

## Nihilism and the Eschaton in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

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“Let’s go.”—“We can’t.”—“Why not?”—“We’re waiting for Godot.”—“Ah.” With this infamous refrain, Samuel Beckett introduces the strange world of *Waiting for Godot*. The two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, have nothing significant to do with their lives other than waiting for the inscrutable Godot, or any significant place to be other than by the side of a road in the middle of nowhere. Although scarcely an epistemologist or metaphysician, Vladimir has moments of lucidity in regard to their situation:

Vladimir: Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? (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. (Pause) Astride of a grave and a 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. (He listens.) But habit is a great deadener. (He looks again at Estragon.) At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. (Pause.) I can’t go on! (Pause.) What have I said?<sup>1</sup>

However, at this exact moment when he seems poised to be conscious of the Heideggerian sense of *Geworfenheit* (or “thrownness”) and begin to fashion his own singular and creative world apart from Estragon and the rituals of waiting, the boy messenger returns and Vladimir once again lapses into the fate of waiting for the mysterious Godot. As Eva Metman suggests, “Godot’s function seems to be to keep his dependants unconscious.”<sup>2</sup> A critical moment passes and Vladimir slips again into habit, the action of inaction.

Estragon, the more passive and instinctive of the pair, although frequently living in a daze and subject to the lure of sleep and the thrall of dreams, is not without insight into this abysmal world. After listening to Vladimir’s comment about the uselessness of reason, he pronounces: “We are all born mad. Some remain so.”<sup>3</sup> And at the beginning of the play, he opines: “Nothing to be done.”<sup>4</sup> This sets the tone for his frequent cynicism and suggests a sort of primordial intuition about

his actual plight of being mired in nothingness (“There’s no lack of void”). But again, as in the case of Vladimir, this intuition is undeveloped and unpursued; Estragon prefers the constant escape of mindless conversations, silly games (“Boot on, boot off”), the delicacies of carrots or radishes, the distractions of Pozzo and Lucky, and the lure of quasi-narcolepsy.

Given the tramps’ bleak assessment of their situation and their frequent despair, is it appropriate to describe them as nihilists? If by “nihilism” one means the doctrine or belief that life is utterly without significance of any kind, then the answer seems to be “no.” The tramps *have* a meaning, albeit one that is repetitively deadened and empty. As Vladimir puts it: “Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come—.”<sup>5</sup> Günther Anders suggests that to say that the tramps are nihilists is not only incorrect, but the exact reverse of what Beckett wants to show:

Vladimir and Estragon conclude from the fact of their existence that there must be something for which they are waiting; they are champions of the doctrine that life must have meaning even in a manifestly meaningless situation...What Beckett presents is not nihilism, but the inability of man to be a nihilist even in a situation of utter hopelessness.<sup>6</sup>

This is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s claim that “Any meaning is better than none at all.”<sup>7</sup> Despite their sense that human life is nothing more than a brief and absurd interlude between the thrownness of birth and the darkness of death, the tramps cling to the notion that the mysterious and enigmatic figure of Godot will save them and give their lives significance. They will not allow themselves, therefore, to be nihilists for they refuse the one freedom the nihilist insists on—the freedom of suicide. The tramps play at suicide, and the constant stage presence of the tree suggests that the possibility of suicide is an *a priori* of the human condition. One is reminded of Camus’s assertion that suicide is the only serious philosophical problem<sup>8</sup>, but the tramps can only joke about hanging themselves. In Act 1, suicide is contemplated as a distraction, which could result in “an erection...and all that follows.”<sup>9</sup> This is followed by banter about who should be hanged first—who is lighter or heavier—but the tramps decide to do nothing (“It’s safer”). In Act 2, at the end of the play, the topic of hanging themselves re-emerges. This time they engage in a sort of vaudevillian routine in which they try to use Estragon’s trouser-cord as a rope, but Estragon’s pants fall down and the rope breaks. A poignant dialogue ensues:

Vladimir: Not worth a curse.

Estragon: You say we have to come back tomorrow?

Vladimir: Yes.

Estragon: Then we can bring a good bit of rope.

Vladimir: Yes.

Estragon: Didi.

Vladimir: Yes.

