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The Prisoners in Waiting for Godot : No Time, No Space, and No God

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The Prisoners in *Waiting for Godot*

—No Time, No Space, and No God—

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Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) declared the death of God in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1833).¹ Although Zarathustra enjoyed his solitude spirit in the Non-Logos World, he realized that he had to share his wisdom and knowledge with others. In short, he could not be a hermit in the peaceful and sinless Non-Logos World, but had to live in the vivid, severe and busy Logos World again. Zarathustra's soul is the same as Kukai,² who preaches the necessity of both thought and practice.³ On his way from mountain to town, he met another hermit. The hermit advised Zarathustra to be a freer bird flying in the wood (Non-Logos World), rather than live in the town (Logos World). Zarathustra asked the hermit, „Und was macht der Heilige im Walde?“ (13). The hermit, who despised the real world, answered thus:

Ich mache Lieder und singe sie, und wenn ich Lieder mache, lache, weine und brumme ich:
also lobe ich Gott. (13)

His answer revealed his contempt toward the real world. He feared to be on close terms with others so much that he could not go down the mountain. So Zarathustra went down the mountain alone to tell people what he now knew:

„Sollte es dem möglich sein! Dieser alte Heilige hat in seinem Walde noch Nichts davon
gehört, dass Gott todt ist!“ — (14)

The hermit on the mountain has fallen into self-intoxication and self-deception. What does the life of the hermit in the wood symbolize?

When the philosophy of the death of God or Logos permeated into the western Christian Logos World, it cut away the foundations of knowing. There are two issues we need to look at:

the problems of 'Fall' of Satan⁴ or 'Untergang' of Zarathustra. First, the death of both <Logos = God> and <Logos = Man>; secondly, the philosophical meaning of 'Fall.' In what kind of the world will we be left stranded after the death of Logos? In this paper, I will consider the issue of our fear of the emptiness of the Non-Logos World after the death of Logos in *Waiting for Godot* (1952) by Samuel Beckett.

I

Nietzsche declared that "God is dead." According to Nietzsche's theory, God is a ghost of Man, a Non-Existing phantom, an illusion, created by the imperfect, weak Man as his own shelter to hide his unfaithfulness and unfairness. At the same time, God is nothing but a deputy who revealed his spiritual weakness. The western God was Logos, the Almighty, the center of the world, the purpose, the ruler, the reason, the perfect value system, the traditional order and meaning, the time, the progress and development of society, beauty, art, culture, and self-formation. God is the only ruler of this Logos World. Assuming that this view is true, the world after God's death is the negative Non-Logos World. For example, we will see the chaotic world of Satan and hell in *Paradise Lost* (1667) by John Milton: "the parching air Burns froze, and cold performs th' effect of fire" (II. 594-5).⁵ Moreover, we can remember the wicked world of the witches, "fair is foul, and foul is fair" (I. i. 11) in *Macbeth* (1605-6),⁶ which mixed the affirmative conception with the negative.

Before God's death, all life was formed to be supported by certain definitions of social conventions based on Logos. But in the Non-Logos World after God's death, conventions dissolve and life has no purpose and meaning at all. It is a world of emptiness, fear, and Chaos. Albert Camus (1913-60) explains fear in the Non-Logos World in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942):

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly diverted of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land.⁷

This is the very Non-Logos situation. In *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961), Martin Esslin quoted Eugène Ionesco's definition of the unexplainable and bottomless situation as 'the Absurd' in his essay on Franz Kafka (1883-1924), which is an incomprehensible term:

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.⁸

Moreover, in *Beckett* (1968), Richard N. Coe explains the Absurd as follows:

The Nothingness Nirvana is *also* the Nothingness of the Absurd, and the transition from one to the other is both imperceptible and catastrophic. The first state lasts only “for a time”; . . . Then suddenly, the Change: . . . It is an awareness that man can *never* escape his own rationality, and that *Néant*—even when he is actually there—involves a logical contradiction, and therefore cannot be. It is an impossibility, even when it exists.⁹

Nevertheless, Esslin expressed the meaning and importance of the Absurd dramas in the modern theater:

The Theatre of the Absurd has renounced arguing *about* the absurdity of the human condition; it merely *presents* it in being—that is, in terms of concrete stage images. This is the difference between the approach of the philosopher and that of the poet; . . . —the difference between theory and experience.¹⁰

In such an Absurd Non-Logos situation, every character in the Non-Logos dramas is waiting for something or someone and longing for his own identity.

