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# Between Pozzo and Godot: Existence as Dilemma

by Stephani Pofahl Smith

“Connaître le saint, tout est là,  
n’importe quel con peut s’y vouer.”  
Molloy

BECKETT HAS REFERRED to a passage of St. Augustine in connection with *En attendant Godot*: “Do not despair: one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume: one of the thieves was damned.” This admonition condenses succinctly the central theme of the play, as Martin Esslin has indicated,<sup>1</sup> but not only in its limited religious sense. Man is indeed hanging between despair and presumption, not only in the domain of his salvation, but in the whole condition of his existence. The religious context in *En attendant Godot* is chosen as a symptom of a deeper concern, the malaise of man before the impossibility of attaining to any certain knowledge. For Beckett the question of salvation is only the most evident sign of the dilemma of uncertainty which is the lot of man.

St. Augustine warns the Christian that he must neither presume that he is saved, lest he fall by the sin of pride, nor assume that he is damned, lest he sin by doubting the efficacy of grace and lose his means of salvation. The Christian’s dilemma is to be caught between two prohibitions with no clear path of conduct between them. To turn away from one is to turn towards the other. The “shape” of the idea which caught Beckett’s interest consists of two negative and opposing injunctions which are so broad as to exclude any positive attitude.<sup>2</sup> All that is permitted for the Christian is a state of uncertainty, an attitude of humble, doubtful, but watchful waiting until death releases the soul into eternity. This Christian attitude is made flesh in the two tramps by the roadside, but its significance is

<sup>1</sup> *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> “I am interested in the shape of ideas even if I do not believe in them . . .” Cited by Esslin, *The Theater of the Absurd*, p. 20.

extended beyond the question of salvation to include all of human existence.

As the play opens Vladimir introduces the theme of the arbitrary choice of the gods and refers to the event which prompted the remark of St. Augustine. Vladimir wonders why the version that one of the thieves at the crucifixion was saved, the other damned, is the accepted version when the gospels are not in agreement. Although he does not answer his own question, the reader may surmise that this version is the accepted one because it reflects the conception which man has of his existence and which he often projects into his divine myths. Out of two, one is saved at the last minute, though both are guilty sinners. One can be saved or damned until the last moment before death, on either the right hand or the left of a judging god, among the sheep or among the goats, with no way of being certain in advance.

Christian symbolism indicates that man sees himself as one who never has more than half a chance. He is ever adrift between despair and presumption because he has no certain evidence on either side of his most important questions. Religion only replaces one problem with another, substituting uncertainty about salvation for uncertainty about God's existence. Man is always faced with mutually exclusive possibilities. Heads, there is some form of transcendence and all our questions will be answered. Tails, we exist only in time and we will never know. We have neither the certainty needed to hope and expect, nor the certainty needed to give up hope. One of the two thieves was saved. "C'est un pourcentage honnête," remarks Vladimir.

Beckett alludes to this arbitrary chance which governs man's fate throughout the play. The balance between despair and presumption is most clearly presented in the situation of Vladimir and Estragon waiting for the nebulous Godot. They are not allowed the luxury of presumption, since they can never be certain that Godot will come; nor are they allowed the luxury of despair, since they can never be certain that he will not come. Just as one might be saved in the moment before death, Godot may come anytime up to the moment of nightfall. Pozzo counsels sagely, "j'attendrais qu'il fasse nuit noire avant d'abandonner," but it is never clear that night has fallen until after the messenger has announced that Godot will not come. The tramps can neither willingly remain nor willingly leave. Because there is no certainty, there is no basis for action. Their situation is summed up in the opening words of the play, "Rien à faire."

The "may or may not" impasse reappears in different forms

throughout the play. Godot may or may not come. If he comes, he may grant their prayer or he may not. He may bring good or evil. When it is thought that he is approaching, one of the tramps fears, the other is eager to meet him, both for no apparent reason. There are several examples of pairs in which one is blessed, the other cursed, "on ne sait pourquoi." Godot beats one of his shepherds but not the other. Reference is made to Cain and Abel, another choice of one out of two which remains without explanation. When Pozzo replies to both names, Estragon observes, "C'est toute l'humanité."