Estragon: I can't go on like this.

Vladimir: That's what you think.

Estragon: If we parted? That might be better for us.

Vladimir: We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. Unless Godot comes.

Estragon: And if he comes?

Vladimir: We'll be saved.<sup>10</sup>

Undoubtedly, there is a certain sadness in this interchange as well as another realization of their dependence on each other, but there is also a good deal of slapstick humor. The tramps do not seem to be in any danger of actually hanging themselves and thereby ending their plight, unlike many serious nihilists who *have* done so.<sup>11</sup> Nor does there seem to be any progress made on the issue of realizing “thrownness” and developing their own singular, separate, and creative worlds, which would seem to be a pre-condition for so-called existential “authenticity.” From the context of the discussion of suicide in Act 1 to that of the same issue in Act 2, the tramps are acutely aware that all they can or are willing to do in life is just wait together endlessly—and rather mindlessly—for Godot. Such habitual, reflexive, and conformistic behavior is hardly what the existentialists have had in mind with the notion of authenticity.

Although his analysis is insightful, Anders seems to miss a deeper level on which the tramps may indeed be nihilists in Nietzsche's precise sense of the term. That is, for Nietzsche, a nihilist is not one who believes in nothing, but one who abandons belief in *this* world in favor of another world that is (according to Nietzsche) idealized, fictitious, and the product of the mechanisms of *ressentiment*.<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche finds the source of such nihilism in the Platonic/Judeo-Christian worldview, and vigorously exposes this in many works using his genealogical method of analysis. Although Nietzsche does not use the word as such, the idea of a critique of *eschatology*—and specifically the Platonic/Judeo-Christian idea of the *eschaton*—figures prominently in his philosophy. Eschatology, of course, is the study of the end of time, classically in a religious sense, and the eschaton is the exact expectation of what that end time would involve. Following largely in the tradition of Zoroastrianism, the three Semitic religions of the West have postulated similar eschatons that share a common structure: the return of a messianic figure at the end of cosmic linear history, a final apocalyptic battle between the forces of good and evil, and the institution of a scenario of judgment which will be followed by eternal salvation or damnation. Nietzsche also traces the phenomenon of

a *philosophical* eschaton by way of the Platonic denial of the world of becoming and the postulation of pure being in terms of abstract and eternal forms with which the human soul communes after death. Thus, in either a specifically religious or philosophical sense, Nietzsche claims that the eschaton—the notion of another world besides this one—diminishes and devalues the real and present world of the senses. And those who come to believe in this other world are, he alleges, nihilists in the exact etymological sense of the word: they are believers in the “nothing” of a pseudo-world to come. Could this notion of the eschaton have applicability to *Waiting for Godot*?

Many critics have thought so.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, it seems obvious that Beckett has scattered many eschatological hints throughout the play. The list is extensive, but would include the following:

- (1) Vladimir speaks of the Gospels and of one of the thieves who was crucified with Christ as being saved. (“One of the four says that one of the two was saved.”)
- (2) The Bible is mentioned, although Estragon has only a halting memory of it and says he mainly recalls the colored maps of the Holy Land.
- (3) Christ is referred to as “our saviour.”
- (4) Estragon says that all his life he has compared himself with Christ.
- (5) Pozzo claims that humans are “made in God’s image.”
- (6) In response to Pozzo, Estragon mockingly says that his own name is “Adam.”
- (7) Lucky delivers a rambling tirade in which the traditional God of Judeo-Christian metaphysics is satirized—a being with white beard, outside time, without extension, etc.
- (8) Vladimir alludes to Proverbs 13:12 with his statement that “Hope deferred maketh the something sick....” (“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.”)
- (9) The tramps cry out later in the play for God and Christ to have mercy on them.
- (10) Cain and Abel are alluded to as possible names for Pozzo and Lucky in Act 2.

The conclusion for many critics has seemed inescapable. As Jeffrey Nealon puts it, *Waiting for Godot* is an attack on modernism with its ideologies and Grand Narratives that claim to interpret the world: “Estragon and Vladimir are trapped by their modernist nostalgia for legitimation in Godot.”<sup>14</sup> But exactly who or what is Godot?