II

It is Samuel Beckett who captured the Non-Logos World through Literature. For example, Beckett’s masterpiece, *Waiting for Godot*,¹¹ is the very belle of the Non-Logos Theater. Man is described as a poor player, or a prisoner in the Non-Logos World, where life is nothing but to endure suffering of hell. Hell is no place and no time and no God, eternally. This play was put on the stage by the producer, Roger Blin, the standard-bearer of the French Avant-garde movement, at the small Left Bank Theatre de Babylon in Paris on 5 January, 1953. The stage symbolized the meaninglessness of existence and the fear of emptiness. This is not a conventional drama as described by Aristotle (384-322 B. C.) in *Poetics* (?340 B. C.). According to Aristotle’s theory, the traditional drama contains “the beginning, the middle and the end,” which is logically ruled by the relationship of cause and effect, and gives us the order and meaning of life. In brief, in tragedy the hero must endure many difficult pains, and try to bring himself to a meaningful and enlightened place at the end. In *A Reader’s Guide to Samuel Beckett* (1973), Hugh Kenner also explains that the established form of drama goes straight ahead successively like one-way traffic:

It seems contrary to the grain of the theatre, where the normal unit is the event, and where intervals between events are cleverly filled so as to persuade us that the cables are weaving

and tightening that shall produce the next event.¹²

But Beckett completely refused all these traditional forms. In Beckett's theater, there is no plot, no description of characters, no motive, no relationship of cause and effect, no theme, no witty and meaningful conversation, no bitter speech, no mental conflict among characters, no important action, no sense of time and space. In *Samuel Beckett's Art* (1971), John Fletcher also sees the emptiness of his own existence from the same perspective:

His drama takes a similar road to nothingness: there are fewer and fewer characters, plot vanishes entirely, and the dialogue degenerates into a monologue in which the last actors gabble alone.¹³

The wandering situation only floats around the periphery of the stable kernel, without focusing on anything, and without reaching an end. This stage is the very manifestation and incarnation of the Non-Logos World.

Although this form renounces all the old functions such as time, space, matter and spirit, it is the best way to transform them finally and to rescue Beckett's wandering soul. In *Beckett and Myth* (1988), Mary A. Doll explains Beckett's "trick" by saying that the emptiness and fear of Non-Logos is the most fitful means to revive the lost soul:

For fifty years Beckett's work has focused on soul-searching—the topic, as well, of myth and of depth psychology. Beckett takes us to various places, where soul—glimpsed but not found—is felt at its zero point. . . . There, in the space that emptiness affords, the living soul suffers. There, the searched-for soul lives. Beckett shows that we have absolutely no choice in the matter of going back to this other place. . . . Our life depends on it, however; for to journey to that emptiness is to rediscover the forgotten soul.¹⁴

In *Waiting for Godot: Form in Movement* (1990), Thomas Cousineau points out that Nietzsche's theory of 'The Death of God' is reflected:

For these spectators, *Godot* reflects a sense of crisis and urgency that can be traced to Friedrich Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God and the existentialist themes of alienation and despair.¹⁵

Moreover, in *Proust* (1931) Beckett observes that, in order to revive the forgotten soul, we must renounce the established thought. Revolutionary thought is necessary:

The only fertile research is excavatory, immersive, a contraction of the spirit, a descent.

The artist is active, but negatively, shrinking from the nullity of extracircumferential phenomena, drawn in to the core of the eddy. (48)¹⁶

His way of thinking relates to the second problem of “going down the mountain” in the Introduction to *Also sprach Zarathustra*. As Michio Takeyama explains it in his translation-notes of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, ‘Untergang’ for Zarathustra has two meanings. Firstly, there is the literal meaning of going down the mountain of the silent and thoughtful Non-Logos World to the town of the noisy and real Logos World. Secondly, there is an abstract and symbolic meaning of Zarathustra’s life being ruined tragically, namely “of dying in order to live,” in order to grow and transform his soul. In other words, for Zarathustra, ‘Untergang’ is the process of seeking for the deepest wisdom and coming back to the most essential Self, stripping off all the heavy and meaningless clothes. Judging from Nietzsche’s view, this is “to die in order to live.”

Regarding the heavy and vacant clothes, in the nineteenth century Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) viewed traditional Christianity as the heavy, deceptive clothes. In *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4), by stripping one by one the gorgeous clothes that had concealed the true soul, he made us recognize that it is important to be naked in spirit and notice limits of language.¹⁷ In contemporary theater, Beckett used various meanings of <Sartor Resartus> hidden in the bottom of ‘nakedness and clothedness,’ and developed them in his works. Of course, here ‘the clothes’ are not only stage costumes, stage setting, and stage properties, but also ‘clothes of language’ and ‘clothes of actions,’ performance. Beckett’s interpretation of <Sartor Resartus> is ‘to gradually strip off extra flesh,’ which is connected with the idea of ‘the contraction of souls or the spiral Fall.’ For Beckett, ‘the contraction of souls or the spiral Fall’ means to compress Man’s way of knowing, to boil all the conditions down, leaving only the essence, and to face his naked Self. We can see the naked essence, not by adding anything (expansion), but by stripping all (contraction), because only when we are stripped of the last piece of cloth, does the soul of Man appear as the naked Self for the first time. In *Shakespeare our Contemporary* (1967), Jan Kott explains the idea of ‘Stripping Clothes’ as ‘peeling of an onion’:

This is the cruel and mocking ‘peeling of an onion’, Shakespearian and modern alike. The onion is peeled to the very last, to the suffering ‘nothing’. This is the theme of the fall. The concept of man has been reduced and all situations have shrunk to the one ultimate, total and concentrated human fate.¹⁸

Therefore, in *Waiting for Godot*, to continue the same actions and speeches is “to peel the skin off an onion.”

