipation, return, and disappointment". (Kennedy 31) a search for that other voice or person who - in Beckett's fiction - is as unattainable as the true core of the self. We recognize in this the remnant of the old Platonic or Romantic longing for essences; for a further union of word and being, self and non-self. And it is probable that the Beckett world, for all its fundamental skepticism and drive towards 'nothingness', is guided by a much stronger remnant of those immortal longings – “essence, union, communion, divinity - than are likely to be admitted by most of our contemporaries”. (Kennedy 162).

Yet, Beckett's world, is a world in ebb, a shriveled, twilight world that has no part in the light of day. But for Beckett, even if living is placed in doubt, there is still the optimistic attempt to examine the self. In an ultimate sense, the phenomenon of self inhabiting a space that alters in form, color, and light according to some preordained design reduces itself to a condition of waiting. Waiting involves enduring, filling in the hours and noting their passage, suffering the boredom which the living seems to require. Suffering and boredom, then are the two contrasted conditions of human life. It is with these two terms and their interrelations with time, "that double-headed monster of damnation and salvation" (Proust. I), that our next chapter will focus on, for the true heroics of the self come in such moments of crisis when its acts do not assure or guarantee a continuous identity. And for this, we've entitled our next chapter "The Quest for The Self".

**CHAPTER IV:
BECKETT'S QUEST FOR
SELF**

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Introduction

The history of literature, as it affects or is related to a study of Samuel Beckett, is a history of the effort to define the self in space and time, and to speculate about its power of initiating and maintaining identity.

The twentieth-century drama has been a reflection of a metaphorical journey into the very depth of the self. An excavation to regain the real existence man has lost. Thus he is in the quest to meet his spiritual liberty and the individual soul. Followed by the relative achievement of the European nineteenth-century dramatic characters in their inward imaginative technique for the quest, the Absurd characters try to negate themselves through complete detachment and inaction in order to be shielded from the ruinous engaging of the outside world, which smashes the sign of the higher self. They endeavor to start a new beginning which is their absolute, boundless, and inexhaustible principle wealth, where they return into closeness to the essence of being.

The breakdown of the medieval worldview initiated a radical change in the Western concept and experience of the self. The question 'What am I' can no longer be answered by defining man's status and destiny "within the primordial community of being."¹²¹ Man's nature has not changed. What has changed in western consciousness is the felt relationship between self and world. The self as subject faces any non-self as an object of investigation and action; it experiences itself as the Wholly Other, to use Rudolf Otto's term in a different context. Since the self can no longer define itself through its relations to what now has become "outside," it must seek the answer in a world without time and space.

¹²¹ "God and man, world and society form a primordial community of being. The community ... is knowable only from the perspective of participating in it." Eric Voegelin: Order and History, Vol. 1. Louisiana University Press: 1956, p. 1.

Throughout his career, Beckett's characters are in a perpetual exploration of their inner world, they begin to realize that knowledge of the self is just as elusive as knowledge of the outside world. This loss of self, which profoundly marks all of Beckett's characters, leaves them in a kind of no man's- land between an unknowable outside world and an unlocatable self. With no foundation on which to ground their beliefs, whether in the outside world of objects or the inside world of the self. Beckett's characters find themselves in a position of extreme epistemological weakness. It is no doubt Beckett's depiction of this interstitial zone of uncertainty between subject and object that is his most enduring contribution to world literature. In terms of dealing with the outside world, the Beckettian character adopts a habit that serves as both protector and prisoner. In his Proust, Beckett describes habit as his protector when stating: "[a]n automatic adjustment of the human organism to the conditions of its existence" (Proust 9). Beckett thus defines the habit as 'the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects' (Beckett, 1999, p. 19). For Beckett, the habit would refer to a set of thoughts, strategies, and (re)actions that memory calls upon throughout our attempts to make sense of and negotiate the world. Through these habitual processes of adjustment, time divides self from self and subject from object, ensuring that we neither remain the same nor grasp the dynamic object-in-itself. However, habit distorts this temporal dynamism, allowing us to believe that both we and the objects around us are basically unchanged from one moment to the next.

Beckett's characters exhibit this kind of inward quest in their "eventful immobility or movement around a still center" (Gilman 177). They are crushed by the burden of consciousness, which brings with it the self-responsibility they would like to escape but cannot.

In this chapter, we begin to outline an account of the self (identity) in modern philosophy that goes back to Hume's and Kant's criticism of the Cartesian self. The following section addresses the birth and development of the idea of the modern self where I try to examine briefly the route that led to identifying the self with consciousness. I will then show how modernity produced alternative understandings of the self. I suggest starting with providing definitions in terms of what self-functionality is supposed to accomplish. What questions or issues are self or sense of self supposed to give answers to? Then, we try to explore the paradoxical relation to the embodiment in Beckett's drama, with particular reference to *Waiting For Godot* and *Endgame*. In this sense, I'll try to **define the self as a complex of matter** itself, in its several extensions; manners, as these, are associated with **the human body and memory** involved in exercises of **self-determination**; and the **consciousness of self as body related to objects** arranged in **the space-time** it occupies and finally, **the experience of waiting** and struggling with a **pervading sense of futility**, anguish and loss, and the **attaining of timelessness in the pursuit of identity through desire**.

IV.1. The Development of the Modern Self

Checking the Oxford Dictionary (Hornby, Gatenby, & Wakefield, 1963) for brief and concise definitions of self, we find two definitions for self: "1. person's nature, special qualities; one's own personality; 2. one's own interests or pleasure." the latest edition of the APA Dictionary of Psychology (Vandenbos, 2006). Here it says for a sense of self: "an individual's feeling of identity, uniqueness, and self-direction" (p. 542).

We find a broad range of references to terms like self-concept, self-image, or sense of identity in the APA Dictionary of Psychology, centered on issues of separation and individuation, and the feeling of being unique and alike. Attempts to define self frequently

rely on self-representations, or mental constructs about ourselves as individuals in terms of how we are identified (usually by others). Sense of self is something we are said to have, i.e., it is a property of an internal make-up as “who-we-are” as persons, not easy to shake off. Concepts of self and sense of self can filter into the diachronicity of continuity and change as a result of the self/other and agency distinction.

Modernity starts with the emergence of the anti-humanist movement (such as Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger) where self-subject becomes one of the key concepts. The modern concept of the self is uprooted¹²². Yet, it developed in dialogue with traditional sources of order. With modernity, Taylor claims, we no longer recognize a grand moral order, and the self became the source of subjective right¹²³.

Notions of a modern self (Elias, 1939/1991, 1998; Gergen, 1991) are taken to be deeply intertwined with the development of nation-states and local communities—particularly the city, the emergence of the subjectivity of the young citizen/citizen ("sociogenesis" and "socialization"), forms of knowledge and reflection ("rationalization"), sensation and perception, all in lockstep with a growing "interiorization" and "psychologization."

The world loses its intrinsic order as a result of secularism. There is no cosmic principle to discover; individuals must look within themselves to determine their place in this universe. We must reinvent that order and define ourselves in relation to what is "outside of us" now that we no longer have a predetermined place in the world. The universe is divided into 'outside' and 'inside,' 'I' and 'other,' thanks to the binary nature of modern identity. The modern self develops exactly from that binary tension¹²⁴. When discussing a self as different

¹²² See: Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, especially, pp. 55–58.

¹²³ Op. cit., p. 11.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Michal Rozynek “*A Philosophy of Nationhood and the Modern Self*”, (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2017), p. 64.

from the other and perceiving a self "in relation to self," this process of differentiation should be taken into account (such as in self-reflection and self-control). Self, as distinct from others, can now begin to seek temporal continuity, unity, and coherence, i.e., identity throughout life, via developing the ability to account for itself (as agent or as undergoer), self-reflect, and self-augment.

The transformation of the self into a noun, according to Charles Taylor, distinguishes the modern moral world from the ancient. 'In every language, there are resources for self-reference and descriptors of reflexive thought, action, attitude [...]. But this is not at all the same as making 'self' into a noun, preceded by a definite or indefinite article, speaking of 'the self, or 'a' self.'¹²⁵ According to Plato's philosophy, the self can be found exclusively in a single place: the mind. The soul was associated with corporeal places¹²⁶ in ancient Greek literature, particularly in Homer. To be oneself, according to Plato, is to be in control of our faculties, as well as thoughtful and conscious of ourselves. The body is the opposite of the self, not the outside world. Sleep, rage, sorrow, and thoughtlessness are all for Plato's moments when we lose ourselves. The earliest and most basic principle of knowledge is our own existence as thinking beings. According to Descartes, the existence of our body, on the other hand, does not have the same level of clarity and certainty.

I rightly conclude that my essence consists only in my being a thinking thing, being a thinking thing [or a substance whose whole essence or nature is merely thinking]. And although I may, or rather, as I will shortly say, although I certainly do possess a body with which I am very closely conjoined; nevertheless, because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in as far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and as, on the other hand, I possess a distinct idea of body, in as far as it is only an extended and unthinking thing, it is certain that

¹²⁵ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 113.

¹²⁶ Jerrold Siegel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

I [that is, my mind, by which I am what I am] is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it.¹²⁷

The Cartesian ego, which arose as a radical result of dualism, has anchored our thinking about freedom, but it hasn't provided a way to understand our position in the world and in society. If the self and awareness are identical, the self is not only isolated from the outside world, but also from itself. Without division, the self cannot know itself, and here is where the actual subject-object opposition occurs. The price of combining two worlds into one is then the division of the subject. This is a political problem since modern society is based on both a radical idea of freedom and the modern self on the one side and a strong sense of national belonging on the other.¹²⁸

Individual identity has tremendous caché in contemporary culture. Perhaps the unabated interest in the self signifies our inescapably rooted philosophical natures—a recurring desire to know who and what we are. Whatever the source of our interest in the self, cultural, philosophical, and psychological elements play important roles in the current fascination with the self.

Philosophers working within the Western analytic philosophical tradition define personal identity as a continuing body, mind, personality, and memories (or some

¹²⁷Op. cit., pp. 132–133.

¹²⁸Taylor notes that in Romanticism, this tension can be solved only through an expressive unity of the body and the spirit, individual and society. Not only is thinking not possible without language, but thinking is always confined to a particular language. Ultimately, the unity of the self can only be achieved in a limited cultural world, in a community of words and images—the nation. As Herder argues, 'languages of different peoples reflect their different visions of things.' As a result, individual autonomy can be seen only in relation to the self-determination of the moral will of the community. This link, however, is only an illusion. Neither Herder nor any of his forerunners can explain the nature of the link between body and spirit. Instead, they tend to believe that matter and nature are themselves spiritual. Hence the choice of the language of heart and intuition which combines certain features of reason and perception. However, as Charles Taylor notes, 'if our unity with the cosmic principle was to be achieved by abandoning reason, through some intuition inarticulate in rational terms, then we have in fact sacrificed the essential.' (Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 12) The Romantic vision of a man as an expressive unity is powerful, but one-sided. In the same way, as rationalism has problems with understanding belonging, expressivism does not offer a language in which to talk about our choices, rights and duties.

combination thereof), making a person at t_1 the same person at $t_2, t_3 \dots t_n$, where t_n represents any time in the future. But how does a person at t_n know that he or she is the same as the person at t_1, t_2 , and so on? Does the person at t_n remember the experiences of the person at t_1 , as Augustine, Descartes, and Rousseau suggest? Must the self be unified through memory? Or can the unity of self be grounded in other psychological and/or literary methods or processes, as Nietzsche and Barnes claim? And who (or what) is the person remembering himself or herself? What is its essence?

Recent research in neuroscience and postmodern critiques of science suggest that identity is constructed rather than remembered (or that memory is constructive rather than mimetic in nature). Identity construction occurs via a set of perspectives that follows from scientific inquiry but also paradoxically presupposes scientific inquiry. Within this paradigm, personal identity arises from a process of selecting, highlighting, and deleting (or repressing) remembered experiences through a set of precognitive or subconscious concepts or ideas—a process of identity encoding in the brain. As long as the paradigm does not overly constrain the process of identity encoding, then the possible outcomes or arrangements of personal identity for any given person are infinite.

Charles Taylor aptly describes the vexing nature of identity in *Sources of the Self*:

There is a question about ourselves—which we roughly gesture at with the term “identity” which cannot be sufficiently answered with any general doctrine of human nature. The search for identity can be seen as the search for what I essentially am. But this can no longer be sufficiently defined in terms of some universal description of human agency as such, as soul, reason, or will. There still remains a question about me, and that is why I think of myself as a self. This word now circumscribes an area of

questioning. It designates the kind of being of which this question of identity can be asked.¹²⁹

Jung's twentieth-century concept of the Self parallels Nietzsche's idea of the 'Übermensch' and the quest for wholeness, but Jung's approach leans more toward the spiritual side of dissolution, emphasizing the ego's transmutation into the unconscious world. His concept of the Self reflects a long-term effort to elevate the human being, a concept he inherited from the previous century. The Dionysian concept of the whole self is emphasized explicitly in Nietzsche's "Übermensch." Individuals are supposed to achieve the whole self by uniting with nature in order to be redeemed and saved from the moral beliefs of the time, which restrict their instincts, according to Nietzsche's concept. As Nietzsche (1999) points out in the prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the Dionysian individuals thus promote the "natural body" (p. 1). Nietzsche's naturalized individuals who seek a higher self via intoxication, madness, art, love, literature, and ecstatic endurance of suffering embodies Nietzsche's idea of the unification of body and spirit, joy and sorrow, creation and destruction.

Dionysian individuals, on the other hand, are those who have reconnected with humanity's essence as well as whatever is passionate, irrational, and chaotic inside them. They joyfully and tragically demolish the ego in order to merge with nature's humanizing spirit and "experience an ascent-up" into a high and free naturalized self (Nietzsche, 1967, p. 120).

Basically in an age of nihilism, the self is fractured, broken into warring elements, palsied with doubt and indecision, no longer sure of itself. An age that is skeptical of all absolutes can do no more than asking questions. Heidegger presents a self that is projected inevitably toward a future that culminates in death. His philosophy emphasizes the reality of death and the truth of Nothingness. Winnicott suggests on the other hand, that the individual discovers the self while playing in this potential space between herself and her environment,

¹²⁹Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 184.

in the interrelation between the two (Winnicott, 1971, p.54), whereas Lichtenstein suggests that the individual discovers the self, the sense "that I am," in the functions of identity, how one processes external stimuli. The core identity itself is "a biological adaptive principle" (Lichtenstein, 1983, p.114). What then is about Beckett's self and identity?

IV.2. Beckett's Self and Identity

While Descartes achieves a conclusion by translating doubting into thinking as an affirmation of self-existence, Beckett's ego continues to doubt, turning skepticism into pessimism. In Beckett's world, the self never achieves personal identity, as defined by Locke, Hume, and others. The self takes on a variety of names until it no longer has any, yet it is never fully grasped, and therefore remains elusive¹³⁰. Nevertheless, the self talks about itself. Hence the "language of the self".¹³¹ This existentialist and philosophical motif drove Beckett to delve deeper into the human psyche, combining the split and suffering self that emerges with compulsive intensity in his plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, in which characters try to negate themselves through complete detachment and inaction in order to be safe from the destructive alluring of the outside world that shatters the character's self.