Pozzo finds the tears of the world of little importance because "Pour chacun qui se met à pleurer, quelque part un autre s'arrête. Il en va de même du rire." This is but another form of the Cain and Abel story. Humanity consists of pairs, one crying, one laughing, never two fortunates at once, never all damned or all saved. If God has pity on Estragon, this leaves Vladimir out, and he asks irritably, "Et moi?" Whatever the mood of one, it must contradict the mood of the other in a world of unhappy couples bound together by the shared dilemma, but divided by the fifty-fifty chance.

In considering suicide the tramps observe that there is "une chance sur deux. Ou presque," that one will be lighter than the other and will succeed in hanging himself while the other will break the branch and fall. The arbitrary choice of fate is underlined once more by Pozzo's contradictory statements about Lucky's position: "Remarquez que j'aurais pu être à sa place et lui à la mienne. Si le hasard ne s'y était pas opposé. A chacun son dû." The question of receiving according to merit is meaningless if chance also governs who is meritorious. There is always a toss-up chance and one never knows:

Estragon.—Je me demande si on n'aurait pas mieux fait de rester seuls, chacun de son côté. (Un temps.) On n'était pas fait pour le même chemin.

Vladimir (sans se fâcher).—Ce n'est pas sûr.

Estragon.—Non, rien n'est sûr.

The dilemma of uncertainty is not limited to the question of grace but permeates all of existence, from the largest questions to the smallest. Inside or outside of the theological context, man can never be sure if he acts in his own favor or not. "Ne faisons rien, c'est plus prudent" is Estragon's solution, but later even the prudence of inaction fails to save him from a beating. Vladimir explains, "Mais il y a la manière, il y a la manière, si on tient à sa peau." There is nothing to be done, but one is not necessarily safe in doing nothing.

The tramps endure the painful wait even though it is never clear what Godot will do if he arrives. The only certain fact about his

function is that his arrival would answer the questions of what they are waiting for and whether it will come or not. Most important, his arrival would end the interminable progression of time that the tramps are trying desperately to fill. If he came, or gave certain evidence that he would not come, they could then do something besides wait for him.

When Beckett replied to a question about Godot's identity with the words, "If I knew, I would have said so in the play,"<sup>3</sup> he was being both coy and honest. Godot is an unknown factor, a posited solution which is never either realized or excluded from the domain of possibility. In the experience of man, something is always missing, be it the god needed to give meaning to existence, the knowledge needed to conclude, or the ending which would complete, rather than simply continue to renew the cycles of time. There is an ever-present void, ever accompanied by an imperative need to fill it. In this sense Godot symbolizes God, but one might also say that God symbolizes Godot. Beckett's "Monsieur X" represents an effort to create the archetypal absence which generates gods.

Godot is analogous to God on a higher level of abstraction because God is a word with a defining tradition behind it, a blank which has been inadequately filled in, while Godot is just a name, any name, a blank illustrated by an "X." The more detailed the effort to represent the unknown, the more illogical the result, as in the case of God. The elements of such a representation must include uncertain evidence (hence the necessity of faith), contradiction and paradox. Godot is not intended to symbolize any particular god, but he shares some of the attributes of gods because his role in the play is analogous to the role of god in the imagination of man.

The information given about Godot falls into the category of common anthropomorphic characteristics attributed to gods. He is arbitrary and unpredictable, like the gods who are assumed to be beyond the understanding of men because the world remains without solutions. He is a father-figure with a white beard who will provide food and warmth if he does not punish instead, for man with his undeserved punishment and unanswered questions always sees himself as a child before the almighty omniscient. Godot is also a business man or a politician with many relations, a modern version of the distant and powerful. He hardly inspires more confidence for being less solely responsible than older forms of deities. One must wait on his pleasure while he consults. "Notre rôle?" says Vladimir, "Celui du suppliant."