In this way, 'Fall or Contraction' is not loss, but a release in which we become physically and spiritually free. It is not a minus, but a plus which reduces vacant words and actions to things themselves and regenerates Man. To close in upon the essence is the responsibility and duty of the Non-Logos Literature that Beckett intends to create.

III

Here we study the Non-Logos World, which Beckett created by using the tragic way of 'Fall or Contraction.' He usurps the glorious position of language as the most powerful tool of thought to dominate the Logos World. Metaphysically and historically, though language is the fitful means to express, discover, and communicate the truth and thought, it has lost useful functions and reduced to an imperfect and valueless tool. George Steiner points out in "The Retreat from the Word: the First of Two Talks," the phenomenon of the value depreciation in language spread not only into literature but also into modern thought, science, mathematics, and philosophy.¹⁹ Therefore, in order to put a play on the stage, a dramatist had to use language, even if language was imperfect and contradictory.

Here, at last enters the work of Beckett. In *Waiting for Godot*, we will examine the astonishing and various techniques he employed for the Non-Logos drama. The drama is an empty stage. In *Samuel Beckett* (1991), Andrew K. Kennedy points it out:

The empty stage itself is clearly a device to magnify theatricality. . . . In *Waiting for Godot* the main function of staging the stage itself, as the setting of the action, is underline its emptiness—a space is filled with words and images (a tree, the moon rising at the end of Act I).²⁰

Therefore, the stage is "A country road" (11); we don't know exactly where it is. It is "Evening," but it may be dawn. Neither time nor place is specified on the stage. "A tree" (11) stands bare and alone. This poor tree is the landmark where the two characters are to meet Godot. Moreover, it may be the tree of life, because although it has no leaves in Act I, a few leaves materialize in Act II; or it may be the Cross on which Christ was crucified, or the forbidden, knowledge tree in the Eden, or the tree to hang the characters on (but in vain). It can also be considered to be the pipal tree, or the sacred tree under which Buddha was spiritually awakened. Under the tree, the two weary tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, are waiting for Godot. Estragon is usually played by a fat and squat man, and always worries about simple matters such as food, sleep, and dreams. Beckett explains, "Estragon is on the ground, he belongs to the stone."²¹ Meanwhile Vladimir is usually played by a tall and spare man. Of the two he is

more contemplative, the dispenser of food, and the initiator of action. Beckett points out that "Vladimir is light, he is oriented toward the sky. He belongs to the tree."²² 'A stone and a tree' become a visual hieroglyphic pair. There are other examples of this: 'body and mind' and 'earth and sky.' Although they seem to be outside time and place, and free from everything, ironically they are inseparably connected with Godot, and long for Godot without knowing the reason. Being tired of waiting for Godot, Vladimir persuades and unreasonably encourages himself to keep waiting: "Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come——" (74). They are looking forward to being rescued from the unnamable and unexplainable Non-Logos World, which becomes possible if Godot arrives there. But if so, the probability of salvation is only 50 per cent. Judging from testimony of the Gospels, one of the two thieves crucified along with Christ at Golgotha was saved because he asked Christ for forgiveness, while the other fell into hell. Although Estragon and Vladimir know the possibility of salvation is not good, they are still waiting for Godot. Godot will never appear.

Moreover, they continue to hope even as their chances are reduced by others joining them in waiting for Godot or other people arriving in Godot's place. For example, Pozzo arrives with his servant, Lucky, or when a messenger boy appears to say that Godot will be a little late or will come not today (Act I) but tomorrow (Act II). But none of them are Godot. Estragon and Vladimir meet them with fear, anxiety and hope. But they are disappointed that each new comer is not Godot. Again they sigh. Estragon says, "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (41) With this speech, Beckett persuades the audience that nothing will happen, nothing will change and there is nothing to hope for. It is just as Estragon says, trying to remove his shoes, "Nothing to be done" (11), which is the simple, resigned, and cursed speech in the beginning at this play. In *Samuel Beckett*, Andrew K. Kennedy also discusses the unchangeable emptiness of waiting:

The expectations of Estragon and Vladimir seem to be both limitless and irrational; and the various climaxes and pseudo-climaxes, or non-arrivals, do not change their condition.²³

Although Vladimir also says, "Nothing to be done," he considers it on a more philosophical level than that of a failure of the simple physical actions:

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. (11)