The traditional problem has been one of hermeneutics: what did Beckett intend by the symbol of Godot? A wide gamut of interpretations has been proffered. Godot is the unreachable God; he is death; he is some kind of future utopia; he is the panacea of plentiful food and shelter; he is the suggestion of the triumph of mass unconsciousness and social conformity over individual authenticity; or he is a strange sort of quasi-bureaucrat or administrator who has family, friends,

agents, correspondents, books, and a bank account. Two issues complicate correct explication: (1) All suggested exegeses are underdetermined by the text itself and by the absence of any significant interpretation of the play by Beckett himself; and (2) Beckett claimed that he was more interested in the aspect of “waiting” in the play, and less concerned with the question of who or what Godot is.<sup>15</sup> I will follow this latter thread momentarily. But tentatively, I want to postulate, as have others<sup>16</sup>, that Godot is the equivalent of the Platonic/Judeo-Christian eschaton. This need not, of course, exclude strictly secular or political types of “end-time” scenarios, even though Beckett seems to have focused more on religious eschatology. Thus, it may be possible to suppose that in the appearance of the antipodes, Lucky and Pozzo, we have a veiled allusion to the master/slave mode of Geist as explored by Hegel, or the historical phenomenon of class antagonisms as developed by Marx. Both of these secular eschatologies issue into a kind of determined waiting or expectation as to the consummation of history, whether in the form of the resolution of the dialectic in Pure Spirit and the Prussian state or its dissolution in the classless society. Either way, it is abundantly clear that the tramps are envious of Pozzo and his menial precisely because *they* have a direction and goal (at least in Act 1 of the play). There is a kind of historicity and driving “motor” of history that propels the antipodes, which Vladimir and Estragon clearly lack.

If Godot is plausibly understood as the Western eschaton in either a religious or political sense, then we must immediately return to Beckett’s primary interest in “waiting.” What does an eschatological structure do to the experience of time? Since each Western eschaton has seemed to be unreachable, the temporal phenomenology they share is that each moment of lived time can only have an instrumental value, not an intrinsic value. That is, each moment is “unterwegs”—on the way to—the end state that will justify and redeem it. Moments of time in this framework are not to be enjoyed as such; they are to be endured. The issue is complicated by the unreachability of the end in the sense that this very unreachability converts the active stream of time into a sort of quicksand or temporal mush. We see this conversion occurring constantly in *Waiting for Godot*. The tramps go through the dull routines of each day; nothing of any real consequence is accomplished, and all actions and conversations move in vast circles, the purpose of which is merely to jolt lived time ahead inch by inch. This explains why the tramps are desperate for diversions. Anything at all is fair game—including verbally abusing each other, silly routines, singsong divertissements, playing at being Pozzo and Lucky, speculating about Godot, and contemplating suicide. Their great despair is precisely a function of their mindless devotion to an end state that (in Beckett’s eyes) cannot and will not come. Because they merely exist, but do not experience the full richness of the temporal now, they lack a significant world and are doomed to the labor of constantly being forced to “kill time.” It is true that there are moments of genuine humor in the play, and the tramps do seem to have a kind of empathy for each other, but all this is overridden by the fundamental pessimism that forces them

to live in the shadow of a pseudo-salvation that will never come. Their numbingly repetitive references to Godot are analogous to the final, weary efforts of men who no longer believe in anything significant at all in this world. They are doing nothing other than going through the motions of living in a manner not unlike the “last men” that Nietzsche postulated as the dénouement of the inherent nihilism of the Western eschatological worldview. Of course, it is true that waiting *is* the fundamental project or meaning of the tramps’ lives, as Vladimir realizes when he notes that “we are not saints but have kept our appointment.” Thus, it might be argued that in realizing their being-as-waiting they have realized their authentic being. But the question from Nietzsche’s point of view would be: what have the tramps accomplished by their deadened rituals, and what have they found out about themselves? The answer seems to be that they cling to a worldview that no longer has any life or vitality or even believability to it. They have not even ventured a beginning movement toward any significant individuality or creativity. Their hopeless stance is a kind of life-denying masochism of the sort that Nietzsche (and perhaps Beckett too) found all too often in Western eschatology.