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Esslin, p. 12.

Godot is clearly related to God by his "divine" attributes. He resembles God more significantly, however, in that all that is known about him comes from secondary sources, is uncertain and contradictory, while he himself remains absent and silent. The only way in which Godot is observably active is in the imagination of the tramps: he keeps them waiting without satisfying them as to whether or not he will come. Godot *is* an absence, but an absence implies a presence. Godot, like God, seems to have been, may have been, present somewhere, at sometime in the distant past. There is some kind of awareness of his existence, though none of the details of his nature are certain. This awareness is thin evidence, since it might be entirely mistaken, but just enough evidence to keep one from being certain of the contrary.

Paradoxically, it is Godot's failure to appear which identifies him. Richard Coe has pointed out that Beckett's god is "that Being whose non-existence is the only conceivable evidence of his existence."<sup>4</sup> The god who appears cannot be a god, for by appearing he would become an existence and would fall into time. The god who does not appear, however, leaves us in doubt both as to his nature and his existence. Those who are trapped in existence can never know what, if anything, is beyond existence. Any attempt to describe non-existence must inevitably be a paradoxical parallel between existence and non-existence, a logical failure. Godot represents all of the necessarily inaccurate efforts to imagine the form of that which is by nature formless.

Godot's role is similar to that of the Christ of the Second Coming. The vaguely predicted Second Coming is one more projected answer to the eternal questions of men. Like Godot's arrival, Christ's appearance would stop the cycles of time and provide the definitive ending. Existence is a wait, by nature incomplete, a continuously unsatisfied curiosity to know if there is anything beyond itself. Vladimir would like to find some value in waiting, if only in endurance. "Nous ne sommes pas des saints," he says, "mais nous sommes au rendez-vous. Combien de gens peuvent en dire autant?" Estragon only replies dryly, "Des masses." Everyone is playing the waiting game in one form or another because he can do nothing else.

What can the tramps do except use their imagination to fill the space? And what can man do, until he has some certain evidence regarding the nature of his own existence, except try to fill the vacuum of time? Nothing certain is given him, so he must invent. Since he cannot predict the result of any gesture, he has too much

<sup>4</sup> *Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove, 1964), p. 94.

room for activity and no basis for meaningful action. "Ce qui est certain," says Vladimir, "c'est que le temps est long, dans ces conditions, et nous pousse à le meubler d'agissements qui, comment dire, qui peuvent à première vue paraître raisonnables, mais dont nous avons l'habitude." For Beckett "divertissement" is the only occupation possible for man, and he draws on both the tragic and comic implications of this fact. In Godot's absence the tramps will have to make do with Pozzo. Time doesn't fly when he arrives, but it seems to go a bit faster.

It is not by chance that Estragon keeps confusing Pozzo with Godot. The two "o's" are clearly heard, but the intervocalic consonant, even the initial can be easily slurred. Why one name and not another when all terms are arbitrary? "Pozzo" is almost a clownish deformation of "Godot."

The information given about Godot presents him as cruel, arbitrary, and possibly kind, at least to some, but all of the information comes from secondary sources. Because Pozzo appears and acts, he makes Godot's supposed cruelty seem insignificant. Godot is said to beat one of his two shepherds, but we see Pozzo crack the whip over Lucky.

Godot is closer to the divine than Pozzo because he remains in the domain of conjecture and does nothing. In Pozzo we have a divinity who acts, a representation of gods as they appear in mythology, and a satire of the anthropomorphic concept. If a man behaved like a god, he would be as intolerable, tyrannical and ridiculous as Pozzo. Pozzo, then, may be said to be a degeneration into specifics.