Vladimir shows that it is most precious for Man to challenge again and again, even if he has al-

ready experienced failure. In this way, he encourages himself. This very short speech ranges from the lowest, simple and physical meaning to a serious, existential meaning. In short, by having Estragon fail repeatedly in the simple, physical action of taking off his shoes, Beckett shows that there is “nothing to be done” even if we do our best. As long as we are prisoners in the Non-Logos World, we cannot escape from the bottomless fear of its emptiness, however hard we continue to fight with it again and again. Simply to continue is the most important way to prove our existence. Beckett transforms this theme into ‘the changelessness in change by continuity.’ Zarathustra also cries:

„War Das——das Leben?“ will ich zum Tode sprechen. „Wohlan! Noch Ein Mal!“
Meine Freunde, was dünket euch? Wollt ihr nicht gleich mir zum Tode sprechen:
„War Das——des Leben? Um Zarathustra’s Willen. wohlan! Noch Ein Mal!“—— (396)

And he starts his determined resistance and progresses through persistent repetitions against the countless failures of every effort.

IV

Incidentally, when we focus on Godot, his uncertain, untouchable, unreliable and hopeless features are gradually revealed as time passes. There is no hope, no salvation and no future; we cannot catch it or him. Who or what is Godot? When this drama was performed for the first time in New York, Alan Schneider, the director, asked Beckett, “Who or what does Godot mean?,” Beckett answered “If I knew, I would have said so in the play.”²⁴ Godot may be a parody of God, a ridicule of death or an irony of Religious Revolution. Ruby Cohn also tried to explain Godot with the unreachable goal in an interesting way in *Back to Beckett* (1973), but in vain:

. . . Godot might be “happiness, eternal life, the unattainable quest of all men”. And Godot has subsequently been explained as God, a diminutive god, Love, Death, Silence, Hope, De Gaulle, Pozzo, A Balzac character, a bicycle racer, Time, Future, a Paris street for call-girls, a distasteful image evoked by French words. . . .²⁵

Cohn could not help but continue to struggle to define Godot. In the end, Cohn had to abandon all definitions. Godot is Chaos, confusion, relativity, the destroyable, the emptiness, the timelessness, the undefinable, the unnamable, or Non-Existence. In other words, Godot is the symbol of the Non-Logos World. But the theme of this drama is not Godot himself, but “to wait.” The waiting is exaggerated by the absence of time in the Non-Logos World. There is no stream of the usual time. When Estragon tries to understand when they are to meet Godot, he is

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unable to do so. At last he gets angry because he has been forced to endure the weight of the forced time:

[*Very insidious.*] But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? [*Pause.*]
Or Monday? [*Pause.*] Or Friday? (16-7)

Moreover, in Act II the blind Pozzo cannot understand what is happening because he exists in the evacuated time of the Non-Logos World:

[*Violently.*] Don't question me! The blind have no notion of time. The things of time are hidden from them too. (80)

In this respect, as modern people live in the Non-Logos World, which cannot be measured with an usual scale of time, in fact they cannot understand the external phenomenon or the truth hidden in the depth, and have no power to see through the truth. In the Act II, Pozzo curses uncomprehensible time like this:

[*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. (83)

In this timeless hell of Non-Logos, Man is a poor prisoner and must digest or kill his own time from birth till death, which reminds us of Macbeth's famous speech;

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (V. v. 19-28)

His speech echoes hollowly in our minds. In *Goethe's Faust* (Part I 1808, Part II 1832), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) also recites the emptiness of existence in time:

Past and pure nothingness are one at last!
What boots this evermore creating, when
Things all sweep into nothingness again?
'There! Now 'tis past!' From this what can we glean?
'Tis all the same as though it ne'er had been,
Yet round and round it goes, as though it were.
Eternal Void I, for my part, prefer.²⁶

One day is the same as another day. Therefore, even if we were born one day and we die another day, it is the same thing as if we did not exist at all. In endless time, we repeat the history of meaningless life. But once we realize the emptiness of life, we can challenge. This is Zarathustra's strength to continue even after many failures.

Therefore, in order to win against this cruel endless time, we must kill the rushing time whatever means use before being crushed it. In *Happy Days* (1963), however hard Winnie kills the surging time, however consciously she continues to fight against mountainous time, she is gradually embedded into the mound of heaped time. In other words, we can replace 'the mound of time' with 'the sea of time,' which spreads endlessly, where poor Man does not know what to do, and only keeps standing silently. In *Proust*, Beckett defines this time as "that double-headed monster of damnation and salvation—Time" (1) or "Time—a condition of resurrection because an instrument of death" (22), and he expresses Man as the prisoner of time in the Non-Logos World like this:

Proust's creatures, then, are victims of this predominating condition and circumstance—Time; victims as lower organisms, conscious only of two dimensions and suddenly confronted with the mystery of height, are victims: victims and prisoners. There is no escape from hours and the days. Neither from to-morrow nor from yesterday. (2)

But even if we are embedded in the mound of time, and are drowned in the sea of time, surely we cannot help facing despair in the endless time, but there is also hope because of double-edged factors of time.