It should, however, be pointed out in fairness that many eschatologists have had a different experience of time than that of Beckett. It is logically and psychologically possible to believe in the end-time to come and also live happily in the present world. The key emotion would seem to be that of joy: many Christians, for example, show an apparent joyousness in their lives even though they concede that, metaphysically, this world cannot compare to the one to come. Paul Fiddes points out that the parable in the Gospel of Luke about the watching servants who await their master’s return (Christ) stresses the nature of the Christian *parousia*, which anticipates a creative and joyous ending of the world for true believers.<sup>17</sup> In this worldview, time is not merely to be endured but is to be celebrated as part of the cosmic plan. But the main issue for exegesis here is that, while never officially announcing his atheism, Beckett does not seem to have believed in such a Grand Narrative. Vladimir and Estragon (as well as other tragic dyads, such as Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*) are veritable strangers wandering in a strange land where the Narrative is dying, if not already dead. Beckett is not exploring the *parousia*, but rather the *a-parousia*; he seems to take the emptiness or falseness of Western eschatology for granted and relentlessly explores the consequences thereof.

Objectively, of course, it does not seem possible to prove which view of the end-times is correct,<sup>18</sup> and so we may take Beckett as offering a sort of philosophy of “as if”; that is, he seems to be suggesting that if the Western eschaton is false and/or belief in it has decayed to the point of meaninglessness, then the characters of Vladimir and Estragon would be inherently tragic or farcical human archetypes. They would be the reduction to absurdity of the theology of waiting for that which (according to Beckett) cannot and will not come. Objective proof of statements supporting or

denying the ontology of the Western eschaton seems to be problematic, so Beckett apparently resorted to literature as the only medium in which he could express his views on the matter.

That the tramps lack a significant world has not gone unnoticed by commentators. Günther Anders notes:

That this real loss of a world requires special means if it is to be represented in literature or on the stage goes without saying. Where a world no longer exists, there can no longer be a possibility of a collision with the world, and therefore the very possibility of tragedy has been forfeited. Or to put it more precisely: the tragedy of this kind of existence lies in the fact that it does not even have a chance of tragedy, that it must always, at the same time, in its totality be farce...and that therefore it can only be represented as farce, as ontological farce, not as comedy.<sup>19</sup>

Because of their stubborn and nihilistic attachment to an idealistic eschaton, the tramps cannot rise to authenticity. That is, they cannot, for example, be tragic heroes in the way Hamlet, nor can they be *Übermenschen* in the way that Nietzsche thought of Goethe.<sup>20</sup> This is because they lack the requisite depth of character and the singularity of creative and meaningful action. Even the strangely attractive world of Pozzo and Lucky in Act 1 is ultimately unavailable to the tramps in Act 2, where it is revealed that Pozzo is now blind and Lucky is dumb. This seems to be Beckett's way of insinuating that the proto-Hegelian dialectic of the antipodes has played itself out, and the two are just as helpless and lost as the tramps. Pozzo as a potential Tiresias or soothsayer (Hegel? Marx?) shows himself to be a tired and broken old man, and Lucky, we discover, is carrying nothing more than sand in his bags—sand, the very raw material of certain types of clocks. Thus, Lucky very literally has “time on his hands,” and Pozzo is a confused fool—another type of *dénouement* for the Western eschaton in socio-political terms.

Paul Fiddes has put forward a very different interpretation of the characters of Pozzo and Lucky, albeit one that supports the critique of the play as a commentary on the decline of the religious eschaton. Fiddes argues that Pozzo's first appearance in Act 1 is a satire of the Judeo-Christian God: Pozzo is imperious and dominating, he drives his servant Lucky in front of him on a rope, and the tramps initially mistake Pozzo for Godot himself.<sup>21</sup> Additionally:

Pozzo has all the pretensions of the God of traditional metaphysics. He expects the others to know his name, and claims the open road as ‘my land’. He greets them mockingly as ‘Of the same species as myself...Made in God's image!’, adding ‘I cannot go for long without the

society of my likes even when the likeness is an imperfect one'. He is the creator-impresario, a theatre director who absolutely controls his actors...<sup>22</sup>