Pozzo is easily recognized as a divinity, "D'origine divine!" he exclaims.<sup>5</sup> He thunders out his name with the expectation that the tramps will recognize it. Vladimir can only recall "une famille Gozzo," and Estragon asks him if he is Godot. As excuse for his error Estragon stammers, "... l'obscurité ... la fatigue ... la faiblesse ... l'attente ..." Desire for the one who is absent makes Estragon find him in the one who is present, whether or not the two correspond exactly. The vaguely threatening dominion which Godot holds over the tramps finds a more negative counterpart in the master-slave relationship of Pozzo and Lucky. The tramps dream that Godot will fill their bellies, while Pozzo gives them a few bones. Godot would end their wait; Pozzo provides temporary relief by entertaining them.

Pozzo cannot be Godot because Godot is by definition the one

<sup>5</sup> Pozzo finds ludicrous the thought that the tramps are "D'origine divine," participating in God's nature. He is also enormously amused at the idea that he and they are of the same species.

who does not appear. The relationship between the two is similar to the relationship between the many gods and God. One might compare the problem to that of scholars trying to imagine the master copy of a series of badly deformed medieval texts. Pozzo represents any divinity that we possess, a name to be called on, though he may not answer, a form with attributes, though a maze of contradictions, a poor substitute for an immense desire. Estragon would nevertheless be willing to accept him as Godot, whatever the disappointing consequences, simply to give himself the impression that the wait has ended. Estragon would like to hope that Pozzo is Godot in disguise.

The relationships among the four characters are a tangle of paradoxes. Pozzo is brutal with Lucky and talks of him as if he were of an inferior species, yet he claims that it is Lucky who has taught him the great truth about the alternating tears and laughter of the world (that is, about man's fifty-fifty chance), and who has raised him from a lower level. "Sans lui je n'aurais jamais pensé, jamais senti, que des choses basses . . ." explains Pozzo. Lucky has raised his own idol and has gained the official title of "porteur." (Later, tired of supporting Pozzo, Estragon complains, "On n'est pas des cariatides.") Pozzo is neither self-made nor self-supporting, but if men must hold up their own idols, Lucky has at least the good fortune to find himself in a situation without ambiguity. As long as Pozzo gives the orders, the question of a basis for action doesn't present itself. Freedom from uncertainty is the main advantage of Lucky's position, but it is negated by the threat that he may lose his job. He is not secure after all. His only concern is that he may be judged unworthy to serve, but he occasionally disobeys orders nevertheless. The contradictions in his conduct parallel those of man in his relationship to his gods.

In spite of all his autocratic ways, Pozzo pretends to be dependent on the tramps for encouragement. They must beg him to do what he plans to do anyway and praise him for what he does, just as one is supposed to pray, "Thy will be done," and to praise the divine will for doing what it pleases.

Lucky's apparent subservience and Pozzo's complaints about his ill deeds constitute another contradiction. "Je n'en peux plus . . . plus supporter . . . ce qu'il fait . . . c'est affreux," Pozzo moans, and finally, "Il m'assassine." Although this is hardly the case, Vladimir and Estragon have already taken his side against Lucky. A moment later Pozzo denies that Lucky could make him suffer with the words, "Est-ce que j'ai l'air d'un homme qu'on fait souffrir, moi?" Indeed we don't believe his show of grief. His air of jeering superiority



towards his "semblables," who resemble him only imperfectly, tempts one to read, "Est-ce que j'ai l'air d'un homme, qu'on fait souffrir, moi? "

Like a god, and just as illogically, Pozzo wants to convince the tramps that he suffers from the wrongdoings of his helpless servant. Lucky would then be guilty, but he would also possess the power to make Pozzo suffer. Pozzo recoils from the latter implication and insists that his power and authority are complete.

Pozzo's strange conduct recalls the behavior pattern of the Old Testament god, who passes from grieving and repenting that he has made or chosen such wicked men, to threats and reminders of his force. But the threats of complete destruction, like the threat to abandon the chosen people, never take place. Some are always favored and saved, and the cycle begins again.