Therefore, in order to kill the endless time as "that double-headed monster," Man does his best on the stage of life. There is no exception to escape from the endless time even in the characters in *Waiting for Godot*. They notice unconsciously that they can transcend endless time without suffering, if they continue to do something:

Vladimir: That passed the time.
Estragon: It would have passed in any case.
Vladimir: Yes, but not so rapidly. (46)

Nevertheless, however hard they try to do their best, it often happens that the topics of their conversation are at an end. Therefore, they constantly have trouble finding new topics. For example, Vladimir shows how their conversation has ended as follows:

But it is not for nothing I have lived through this long day and I can assure you it is very near the end of its repertory. (80)

This speech shows how difficult it is to kill surging unending time in the Non-Logos World.

V

In this chapter, we study how to kill the vacancy of the endless time. There are ways to kill time with words. As said before, Man cannot communicate and talk with others through intellectual thought, as language retreats completely or is reduced to valuelessness in the Non-Logos drama. It is not possible to talk with each other normally. Even the meanings of simple words are lost. For instance, although Vladimir told the messenger boy, "You're not unhappy" (50), after hesitating the boy could manage to answer only "I don't know, sir" (50), because he could not understand the meaning of "happiness." When communication breaks down, human relationship disappears. And friendship, love, marriage, beliefs are not realized. In *Proust*, Beckett interprets the uncertainty and the incommunicability of love and friendship in these terms:

But if love, for Proust, is a function of man's sadness, friendship is a function of his cowardice; and, if neither can be realised because of the impenetrability (isolation) of all that is not 'cosa mentale,' at least the failure to possess may have the nobility of that which is tragic, whereas the attempt to communicate where no communication is possible is merely a simian vulgarity, or horribly comic, like the madness that holds a conversation with the furniture. (46)

For example, as for friendship, friendship between Vladimir and Estragon is also in doubt. Whenever one goes out of sight of the other, they feel lonely. Nevertheless, although they stay together, they not only often quarrel, but they also do not want to be with each other:

Estragon: You see, you feel worse when I'm with you. I feel better alone, too.
Vladimir: [*Vexed*]. Then why do you always come crawling back?
Estragon: I don't know. (55)

As concerns belief, their quotations are often incomplete and vague, although in their conversations they use many quotations from *The Bible*. The two thieves crucified along with Christ be-

gan to talk to pass the tedious hours, their conversation is also ambiguous. Moreover, it challenges the existence of God because it shakes His stable foundation. To question Christian righteousness means that Western ethics has fallen completely.

As words have lost the fundamental power to order and to dominate, the selfish and humiliating relationship between master and slave in Pozzo and Lucky is not realized. For example, in Act I Pozzo enters as a tyrant, who orders and dominates Lucky, using his rope and whip and giving orders with the strict and simple words, but this relationship gradually weakens. In Act II, Pozzo has not exercised his power over Lucky and their relationship has collapsed. The audience must be uncomfortable, because the audience themselves are unconsciously content with the present, pyramidal position.

As for words and actions, we can discover ambiguous scenes. For we often listen to parting speeches between Vladimir and Estragon, but they do not leave:

1) Vladimir: Then adieu.
Pozzo: Adieu.
Estragon: Adieu.
Vladimir: Adieu.
Pozzo: Adieu.
[*Silence. No one moves.*] (45)

2) Estragon: Well, shall we go?
Vladimir: Yes, let's go.
[*They do not move.*] (52)

3) Vladimir: Well? Shall we go?
Estragon: Yes, let's go.
[*They do not move.*] (88)

They try to go many times, but they cannot depart and linger hesitatingly. As in *Beckett and Myth* Mary A. Doll also points out that "For Beckett's characters life is hell, nothing going on forever."²⁷ Perhaps they will keep on staying there, even after the curtain falls. Let's take another example. When the fallen Pozzo cries for help, Estragon and Vladimir do not help him. The reason is that they cannot understand Pozzo's feeling and respond correctly, as the word, "help," loses its meaning. In the Non-Logos World, words and actions lack the unity and fall to pieces. Therefore, we cannot expect precise actions, as the foundation of language and its fundamental meanings have already disappeared.

VI

Since language cannot fulfill its normal function, people cannot communicate smoothly with each other. However, they cannot escape from the fearful timeless prison in the Non-Logos World. He must fight against endless time in any way he can except words, as Winnie does her best to kill time with her womanly possessions such as the bag, the handkerchief, the lipstick, the parasol, the toothbrush, the mirror and her revolver in *Happy Days*. She fights against it with her bag, her parasol, her hat, and her revolver. Therefore, many kinds of theatrical devices become important factors; body language, silence, playing something, a stage setting, a stage costume, a stage sound or a stage lighting, which are more powerful and expressive than established language itself. Especially, body language or gesture is the most significant element to be chosen in the Non-Logos Theater. For gesture has more fundamental communicating energy than language because of its primitive origins. In *The Theater and Its Double* (1958), Antonin Artaud points out the enormous energy of the theatrical language, comparing it with the spoken language:

And by language I do not mean an idiom indecipherable at first hearing, but precisely that sort of theatrical language foreign to every *spoken tongue*, a language in which an overwhelming stage experience seems to be communicated, in comparison with which our productions depending exclusively upon dialogue seem like so much stuttering.²⁸

Therefore, the characters' simple actions are more important than the complicated spoken language. For instance, Estragon often acts like he wants to sleep on the stone; Vladimir always looks around the stage, waiting for Godot anxiously and hopefully; Pozzo controls Lucky with his rope and whip in their relationship as master and slave; Estragon chews his carrot; Lucky always stands vacantly with a seemingly heavy bag. When Estragon puts a hat on Lucky's head, Lucky continues to speak without stopping; but as soon as the former takes the hat off, the latter stops speaking suddenly and becomes silent. Many times Estragon tries to take off his shoes, which do not fit his feet, but in vain. Vladimir loses his pants easily. Estragon and Vladimir continue to take their hats off and on, and pass their hats and Lucky's hat around; Estragon and Vladimir try to hang on that tree again and again, but in vain. In *Back to Beckett*, Ruby Cohn points out their simple actions;

Their activities have an improvisational quality—dancing, juggling, tumbling, miming, falling, and riding—. ²⁹

But if both of them continue these comical acts, their repeated performances begin to give rise to fear, which transforms the comic to the tragic step by step.

Moreover, there are examples of the continuous, simple games of language:

- 1) Vladimir: Say, I am happy.
Estragon: I am happy.
Vladimir: So am I.
Estragon: So am I.
Vladimir: We are happy.
Estragon: We are happy. (56)

- 2) Estragon: All the dead voices.
Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Vladimir: Like sand.
Estragon: Like leaves.

Vladimir: They make a noise like feathers.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Vladimir: Like ashes.
Estragon: Like leaves. (58)

- 3) Vladimir: We could do our exercises.
Estragon: Our movements.
Vladimir: Our elevations.
Estragon: Our relaxations.
Vladimir: Our elongations.
Estragon: Our relaxations. (71)

- 4) Estragon: To get up.
Vladimir: He can't get up?
Estragon: He wants to get up.
Vladimir: Then let him get up. (73)

These pieces of rhythmical conversation sink deeply into our heart like a sweet serenade streaming into the night sky. Nevertheless, they cannot understand the content of these conversational exchanges because these words lack meanings. Therefore, they only repeat the same words or phrases without recognizing their significance.

Next, let us consider their admirable movement on the stage, where not only the characters and the stage set are relatively arranged, but they also are maximumly curtailed. There are two perfect symmetries; one of Estragon, Vladimir, and a tree; another of a moon, a stone and a

The Prisoners in *Waiting for Godot*

tree. These arrangements are perfect theatrically. Meanwhile, 'playing something' is one of Estragon and Vladimir's unforgettable ways to kill time. All their performances are clownish as in a circus or a music hall. They seem to be unpowerful and untidy actions, but they are the completely calculated movements. Beckett firmly believes that all comical actions become tragedy, so their comical performances create a highly structured, black humor. On stage something of values of conventional rules are stripped one by one with laughter. When the audience watch the bitter scenes on stage, they begin to compare them with their own lives and smile wryly if not painfully. Pozzo enters with many things in Act I and his desire for possession summons pity and black humor. He loses almost all that rubbish in Act II. Although Vladimir and Estragon try to commit suicide in a tree at the end of Act I, Vladimir's pants slip off. Here as soon as the black gag is realized, the tragedy of suicide turns into obscene comedy. In *The Theater and Its Double*, Antonin Artaud insists that the power of 'the wild laughter' is the most important element that has revived contemporary theater:

The contemporary theater is decadent because it has lost the feeling on the one hand for seriousness and on the other for laughter; because it has broken away from gravity, from effects that are immediate and painful—in a word, from Danger.

Because it has lost a sense of real humor, a sense of laughter's power of physical and anarchic dissociation.³⁰

Therefore, 'laughter' has a perplexed, black and sad tune, which results from abruptly breaking down safety and solidity.

VII

Take for example another possible way to kill the swarming endless time: simple but useful 'Repetition.' For instance, the word, 'again,' is used repeatedly. As with Winnie in *Happy Days*, the characters are surrounded by double and triple structures of 'Repetition,' ranging from simplicity to complication, and from words to actions. 'Repetition' offers a lilting tune to this oppressive drama, streaming in a low tone like background music from beginning to end. In the prison of endless time in the Non-Logos World, this rhythmical tune gives the characters some peace of mind. For example, this phrase, "We are waiting for Godot," enters many times in this drama:

Estragon: Let's go.
Vladimir: We can't.