Fiddes also points out that the very name Pozzo probably refers to the omnipotence of God, "as Pozzo sounds like the Latin verb *posse*, to be able, or to have the power to do something. Pozzo has all the power, all the ability, and he exploits it mercilessly."<sup>23</sup> In turn, Fiddes interprets Lucky's tirade as a rambling lament concerning the helplessness of the human condition in the face of God's supposed omniscience and omnipotence:

Although human beings, according to Lucky are 'Essy-in-Possy' or *esse in posse*—that is, beings with potential—in the face of an impassible and timeless God, they waste and pine, they 'shrink and dwindle'; they can have no 'possy', no possibilities. They simply decline.<sup>24</sup>

The tragic finale of the play, says Fiddes, comes in Act 2 when Pozzo returns as blind and helpless, and Lucky returns as mute: "In Act 2 Pozzo appears again, sadly changed. He is a wreck of his former self, blind, no longer omniscient (he used to have 'wonderful, wonderful, sight'). Lucky is dumb. The God of traditional metaphysics is dead to the modern mind."<sup>25</sup> The "Personal God" that Lucky speaks of in his tirade at last seems to have devolved to the status of a habitual and irrelevant myth. The tramps throw themselves on Lucky in Act 1 to try to stop his speech, as they realize only too well the implications of what he is saying.

Obviously, the characters of Pozzo and Lucky are extremely enigmatic and many other critical interpretations of their symbolism have been ventured, ranging from the idea that the antipodes represent the inherent sado-masochism of human nature to the idea that they are thinly disguised shadow images or doppelgängers of Vladimir and Estragon. Again, all such interpretations seem to be underdetermined in the actual text. I have restricted my interpretations to those that seem more relevant to the eschatological view of the play.

Finally, inasmuch as the tramps and the antipodes lack significant existences in a meaningfully temporal world, the characters' sense of memory in the play is very problematical. Of the four, Vladimir has the best memory, but even he has numerous lapses and moments of doubt when pressed on specifics by Estragon. Estragon's memory, on the other hand, is dubious in the extreme unless it relates to specific sensory stimuli, such as the taste of chicken bones or a bruise delivered by a kick from Lucky. As to the antipodes, Lucky seems incapable of any significant memory at all (aside from jumbled allusions in his tirade to various philosophers and philosophical stances), and Pozzo's memory has almost totally failed him in Act 2. Even though the play is entitled *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett does not seem very much interested in either future or past. For



him, significant human fulfillment does not appear to be grounded in memory or expectation; there is no absolutely stable past or otherworldly future to discover. His existential perspective is grounded in the present: to exist is to live in the now, for the past is “the no longer” and the future is “the not yet” (endlessly deferred). The no longer and the not yet both reveal the futility of life. Thus, Beckett appears to be suggesting that memory and the eschaton as real forms of salvation are illusory.

Failure of memory constitutes a significant fragmentation of all four main characters. Beckett seems to be presenting them as reductions to absurdity of the plight of Everyman. Vladimir is the “realist” who disintegrates into a mere shadow self while hopelessly clinging to his “being-as-waiting.” Estragon is the “dreamer” who prefers to sleep his way through life in a sort of life-denying stupor. Lucky is the erstwhile philosopher whose grand words and ideas have degenerated through a schizophrenic “word salad” phase on the way to absurdity and silence. And Pozzo is the master of manor and history who, in the end, finds himself blind and fallen in a heap in the middle of the road. The tramps in particular have been systematically victimized by their habitual allegiance to the *Heilsgeschichtliche*—or “salvation history”—of Western eschatology. Their devotion to an impossible world to come leaves them spiritually bereft in the here and now. Even though they exhibit pseudo-identification with apparently “important” values, they are nihilists in the sharpest, most Nietzschean sense imaginable precisely because they refuse to (or cannot) leave their bog and each other and engage in the existential project of re-creating themselves and their worlds as singular, meaningful phenomena. In a general way, all existentialists understand authenticity as a singular and lucid attempt to find one’s own deepest values and projects in a way that precludes the deadness of habit and the capitulation to conformistic behavior. In this way, the tramps are paradigms of inauthenticity.