Beckett's characters exhibit this kind of inward quest in their "eventful immobility or movement around a still center" (Gilman 177). They are crushed by the burden of consciousness, which brings with it the self-responsibility they would like to escape but cannot. Hence, the Beckett hero does not seek, but rather flees, his identity; his quest is for

¹³⁰See Frederick J. Hoffman, 'The Elusive Ego: Beckett's M's,' in *Samuel Beckett: The Language of Self* (New York: Dutton, 1962).

¹³¹ This conception of the "language of the self" is present in Hoffman's aforementioned study, but it is also the theme of Jacques Lacan's research. See, in particular, Anthony Wilden, *The Language of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968).

obscurity, for self-annihilation. How then is the relationship between self and Time as well as self and space?

IV.3. Self and its Relation to Space and Time

With the advent of new scientific revolutionary impact, formerly accepted a priori categories of time and space have been superseded by new definitions that take into consideration the spatiotemporal coordinates and the individual qualities of the observer, who thus enters the field of the observed and so, the logic of the human consciousness loses its formerly privileged position as observer and decipherer of reality and gives way to a complex interplay between the conscious and the unconscious.

Space, time and identity, not only are they the three questions to which narrative discourse feels most obliged to respond, they also represent the essential points of reference for the human subject as s/he seeks to orient and understand her-or himself in the world.

The Beckettian vision of the world doesn't focus on identity, the other-elusive self, as many authors would say, but it conveys a struggling attempt towards a new means which is the quest for the authentic self based on a decisive detachment, this sum of mnemonic experiences lived through time and space, which in turn impacts the identity of the individual. Yet, to assert identity, Beckett's self fought steadily to avoid immersion in nonentity. Beckett therefore appreciates the Proustian goal as the sustenance of the ego, keeping it above the flux of ordinary time and enclosing it within vital cages of memory.

"The individual is the seat of a constant process of decantation, decantation from the vessel containing the fluid of future time, sluggish, pale and monochrome, to the vessel

containing the fluid of past time, agitated and multicolored by the phenomena of the hours."¹³²

In Beckett's Proust, the self is portrayed as "volatile, unpredictable, and inconstant," for it cannot be reduced to a single concept or substance.

Throughout his career, Beckett's characters are in a perpetual exploration of their inner world, they begin to realize that knowledge of the self is just as elusive as knowledge of the outside world. This loss of self, which profoundly marks all of Beckett's characters, leaves them in a kind of no man's- land between an unknowable outside world and an unlocatable self. With no foundation on which to ground their beliefs, whether in the outside world of objects or the inside world of the self. Beckett's characters find themselves in a position of extreme epistemological weakness. It is no doubt Beckett's depiction of this interstitial zone of uncertainty between subject and object that is his most enduring contribution to world literature. His characters try to negate themselves through complete detachment and inaction in order to be safe from the destructive alluring of the outside world, which alienates them trying to start a new beginning, a return to the essence of being. They perceive a world in which the distinction between living and having lived fades into a constant oscillation. This idea conveys a struggling attempt toward a new means of the quest for an authentic self which is based on a decisive detachment.

According to Kalb, Beckett insists, on encouraging performances that limit the external physical techniques and work toward inward psychological centers (Kalb 22), he also points that "it is the disempowerment of Beckett's protagonists, removed from the sphere of active engagement in the world, which guarantees their integrity" (205). In a parallel way, McMullan evaluates Beckett's art of directing and states that Beckett's actors, like Lois

¹³² Beckett, Proust' Three Dialogues, 15.

Overbeck, describe their experience of being put in a "straitjacket making their bodies and senses cut off" (202).

Beckett's characters are puzzled over the question of the identity of created things as they are engaged in the bewildering process of defining objects as individually and separately objects or as extensions of the self. All of these facts about Beckett's world set it off from that of his contemporaries. Beckett isn't concerned to prove illogicality or absurdity since they've been already assumed. Instead, his writings are meaning attenuations: a never-ending, noisy, and repetitive echoing of logical questions and close definitions.

In terms of dealing with the outside world, the Beckettian character adopts a habit that serves as both protector and prisoner. In his Proust, Beckett describes habit as his protector when stating: "[a]n automatic adjustment of the human organism to the conditions of its existence" (Proust 9). He thus defines the habit as 'the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects' (Beckett, 1999, p. 19). For Beckett, the habit would refer to a set of thoughts, strategies, and (re)actions that memory calls upon throughout our attempts to make sense of and negotiate the world. Through these habitual processes of adjustment, time divides self from self and subject from object, ensuring that we neither remain the same nor grasp the dynamic object-in-itself. (See Chapter II, Sartre's Being and Nothingness) However, habit distorts this temporal dynamism, allowing us to believe that both we and the objects around us are basically unchanged from one moment to the next.

The self is many selves, and the problem is to assert a continuous self-identity. In Habit, this identity is maintained at the expense of distinction. Beckett defines Habit as "the generic term for the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects" (Pohtast 109). This statement admirably

defines the condition of the Beckett hero, who strives loudly and desperately to "count himself in" as a self; he undergoes elaborate routines of repetition, draws up fantastically intricate charts of possibilities inherent in habitual decision and action.

Beckett's character is always changing, his moods going back and forth across the spectrum of feelings. And, as Proust claims, knowing oneself or the other is difficult due to the endless series of moi's that inhabit each of us: "Ces êtres, s'ils changent par rapport à nous, changent aussi en eux-mêmes"¹³³ It is clear then that according to Proust the universe is seen differently by each of us and changes daily its aspects, as we change within ourselves: "L'univers est vrai pour tous et dissemblable pour chacunce n'est pas un univers, c'est des millions, presque autant qu'il existe des prunelles et d'intelligences humaines, qui s'éveillent tous les matins."¹³⁴ In his essay on Proust, Beckett emphasizes the turmoil of the subject as a barrier to perception: "The observer infects the observed with his own mobility" (p. 6) and this is well defined in Beckett's drama where art is the ultimate expression of human impotence, whereas for Proust it represents a triumph over the fragmented universe created by the passage of time and the variation of perceptions from one person to another: "l'oeuvre d'art était le seul moyen de retrouver le Temps perdu"¹³⁵. (Hale, *The Broken Window* 6). There is still change, which is something that happens in time. However, the way the characters experience change is usually such that the occurring events cannot be properly arranged in the temporal order. This is also why the characters cannot utilize the experience of change to secure the passage of time. The tree grows leaves without transition. Pozzo and Lucky, on their second appearance, are blind or dumb, respectively, without transition. Pozzo denies a well-ordered succession to the process of his going blind. He even concentrates on a single

¹³³ Marcel Proust, *La Prisonnière*. (Paris : Gallimard-Folio, 1954), p.80.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹³⁵ Marcel Proust, *Le Temps Retrouvé* (Paris: Gallimard-Folio, 1954), p. 262.

moment, all those events which are normally separated in time. This means that he considers time as a basic structure of the empirical world to be null.

POZZO: (*suddenly furious*). Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (*Calmer.*) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (*He jerks the rope.*) On! (89)

The characters neither possess some kind of mental device which could be used as the source of a reliable orientation in time nor are they in contact with a stable, objective world structure from which such an orientation could be derived.¹³⁶ This applies to Hamm and Clov just the same, as their brief dispute about the use of temporal expressions shows:

HAMM: Go and get the oilcan.

CLOV: What for?

HAMM: To oil the castors.

CLOV: I oiled them yesterday.

HAMM: Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday!

CLOV: (*violently*). That means that bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything anymore, teach me others. Or let me be silent.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ The insecurity is not diminished by the fact that the author, at the beginning of the second act, gives this stage direction: "*Next Day. Same Time. Same Place*". It is only the reader who gets to know that, not the spectators, let alone the characters. In the world in which the characters have to live, there is no certainty about time or space. For the role of time and the paradoxical structure of Gogo's and Didi's world see B.O. States, *The Shape of Paradox*, Berkeley CA, 1978.

¹³⁷ Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, London (Faber and Faber) 1958, p. 32. Page numbers referring to this edition will henceforth be given in parentheses.

The characters in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* continually strive to find a secure notion of yesterday, tomorrow, and sometimes even today. Similar issues occur when it comes to their location in space. Their insecurity over their place in space; is exacerbated by their persistent loss of memory. By creating characters who ultimately cannot remember, or if they can, immediately undermine memory's validity, Beckett constantly draws our attention to the problem of memory: that "reference [in memory narrative] is never to events of the past but to memories of those events" (Olney 863). For Beckett, the past is irreversible and ultimately unknown. This is an interesting and crucial temporal inversion that Beckett employs in his plays: the past, although it is already lived, cannot be known; the future, even though it is unlived, remains certain—we will die.

Waiting for Godot exhibits Beckett's inverted sense of temporality, and because the characters have nothing on which to base their experiences, they seem to exist from the outset in a setting defined by the loss of the real.

The central characters of *Waiting for Godot* are always wondering where they are, where they were yesterday, and where they will be tomorrow. They also keep thinking about what happened the day before, and if there seems to be any memory of what this may have been, whether their memory belongs to yesterday or to some other strange moment in time if there is any trustworthy memory at all. Vladimir and Estragon know where they are "going" (nowhere, in that they will continue to wait for Mr. Godot), but they do not know where they have been. Early in Act I, Vladimir and Estragon attempt and fail to establish what they did yesterday. They are unable to determine whether; the place where they find themselves is the same as the one where they were last night. Space, if large enough, to need successive experiencing is experienced in time; if there is no certainty about temporal relations anymore, there is no certainty about spatial relations either.

ESTRAGON: We came here yesterday.

VLADIMIR: Ah no, there you're mistaken.

ESTRAGON: What did we do yesterday?

VLADIMIR: What did we do yesterday?

ESTRAGON: Yes.

Such an exchange implies that the past is unknowable to Beckett. Vladimir and Estragon can't remember what they did yesterday, and they can't claim or reconstruct the past if they can't remember. Godot's future, not the past, is definite. As a result, our current location (as derived from the past) becomes as elusive as our past activities. While Vladimir and Estragon attempt to create reality through recalling a past they cannot remember, their attempts are always futile. In the following exchange in Act II, Vladimir attempts to shake a realization from Estragon that things have changed since yesterday, but again Estragon cannot remember yesterday.

VLADIMIR: The tree, look at the tree.

Estragon looks at the tree.

ESTRAGON: Was it not there yesterday?

VLADIMIR: Yes, of course, it was there. Do you not remember? We nearly hanged ourselves from it. But you wouldn't. Do you not remember?

ESTRAGON: You dreamt it.

VLADIMIR: Is it possible that you've forgotten already?

ESTRAGON: That's the way I am. Either I forget immediately or I never forget.

VLADIMIR: And Pozzo and Lucky, have you forgotten them too?

ESTRAGON: Pozzo and Lucky?

VLADIMIR: He's forgotten everything! (60-61)

Here, as Olney notes, the characters deny the absolute statement of "I remember." Didi attempts to coax Gogo into such a statement, but Gogo hesitates. Eventually, Gogo will state that he remembers being "kicked in the shins" by "a lunatic who played the fool" (Godot 61) but establishing when and where the occurrence took place results in futility. So, we have left an occurrence without specific relation to time or space, thereby its causality or origin cannot be established. Such moves do not allow for the creation or even the simulation of a real; they underline its absence. Beckett's characters have no past, which denies them an identifiable time and space. In Act I, Vladimir and Estragon have difficulty determining which day they are and which day they are to wait for Mr. Godot.

ESTRAGON: In my opinion we were here.

VLADIMIR: (*looking round*). You recognize the place?

ESTRAGON: I didn't say that.

VLADIMIR: Well?

ESTRAGON: That makes no difference.

VLADIMIR: All the same ... that tree ... (*turning towards the auditorium*) ...
that bog.

ESTRAGON: You're sure it was this evening?

VLADIMIR: What?

ESTRAGON: That we were to wait.

VLADIMIR: He said Saturday. (*Pause.*) I think.

ESTRAGON: You think.

VLADIMIR: I must have made a note of it.

He fumbles in his pockets, bursting with miscellaneous rubbish.

ESTRAGON: (*very insidious*). But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? (*Pause.*) Or Monday? (*Pause.*) Or Friday?

VLADIMIR: (*looking wildly about him, as though the date was inscribed in the landscape*). It's not possible!

ESTRAGON: Or Thursday?

VLADIMIR: What'll we do?

ESTRAGON: If he came yesterday and we weren't here you may be sure he won't come again today.

VLADIMIR: But you say we were here yesterday.

ESTRAGON: I may be mistaken. (*Pause.*) Let's stop talking for a minute, do you mind?¹³⁸

The problem of the past is extended in this passage, and its importance for creating a context for present understanding is highlighted. If the characters cannot remember the past, they cannot either establish the present. The unfathomable past has crept into the present, displacing certainty of time and space. Hence, we arrive at the significance of the play's nonspecific setting: "A country road. A tree. Evening." *Waiting for Godot* seems to occur outside time and space and signals the lack of temporality the characters experience, as they are unable to understand themselves via cause and effect—via past and present.

The methods that were once used to secure oneself a firm foothold in time are no longer effective. Memory, the most essential of these instruments, has lost its ability to offer a stable point from which even the present moment could be accurately identified. The existence of Gogo and Didi is such that there is no secure temporal orientation for them. They don't have a trustworthy memory, and they don't have any other tools that could help them find their way.

Moreover, the self is multifaceted because there are transitions between states of existence. This puts the self's ability to control itself in jeopardy, and it also means that

¹³⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, London (Faber and Faber) 1956, 14 f. Page numbers henceforth given in parentheses refer to this edition.

Beckett's characters' desires can't be fulfilled because they change at different stages. Involuntary memory can often restore an older self that can no longer exist. Then the awareness of the non-repeatability of personality becomes painful, as evidenced by Vladimir and Estragon's memories of a period when they were respectable and Hamm's memories of being a landlord. Although memory-driven repeated synthesis combines past and present, it also stimulates difference, preventing the creation of a full being. The self, on the other hand, is stabilized by repetition as a habit, which shields it from formlessness and helps it to keep control over itself and the world. Beckett's theatre, according to Robbe-Grillet, reflects Heidegger's apprehension of 'primordial being-there,' which is the human condition (Connor 114).

IV.3.1. Habit and Repetition

IV.3.1.1 Habit

Proust's ideas and works inspired Beckett immensely, particularly his concept of habit, which can be seen in most of Beckett's writings, and most notably in *Waiting for Godot*. Habit, according to Proust, is an impediment to knowledge and a technique of dulling one's senses; it is the "ballast that chains the dog to its vomit," as Beckett defines. (Proust, 19) According to Andrews: "A habit, from the standpoint of psychology, is a more or less fixed way of thinking, willing, or feeling acquired through previous repetition of a mental experience." (Andrews 121). He goes on to say that habit "lies outside of consciousness," that it is "the more or less fixed course of consciousness with repeated experiences; the shaping of the familiar consciousness rather than that consciousness itself;"(121-122). After the general statements on time in the first chapter of his book, Beckett presents the theory of habit to interpret Proust's well-known distinction between two kinds of memory. When treating the subjects "habit and, memory"; Beckett sticks closely to Proust's original text. He just seems to

defend them with philosophical content from Schopenhauer. He refers to habit as a paralyzing force, which causes the attention to focus more on the inner world, leading to the protection of the essential faculty that is human essence, as stated in his Proust: "Habit paralyzes our attention, drugs those handmaidens of a perception whose cooperation is not absolutely essential (8-9).