The New Testament presents a variation on the same theme. Here assertions that the sins of men caused the suffering and death of Christ alternate with insistence on Christ's sovereignty over men and death. Pozzo is either pretending that he suffers or pretending that he is immune to suffering. One cannot be both master and servant, omnipotent and contingent. A similar contradiction appears in Lucky's speech about a personal god:

... qui du haut de sa divine apathie sa divine athambie sa divine aphasie nous aime bien à quelques exceptions près on ne sait pourquoi mais ça viendra et souffre à l'instar de la divine Miranda avec ceux qui sont on ne sait pourquoi mais on a le temps dans le tourment . . .

Lucky was taken into service as a "knouk," to provide entertainment in the large sense, as fools did for kings, or as men were made by the gods to provide them with sport and praise. After long years of service Lucky has ceased to please and his status has been debased to that of "porteur," which is not his trade. Lucky's disobedience is not the most important cause of Pozzo's anger. It is Lucky's "think" that really hurts, and Pozzo suffers visibly during the whole speech. If Lucky has raised him up with his thinking, he can also bring him down in the same way. A master who is sensitive to words and can be improved by them, can also be hurt by them. Lucky's speech is a tangle without a conclusion, but it gives an indication of how he used to "amuse" Pozzo and "make him better" with garlands of metaphysical and philosophical speculation. Now Lucky sickens him with confused scientific jargon and inadequate efforts towards precision.

At least two facts emerge clearly from the muddle of Lucky's

speech: that it is difficult to take a personal god seriously (in any case he only includes the dilemma rather than providing a solution), and that man is shrinking. Lucky heaps absurdity upon absurdity. Could a god who loves men allow them to suffer and leave all in doubt as to whether they are among those loved? Could the indifferent, silent eternal feel concern for men, indeed, feel anything at all? The three words of Greek origin (apathie, athambie, aphasie) are not chosen only for comic alliteration. They all indicate that a god is *incapable* of emotion, surprise, and speech. He cannot love or suffer.

Yet if we cast aside the conception of a personal god, man is not punished but continues to suffer nevertheless. With the loss of his personal god, man loses his status as the object of divine retribution or love. He then becomes but a suffering blur of consciousness on the calm, indifferent surface of the universe, and the earth seems made only "pour les pierres." Man is shrinking because he has lost his elevated position as god's chosen creature but is unable to find another position with which to replace it. He remains homeless because he can neither place himself among the gods nor among the beasts and stones. The area which remains to him, like the tramps' place by the roadside, is small yet poorly defined. Efforts to find out who and what he is must always remain unfinished, just as Lucky's speech remains without a conclusion and ends with the cry, "Inachevés! "

Lucky still has a place, though it is far from ideal. He has accepted Pozzo as his master and lives in a directed world. Lucky wants to remain in the same situation, while the tramps exist in a wasteland of uncertainty, waiting for something to change the intolerable present. Pozzo furnishes Lucky with that which the tramps lack, a divinity or absolute which seems to provide freedom from the pain of doubt. It is probably not just idle curiosity which prompts Estragon to ask if Pozzo plans to replace Lucky with another servant. It is Estragon who would be willing to exchange Godot for Pozzo, and Lucky's situation may seem to have certain advantages over his own.

A closer look, however, reveals that Lucky is in the end no better off than the tramps because he must live in doubt as to whether or not he will be judged worthy to continue as Pozzo's servant. Lucky's efforts are only an alternate form of "divertissement" which consists of exhausting himself out of fear of losing a position which holds only one advantage, its security. He has made himself a slave without the assurance that he will continue to have a master.