Estragon: Why not?
Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.
Estragon: [*Despairingly.*] Ah! (46-7)

Whenever this phrase is spoken and heard, their minds are at rest. There are also Estragon's act of pulling off his shoes, the exchanging of their hats, their pretense of suicide, and so on. Thomas Cousineau observed in *Waiting for Godot: Form in Movement* as follows:

We tire of hearing the same thing and yet also enjoy it. Repetition is boring, yet rhythm, which depends on repetition for achievement of its effects, awakens sources of pleasure even when the message it conveys to the conscious mind is a despairing one.³¹

Namely, whenever the audience hear these phrases and see these actions continuously, they understand it to be 'Repetition' and at heart they are waiting for the pleasant sense of drifting away in 'Repetition.'

Nevertheless, these words and actions are not always repeated with the same pattern and energy. For instance, although Pozzo and Lucky come on stage in the same way in Act I and II, their possessions, their relationship of master and slave, or their physical situations are completely different. Pozzo can see and act arrogantly like a tyrant to Lucky in Act I, while he becomes blind and changes into a powerless, stubborn and old man in Act II. On the other hand, although Lucky continues chattering to himself in Act I, he cannot speak at all in Act II because he has become mute. Perhaps the further the play progresses, the more will be lost to them. The radically altered and decayed state of Pozzo and Lucky presages a gradual decline of Vladimir and Estragon. Like 'the round-song' ("And dug the dog a tomb"), which Vladimir sings at the beginning of Act II, and which might as well go on forever, it is a circle which is diminishing, but never reaches the center of absolute zero. As time itself tapers off in the Non-Logos World, the more Acts are repeated, the more 'the Spiral Falling Phenomena' happen; the play infinitely approaches the center.

Concerning 'a tree,' although it is a dead tree in Act I, it turns into a living one because a few leaves come out in Act II. Therefore, broadly speaking, the tree is the same in Act I and II, but closely examined, it is never the same. Moreover, as noted in section VI in this essay, although 'leaves, feathers, ashes, and sands' are not the same objects, each noun has a common essence, which means 'dead voice,' and obtains the same value. By simply putting the same worthy nouns side by side, Beckett skillfully creates a wonderful harmony in the speeches. Here 'Repetition' of the same elements bores the audience. Thomas Cousineau also suggests that

'this repetition' provokes not boredom but a kind of communication, because of involving no identical words, but equal value:

It is also important to notice that this repetition involving different elements provokes none of the tedium that we feel when confronted with repetitions of the same.³²

Namely, the law of 'Repetition' and 'Variation' transmits the different but same worthy words into a comfortable rhythm.

Here is the law which we never forget; namely, the changes owing to repeating words of the equal value are only a superficial transformation, not a fundamental change of the situation. We call it 'the Changelessness in the Change.' Ultimately, however many superficial events may happen, the hidden essence never changes in the deepest structure. Pozzo's speech contains the law of 'the Changelessness in the Change':

The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh. [*He laughs.*] Let us not then speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. (33)

Here we can see the same law of 'the Changelessness in the Change.' Nevertheless, however comfortable the rhythm is, we feel boredom. 'Repetition' in the simple diversions, games and play turns into the chronic fall, namely 'Habit.' In *Proust*, Beckett discusses 'Habit,' which is the dogs to his vomit:

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, the lightning-conductor of his existence. Habit is the ballast that chains the dogs to his vomit. Breathing is habit. Life is habit. Or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals; (7-8)

To get into 'Habit' blindly is injurious to soul and body as much as dependence on drugs. But, in reality to live itself becomes 'Habit,' basically. In lives reduced to 'Habit,' there is no longer dynamic energy. Feeling no pleasure and no pain, and looking for many kinds of diversion, Man kills time as a prisoner in the infinite hell of the Non-Logos World. Vladimir notices the fearful aspect of 'Habit' and miserably screams:

We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. [*He listens.*] But habit is a great deadener. (84)

'Habit' changes from a comfortable diversion into a murderer, when habits slip or fail. We can

recall *The Cry* by Edvard Munch (1863-1944), the Expressionist from Norway. It is not clear to us whether fear of the bottomless existence in the Non-Logos World is happy or not. Nevertheless, once we recognize its fear, there is no means to escape from the absurdity of Existence itself. As we face this fear, we must always struggle against Self-Existence, which itself becomes a threat.

Conclusion

We have looked at some measures by which to escape from fear and suffering in the Non-Logos World. And we have found repeated pathetic efforts, in order to pass day after day as a prisoner of endless time. Is there salvation? It is certain that there is a slight hope.

Firstly, hope is hidden in 'the leaves.' Beckett explains the usefulness of a tree in *Proust*:

'Man,' writes Proust, 'is not a building that can receive additions to its superficies, but a tree whose stem and leafage are an expression of inward sap.' (48-9)

If the tree has some energy in the sap, it produces leaves and the trunk grows larger and larger. Even though there is only a little energy at the beginning, it contains the potential to restore life to a tree. Compared to the life of Man, the sap as the source of growth is Man's 'dream, hope, and happiness' for his future. Therefore, as soon as Vladimir speaks about 'happiness,' he knows that the dead tree begins to sprout a few leaves. This wonderful happening means the following: however desolate the landscape of our mind is, we will be able to find salvation if there is only a little hope, a gentle rain in our deep mind. In order to revive the tree of Man, it is important to have a little dream.