Habit, thus as mirrored in Proust, looks behind the ego's surface, behind voluntary to involuntary memory. Beckett calls memory and habit "attributes of the time cancer"¹³⁹ with the former subject to the more general laws of the latter, which in turn is a function of the subjects desire to escape the reality of the world in which he must live:

Habit is a compromise effected between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities, the guarantee of a dull inviolability.....life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals, the world being a projection of the individual's consciousness, the pact must be continually renewed.¹⁴⁰

Habit then is not a condition but an active agent, and as such, it operates as a strategy. Routine is a habit, and when waiting is filled with routine, it too is a habit. But when habit breaks down, the individual suffers: "The periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptations... represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being".¹⁴¹The necessity of renewal, Beckett concludes, also necessitates periods of transition, and it is these in which the protective function of habit may break down and a vision of true reality may emerge. This "adventure of being" presumably provides the occasion for precise identification of self in Beckett's work, yet habit is also a challenging resource of being for the Beckett hero.

¹³⁹ Beckett, Proust, p.6.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

In his Proust, Beckett describes periods of transition between an old self and a new one as follow:

“When for a moment, the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being . . . that is, the free play of every faculty. Because the pernicious devotion of habit paralyses our attention . . . our current habit of living is . . . incapable of dealing with the mystery of a strange sky or a strange room, with any circumstance unforeseen in her curriculum . . . [But when] the atrophied faculties come to the rescue . . . the maximum value of our being is restored” (Beckett, 2006, p. 516).

The self that existed yesterday is not the same as the one existing today, every cell of which the body is composed being, as we now know, replaced and renewed in the process of growth. There is certainly no rebirth of the self in these characters.

Beckett's characters are all locked into an old self; they are all, to borrow Beckett's terminology in Proust's book, 'prisoners of habit'. When they suffer because they have, for a moment, broken through to an awareness of their suffering; the release is not as in Proust, involuntary memory; it is a glimpse through the structured world of habit into the void: a momentary awareness of their own nothingness. The discarding of selves leads to the same void; the process is not rebirth.

In *Waiting for Godot*, the two acts are repetitive yet non-identical, similar yet different, in which the characters struggle to recall past events, rejected not only the contemporary doubts concerning the stability of human identity but also, and in a larger sense, the distrust of empiricism itself, the conviction that the tangible elements in this world are ultimately inconsequential, that they have shimmered away into insubstantiality as individuals seek some overarching meaning beyond the purely tactile, beyond the terrestrial reality that has grown more irrelevant to these fundamental questions about mankind's role in the universe and the ultimate purpose of life.

In Beckett's drama, time is the burden—both as a chronic endurance and as a common theme. His characters suffer time and consciousness without being able to form them into a satisfying design. Furthermore, according to Beckett, we exist everywhere in time, not only in the present, which implies the past is inextricably part of us. So in his plays, Beckett is concerned with the passage of time or refusal of time to pass. Beckett reminds us in all of his works that man can be related to time in two ways: first, as a temporal measuring system that allows him to easily classify things as past, present, and future; and second, as the essential substance of life, because man (Dasein) develops to be (creates his essence) in the world of Time rather than the realm of Space. Therefore, in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, space is nothing more than a reflection of what Time and man have created. Estragon and Vladimir are more concerned with the waiting fact- a temporal experience than with where they are waiting. Pozzo and Lucky's journey is never defined in terms of where they are coming from or going to (despite Pozzo's unreliable explanation that he is taking Lucky to be sold at the "Marché de Saint-Sauveur").¹⁴² Their journey is a means for them to fill the empty hours and days. It is a temporal experience that represents the meaningless and aimless wandering of the inauthentic existent in life. In the case of Hamm, his spatial orientation is a direct result of what he has become. He has created his own personal universe of inauthenticity by separating himself from reality. His inauthenticity reveals itself first in terms of Time, then in terms of Space. Hamm's space world consists of a small room, unfurnished except for his wheelchair, a picture facing the wall, two bins, and a small stepladder that allows Clov to look outside from time to time through the two small windows at the top of the wall. Hamm's spatial world is even more confined than the setting implies, for he is blind. Hamm's "world" has been symbolized as a human skull, with the two windows representing the eyes. Whether or not Beckett intended such an interpretation, the fact remains that Hamm's "world" and his

¹⁴² Beckett, *En attendant Godot*, p. 51.

perception of reality are distorted, like those of a neurotic. In the opening pages of his essay Proust, Beckett quotes Proust's statement about Time:

"But were I granted time to accomplish my work, I would not fail to stamp it with the seal of that Time, now so forcibly present to my mind, and in it, I would describe men, even at the risk of giving them the appearance of monstrous beings, as occupying in Time a much greater place than that so sparingly conceded to them in Space, a place indeed extended beyond measure, because, like, giants plunged in the years, they touch at once those periods of their lives—separated by so many days—so far apart in Time."¹⁴³

Beckett explains his concept of man as a temporal being whose past is not only present but is constantly shaping it, and whose future is likewise present in his finitude—his being toward death:

Yesterday is not a milestone that has been passed, but a day-stone on the beaten track of the year and irremediably part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous. We are not merely wearier, because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday".¹⁴⁴

The world that Beckett creates for his characters has been described as "an eternity of stagnation,"¹⁴⁵ Estragon and Vladimir continue to wait, putting on hats, taking off shoes, and eating carrots and turnips. Pozzo and Lucky continue on their journey, stopping occasionally for Pozzo to eat his chicken, smoke his pipe, look at his watch, and sit on his campstool as for theirs is a world of habit, of relatively fixed behavioral patterns.

Hamm maintains his position at the center of his room, occasionally summoning Clov with his whistle, spasmodically lifting the lids of the garbage cans in order to torment Nagg and Nell, and repeatedly demanding his sedative, "Life is a habit," says Beckett.

¹⁴³ Beckett, Proust, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study* (New York: Grove Press, 1961) p. 153.

Habit whose expression is waiting and whose issue is boredom is for Gogo and Didi the sum of the human condition.

IV.3.1.2 Repetition

"If one were to represent repetition by a simple graphic delineation, the circle would be a suitable image of its movement," says Lichtenstein (25). Though, "the central aspect of the phenomenon of repetition ... is the intimate link between repetition and the experience of time in man" (27). Repetition pervades all of Beckett's plays where this use of repetition invokes a sense of circularity, a cycle that fittingly echoes the natural world, and a sense of "duration." Repetition is only possible when we have time on our hands (Lichtenstein 27), and Beckett's characters undoubtedly have time on their hands. In *Waiting for Godot* (WFG), Beckett astonished audiences by seemingly throwing away the unity of time and replacing it with a place far beyond time, a place of unchanging repetition, where one day becomes indistinguishable in memory from the next and the passage of time is a mystery. One could argue that life is—a birth, a death, and a life of major and minor plays in between. However, such a metaphor for existence presupposes our ability to take a step back and look at life at a glance, to perceive the exact beginning and end of each of our diverse experiences, and to understand that there is nothing before or after. Beckett's drama literally flips time, providing a relentless backdrop against which we inevitably repeat ourselves as the world revolves. Repetition is not only found within the plays but it is also hinted at the outside of them. We learn shortly after the start of *Waiting for Godot that*, Estragon (Gogo) spent the night in a ditch, where he was beaten up, as is usual:

Vladimir: And they didn't beat you?

Estragon: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.

Vladimir: The same lot as usual?

Estragon: The same? I don't know. (7)

Something in Gogo's identity makeup leads him to expect and accept being beaten up regularly. The acts are structured in such a way as to underline the dullness of a life spent waiting for Godot. For Beckett's characters, their lives are filled with meaningless repetition. "Time does pass, night comes, we grow old," nothing to be done" (7), the world revolves—around and around. Didi and Gogo meet every day to wait for Godot.

In *Waiting for Godot* and throughout his other plays, Beckett's fascination with the repetitive nature of human existence is clear. His characters are repetitively compliant or repeatedly bounce on and off the stage. As a result, repetition plays a significant part in Beckett's plays, expressing man's need to maintain a feeling of self "inside the flow of time" (Lichtenstein 30), a sense of identity. The importance of the need for repetition in Vladimir's relationship with Estragon cannot be overstated. Though Estragon's dialogue is the most repeated, the two also repeat each other, and the play illustrates the monotony of their days: Gogo is beaten up; Pozzo and Lucky visit them; the boy comes; they wait. Despite the repeated characters' visits, Vladimir and Estragon are the only two characters that recognize and remember each other. The boy, Pozzo, and Lucky reappear, but Didi and Gogo are forgotten. In fact, while Vladimir claims to remember them, he also has doubts. "We know them I tell you. You forget everything. (Pause. To himself.) Unless they're not the same..." To Estragon's "Why didn't they recognize us then?" Vladimir replies that "nobody ever recognizes us" (32). Hence, it seems like Didi and Gogo rely on each other to remember as much as to be remembered. As Connors states: "It is repetition that makes the difference, for it demonstrates to us that the sense of absolute presence is itself dependent upon memory and anticipation" (119). "We always find something, eh Didi," Estragon says, "to give us the impression we exist?" (44)

The present self is the repetition of the past self with a difference, hence the bums' wish to prove that they are the same as yesterday and that they will be the same as today. Pozzo and

the boy's anxiety about the tramps' presence in the present tense are exacerbated by their inability to recognize them in the second act, and they attempt to confirm this present tense by referring to an anticipated retrospect. So when Vladimir meets the boy for the second time, he is concerned that he will tell Godot that he has seen them.

Despite the boy's denial in both cases, this meeting in Act II reminds us of a similar encounter in Act I, and we recall that it has already struck Vladimir as a repetition. This illustrates how memory and anticipation play a role in the sensation of absolute presence. So in *Waiting for Godot*, every presence turns out to be a repetition of anticipation. In *Endgame*, Hamm displays the same characteristic as Vladimir and Estragon of being there in an everlasting present all the time. In fact, this last one has no possibility of going elsewhere. (Morrisette 65-67)

Beckett uses both linear and circular repetition. As Pozzo's situation in the second act demonstrates, linear repetition indicates entropic decay. The impossibility of any stable presence is suggested by circular repetition. Everything is brought back to its original state by the circularity of form. The first time through will strike us as new, and the second will likely feel like a sequel of the first, but repetition deprives us of any sense of priority or finality.

In conclusion, Beckett's estranged characters can only find relief from their suffering by surrendering to habit. In Beckett's world, nothing happens, and nothing ends, since time is circular.

IV.3.2. Framed Memories

In life, memory is rarely a smooth recollection of actions and thoughts that come to us in chronological order. However, it is from memory that we construct our self-image and so that the interior self, if examined closely, never feels quite complete. The

tension inherent in this division is especially troubling to those who live in a society without the comforting structure of "God's plan," whether characterized by reward and punishment or controlling destiny and is, therefore, a central tension to human experience in the modern world.

Neuroscience believes that we actually remember most of what we experience but only has access to snippets. If the scientists are correct then, they have discovered what the Modernists seemed to be addressing in their writing: memories are subjective glimpses of our lives and need to be represented, in a way that reflects both their subjectivity and their lack of discernable structure. More importantly for literature at least, these fragments are the building blocks from which human beings construct their internal idea of themselves so, they are key to any depiction of interiority. Like trying to build something that stands up, when half of the ego bricks are missing, the process is frustrating, and the results can be unstable.

As we progress through life, our self-image changes, although almost usually in retrospect through memory, thus the approach used to portray this change is an important part of serious literature. During this time, the value of viewing the process in a purely linear way had to be questioned, both in terms of time and memory fragmentation. The importance of recognized and suppressed memories is key to understanding any individual, according to the Freudian view of the human psyche.

Beckett uses the repetition and fragmentation of ideas and events in his plays in the way that a number of characters, especially those in distress, interact with their memories. In some cases, the process of remembering is abstracted by separating the voice that retells the stories from the figure remembering them. The clearest and most

concrete example of this is the vague recollection of lost respectability that haunts Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*.

The memories of Vladimir and Estragon (*Waiting for Godot*), as well as Hamm and Clov (*Endgame*), are questioned, in the dialogue, with no clear answer as to which version is true. Indeed, everything about the time frame shifts in *Waiting for Godot*, including the understanding of what happened "yesterday." Because Vladimir can preserve fragments of his past despite his sporadic memory, we can assume that he did meet with Godot at some point and that their agreements were mere: "[n]othing very definite," suggesting that his haziness of Godot is due to the fact that he has forgotten most of the details of their encounter (WFG 49). Memory, of course, provides the foundation for identity because it allows us to record past experiences which have led to our current sense of self. Vladimir's internal memory device, on the other hand, is defective since he, the doubting being, has rejected the uncritical acceptance of his memories' perceptions. In his plays, Samuel Beckett gave the fault line between interior and basic exterior reality, a physical manifestation that denies the audience the opportunity to match the "outside world" assumptions about the lives of those on stage. When one is blind and the other is mute, both are decrepit, and each is still acting out his part, it's difficult to make quick assumptions about the character of a bullying master and abused slave. Beckett (first in French and subsequently in English) employed a conversational style, like other modernists, to break through the barrier between the audience's consciousness and the loneliness, confusion, and even terror that his characters are experiencing. When they run into Pozzo and Lucky for the second time, Vladimir sums up the dangers: "That Lucky might get going all of a sudden." Then we'd be screwed" (Godot 285). The expletive is particularly Irish in this context, but its colloquial register makes Vladimir's previous, broad formal query, "We should

subordinate our good offices to certain conditions?" sound even more vast. (in this case, the demand for a bone upfront before assisting the writhing Pozzo) is hilariously sarcastic. The contrast in speaking styles provides humor (without undermining the memory of Lucky's violence in Act 1).

Beckett, in the personae he creates, also seems to be crawling between dry ribs. The portraits are so stark and out of so separate from social standards that they almost seem like a stage image, a part of the *mise-en-scène* (except that it is so little on stage). Many of the characters in Samuel Beckett's novels and plays are on the verge of death, which intensifies their more or less conscious quest for personal identity. There isn't much in Beckett's plays about "the day of judgment "and much less about eternal rest. His depiction of death is very much a meditation of life. This ending, like all of Beckett's dramatic work, lacks any feeling of rebirth or natural transition. There are cycles throughout Beckett's work, such as the reduced recurrence of events, in *Waiting for Godot*, and certainly, old age hanging on in *Endgame*, but there is no sense of renewal at the end lives in Beckett's work. He may have been talking about the struggle to express, in modern times, what it means to be human. Beckett's message is frequently regarded as dismal or dreary. Perhaps it's because it's pure that it triggers the same protective avoidance response as in depression. Even in the most depressing pieces, there is a human connection and a sense of hope. (Beckett, qtd in *An Explication* by Catherine Joyce B.A., London, 1982).

IV. 5. Beckett's Reduction and Self-annihilation

Based on Nietzsche's idea of Dionysian self-dissolution, the detaching, reductive attempts of Beckett's characters can be deciphered as the atrophying vocation which makes them able to approximate the essential being, which is for them the innermost heart of things.