It is clear that the situations of both Lucky and the tramps are

equally undesirable. The choice is between real slavery and apparent freedom, apparent because the tramps' uncertainty prevents them from using it. Here Beckett parts company with both believers and existentialists because he presents existence as a dilemma that cannot be resolved either by taking a god or by refusing all gods. The existentialists would affirm that the "moral" of the play tells us to accept the fact that Godot will never come and proceed to the concerns of our present existence. But Beckett's play has no moral in itself, and, in all the details of its structure, resists any resolution. The tramps cannot affirm that Godot will not come because they cannot know. To abandon the wait, just as to affirm that god does not exist, is a gratuitous choice of one out of two possibilities, and the gratuitous yet certain choice lies in the inexplicable domain of the gods. The tramps are simply men, too reasonable to toss a coin, too lucid to be pushed into a choice by subjective desire, too weak to act "as if." Godot's failure to arrive for two days proves nothing. It can be used equally as evidence that he will surely come on the third or that he will surely never come at all.

The attitude of the tramps defines the atmosphere of this work in which the carefully constructed balance of the dilemma is kept from sliding in either direction. Everything is unfinished because there are no conclusions. The tramps are not filled with the hope of true faith which is able to nourish itself in spite of contradictory evidence. They have no deep inner conviction that Godot will come. Unlike the existentialists, however, they are equally unable to solidify their doubts into an affirmation of the negative.

It is in their indecisive vacillation that the tramps seem profoundly human and make a sharp contrast to Lucky. Lucky has made his choice and now simply concentrates all of his efforts on maintaining himself in the same intolerable situation. More than for any other reason he appears less than human because no possibility of an alternative occurs to him. The tramps' questions are endless and often without a reply; Lucky never asks one. Even when Pozzo is blind and helpless, Lucky continues to obey him as before.

To obtain the dubious comfort of a personal deity, one must think only on command and live in fear lest the favor of being allowed to serve be discontinued at the master's whim. The tramps are more lucid than Lucky, and Pozzo loses his ascendancy over them when he no longer appears to merit the attention paid him. They look to him as a source of information and a means to pass the time, but find him disappointing in both capacities. Pozzo pretends to inform the tramps about twilight, but in fact gives little useful information. He

recites the story of the fall of night with divine ambiguity and aplomb, limiting his precision to the past and leaving the future as vague as before. His recitation recalls the Judeo-Christian myth of the creation of the world and its predicted end. There is some precision regarding the beginning, the middle seems interminable, then suddenly the end is upon us, "au moment où nous nous y attendrons le moins."

The story of the fall of night is also an image of the life of man and of the wait for Godot, either of which can end unexpectedly at any moment. It is always the endings which are problematical because they cannot be situated in time in advance. Pozzo leaves the tramps as unsettled as he found them. Whether they are waiting for night, death, Godot or the end of the world, they are faced with a vaguely predicted end and no assurance that it will take place until it actually does take place. Their ironic duet in response to the recitation returns to the central theme of the play:

Estragon.—Du moment qu'on est prévenu.

Vladimir.—On peut patienter.

Estragon.—On sait à quoi s'en tenir.

Vladimir.—Plus d'inquiétude à avoir.

Estragon.—Il n'y a qu'à attendre.

Vladimir.—Nous en avons l'habitude.

Nothing happens to the waiting tramps and nothing changes. Outside of the circle of their preoccupations, however, processes which are usually gradual are accelerated at an alarming rate. A tree which was bare in the evening is covered with leaves the next day. In a single day Lucky and Pozzo reveal a physical degeneration which usually takes much longer. In Act I Pozzo has difficulty setting off on his journey, while in Act II he falls and is unable to get up without help. He loses his watch on the first day and denies all knowledge of time on the second. Lucky struggles with his speech in Act I and is unable to talk at all in Act II.

We never learn if Pozzo arrived at Saint-Sauveur, but it is clear that he has not benefited from the trip. Irreverent allusions to Christ indicate that faith is impossible for anyone who is unwilling to renounce reason completely. We are reminded that Christianity has pushed anthropomorphic realism to excess in the impossible paradox of the god-man.

Christ, accompanied by his mother, the virgin wonder, resembles the personal god of Lucky's speech. The god who suffers with men out of love represents an extreme exaggeration in the conception of a

personal god. A god who appears or suffers has entered the cycles of existence and cannot also be beyond existence. The Passion of Christ is central to his humiliation and identification with men because suffering belongs exclusively to the domain of existence. Suffering is a distinguishing mark which separates existence from non-existence, contingency from absolute.