All that remains, perhaps, is to determine Beckett’s own attitude toward these unfortunates. It can only be one of resigned compassion for the absurdity of the human condition, as is evidenced not only in *Waiting for Godot*, but also in later plays, such as *Endgame*, where the main protagonist is blind and paralyzed and awaiting death. The only consolation given to these fading characters is the dyadic relation to an Other who can share in their angst and decline. Hamm has Clov in *Endgame*; and the antipodes and tramps stagger on as pairs in *Waiting for Godot*. It is also apparently not coincidental that Beckett greatly admired the farcical character of Charlie Chaplin, the little metaphysical clown, who made an entire generation poignantly aware of the perils of being-in-the-world. Given Beckett’s assumptions about the collapse or hollowness of Western eschatology, he seems to be suggesting that there is little consolation for humanity other than the companionship of the doomed and the pathos of gallows laughter. Meanwhile, one might suggest, the ethos of Nietzsche’s Übermensch awaits as a different paradigm for being-in-the-world, one that seizes on

the nihilism of Vladimir and Estragon as a pre-condition for transcendent creativity, joy, and the transvaluation of Western eschatological values.<sup>26</sup> One imagines Goethe and Heine waiting in the wings offstage in contra pose to the sad spectacle of the tramps onstage in *Godot*.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, in *A Samuel Beckett Reader*, ed. Richard W. Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1976) 471-72.

<sup>2</sup> Eva Metman, "Reflections on Samuel Beckett's Plays," in *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 128.

<sup>3</sup> Beckett 458.

<sup>4</sup> Beckett 370.

<sup>5</sup> Beckett 370.

<sup>6</sup> Günther Anders, "Being without Time: On Beckett's Play *Waiting for Godot*," in *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 144.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968) 598.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1959) 2.

<sup>9</sup> Beckett 380.

<sup>10</sup> Beckett 475-76.

<sup>11</sup> For a further discussion of the tramps playing at suicide, see Roger C. Schonfeld, "Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down: Ropes, Belts, and Cords in *Waiting for Godot*," Dec. 22, 2009, [http://www.samuel-beckett.net/godot\\_roger.html](http://www.samuel-beckett.net/godot_roger.html). Schonfeld makes interesting use of the symbol of the rope and the various ways in which people and even Godot are "tied" in the play.

<sup>12</sup> See Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay.

<sup>13</sup> See Paul Fiddes, *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 157-80. See also Chapter 4: "The Negative Way Negated: Samuel Beckett, Counter-Mystic," in Shira Wolosky, *Language Mysticism: The Negative Way of Language in Eliot, Beckett, and Celan* (Stanford UP, 1995). Wolosky traces many of the influences of Nietzsche on Beckett's views about language and nihilism. Additionally, see (1) Shane Weller, *A Taste for the Negative: Beckett and Nihilism*, (Legenda, 2005). Weller examines the views of many modern and postmodern critics who either supported or opposed Beckett's alleged nihilism; and (2) Richard Lane, "Beckett and Nietzsche: The Eternal Headache," in *Beckett and Philosophy*, ed. Richard Lane (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

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<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey Nealon, "Samuel Beckett and the Postmodern: Language Games, Play and *Waiting for Godot*," in *Waiting for Godot and Endgame*, ed. Steven Connor (London: Macmillan, 1992) 51.

<sup>15</sup> See Anders 144.

<sup>16</sup> See Fiddes 157-80.

<sup>17</sup> Fiddes 167-75.

<sup>18</sup> If it is possible to have the proper conditions for post-mortem, continued personal identity—and assuming the veracity of the Western religious eschaton—it *may* be possible to verify claims about such a transcendent world. On the other hand, if claims about continued post-mortem identity and the eschaton are false, they cannot be known to be false. In other words, such claims may be verifiable but they are not falsifiable.

<sup>19</sup> Anders 142.

<sup>20</sup> For an excellent analysis of Nietzsche's understanding of authenticity in the form of the Übermensch, see Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Princeton UP, 1974), Chapter 11.

<sup>21</sup> Fiddes 175.

<sup>22</sup> Fiddes 175.

<sup>23</sup> Fiddes 176.

<sup>24</sup> Fiddes 176.

25 Fiddes 176-77.

26 See Kaufmann, Chapter 3.

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