In the second act, Pozzo enters while he's blind and needs Lucky as his master time. The rope is now shorter since Pozzo can follow Lucky easily. Lucky's nearness to Pozzo signifies that he is gradually approximating emancipation and spiritual mastery. Such a symbolic display demonstrates that Lucky's self-mortification has been fruitful, as he has evolved from slavery to mastery. On the other hand, considering Pozzo's uncertain identity (who is frequently confused for Godot), it's clear that Lucky has already achieved the desired transcendence or the unified whole which is incarnated in the God-figure through being tied to him and persisting in reductive suffering. Vladimir boldly observes, following Lucky's reductive efforts, that "We were beginning to weaken. Now we're sure to see the evening out"(454). Vladimir alludes to the rewarding nature of Lucky's reductive efforts here. As a result, he expresses his delight right away: "We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, for Godot, for... Waiting. All evening We've struggled, unassisted. Now it's over. It's already tomorrow "(455). Vladimir discovers that waiting binds him to Godot, which is the aim of the looked-for spiritual rebirth. Waiting can be considered as a diminishing strategy manifest in the allegory of Lucky's endurance. In a similar way, the Pozzo-Lucky attachment binary is the prototype of the play's primary motif of detachment and illumination. Beckett's characters effectively show the estimate to a higher self-acknowledgment through impeccable self-renunciation. The concentration changes from disposing of the material world to self-renunciation where the blocking component has all the earmarks of being simply the body: "There's a man all over for you, accusing of his boots the flaws of his feet" (372). The decreasing methods for the mission uncover themselves in the jokester like highlights and the shortened names of the tramps in *Waiting for Godot*. The idea of holding up is itself a reductive means.

These clown-like features and abbreviated names of the tramps reflect the quest's shrinking means. The fact that Vladimir and Estragon share the same most important life

objective of discovering a reason for existing is evident, in the quest's name Godot; an almost contraction of their nicknames, Gogo and Didi, the inner self which might alternatively give their lives cohesion. As Lament states: "even their names sound like the distorted double echo of a single name uttered in the void. Reverberated Godot might become either Gogo or Didi, a child-like nickname for God or Dieu" (199). Such unity emanating from visible or invisible attachment ironically means a detached withdrawal from the world of matter and the transmutation of the ego into the spiritual world of the unconscious and the realization of the Godot of identity. As Gogo and Didi thus, await an answer, an external or internal solution, it is natural, in moments of disorientation or disconnection, when they say: "Let's go" that they also return to their game with the ritualistic "We're waiting for Godot." As the interminable paralysis of the ego continually breaks temporal and spatial connections through complete ignorance, cyclical movement of everyday life, or habitual conversation, it is seldom shattered by external reality's interrupting forces, making the achievement of the required spiritual peace more likely. Contrary to the commonly held view of the search for the longed-for identity in absurdist plays as nihilistic, it is possible to see them as positively significant in their negative, non-active aspect. The characters are consciously turning away from the outside world to atrophied reduced protective lessness manifested in their homelessness, broken words, and their defective physical characteristics. The atrophying attempts of such characters delineate a movement towards the center, demonstrating the ongoing transmutation of the conscious ego into the spiritual world of the unconscious. Beckett insists on encouraging performances that limit the external physical techniques and work toward inward psychological centers (Kalb, 1989, p. 22).

In the first scene of *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir displays the beginning of a fresh attitude to his renewed struggle: "All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything." And I resumed the struggle" (370). This passive

and reductive technique is illustrated by a sparse stage setup of a country road with a barren tree and a sinking sun. As shown in Estragon's symbolic attempt to remove his shoes, the play displays subjective self-diminishment with objective decrease. "Boots must be taken off every day," Vladimir responds, emphasizing the necessity of such a decrease. That's something I'm sick of telling you. Why don't you pay attention to me? (370) Vladimir's spiritual dissatisfaction is shown by the removal of his hat and peering into it, but Estragon's issue with his boots shows that a mobile quest is ineffective. Beckett's passive approach is immediately apparent in his scenic suggestions. Cohn (1962) observes that Beckett constructed a space, frequently vacant, rather than an action in his plays. "Beckett's goal was to harmonize stage setting with soul." (19) In Beckett's two plays, the decreasing course of development is visible, and it is thematically summed up in Vladimir's point of view when he says, "There's a man all over for you, blaming his boots for the faults of his feet" (372). For the spiritual ailment of lost identity, Vladimir prescribes the complete detachment or atrophying approach, which neither Estragon's boots nor Vladimir's hat could heal. In other words, both practicality and rationality seem to be unreliable in helping individuals realize the authentic self. In *Endgame*, the cyclical process of annihilation and rebirth is more evident, and the play of being and non-being recurs. The world has completely atrophied, and the motif of annihilation is highlighted more vividly in the characters' obsession with self-reduction to the highest degree: "I can no longer endure my presence" (21). To put it another way, the play's dominant motif is reduction: "One day you'll be blind, like me... Infinite emptiness will be all around you, ... and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe" (*Endgame* 28) All of the play's names, in a puzzling way, correspond to 'nail' in different languages. Even the term Hamm, which sounds a lot like the Latin word *Hamus*, means 'hook.' All of these symbolic names convey that the characters are similar to nails that should be hammered, reflecting the idea of annihilation. The detachment in the prison-like confinement of the room

in *Endgame* is more severe than in the semi-detached scene of the barren country road in *Waiting for Godot*.

Clov's explicit praise of his ultimate self-confinement reaffirms the notion of perfection in reduction and loss. "I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle at me. Nice dimension, nice proportions" (12). Through severe self-reduction and passive waiting, the scattered images of the womb and tomb in *Waiting for Godot* evolve into a more tangible drama of death and life in *Endgame*. The characters' struggle to limit their physical existence in order to live is depicted. The recurring motif of reduction indicates that when humans deteriorate into full self-annihilation, a new life emerges. They are always struggling to free themselves from the constraints of existence and reach the free soul through atrophy. The protagonist emphasizes the master figure of reduction immediately. He appears with a white, bloodied handkerchief covering his face, symbolically indicating that he is dead. The fact that the play's dialogue begins with the word 'finish' and ends with the 'remain' can also be interpreted as an allusion to the play's mystical central theme of annihilation and rebirth. In other words, it can be inferred that it is through finishing that you can remain. While the idea of annihilation and rebirth is implied in *Waiting for Godot* through symbolic images of suffering, reduction, endurance, and detachment followed by images of hope, *Endgame* portrays development towards a cyclical, ubiquitous reduction leading to rebirth. The main character, Hamm, announces "me to play" for a game that is already lost, revealing *Endgame*'s conscious approach to loss. The recurrent play of loss, like *Waiting*, acts as the play's central paralyzing agent. The dominant motif of evasion from the conscious ego is highlighted by Hamm's fanciful mind, which manifests itself in composing brief passages of a tale every day. In his non-being, Hamm's desire to unpeople the world is a metaphorical endeavor to diminish existence and so get closer to the source of being. In response to this, Ruby Cohn (1962) asserts: "to in-exist is divine." (156) She adds individuals can gain relief

through not-being. Hamm strives harder than the tramps in *Waiting for Godot* to falter near the end. The fact that everything in *Endgame* is gradually destroyed while the end is perpetually postponed demonstrates the maturing nature of waiting. Cohn finally concludes that "this faltering is not energetic and life-giving, it is towards taking life" (156). Here, faltering is a kind of annihilation done by creating more opportunities for loss and demolition. By reiterating the promise of the child messenger in *Waiting for Godot*, the unexpected realization of being tied to Godot [waiting] transformed the absurd existence into a meaningful and fruitful mission while the recurring faltering of the end in *Endgame* results in the appearance of a manifest rebirth. In other words, a manifest rebirth emerges in the concrete image of a child born among the ashes of non-existence, while the child messenger promises that Godot, the longed-for identity, will come tomorrow out of Hamm's recurring failing.

Hamm's ability to witness his own longed-for spiritual stasis and does not need anybody else to validate his existence is reflected in the fact that he no longer needs Clov: "It's the end, Clov, we've come to the end, I don't need you anymore" (49). What demonstrates Hamm's capacity to witness his long-awaited spiritual stasis without any need for anybody else to validate his existence. We may deduce from this that Hamm is finally conscious of his own being and no longer needs Clov's presence. Individuals can ultimately attain the primordial state of being, Non-existence, which is the complete annihilation of the self, after a long period of conscious deprivation and loss, to the unified whole. Despite the sudden self-recognition, Hamm's insistence on continuing to play the game of loss indicates the character's persistent desire to keep the experience of loss, the recurrent loss of the ego. Stopping the repetitive process of loss brings the questers back to the conscious ego they were searching for all along. The emergence of a new life may be seen in Hamm's recurrent repetition, "something is taking its course." According to McDonald (2006), *Endgame* is

"certainly a play about loss" (51). From the very beginning of the play, the greatest transgression is considered to be reproduction, and its source is restricted to garbage cans. The world in which they live is shown at its most impoverished and belated condition. The environment is desolate, and what remains outside is "all corpse" on the verge of expiration and death. A perfect withdrawal is represented in a picture on the wall inside the room. The characters confess that they don't mean anything as Hamm says: "We are not beginning to ...to ... mean something? Clov: Mean something? You are I, mean something! Ah, that is a good one!"(27) Such a lack of desire reveals the ego's complete expulsion from the spiritual world of meaning. While, in *Waiting for Godot*, the concept of being continually linked to Godot appears to provide some relief, implying reduction and partial dissociation from any action. *Endgame* depicts a conscious process of loss and incessant active inaction to take everything to an end. As a result, Metman (1960) comments that Hamm "turns the process of dying into an act of dying" in *Endgame* (134). Cohn's assessment of Beckett's plays reflects the character's progressive obsession with recurrent deprivation and loss: "The tramps keep waiting, Hamm keeps finishing" (156). The course of progression from waiting for Godot to *Endgame* is revealed by the character's process of continual loss, which results in the emergence of the quintessential self. In fact, the latent emergence of the new birth symbolized by the tree that grows in *Waiting for Godot* reflects Beckett's idea: "Man is ... a tree whose stem and leafage are an expression of an inward sap" (1931, 25). This idea highlights the growing illumination of the inner essence. In the barren world of *Endgame*, such growing illumination yields fruit in the image of new life. In *Endgame*, Metman states that the ultimate inner liberation is a precondition to the emergence of new birth, while in *Waiting for Godot*, such an obvious manifestation comes late since the inner release is constantly interrupted. Hamm's confession reveals the complete transmutation of the conscious ego to the unconscious world: "I was never there, Clov! ...I was never there ...Absent, always. It all

happened without me" (47). Here Hamm's absence indicates the total collapse of his ego, which had grown stronger as a result of continuous physical struggle and loss. This idea is confirmed when Hamm's final and lasting loss is followed by his upright and dignified position of remaining in the chair until the curtain falls. The absence of bicycle wheels, coffin, sugar-plums-pain-killer, pap, tide, navigator, or rug from the board reveals how successful Hamm has been in the play of loss. It reminds us of *Waiting for Godot's* second act, where Pozzo's belonging is lost.

The Jungian interpretation of the Theatre of the Absurd, in which the transmutation of the ego causes individuals to reach the spiritual world of the unconscious, is equally relevant to self-annihilating deeds that bring Beckett's characters to a higher degree of self-realization. The idea also corresponds to a Nietzschean interpretation of the Theatre of the Absurd, in which tragic suffering is joyfully welcomed by Dionysian individuals to achieve a higher self.

IV.5. Waiting and Death

The concept of time and "waiting for" occurs in each of the two plays I examine. In this sense, I attempt to deconstruct the Beckettian flow of time and show why it causes Beckett's characters suffering and tragic lasting between life and death. Time is their element, yet they are not suited to the long perspective that confronts them at each instant of their being. Beckett also plays, as we shall see, on the relativity of time: there are many levels to this structural element of his theatre. One very typical one, very briefly, is that of the nightmare of a time, that of a treadmill-present, empty of recall of the past or of anticipation of the future, of any sense of preparation behind or of consummation ahead. *Endgame*, for example, maybe interpreted as the final yet never-

ending moment of consciousness before death. Beckett's time has both qualities, as we shall see. Although generally, nothing happens in the theatre of Beckett, the fact that time passes while nothing happens is very important: psychological time may be at a standstill, the characters may seem to be outside time, yet physical time is passing, inexorably, relentlessly. "In the one movement is unidirectional, and a step forward represents a net advance: in the other movement is non-directional - or multi-directional, and a step forward is, by definition, a step back", "Hell is the static lifelessness of unrelieved viciousness ••• There is a continuous purgatorial process at work, in the sense that the vicious circle of humanity is being achieved, and this achievement depends on the recurrent predomination of one of two broad qualities ••• On this earth that is Purgatory ••• neither prize nor penalty; simply a series of stimulants to enable the kitten to catch its tail"¹⁴⁶(Rainey 1072). Time is perhaps the only reality in the world, the thing which is the most concrete, for it is equivalent to death.

The concept of waiting is itself a reductive means. So waiting "can have as consequence a consummation that provides a clear understanding of the self and its relation to the situation- a state of being free from the morbid transition of matter"(Ghosh 308). He also sees waiting as a proof of Godot whom he would think as the true self. He adds that, "waiting is a striving towards attainment of identification with the ultimate (Godot). (313)

Vladimir and Estragon are devotedly waiting for Godot, and they believe it is necessary to do so regardless of his identity or whether he will arrive or not. They find solace in the games they play while waiting, which serve as a distraction from the suffering that their uncertain waiting brings. They are relieved when they find a game to play. Vladimir finds Lucky's hat and, after a prolonged game of hat exchanging, declares, "Now our troubles are over"

¹⁴⁶ Rainey, Lawrence. *Modernism: An Anthology*. 1st ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2005.

(Godot 66—67). As a result, the games appear to keep them engaged and happy.

While waiting, the tramps strive to make sense of their existence, which they convey via their games. Humans are able to build their reality and meaning, according to Sartre, through interaction between the "for-itself" and the "in-itself," and then "for-others" (800). (as already seen in Chapter II) The reflective consciousness, according to Sartre, is how consciousness strives to become something: the "for-itself" is in order to be to itself what it is. (Sartre 806) Vladimir appears to be the one who most clearly symbolizes the consciousness of the "for-itself," since he is the one who can recall things, albeit in a limited way; he is the one who observes changes in the objects around them. He's the one who notices that the tree where they're waiting has sprouted leaves, leading Estragon to comment, "I see nothing" (Godot 61). The consciousness that is more linked to the "in-itself," on the other hand, is Estragon. He can't "see" and has no memory of previous events or objects, nor does he seem to care: "Vladimir: Do you not remember?" and "Estragon: I'm tired" (61). As a result of Vladimir's encouragement to "try and remember," he eventually does: "[With assurance] Yes, now I remember" (61). As a result, Estragon's consciousness is "for-itself" through "for-others," such as Vladimir.

After the motives and desires (i.e. the interactions between the "in itself") have been taken into consideration, St. John Butler argues that freedom becomes a fundamental part of these explanations, since I (the "for itself") may choose what I will do (76). In other words, one selects what values, beliefs, and actions to have and take, and so the choices "confer value," according to Sartre; the self is thus created, and becomes a "foundation of values" (Butler 76)

We can argue that Vladimir and Estragon are the knowers who see their world, not just by being mindless "in-itself," but by their awareness of the objects around them. Vladimir and Estragon build a foundation of values, a self, by choosing their actions and beliefs, such as

continuing to wait for Godot and playing games with one another, through their interaction between objects and one another. They should be free to make this choice, but they simply cannot. Vladimir and Estragon are aware of the possibility that Godot may come and save them, but they are aware that this is only a possibility, which is why they suffer. According to Sartre, it causes anguish (68). This anguish stems from the awareness that they must make a choice and that this choice will have repercussions. Sartre argues that one feels “anguish in the face of the future” since it has only “an undetermined future to offer” (68-69). And in the case of Vladimir and Estragon, since their future is undetermined, they might therefore use distracting games not just to create meaning, but also to escape this anguish.