When the suffering of Christ and Estragon are compared, it is Christ who had the easier life:

Vladimir.—Mais tu ne peux pas aller pieds nus.

Estragon.—Jésus l'a fait.

Vladimir.—Jésus! . . . Tu ne vas tout de même pas te comparer à lui!

Estragon.—Toute ma vie je me suis comparé à lui.

Vladimir.—Mais là-bas il faisait chaud! Il faisait bon!

Estragon.—Oui. Et on crucifiait vite.

Vladimir's apparently reverent exclamation turns into a comic reference to the milder climate of Christ's sojourn, and Estragon implies that Christ suffered less than he because not as long. If Christ was a god, he could not have suffered like a man. The tramps' effort to crucify themselves failed. Whether the tree on stage is viewed as an allusion to the cross or as the tree which was unable to support their suicide attempt, Vladimir's comment is the same: "Décidément cet arbre ne nous aura servi à rien."

Voltaire is specifically mentioned in Lucky's speech because he regarded Christ as a domineering and dangerous god, as well as an easy one to discredit. Before the era of the *philosophes* all time was centered in the Savior. The world had a manifest destiny, and history had a beginning, a predicted end and a purpose. When Voltaire cast out the idea of Providence, he left a world governed by chance, uninhabitable for man. In attempting to make god more reasonable, Voltaire only succeeded in mortally wounding him.

On the way to Saint-Sauveur Pozzo is vigorous and confident, filled with purpose and concerned about time. When he returns, he is weak, purposeless and blind. He has lost his sense of time and wanders with no destination.

On the second day Lucky has not yet lost his personal deity, but the menace is there. It is no longer the traditional menace of being abandoned (or exchanged, as the ungrateful Jews were exchanged for the Gentiles), but the threat of the disintegration of the divinity. Lucky, for his part, has lost his ability to verbalize his speculations. In his speech he struggled and lost the battle to say something conclusive about god and man with bits of logic, poetry, and

"learned references." When he can no longer speak, Pozzo can no longer direct. What other tools have we, if not words, with which to reach out towards the incomprehensible, to give shape to our gods and make the world ours? The aphasic eternal will not speak about itself. We see that our words have failed, but we cannot conclude. We have not said anything about that possible being who is beyond words.

Pozzo's surprising outburst against questions about time in Act II is set in opposition to his earlier habit of consulting his watch to give the exact hour of events. He now denies progression and affirms that life and death take place in the same moment. Such a statement directly contradicts the experience of the tramps.<sup>6</sup> It could only be made by one who places himself outside of time and existence.

If Christ is the god with a precise relationship to history, other gods are unaware of the time spans of men. All time is but a day in the life of the eternal, and in terms of the immeasurable void which precedes and follows a human life, it is but a hardly noticeable instant. Pozzo, "made in God's image" in the English version, is associated with the void which his Italian name suggests. It is man who has tried to shape the void with words and has only succeeded in creating an autocratic and capricious hybrid which incorporates his anxiety rather than calming it. Gods who resemble Pozzo are called into being to fill the chasm of questions in man's existence. But they are always inadequate; the void remains and eventually swallows them. As Pozzo becomes more debilitated, he approaches non-existence and the void which identifies him. He begins to resemble the formless eternal, blind and indifferent, like destiny, to time and men. He is even less able than before to answer the tramps' questions or satisfy their needs, all necessarily related to existence in time. A void cannot be used to fill a void.