VLADIMIR: No no! [*He reflects.*] We could start all over again perhaps.

ESTRAGON: That should be easy.

VLADIMIR: It's the start that's difficult.

ESTRAGON: You can start from anything.

VLADIMIR: Yes, but you have to decide.

ESTRAGON: True.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR: Help me!

ESTRAGON: I'm trying.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR: When you seek you hear.

ESTRAGON: You do.

VLADIMIR: That prevents you from finding.

ESTRAGON: It does.

VLADIMIR: That prevents you from thinking.

ESTRAGON: You think all the same.

VLADIMIR: No no, it's impossible.

ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's contradict each another.

(Godot 59)

This illustration demonstrates that Vladimir and Estragon do not have "bad faith," as defined by Sartre. Bad faith is the result of a conscious "for-itself" is trying to avoid the responsibilities of freedom by trying to change into an object of "in-itself" who refuses to acknowledge his freedom (Sartre 800). Since humans are conscious, it is simply impossible for a being of "for-itself" to become an object; hence, it is a lie (800). They are able to divert themselves from the anguish of their choices through the exchanges between Vladimir and Estragon, but yet avoid "bad faith" since they do not deny them. They avoid becoming simply "objects of waiting" by being conscious of their choice; the diversions are only there to help them in coping with the decision to wait for Godot—and all the unknown consequences it entails—rather than to reject its implications. Although Vladimir and Estragon consciously choose what to do and be, and therefore create meaning via the waiting for Godot, they may be aware of what they have acquired. This is why they have to reaffirm their need for Godot on a routine basis.

Butler says that the self encompasses all aspects of oneself, and that "happiness is what "I" am feeling" (88). Vladimir and Estragon declare that they are happy, and so they, therefore, become happy (Godot 56). As a result, they can conclude that the "I" is happy. They also come to the conclusion that the best thing they can do now that they are happy is to wait for Godot. Waiting, then, seems to be an important factor in the creation of meaning and self.

When Vladimir's decisive fortitude leads to another moment of manifestation, productive endurance comes into view once more. That's why, after waiting, a new birth emerges as Vladimir announces that the tree is sprouting immediately after his delightful explanation about waiting "...Wait ...we embraced...we were happy...happy...what do we do now that we're happy...go on waiting...waiting...let me think...it's coming...go on waiting ...now that we're happy...let me see...ah! The tree!" (439)

Vladimir's ecstatic waiting as perseverance is followed by his unexpected illumination, symbolized by the sprouting of the leaves; the relationship illustrates how fruitful the diminishing agony of endurance is. Hesla claims that the green leaves signify "life and rebirth, and a 'comic' view" (Hesla 145). This idea, however, may be erroneous. "Everything's dead but the tree," Vladimir notes, which should imply at least a glimmer of hope, but instead represents a dark and twisted sense of salvation (WFG 349). But for Beckett, even if living is placed in doubt, there is still the optimistic attempt to examine the self. In an ultimate sense, the phenomenon of self inhabiting a space that alters in form, color, and light according to some preordained design reduces itself to a condition of waiting. Waiting involves enduring, filling in the hours and noting their passage, suffering the boredom which the living seems to require. Near the play's end, Vladimir puts the question of "waiting" quite frankly and eloquently. Waiting equals existing within a time scheme that permits none of the comforts of eternity.

Waiting is the crucial experience of the Beckett character. It involves enduring the world's nonsense, its absurdity, without clear hope of immediate or direct help. The world is charged with mortality: the grave-digger applies the forceps, Death succeeds to life, which succeeds to death. Act Two succeeds Act One as irrevocably and monotonously as Gogo and Didi can predict each other's gestures and eccentricities.

Waiting is a solemn and dreadful obligation; it is the succession of expected events that form the heart of the experience. Like all other Beckett characters, Gogo and Didi must not only "fill time" but assert and prove existence, ally themselves forcefully with other existing beings. The dangers of nonexistence forever threaten, and they are even a temptation. *Waiting for Godot* says, Jean Jacques Mayoux:

"is on one level a dialectic of suicide, for to wait is to live. Suicide thus appears as a rational decision that should have been undertaken after the very first awareness of the absurdity of life. Once caught up in the waiting, however, no instant of time can ever be decisive again." (Tennyson 386)

Waiting is, therefore, a Rendition of man; it involves an acceptance both of death and of life. It has repressed all types of action in *Waiting for Godot*, and in doing so, the regressive process has reinforced the death-wish, as evidenced by the tramps' gradual reference to suicide.

Vladimir and Estragon become tired of waiting and contemplate hanging themselves from a nearby willow tree. However, they do not, and as long as they exist, they must continue to talk. The two appear to talk out of some compulsion to communicate, as shown in the following dialogue.

VLADIMIR: Say something!

ESTRAGON: I'm trying.

Long Silence.

VLADIMIR: (in anguish) Say anything at all!

ESTRAGON: What do we do now?

VLADIMIR: Wait for Godot.

ESTRAGON: Ah! (63)

Among the many things Gogo and Didi, Hamm, and Clov have in common is that they wish to leave their situation which, can be compared to hell¹⁴⁷, and go. This is what Estragon keeps suggesting, whereupon Vladimir reminds him: "We're waiting for Godot." At the end of both acts, Vladimir indeed agrees to go, but "They do not move." Clov, from the beginning, wants it to end. Ending for him would also mean leaving Hamm. At one point, Hamm straightforwardly tells him to be off. Clov does not move but just "heaves a great groaning sigh." Hamm reminds him: "I thought I told you to be off." Clov replies, "I'm trying ... Ever since I was whelped." (18) Although Hamm and Clov wish their life to end or, at least, their present situation to end, they stay where they are and go on, living similar to Vladimir and Estragon, who decide to go but do not move.

The idea of hanging isn't put into action until late in the second act when they each take a piece of the cord and pull it. They've discovered that the more they shrink, the more certain Godot's coming is. The tramps' specific strategy of waiting and the continual surrender of life, on the other hand, is evidenced by their constant delay of suicide, even when on the verge of doing so. This clears the way so that the possibility of transfiguring grace, which, as Vladimir argues, leads to the manifestation of a higher self, is no longer possible. "I'll fall all of a sudden... (447)

The death-wish is an extension of the tramps' conscious commitment to the suppressive nature of waiting. Vladimir represents the ongoing process of loss this way: "We wait. We are bored... We are bored to death.... all will vanish, and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness!" (459) The recurring juxtaposition of beginning and end, as well as womb and tomb counterpoint images, reveal the symbolic disclosure of this kind of gradual regression, which is supposed to abort in the manifestation of an authentic self.

¹⁴⁷ When Hamm has Clov drive him around in his armchair, he lays his hand against the wall of their room and says: "Old wall! (*Pause.*) Beyond is ... the other hell." (23)

"Life and death are compounded in a polar relation, at the very heart of phenomena related to life," according to Lacan's theory. (81, Lacan and Wilden) He is suggesting that suicide cannot end in the manifestation of the authentic self since it breaks the natural law, as birth is not a choice. Thus, despite their final attempt towards physical loss, the tramps postpone hanging themselves once more because the manifestation of the authentic self depends on the recurrent process of loss and not the sudden termination of life. In the same way that Vladimir and Estragon contemplate suicide but do not do so in *Waiting for Godot*, Hamm and Clov do not separate in *Endgame*.

In a nutshell, the tramps inability to hang themselves, as well as their inability to stop waiting for Godot, indicates the possibility that waiting for Godot may be the same as death. That there isn't any other choice. Godot's reality, and their waiting for him, provides the foundation for their consciousness, self, and meaning. They will never be able to overthrow their reality.

IV.6. Timelessness and The Subject/Object

Beckett's essay on Proust sheds light on the mechanics of time and perspective in both Beckett's and Proust's writings. Beckett begins with a reference to Proust's "perspectivism" before delving into "that double-headed monster of damnation and salvation—Time" (p. 1). He examines how desire interacts with time to obstruct one's perspective of other people and oneself, a theme that Proust and Beckett both address. He claims that the self and its desires vary through time and, as a result, can never be identical to the objects pursued, by claiming the dilemma of the subject-object relationship when he outlines the solution Proust proposes in *A la recherche du temps perdu*: ". . . The aspirations of yesterday were valid for yesterday's ego, not for today's. We are disappointed at the nullity of what we are pleased to call

attainment. But what is attainment? The identification of the subject with the object of his desire? The subject has died—and perhaps many times—on the way. (P.13-14) Man, according to Proust, is a creature of habit who is immersed in time and space. Life is a series of agreements that this subject makes with the objective world. Treaties, or patterns of habit, keep partnerships stable and make life bearable, although tedious. However, a change in the spatial environment or the passage of time, which affects both subject and object (and does not follow any system of synchronization), inevitably disrupts the status quo and brings the subject into painful, though possibly also joyful and fruitful, contact with authentic being. The habitual or surface self dies several times over the course of a lifetime, giving way to a new self, comforted and comfortable in its newly ordered and now familiar context, following each painful phase of transition. In each case, the subject's "total consciousness [is] organized to avert the disaster, to create the new habit that will empty the mystery of its threat—and also of its beauty". In this tension between time and stasis, being and habit, it is not difficult to rediscover the dualism that separates reality into microcosm and macrocosm, depth and surfaces—the latter under the sign of conceptual reason. Desire moves us from our current circumstances to a time and space that does not exist yet or does not exist any longer. We may experience and view ourselves as whole creatures fixed solidly in a changeless spatiotemporal reality without the need for desire. And because their desires drive them from one undefinable, uninhabitable space and time to another, whose limits are similarly ambiguous, and which comes no closer to satisfying their need than the space and time they have just left, Beckett's characters are never completely "there" or "here" as seen near the end of *Endgame*, when Hamm announces to Clov: "I was never there" (p. 74). Yet it is desire, or, as Beckett puts it "the absolute predicament of particular human identity." Compare these statements to Sartre's description of desire: "L'homme est fondamentalement désir d'être..... La réalité humaine est désir d'être-en-soi." (Sartre 625) Sartre's atemporal être-en-soi is as impossible a

goal for human consciousness as the liberation of desire to which Beckett's characters aspire. Time is an impediment for Sartre, as it is for Beckett and Proust: "... C'est bien le temps qui me sépare . . . de la réalisation de mes désirs. . . . Sans la succession des "après," je serais tout de suite ce que je veux être, il n'y aurait plus de distance entre moi et moi." (Gerhard 215) Therefore, "... Le temps me sépare de moi-même, de ce que j'ai été, de ce que je veux être, de ce que je veux faire, des choses et d'autrui. (Sartre 170) Only in an extra-temporal and extra spatial dimension that is not subject to change could objects remain still long enough for us to see them as they are, not as they have been or are becoming: "La chose immobile dans le vide, voilà enfin la chose visible, l'objet pur. Je n'en vois pas d'autre." (Ost 38) Only then, in a state of timelessness and spacelessness, could we stop the flow of desire within us that propels our attention from one ephemeral object to another. For Beckett, the self's desire to perceive its own identity as a changeless essence, to add up the unconnected seconds of its days to make a living it can call its own, to salvage the fragments of its existence and integrate them into a comprehensible whole is thwarted by time's movement, from which there is no escape. Such a feat is only feasible in a realm where time as we know it does not exist, and such a domain is as illusory as the basic self that we all yearn to see. According to Bergson this basic self, is "ce moi réel et libre, qui est en effet étranger à l'espace. . . . [et] que nous apercevons . . . toutes les fois que, par un vigoureux effort de réflexion, nous détachons les yeux de l'ombre qui nous suit pour rentrer en nous-mêmes." (Henri Bergson 152) The world, as a projection of the self's consciousness, evolves every day: "the world being a projection of the individual's consciousness... The creation of the world did not take place once and for all time but takes place every day" (p. 8). The Proustian solution to the problem of time is described by Beckett as "the identification of immediate with past experience" (p. 55), or the workings of "involuntary memory" (p. 19), which allow "the communicant... [to be] for the moment an extra-temporal being" (p. 56). Time and death are conquered by such an

experience: "The Proustian solution lies... in the denial of Time and Death, the latter being the negation of the former. Death is no longer alive because Time is no longer alive" (p. 56).

Proust's involuntary memory, on the other hand, is by definition an unintentional occurrence that cannot be induced by the will.

Thus, the self is shattered and stretched throughout time, according to Beckett's early essay's pessimistic philosophy (heavily influenced by nineteenth-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer), and is better understood as a succession of selves. Desire moves promiscuously to another potential attainment after one aim or drive is fulfilled. It can't be satisfied in the end: "whatever the object, our thirst for possession is, by definition, insatiable" (P, p.17). The rest of life becomes a fruitless, forward-looking wait for a Godot who never comes.

In his essay on Proust, Beckett had spoken about the relationship between habit and the act of "suffering" time. Vladimir says, "Habit is a great deadener." And what is the suffering of being to which Beckett refers? He defines it as "the free use of every faculty"¹⁴⁸. As a result, a habit is a useful tool that man employs to restrict his perceptions.

Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is designed off-balance where we do have that special anxiety associated with question marks preceded and followed by nothing. Time, habit, memory, and games from the texture of the play and provide both its literary and theatrical interest. In Proust, Beckett speaks of habit and memory in a way that helps us understand Godot. Didi knows everything and wishes he didn't because he realizes he knows nothing and sees that habit is the ultimate deadener in obtaining an ironic point of view towards himself.

On the other hand, physical blindness is used by Beckett to represent man's deliberate efforts, to screen out the reality of things as they are. Both enchantment and pain arise from

¹⁴⁸ Beckett, Proust, p. 9.

being fully present in an encounter with all its facilities. Beckett describes this experience of authenticity as follows:

"Enchantments of Reality" has a paradoxical air...when the object is perceived as particular and unique and not merely the member of a family, when it appears independent of any general notion and detached from the sanity of a cause, isolated and inexplicable in the light of ignorance, then and then only may it be a source of enchantment."¹⁴⁹

These moments of enchantment are rare in Beckett's theater, but they do occur, such as Vladimir's realization that the formerly bare tree now has four leaves. The overall tone of Beckett's characters' lives is one of extreme boredom. They create an existence of incredible banality for themselves, seeking security in habit and routine so that the occurrence of any unexpected event such as Estragon's finding new boots or Clov's discovering a flea—becomes the day's outstanding event. Ironically, their escape from the "suffering of being" to the safety of habit has not reduced their pain. Theirs, on the other hand, is the pain of boredom that is innate in inauthentic existence. As for the suffering, Beckett states: "The pendulum oscillates between these two terms; Suffering—that opens a window on the real and is the main condition of artistic experience, and...Boredom must be considered as the most tolerable because the most durable of human evils."¹⁵⁰

When Pozzo and Lucky leave the first time, the shouting and the crying have gone once again, **Vladimir** says: "That passed the time."

Estragon: It would have passed in any case.

Vladimir: Yes, but not so rapidly.

Pause.

Estragon: What do we do now?

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Vladimir: I don't know.

Estragon: Let's go.

Vladimir: We can't.

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot. [310]

The situation of Godot is a dreadful void, an emptiness, a wearisome threat of boredom, a desperate need to "fill in the holes of time." The time, moreover, proceeds in a straight line toward death. Next day. Same time. Same place. The motifs of repetition seal the dreary fate. The round song of the dog in the kitchen is available for endless repetition, and it serves Vladimir to fill in a dread space of loneliness until Estragon arrives on the second day. (37-37(1)).

The play's central assumption is that existential time inevitably leads to death. Boredom and desperate measures to give it meaning, or just to "pass the time," exist within its passing. Pozzo undergoes an education in time. He lives by his watch in Act I, but by Act II, he has lost his watch along with his sight and, if he is to be believed, his "notion of time." Enraged by Didi's questions, he offers the clue to understanding this blank perspective on experience: "Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! ...One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (Godot 57) However, he explodes into a meaningful notion, summarizing the situation of finite man in an infinite universe: "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more." He's making a broad generalization about humanity's fate which symbolizes that life is merely a fleeting "instant," and that death is the unavoidable conclusion. When one's entire existence is condensed into a single moment, time becomes

quite meaningless. Within this span of time, this lifetime, this day, this second, the Beckett hero is beset by boredom and pain.

Later, Vladimir repeats Pozzo's keywords—astride, grave, birth—with a new nuance, that of time becomes a habit. Much of the play dramatizes habitual routines, repetitions that stretch and flatten time to an eventless continuum. Day and night, fall and spring, coming and going, and all the little games are easily absorbed into this continuum.

More frequently than in *Godot*, time is stretched through oppositions— morning-evening, light-dark, first-last, end-beginning. Rather than waiting for an ambiguous Godot, Hamm has himself to decide continuation or annihilation: "It's time it ended," he realizes in his opening speech, "and yet I hesitate to—he yawns—to end." His choice is between a slow death and a quick one—for flea, rat, and the few remaining human beings.

When Vladimir in Act I of *Godot* declares that time has stopped, Pozzo protests. In *Endgame* no one actually makes that declaration, but all four characters feel it. There is no discrepancy of perspective, no argument about *longueur*. Hamm asks Clov for the time and weather, and the answer is: "The same as usual." Hamm is "tired," and Clov is "tired of our goings-on, very tired." Hamm yawns through his first soliloquy—an infectious action; having just gotten up, he is ready for bed. There is no meaning in awakening him since there is nothing to wake up for. Sleep is obviously better for him since, instead of awakening to the misery of the present, he is confronted with happy memories from the past, something that these individuals can only find in dreams.

Hamm: [Wearily.] Quiet, you're keeping me awake

[Pause] Talk softer. [Pause] if I could sleep I
might make love. I'd go into the woods.

My eyes would see...the sky, the earth".

(Endgame, p.100)

Everyone seems older than in *Godot*; the word "old" tolls heavily. Sight and hearing are dim for Nagg and Nell; the latter loses her pulse and "looks like" dead. Hamm implies that his heart is dead. Clov has shrunk, and his legs ache. There is no life outside the shelter; the very waves are lead, and the sun is zero, whatever that may mean. Hamm asks Clov: "Do you not think this has gone on long enough?" And the answer is a resounding: "Yes!"

As Vladimir says: "Extraordinary the tricks that memory plays!" (p. 33). Ironically, Beckett would agree with Coleridge: "The act of consciousness is indeed identical with time considered in its essence."

Endgame depicts four characters who are trapped in a room in a post-apocalyptic world. Hamm, a sort of master, is blind; Nagg and Nell, Hamm's legless parents, are confined to ashbins; and Clov, Hamm's helper/servant, wishes to go but is unable to.

The entire drama hinges upon Clov's possible departure, which would "end" the "game" performed between the characters by rendering Hamm unable to care for himself or his parents. Midway through the performance, Hamm inquires as to when Clov last oiled the chair's castors, to which Clov answers, "yesterday."

"Yesterday!" exclaims Hamm. "What does that mean? Yesterday! (*Endgame* 43).

However, Hamm can pass the time by reminiscing about happier times. Hamm:
There's no cure for that. (*Endgame*, p.118)

So, despite the attempts, he is unable to reach the state of timelessness in which he can find his inner essence, his true self.

However, in the dire situation of the scene, to concede and separate would be the equivalent of death. As a result, the characters continue to talk because they must; otherwise, they will die. While there is nothing to express, one must continue to do so since to cease would be a recognition of an invitation to death, as described by Beckett. Hamm and Clov are both waiting for death to free them. Death is everywhere, but they are not allowed to see the

end. Man's agony is perpetuated by circular time, and he is denied a final death. Hamm includes the audience in his agony by throwing his whistle toward them.

In the case of *Endgame*, we find many endings (no more painkillers or bicycle wheels, the rat and the flea are killed, Nell dies) but this only highlights the situation of Hamm, and who is somehow clinging on, beyond time, after all the other deaths, waiting in timelessness for nothing. The leaves suddenly germinated by the Godot tree fulfill the same function, they are a parody of development, of a time in motion that the stasis of the play's action mocks... The only sort of positive time in Beckett is just that condition of authentic temporality stressed by Heidegger, as we have already seen (in Chapter II), Being-towards death. But in Beckett, it is no cause for rejoicing. The whole matter is summed up in Pozzo's celebrated outburst towards the end of *Godot*: "Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! ...When!..., one day like any other day, ... he went dumb, ... I went blind, ...one day we'll go deaf, one day ...we were born, one day... we shall die, the same day, the same second... is that not enough ..?" "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more." (WFG, 89)

Here are all the elements. Being either infinite or infinitesimal, so Pozzo can say that life adds up to one second, On the other hand, Pozzo is also aware of the Heideggerian thesis that time for Dasein depends on finitude, Being-towards-an-end, so his examples of 'when', of 'days', are all examples of endings, the ending of speech, sight, hearing. This is just Beckett's usual addition to Heidegger - the conditions, even of authentic existence, are hell.

In both plays, on the line of the quest for the self, trying to kill the time, the time has deteriorated their selves, the precious possession they are unaware of. It has deteriorated their faculties. They face alarming incomprehensible predicaments.

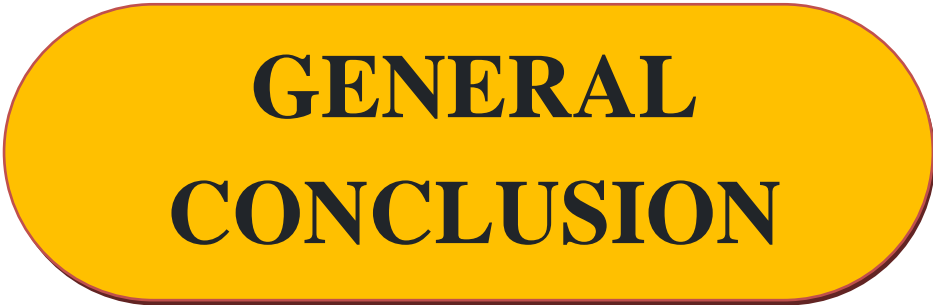
Conclusion

In a nutshell, one can come up with the idea that Beckett's characters are always waiting for the future "their ruinous consolations being that there is always tomorrow; they never realize that today is today. In this, says Beckett, they are like humans, which dawdles and drivels away its life"¹⁵¹. All of the characters are merely trying to pass the time. Nagg and Nell try to fill their days with routines, memories, and illusions. Hamm spends the time while waiting for his death by recalling distant memories of the past, while Clov, in turn, follows Hamm's orders as a way of passing the time. Clov and Lucky play the same roles as Estragon, but Hamm, more than Estragon, is on the verge of timelessness; the end is nearer yet far removed. Beckett has made his characters in a way that if we comment on them, we comment on ourselves. He has made them play in such a way as to show that ordinary people are doing the same things, obsessed by the misery of life - that brief moment - that flash of light between the tomb and the womb. The pursuit of the self outside time becomes an endless, hopeless task because time will not stop. Although his characters face eventually failure in achieving their real selves, they impressively manifest the "existence of the individual as well as the absurdity of human condition"¹⁵². They get close to the self; to that infinite reality, that inner life, but can never attain it. Beckett's characters spend their time talking, dancing, singing, a kind of routine to forget that they are waiting for Godot who may never come, and this has become a habit that Beckett describes as 'the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects' (Beckett, 1999, p. 19).

Beckett's plays are just plays about dying species which provide roles for actors to exercise a diapason of skills, and we can recognize ourselves through their skills.

¹⁵¹ Hobson, Harold, Sunday Times, 1955, p.11

¹⁵² Nichole, Ehlers(2007): "The Failed Search for Self-Identity in Krapp's Last Tape", p.5, www.jmu.edu/writeon/docs/2008/Ehlers.pdf, retrieved in May 2010

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**GENERAL
CONCLUSION**

General Conclusion

The more fundamental problem faced when reading Beckett's drama is the problem of how to understand it when it leaves us no opening into its inner meaning, leaves us wondering if it is indeed intended to have any, but certainly provides us with none of the usual keys with which to open the door of interpretation.

To read Beckett is to break with our reality, to abandon our daily and familiar world, with its habits, its landmarks, its certainties, and its small consolations to venture into a resolutely another world, not very human and too human at the same time. Bodies are invariably fragmented or paralyzed, minds disturbed or disruptive, logorrhea is as threatening as silence, great loneliness remains inexplicable and, finally, death is omnipresent. A dark world, upside down, but a world that strangely resembles ours to the point where one could say that Beckettian writing plays at developing the "negative" of our world, - a term taken in the photographic sense. By mobilizing and challenging the reader's fantasies and anxieties in this way, Beckett is one of those great artists who, in Winnicott's terms, "a l'aptitude et le courage de garder le contact avec des processus primitifs que la plupart d'entre-nous ne peuvent plus supporter d'atteindre"¹⁵³

In Beckett's drama, the only point of view available to the dramatist and the audience is as limited as the characters'; we journey with them through the fragmented time and space that makes up their universe, and while we may see them from a different perspective than they do, our vision is no more reliable or stable than theirs. Because we're watching individuals wander aimlessly through the same undefinable, formless time and space that we do; there are no others in our era. In the theater, as everywhere, space between subject and

¹⁵³ Cf. D.D.Winnicott, « Nosographie: y a-t-il une contribution de la psychanalyse à la classification psychiatrique ? », cité par Anne Clancier, Jeannine Kalmanovitch, *Le Paradoxe de Winnicott*, Paris: Payot, 1984, p.49. L'article se trouve dans D.D.Winnicott, *Processus de Maturation chez l'enfant* (1965). Trad. J. Kalmanovitch, Paris: Payot, 1970, p.93-114.

object is required for perspective vision. When boundaries are hazy and continually eroding, "here" and "there," "now" and "then" get muddled; continuous movement, or "déplacement," which is a key feature of Beckett's (and our) notion of space and time, obstructs perception, which requires stability. In his theater, Beckett has undoubtedly profoundly broken with classical unities in order to produce visions of a new form of time and space. His plays, on the other hand, have been dubbed "classical" in their own right. This is true not because Beckett adheres to classical theatrical esthetics, but because he has developed new techniques that allow him to portray a fragmented, fluctuating, and unseeable universe in a unified and esthetically satisfying dramatic form, techniques that are more relevant to the imagination of his twentieth-century audience.

Beckett's world of flattened summits, of a universal diminuendo, of sordid despairs, we have all encountered something like it before, in our off moments, our nightmares, our fears. Each play is a world, the only world of the hour, of the evening in the theater or the study. And none of them are much like the others: *Endgame* isn't just another *Godot*, and *Happy Days* isn't another *Endgame*. Despite this, we are confronted with the same world in each play. Each play thus conveys the discomfort of a slow, uninterrupted, and endless gravitation. They betray only too distinctly a spirit now heavy but trying desperately to be light. They register as the hollowness of spirit that the years have purified into an unwitting profundity: a pure expression of the Beckettian truth that being and nothingness are coordinates.

The particular unity of Beckett's plays is formed by images of entrapment, circularity, inertia, and gravity interlocking with one another. Together they configure a philosophy; they incarnate the principles of a world. Circularity, together with repetition, expresses the inherent absence of a future; inertia, the essential impotency of man, his apathy and longing anticipation of death. Beckett's world, is a world in ebb, a shriveled, twilight world that has no

part in the light of day. Even if living is jeopardized, Beckett maintains an optimistic attempt to examine the self. Even the structure of Beckett's plays screams entropy. Thus in Act II of *Godot*, the four main characters fall down more often than before; and not only is Pozzo newly blind, but hope is still further deferred. As for *Endgame*, it finally arrives at some "end" (we can scarcely say what).

Falling, dying, going round in circles, stalling, standing entrapped? Beckett has created a monochrome but haunting drama about the emptiness of human existence out of these and other negative motifs. What matters is that Beckett has the great artist's power to shape a new and compelling world. As a bonus, he offers us the assurance that even absolute sterility can become poetry to the mind. And if this is an assurance that we scarcely dared to wish for, it is not a contemptible gift to have.

While Beckett abandoned the traditional dramatic perspective because of his loss of faith in the world order that made such a perspective possible, he had to discover new techniques to connect the elements of his drama. For even if it presents a vision of a fragmented, diminishing, invisible, aimless universe and of humanity that finds neither place nor identity in it, it does so in a very formalized, controlled and systematic way. His drama indeed depicts the "disorder" in which we all exist, and yet he succeeds, if not in giving meaning to the objects of his representation, at least in endowing them with a form. Beckett has realized a new vision, one might even say a new perspective, to link the fragments of his dramatic universe into a tightly structured and aesthetically pleasing whole. It exploits all the various ways in which theatre can appeal to the senses and imagination of its audiences, creating visual and sonic echoes that resonate deeply in the hearts and minds of its audience.

However, although Beckett's meticulous craftsmanship and dramatic genius produce highly unified works, he leaves no doubt that what is depicted is a world where vision is impossible, due to the continuous movement in time and space that infects all its inhabitants,

whether they are observers or not. Beckett rejects the classic technique of using an external and omniscient point of view to organize the elements of his drama. Instead, he forces his viewers to adopt the mobile and partial vision of his characters. As his work progressed, he moved the audience away from the concrete, stable reality and stage space, and deeper into the abstract, fluctuating the space of his characters' minds, where we join them in their compulsive, but unsuccessful attempts to reach, see and express their ever-changing inner being.