When Pozzo says that he is "*aveugle comme le destin*," Estragon wonders if he can see into the future. Estragon comically evokes the tradition of the blind seer, but at the same time alludes to another

<sup>6</sup> In a kind of reply to Pozzo, Vladimir muses, "A cheval sur une tombe et une naissance difficile. Du fond du trou, rêveusement, le fossoyeur applique ses fers. On a le temps de vieillir. L'air est plein de nos cris." The gravedigger with his tools and the doctor with his forceps are one. They stand between the "holes" of birth and the grave, gateways to and from the void. They are one, but not simultaneous. They act "rêveusement," for life arrives and departs slowly and painfully. In between is the expanse of time which must be lived through and which is filled with the mingled cries of birth and death. The same motif appears in a lighter note when Pozzo observes, "*Je n'arrive pas . . . à partir*," and Estragon remarks, "*C'est la vie*."

paradox in the relationship between gods and men. Destiny is blind, yet it controls the future. Destiny is yet another term invented by men to give themselves the impression that some force is directing the world, but they can only imagine this force as blind and indifferent.

All gods have failed because their capricious natures have only reflected rather than eliminated the fundamental uncertainty of existence. This uncertainty reappears in divine myths from Oedipus to Cain to the thieves on the cross. In Act I Pozzo juxtaposed two opposing commonplaces, one referring to receiving by merit, the other, to receiving by chance. Merit and chance, guilt and innocence, remain indistinguishable for man because of his ignorance. The gods have never given man the knowledge he needs to predict. Without this knowledge he cannot act with purpose because he cannot foresee the consequences of his acts. The endings always remain problematical, and only the endings can clarify the significance of the beginnings. The logical impossibility of an indifferent god who loves men, reflects the contradictory mythologies which have ever existed side by side: the god who is concerned about men and directs all to a purpose, and the blind wheel of fortune which crushes men as it turns by chance. Pozzo includes both. He is unable to direct, but he still holds the reins, controlling Lucky's future, but unable to see where they are going.

Pozzo had said of Lucky in Act I, *'C'est moi qui l'orienterai,'* but he has become blind and feeble. He and Lucky now make a mutually dependent team, to counterpoint the dependence of Vladimir and Estragon, and the resemblance is accented by the falling scene. We are left with a failing personal diety who is tending towards identification with the void. The Pozzo of Act I was a ridiculous mixture of blustering contradiction. To content such a master would require that one's thinking be subject to his control. The Pozzo who returns from Saint-Sauveur demands even less human response. He has destroyed Lucky's hat so that he can no longer think at all. Neither he nor Lucky is providing any direction.

At the end of the play one of the pairs wanders aimlessly while the other waits aimlessly. Lucky continues to follow although no one is directing. The tramps continue to wait for the answer that may never come. Lucky is literally and figuratively tied, caught in a net of meaningless movement, while Vladimir and Estragon, though not bound to Godot, are bound to immobility by their uncertainty. Before they can act, they must wait and see. *"Attendons d'être fixés d'abord."*

Once more Estragon would be ready to seize a straw, to take Pozzo for Godot, even though Pozzo is further than ever from meeting their expectations. For Estragon any replacement for the question mark, even a cipher, would be acceptable. Any answer, any conclusion would do. Vladimir is firm in refuting such a proposition, but he too is crossed by a thin suggestion of doubt: "Mais non! Mais non! (Un temps.) Mais non." Perhaps somewhere there is a connection.

If Pozzo is not Godot, he is at best a temporary interruption in the long wait, a false solution. Why continue to sustain him? "On n'est pas des cariatides," says Estragon. Why hold up a crumbling temple? Pozzo had been proud of his resistance to time, but time corrodes all, even an old god. Pozzo incarnates the inevitable failure of the anthropomorphic effort to give form to the unknowable eternal because gods who resemble men fall into finite existence. Pozzo will return to the void, leaving unanswered the question being asked when he arrived: Will Godot come? One can easily discredit any of the divinities who parade through history, but one cannot conclude anything about the divine.

Pozzo comes and goes and leaves the tramps in the same position in which he found them. His arrival offered a moment of hope followed by disappointment; his disappearance is not cause for despair. Though the one who arrives is not Godot, Godot may yet come. The distant possibility of Godot's arrival, however, is hardly cause for presumption.

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