Samuel Beckett as an absurdist playwright primarily aims to portray the change that occurred in human value and nature after world wars. The characters of his plays are a sample of mankind alienated, desperate, and paralyzed. They have a belief in the need for any salvation to spare them misery. In doing so they lose the meaning of life, time, choice, and faith. They struggle in forgetting their past, but their presence keeps on drawing the same image over again. *Waiting For Godot* and *Endgame* express the living conditions of people after world wars, out of contact with God. It shows their effort to get rid of that through waiting for salvation, in which waiting is more like the significance of their existence. In doing so, Beckett highlights the question of self and existence, he shows the importance of self-consciousness and actualization. The latter author presents his characters in form of duality Vladimir and Estragon as friends waiting infinitely for Godot, and Pozzo and lucky as the master and slave passing by Vladimir and Estragon. The two main characters spend significant time and effort waiting for the unknown Godot. They do not know where they are or why they are waiting for Godot and who is Godot. Uncertainty comes from inside of them as they are uncertain of themselves, and goes around them as they are uncertain of their environment and destination. They hang their hope and wishes on meeting Godot as if their existence is determined with that. While they are waiting they depend on each other as if their existence side by side is compulsory for meeting Godot. It becomes clear here that their selves

are not enough for them to determine their choice and decision for they see the option of leaving but they cannot perform it due to the uncertainty of results. These characters may appear silly since the meaninglessness of their self and existence is rooted inside of them. This reflects the self-actualization in which existence is a matter of what a person makes of himself for one is responsible for who is, and it sounds silly to wait for a purpose rather than making it. Thus, if Vladimir and Estragon could ever figure out their need of owning themselves first, they would break the circle of empty and meaningless waiting. Adding to that they lose their identity each time they lose their memory. This shows the importance of circumstances and time in shaping identity, since they live with no past and memory, they lose the real person they are. Moreover, it is like Beckett wants to convey the fact that standing helpless and being meaningless never serve in meeting Godot despite the beliefs. Therefore, God is with those who own themselves, and if Godot represents hope, truth, or even salvation, Vladimir and Estragon should seek it inside of the first. The other duality is made up of Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo as the master who fulfills his thirst for power by enslaving Lucky puts himself superior for the fact that he dominates Lucky. However, deep down he is a slave of himself, since Lucky thinks and acts in his place. He is the one that depends mostly on Lucky. Lucky at least knows his social entity as a slave and owns himself. At the turning point of the play, Pozzo becomes definitely dependent on his slave, since he turns to a blind person, in each movement needs Lucky to guide him. On the other hand, Lucky gets his absolute freedom and completes his self owning by turning into a dumb person, therefore he does not receive orders anymore. As if Beckett wants to show the role of action, circumstances, and timing in determining one's self. Most importantly, the inner world of a person dominates his choices, actions, and decisions. Therefore, if these characters find their self worth , they could put an end to their sufferance and infinite waiting , as the existence and meaning of life is primarily attached to the power of self .

Beckett's characters inhabit a purgatorial world which is an anguished world of their minds, and we do not have to read very far into Beckett's works to recognize therein some aspect of our own condition, for the plays are dramatic illustrations of the plight of modern man, of his being in time, and in space, of his confusion and his anguish. They are involved in situations that are devised to cope with 'what to do. They are out of time to the extent that the dimensionality of time, the sequence of past, present, and future, and the dimensionality of their selves, the sequence of remote, more recent, and present selves, has for them lost almost all meaning. The result of time losing its dimensionality is that one has the sensation of time expanding and contracting at the same instance: expanding towards endlessness, and decelerating as it does so, and contracting towards simultaneity, and accelerating as it does so.

For Beckett, the human being does not occupy a stable and privileged point in space and time where he can visually organize, make sense of, and establish relationships with other beings and objects. Instead, he finds himself adrift in his vague and undefined field of vision where the objects he is looking at appear, then disintegrate, combine, then separate, approach, then fade away unpredictably. The subjects themselves are victims of the same instability, in which they question their own existence and form not as often as they question the world around them. Indeed, the very boundary between self and world is an object of great confusion and speculation. However, the sense of existence and self-definition can only be derived from a certain relatedness to the external world since human identity is intrinsically involved in a fundamental need to be separate but related.

In his early works, Beckett often portrays his characters' movement through the space and time of their earthly existence. Sometimes, and most frequently, their journey takes place at least nominally in geographical space, for example in *Waiting for Godot*: Pozzo and Lucky are going to the fair. All of these journeys, however, may be read as descents into the inner consciousness. In the Beckettian space, all is in motion, no one can escape from its confines,

the self imprisoned in space and time perceives its various parts as foreign objects, fragments created by the mobility of that space and time. Wherever one wanders in Beckett's universe, one still, paradoxically, encounters the same flux, uncertainty, and invisibility, though, the self is never the same from one moment to the next, and space and time are never stable enough for permitting vision. The Beckettian inward journeys thus prove to be no more fruitful than movement towards a goal in the external world where they wind up resembling the "vicious circle" of the Joycean purgatory once described by Beckett:

In the one movement is unidirectional, and a step forward represents a net advance: in another movement is non-directional - or multi-directional, and a step forward is, by definition, a step back ... Hell is the static lifelessness of unrelieved viciousness ...

There is a continuous purgatorial the process at work, in the sense that the vicious circle of humanity is being achieved, and this achievement depends on the recurrent predomination of one of two broad qualities. (Bénéjam 21-22)

Beckett describes life as a closed cylinder where there is nothing but moving and resting, no names, no voices, no stories, no reasons... His characters never catch up with themselves, neither in space nor in time, Just as the kitten who can never catch his tail, and so, although in general nothing happens in Beckett's theater, the fact that time passes when nothing is happening is very important: psychological time may be at a standstill, where characters may seem out of time, and yet physical time passes, inexorably, implacably.

The inescapable time and space bar us from satisfying our ardent desire for another, it is, paradoxically, the predicament of desire that calls earthly time and space into being. To desire means, at one and the same time, "to long or hope for" and "to feel the loss of" (Albert Flocon, and Rene Taton 129).

Just as the perpetual, unsynchronized motion of time and desire keep us from being ourselves in the present, so the fluctuations of space preclude our experiencing what Heidegger termed the “Dasein” or “being there”.

”Beckett’s characters are never fully “there” nor “here,” because their desires take them from one undefinable, uninhabitable place and time to another. And the only one that could satisfy their need is the space and time they have just left. As Hamm announces to Clov in *Endgame*: “I was never there”(p.74).

Jane Alison Hale claims :

“Just as the creation of the world takes place every day, so the birth of the self is not one definitive event delimited by identifiable temporal/spatial boundaries, but a continual process which is over the moment it has begun and therefore without beginning or end.” (Hale 26.)

As human beings, we can be transported out of our present situation to a time and space which are not yet or not more by such concept called desire. Without desire, we could live fully in our present; we could experience and perceive ourselves as complete beings firmly anchored in an immutable spatiotemporal dimension and as Beckett states, desire is: "that absolute predicament of particular human identity" (Janson 175

The intertextuality of Beckett's work gives his audience the impression to enter a world from which there may be no way out. Characters, situations, movements, images, language, concepts, and technical procedures frequently recur, in slightly modified forms, within each play as well as from one work to another. The resonances produced in viewers' memories by this subtle, complex, and pervasive repetition help explain why the experience of seeing and listening to Beckett's works becomes richer and more evocative as one is exposed to them.

Confronting each new Beckettian creation, one has the impression of entering an echo chamber and/or a room of mirrors, where one can expect to encounter a series of sounds and sights that are already somewhat familiar from previous experiences but presented in a slightly different way than before. Beckett makes full use of language, situations, and images that are rich with meanings derived not only from his own work but also from everyday life and the vast body of Western literature with which he is so familiar. The effect of all this repetition, with variations, is to make us feel that we almost recognize what we perceive, but that we can never really grasp it because it is not exactly the same as what we saw or heard last time. So we are led to the same perceptual difficulties as Beckett's characters: the inability to fix images and sounds in such a way as to be able to identify them with certainty in a world whose fluctuations of time and space keep them in constant motion, modifying them just enough to make them different from what we expected to encounter, but never enough to separate them into definable, perceptible and expressible entities. Another way Beckett induces perceptual disorientation in his audience is his intensive use of the technique of the play within a play, of a story within a story, or of a film within a film. In this respect, his drama is truly Pirandellian in its exploration of the boundaries between life and art, drawing his characters and the audience into a mental labyrinth from which there is no problem. His work is intensely reflective: the characters, as well as the plays, reveal an acute awareness of themselves as works of art. The characters' search for perception and self-expression reproduces the artist's incessant quest for vision and form. There is a certain link between the search for self and the artistic process. The self-conscious form of his drama corresponds perfectly to the nature of the process he aims to convey. The structure of Beckett's language is another formal device that conveys the notion of an endless universe where time and space are circular, as opposed to the linearity of classical language, perspective, and space-time concepts.

For a longer time, Beckett's theatrical language remained more conventional. In *Godot* and *Endgame*, for example, although the content of the dialogues was often unusual, absurd, surprising, and even shocking to many viewers, the grammatical structure of the sentences themselves was rather conventional. (A notable exception is Lucky's speech in *Godot*, whose form prefigures that of Beckett's later dramatic monologues.) The text of these early plays was also delivered in the traditional form of a dialogue between various actors. The stable relationship between subject and verb, subject and object, me and I, broke down in the fragments of language that circulate independently, endlessly, in a work, and a world, where nothing, and no one, ever remains unchanged enough from one second to the next to allow for adequate perception or expression in language.

In *Endgame*, four different characters exchange dialogues in bizarre but recognizable stage space. Although this "family" in a play can be seen, on one level, as a representation of various aspects of the same consciousness, it is nonetheless a rather conventional dramatic representation of human interaction, especially in comparison with Beckett's later plays. At certain moments in *Endgame*, our imagination is forced to leave the stage space to follow the unfolding drama: we "see" the world outside the windows only through Clov's descriptions, and the characters sometimes use memories from their past to add color to their grey and dark world. More about Clov's work Significantly, Hamm's story and monologues foreshadow Beckett's later, more sustained attempts to translate in dramatic terms the endless search for self that he had already so strikingly formalized in the novel with *The Unspeakable*. In these plays, we see characters locked in a closed space - one play at a time - that is not being talked about, vainly striving to see or put an end to the painful process of imperfect perception that characterizes the lives of human beings with eyes and consciences in an invisible, unknowable and inescapable universe. In one of his recent non-dramatic texts, *Company*, Beckett has summarized the problems of perception that are at the heart of his drama as well

as his writing in general: Beckett could describe in this passage the experience of the spectators who accompany his characters on their endless journeys within themselves. In a dark theatre, we see other people keeping each other company with a flood of words. Although the image on stage is bold and clear, the more we look at it, the more uncertain we become about what we perceive as we listen to the text, an aesthetic effect described by Beckett in one of his earliest writings: "The object that becomes invisible before your eyes are, so to speak, the brightest and best".¹ We abandon our dependence on our eyes of flesh and surrender ourselves to the workings of our minds, only to find that there are no answers either. Only by trying to calm the fumbling of our consciousness can we come closer to the key to understanding the peace and unity so ardently desired by Beckett's characters, but we can't do it any more than they can: even when the eyelids close, and the windows of empty, dark rooms are covered or only look out onto a dark beyond, there remains a "faint light and turmoil" - the consciousness that cannot meet cannot surrender either.

Beckett's works are not only an expression of his belief that man is free to relate to reality authentically or inauthentically; they are actual quests for truth for self-discovery just as some of his characters appear to wander in an undefined suspended state one senses likewise that Beckett himself is moving out into unexplored regions, searching out the still undiscovered possibilities of literature. It is this ability to move into yet uncharted areas that places him at the forefront of the avant-garde movement.

Beckett's social and existential outcasts are concerned with the old problems of time and eternity, human suffering in the period between birth and death, and the goal and nature of the self (for lack of a better term). They symbolize modern man in quest of a new human answer, refusing to accept either old religious or new scientific solutions. Beckett, as a writer, does not offer a solution to these problems, instead of restricting himself to portraying them in a new light, stimulating our awareness and directing us toward a deeper understanding of

them. In Beckett's theatre, the topic of time and space which we have attempted to clarify throughout our thesis plays a crucial role. Man is portrayed to be doomed to exist in both time and space. None of the comforts of eternity is permitted him, and the only habit enables him to suffer time. His situation can be interpreted geometrically:" "Beckett has, again and again, bent apparently linear time into the static form of the circle ... Against the monotony of the circle is set the fearful descending line that ends in the grave."¹⁵⁴ Man's existence repeats itself in a cyclical pattern with little variation; his expectations of change and friendship are usually disappointed, but the lines of time's decline (and of entropy's rise) into death are irreversible. Though the existential time seems to come to a standstill due to the boredom of life. It's crucial to remember that Beckett's characters aren't who they are because of what they've created of themselves, because they're weak, and their weakness runs deep. They don't reflect Sartre's dramatic emphasis, and they can't be described as being in a situation.¹⁵⁵ They may have been so in the past, but they are now much too distant from society and its problems to fulfill Sartre's standards. They do not choose to play a role, either in good faith or in bad faith, since they are asocial and live in a non-social existence since Beckett does not seem to give much importance to social interaction, which he limits to a simple cohabitation in which the existence of one individual has almost no impact on that of the other. They can't commit or engage since there's nothing left for them to choose or reject. They can no longer be masters and creators of their own essence as men, and they can no longer control their life. They lack property, but more importantly, they lack authority and willpower. As a result, they have no choice but to follow the course of their lives. They are following it because they are pulled to it rather than because they chose it. The characters in Beckett's plays are therefore brought to death by the passage of time, which is beyond their control and makes them basically

¹⁵⁴ Lawrence E. Harvey, "Art and the Existential in *Waiting for Godot*", *Casebook on Waiting for Godot*, Ruby Cohn editor, p. 148.

¹⁵⁵ This point is made by Edith Kern in *Drama Stripped for Inaction: Beckett's Godot*, *Yale French Studies* (No. 14, Winter 1954-1955). 47.

powerless. The only choice left to them, and one that isn't often exercised, is to decide what to do with the time passing. Clearly, the choice is a false one, regardless of whatever it be, the end result remains the same. Only the characters are portrayed to get a choice. They use a variety of strategies to make time matter, or rather, to make it pass unnoticed. Storytelling, object manipulation, games, and tormenting one another are all examples of such tactics. Regardless, when the Beckett hero's methods or defense mechanisms fail, he is plagued by boredom and suffering, depending on how conscious he is.

Presumably this 'adventure of being' becomes in Beckett's work, the occasion for specific identification of self, though the habit is also a difficult resource of being for the Beckett hero. Security of self is in all respects difficult to maintain, and on many occasions, the act of "waiting" is a heroic function. Waiting involves not only watching for a sign of being (a repetition of something remembered, a movement in gestures that have a recognizable line or curve). The act of waiting sets critical expectations in any event when those who wait are starting to lose their sense of urgency. Their condition may not be hopeless, may even be euphoric - momentarily. The act of waiting gets both all the more energetic and direr in Act II in *Waiting for Godot*. Amidst this silly scene, Pozzo's revelation that he is blind and that Lucky is dumb, and his talk on time and the synchronization of birth and death ('They give birth astride of the grave', p. 89) echo the tones of traditional tragedy. Vladimir in his 'waking sleep' appears to recall the 'astride of a grave' image as he theorizes on a potentially limitless arrangement of observers watching each other ('At me too, someone is looking'). Both Pozzo's and Vladimir's speeches change the action into a dream-like state and add to the experience of a 'timeless time' which is pervasive in the entire play.

The final movement turns on the second coming of the Boy as a messenger. "The repetition, with variations of the end of Act I, exploits the deeply rooted human interest in patterns of anticipation, return, and disappointment". (Kennedy 31) a search for that other

voice or person who - in Beckett's fiction - is as unattainable as the true core of the self. We recognize in this the remnant of the old Platonic or Romantic longing for essences; for a further union of word and being, self and non-self. And it is probable that the Beckett world, for all its fundamental skepticism and drive towards 'nothingness', is guided by a much stronger remnant of those immortal longings – “essence, union, communion, divinity - than are likely to be admitted by most of our contemporaries”. (Kennedy 162).

Beckett's characters all evolve in a universe where time and space are in perpetual change, strangely repetitive, but somehow always diminishing. The goal of their travels is either perfect perception or the end of perception, two unattainable objectives that are just two sides of the same non-existent coin. We see them approaching these goals, getting closer and closer to an end that is still just out of their reach. Beckett often suggests the approach of the ending by the physical appearance of his characters, who deteriorate and fade, by their dark costumes, as well as by the nudity and the black/white/grey color combination of the set and stage lighting. His men and women often take refuge in enclosed interior spaces with windows looking out on nothing, and they regard the colorful, vibrant, natural landscapes as insignificant remnants of an unrecoverable past. The language of the texts constantly refers to the end, and the volume and tempo of the sound, as well as the intensity of the lighting, often diminishes as the pieces come to an end. Beckett uses an equal, if not greater, number of techniques to dramatize the improbability of the ending. Just as his plays almost always begin with an incursion into the characters in the middle of a situation that seems to have been going on forever, and make frequent references to the end of their very first lines, when they come to an end they leave us with many doubts about the end of what we have just witnessed. The visual and textual similarities of the beginnings and ends of Beckett's plays formalize the indefinite limits of time and space that inform them. These dramas all seem to represent only arbitrarily selected segments of their characters' lives which, since they are sustained by an

endless process of self-perception, do not depend on the physical perception of the spectators. Beckett makes us doubt the reality of our perception when we "know" that a certain play has begun or ended. He's scrambling the boundaries between the first and the last moment of the play, as well as between tonight's performance and tomorrow night's, and between one play and the next to such an extent that we wonder whether what we perceive will ever reach a conclusion.

Thus, although Beckett's drama can rightly be described as imaginary, and fruitfully analyzed in terms of its relationship to the art of his plays are by no means fixed paintings called for by Diderot, who also imagined a theatre conceived along the lines of the visual arts. Rather, they are abstract paintings that decompose their subjects, splitting them internally into irreconcilable fragments, images of broken objects propelled into endless space and time disordered by their own internal mobility. Art is thus, to Beckett the ultimate expression of human impotence, it represents to Proust a triumph over the fragmented universe created by the passing of time and by the variation of perceptions from one individual to another:

L'oeuvre d'art était le seul moyen de retrouver le Temps perdu.¹⁵⁶

Par Art seulement nous pouvons sortir de nous, savoir ce que voit un autre de cet univers qui n'est pas le même que le notre.¹⁵⁷

Interestingly, Beckett's characters achieve a certain stature at their lowest point, when all defense mechanisms have failed, and they are left to endure the world for what it is, waiting for the end and the hope of change it holds for them. They are anticipating a death of fragmented consciousness as well as a birth into total self-possession, even if it is the experience of nothingness. They're searching for an end to that endless self-consciousness that never leads to self-possession and full freedom. However, the emphasis is on being, the

¹⁵⁶ Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé* (Paris: Gallimard-Folio, 1954), p. 262.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 257—58.

phenomenon of the elusive and divided self, which Beckett identified as the fundamental aesthetic and philosophical problem at the core of his play. The void remains remote at all times. Thus, Beckett's writings stand halfway between literature and philosophy: both play an important role in them, yet Beckett does not declare himself a follower of either:

"Beckett a choisi de ne pas s'expliquer, de ne pas se justifier. Il propose ses textes: c'est à nous de nous placer au niveau de leur rigueur et de leur solitude. A nous de réapprendre à lire. "¹⁵⁸

By letting his work stand on its own, Beckett's interpretive silence tends to give it more independence and value. Of course, there is a fertile link between the author's failure to explain his work and the subsequent proliferation of critical work. All of this is because of Beckett. Beckett has a negative attitude toward critics who proceed to neatly package his work into messages as if life could be explained simply. The fact that Beckett's work and characters exist is enough for him. He doesn't need to extract abstract messages or meanings from his writings because he prefers to deal with concrete elements. In *Endgame*, he clearly demonstrates this: "Hamm: We're not beginning to ... to ... mean something? Clov: Mean something! You and I, mean something! (Brief laugh.) Ah, that's a good one!"¹⁵⁹ Clov responds with a sardonic and intellectual laugh, the laugh of one who ridicules what is false, to Hamm's question (of the two characters, Hamm is the more theatrical, his personality combining the qualities of the writer with those of the critic). For Beckett, there is no protection or reassuring meaning. He is alone, confronted with the perilous reality of human existence and the nearly impossible duty of communicating it. While attempting to do so, Beckett makes no concessions to the harshness of the situation, nor does he seek out any comfort that may cause his perceptions to be confused. He is not clinging to a hope of meaning: he is faced with the void, empty space, and silently flowing time, with no hope of

¹⁵⁸ Durozoi, Beckett, p. 11.

¹⁵⁹ Beckett, *Endgame*, p. 27.

escape or salvation. He strives to fulfill the obligation to express man's suffering, that of being and perceiving, with great dignity. To try the impossible, to articulate the anguish of existence, and to fail (because to be an artist is to fail), is a more significant victory than the kind that comes from accomplishing a smaller task. Beckett prefers a difficult defeat to an easy victory. The quantity and quality of critical study done on and around Beckett attest to his work's intensity and richness. And being in time is at the heart of it all:

"... man, a creature blind, impotent, shaken back and forth by a terrier destiny, emitting the squeaks of an ineffectual art."¹⁶⁰

In a nutshell, one can come up with the idea that Beckett's characters are always waiting for the future "their ruinous consolations being that there is always tomorrow; they never realize that today is today. In this, says Mr. Beckett, they are like humans, which dawdles and drivels away its life"¹⁶¹.

Beckett has made his characters in a way that if we comment on them, we comment on ourselves. He has made them play in such a way as to show that ordinary people are doing the same things, obsessed by the misery of life - that brief moment - that flash of light between the tomb and the womb. The pursuit of the self outside time becomes an endless, hopeless task because time will not stop. Although his characters face eventually failure in achieving their real selves, they impressively manifest the "existence of the individual as well as the

¹⁶⁰ Lawrence E. Harvey, *Samuel Beckett Poet and Critic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 441. The suffering of being is perhaps best portrayed in a short prose work by Beckett, entitled *Lessness*, that is, endlessness without end, and only lessness, a progressive reduction of all faculties before the void: "All sides endlessness earth sky as one no sound no stir scattered ruins same grey as the sand ash grey true refuge ... He will curse God again as in the blessed days face to the open sky the passing deluge ... Little body ash grey locked rigid heart beating face to endlessness." Samuel Beckett, *Lessness* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1969), pp. 7, 8.

¹⁶¹ Hobson, Harold, *Sunday Times*, 1955, p.11.

absurdity of human condition”¹⁶². They get close to the self; to that infinite reality, that inner life, but can never attain it.

Beckett’s characters spend their time talking, dancing, singing, a kind of routine to forget that they are waiting for Godot who may never come, and this has become a habit that Beckett describes as ‘the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects’ (Beckett,1999, p.19).

Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* and *Endgame* are just a play about a dying species which provide roles for actors to exercise a diapason of skills, and we can recognize ourselves through their skills. Finally, the significance of Beckett's plays lies in the precision of its wide human embrace. In Vladimir's sentence: "But at this place, at this moment, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not."¹⁶³

The finding of this study show that it is a mistake to consider Beckett as having a simple philosophical message, much less a dismal one. Beckett's experience is of a world devoid of any overall, final meaning. It is not even true, as Hobbes said, that life is miserable, brutish, and short. Rather, it just keeps going. Beckett is nevertheless fascinated by the way life carries on: "What counts is to be in the world, the posture is immaterial, so long as one is on earth. To breathe is all that is required, there is no obligation to ramble, or receive company..." (Ryan 21)

Through the boredom of youth and the loneliness of old age, life goes on. But there is an almost manic, exulting joy in all that tedium, notably in Beckett's novels and plays. That's how life is. Take it or leave it. But, joy the joke.

¹⁶² Nichole, Ehlers(2007): “The Failed Search for Self-Identity in Krapp’s Last Tape”, p.5, www.jmu.edu/writeon/docs/2008/Ehlers.pdf, retrieved in May 2010.

¹⁶³ Cohn, Just Play, p.14

A suggested area for future academic research would be a broad based comparison of philosophical study between the two Irish writers Beckett and Joyce and their vision toward Future and Death.

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Abstract

The Twentieth century has been the age of the outbreak of two world wars that caused spiritual disillusionment. These two world wars caused profound destruction and loss of ultimate human certainties and definitively created a world without unifying principles, a world without meaning, disconnected from human life. This hastened the advent of nihilism and accentuated the widespread feeling of futility where the self is transformed into a meaningless abstraction. These obsessions have been demonstrated in the works of 20th-century writer Samuel Beckett in his dramatic art ranging from existentialism, psychology, and the absurd which were applied in the description of a dominant trend in the twentieth-century theoretical barrel. The goal of the present study is to examine Beckett's use of the experience of waiting and struggling with a pervasive sense of futility, anguish, and loss, as well as the attainment of timelessness as a strategy for getting closer to the self, have been examined as key components of Beckett's approach in the search for self's identity. Using Proust "A la recherche du temps perdu", Heidegger's "Being and Time", and Sartre's "Being and Nothingness" as theoretical platforms, this thesis will concentrate on the manner in which "Waiting for Godot" and "Endgame" presents the self as a phenomenological construction based on cumulative past experiences inserted into and spread throughout Time and Space. Changing one's perceptions of a memory-time continuum, based on this premise, is to change the self that emerges as a result of this dynamic. The main concern of this thesis is to explore how Beckett as an artist and philosopher deals with the notion of time and space, Beckett's own personal perspective on time, space, and identity while taking into account the contribution of critic, philosophers, academics and literary figures have made in dealing with this human condition, being in time and space represented in the Theatre of The Absurd. The Beckettian vision of the world does not focus on identity, the other-elusive self, but it conveys a struggling attempt to recall past events as a means for the quest for the authentic self based on a decisive detachment, this sum of mnemonic experiences lived through time and space. This philosophical perception of the self is further complicated if we are to study the way in which this self is perceived not only by the subject/object but also by the external world. For example, how does Beckett's character proclaim his identity through his interaction with the external world, the world of the other? Does Beckett's character modify memory so as to conform to the idealistic vision he has created of himself? Does this image, perceived as the desired Other gives him an image of the authentic self?

Keywords: Absurdism – Beckett – Self — subject/object – Time/Space.

Résumé:

Le vingtième siècle a été l'ère du déclenchement de deux guerres mondiales qui ont provoqué une désillusion spirituelle. Ces deux guerres mondiales ont provoqué une destruction profonde et la perte des ultimes certitudes humaines et ont définitivement créé un monde sans principes unificateurs, un monde sans sens, déconnecté de la vie humaine. Cela a accéléré l'avènement du nihilisme et accentué le sentiment généralisé de futilité où le moi se transforme en une abstraction dénuée de sens. Ces obsessions ont été démontrées dans les œuvres de l'écrivain du 20ème siècle Samuel Beckett dans son art dramatique allant de l'existentialisme, la psychologie, et l'absurde qui ont été appliqués dans la description d'une tendance dominante dans le canon théorique du 20ème siècle. L'objectif de la présente étude est d'examiner l'utilisation par Beckett de l'expérience de l'attente et de la lutte avec un sentiment omniprésent de futilité, d'angoisse et de perte, ainsi que l'atteinte de l'intemporalité comme stratégie pour se rapprocher de soi, ont été examinés comme des éléments clés de l'approche de Beckett dans la recherche de l'identité de soi. En utilisant Proust "A la recherche du temps perdu", "Être et temps" de Heidegger et "Être et néant" de Sartre comme plateformes théoriques, cette thèse se concentrera sur la manière dont "En attendant Godot" et "Fin de partie" présentent le soi comme une construction phénoménologique basée sur des expériences passées cumulatives insérées et répandues dans le temps et l'espace. Changer ses perceptions d'un continuum mémoire-temps, en se basant sur cette prémisse, c'est changer le soi qui émerge en tant que résultat de cette dynamique. La principale préoccupation de cette thèse est d'explorer la façon dont Beckett, en tant qu'artiste et philosophe, traite la notion de temps et d'espace, la perspective personnelle de Beckett sur le temps, l'espace et l'identité, tout en tenant compte de la contribution des critiques, philosophes, universitaires et figures littéraires qui ont traité de cette condition humaine, l'être dans le temps et l'espace représenté dans le Théâtre de l'Absurde. La vision beckettienne du monde ne se concentre pas sur l'identité, le soi insaisissable, mais elle traduit une tentative laborieuse de remémoration des événements passés comme moyen de la quête du soi authentique fondée sur un détachement décisif, cette somme d'expériences mnésiques vécues à travers le temps et l'espace. Cette perception philosophique du moi se complique encore si l'on étudie la manière dont ce moi est perçu non seulement par le sujet/objet mais aussi par le monde extérieur. Par exemple, comment le personnage de Beckett proclame-t-il son identité à travers son interaction avec le monde extérieur, le monde de l'autre ? Le personnage de Beckett modifie-t-il sa mémoire afin de se conformer à la vision idéaliste qu'il a créée de lui-même ? Cette image, perçue comme l'Autre désiré, lui donne-t-elle une image du soi authentique ?

Mots Clés: Absurdisme - Beckett - Soi - sujet/objet - Temps/espace.

المخلص:

كان القرن العشرين عصر اندلاع الحربين العالميتين سببا في خيبة الأمل الروحانية. لقد تسببت هاتان الحربان العالميتان في دمار عميق وخسارة لأقصى حد من اليقين الإنساني، كما خلقنا على نحو حاسم عالما بلا مبادئ موحدة، عالما بلا معنى منفصل عن الحياة البشرية. وقد عجل هذا ظهور العدمية وسلط الضوء على الشعور واسع الانتشار بعدم الجدوى حيث تتحول الذات إلى تجريد لا معنى له. وقد تجلت هذه الهواجس في أعمال كاتب القرن العشرين صامويل بيكيت في فنه الدرامي الذي كان يجمع بين الوجودية وعلم النفس والعبث الذي طبق في وصف الاتجاه السائد في البرميل النظري للقرن العشرين. إن أهم ما يقلق هذه الفرضية هو استكشاف كيفية تعامل بيكيت كفنان وفيلسوف مع فكرة الزمان والمكان، ومع وجهة نظر بيكيت الشخصية عن الزمان والمكان والهوية مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار الإسهام الذي قدمه النقاد والفلاسفة والأكاديميين والشخصيات الأدبية في التعامل مع هذه الحالة الإنسانية، حيث يتم تمثيل الزمان والمكان في مسرح العبث. الرؤية البيكيتية للعالم لا تركز على الهوية، الذات المراوغة الأخرى كما يقول العديد من الكتاب، لكنها تنقل محاولة متصاعدة لاستنكار أحداث الماضي، والرفض وليس فقط الشكوك المعاصرة حول استقرار الهوية البشرية بل أيضا، وبمعنى أكبر عدم الثقة بالتجربة نفسها والافتتاح بأن العناصر الملموسة في هذا العالم هي في نهاية المطاف غير مهمة، وقد توهمت بعيدا إلى عدم ثبات حيث أن الأفراد يبحثون عن معنى شامل وراء اللمسة فقط، وراء الواقع الأرضي الذي أصبح غير ذي صلة بهذه المخاوف الأساسية حول وظيفة البشرية في الكون والغرض النهائي من العيش. هذه الوسائل الجديدة هي البحث عن الذات الأصلية المبنية على مفترق حاسم هذا المجموع من التجارب الرمزية عاش عبر الزمان والمكان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العبثية - بيكيت - الذات - الموضوع / الشيء - الزمان / المكان.