Secondly, we see another hope in the nicknames (Gogo and Didi) of Estragon and Vladimir, who are vagabonds set free from space and time. 'Gogo' means 'go,' and is more active and positive than Didi, while Didi is a type of the thoughtful, creative dreamer, though Didi is duller in action than Gogo. Therefore, the most positive and creative ideal comes from working together. By combining 'Gogo' with 'Didi,' one may create 'vice-Godot.' They will recognize that Godot is concealed in themselves, when they renounce everything gracefully and become naked spiritually and physically. Tytyl and Mytyl, the hero and heroine in *The Blue Bird* (1909) of Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), persevered on a bitter and long journey, looking for 'the happy and blue bird.' But at last they found it in their own room, and exclaimed that "We went so far and he was here all the time!"³³ Gogo and Didi may be able to find something concealed in themselves, something which they cannot discover individually, but they can do so by helping and complementing each other. Keeping this complementary dependence subconsciously, smil-

ing the wild laughter, and sharing 'happiness' with each other although knowing it is useless to talk about 'happiness,' they will have the courage to face the fearful Non-Logos World.

Strip off the worldly heavy armors, and face naked Self. Plunge into the mystery of Self-Existence. Choose to 'die in order to revive' again and again, and we will find the courage to live in the absurd Non-Logos World.

Notes

- 1) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, hrsg. Georgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke*, KSA 4 (Berlin: Water de Gruyter, 1988). In this essay all quotations are this version and are shown with page numbers.
- 2) See Kukai's thought in my essay, "The Dialectic of Logos (2): <The Beauty of Mandala >, Cleopatra." *The Humanities*, vol. 1, (Momoyama Gakuin University Institute, 1990). In this essay, Man transcends from 'the Sea of Logos,' by not denying but affirming the dynamic and living instinct even if he is described wicked or bad.
- 3) See my essay, "The Dialectic of Logos (1): Milton to Nietzsche." *The Humanities Studies*, vol. 24: 2. (Momoyama Gakuin University Institute, 1989). This theory is based on the same understanding as that of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology* (1845-6). They insisted on the importance of practicing the ideal theory, and transcended from the Non-Logos World:

For philosophers, one of the most difficult tasks is to descend from the world of thought to the actual world. *Language* is the immediate actuality of thought. . . . The problem of descending from the world of thoughts to the actual world is turned into the problem of descending from language to life. (118)

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical question*. Man must prove the truth, i. e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question. (121)

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, trans. Lawrence & Wishart ed. and introd. C. J. Arthur (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970).

- 4) See my essay, "Where does Logos go in *Paradise Lost?* (1): Fall of Satan," *Kansai Review*, vol. 8, (Kansai English and English and American Literary Society, 1988). In this essay, I observed that the conception of the 'Fall' is the same concept as that of the brave resistance of Satan, the complete Non-Logos Existence in *Paradise Lost*; namely, Satan falls tragically into hell to 'die in order to revive.'
- 5) John Milton, *Paradise Lost: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Sources Criticism*, ed. Scott Elledge (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975). All quotations are borrowed from this version, and are cited by volumes and lines.
- 6) William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir (1951; rpt. London and New York: Routledge, 1992), I. i. 11. Vol.18 of *The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare*. Gen. eds. Richard Proudfoot and Ann Thompson, 35 vols.
- 7) Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), 13.

- 8) Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Fyre & Spottiswoode, 1961), 17.
- 9) Richard N. Coe, *Beckett* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1968), 45-6.
- 10) Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 18.
- 11) Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot. Samuel Beckett: The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986). After this, all quotations are from this version and are cited by page numbers only.
- 12) Hugh Kenner, *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1973), 32-3.
- 13) John Fletcher, *Samuel Beckett's Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), 144.
- 14) Mary A. Doll, *Beckett and Myth: An Archetypal Approach* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 2.
- 15) Thomas Cousineau, *Waiting for Godot: Form in Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 6-7.
- 16) Samuel Beckett, *Proust* (1931; rpt. New York: Grove Press, 1970), 48. After this, all quotations are from this version and are cited by page numbers only.
- 17) Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (London: Faber & Faber, 1948). Especially, in "The World out of Clothes" (Book I, Chap. viii) Carlyle expresses the theory which concerns Beckett's contradictory thought.
- 18) Jan Kott, *Shakespeare our Contemporary*. trans. Boleslaw Taborski (London: Methuen & Co LTD, 1965), 124.
Moreover, in 'Book of Job' (I: 20-1), we can find the idea of 'Fall or Contraction':

Then Job arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground, and worshipped.
And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return;
- 19) George Steiner, "The Retreat from the Word: The First of Two Talks," *The Listener* (London, July 14, 1960), 56-60.
- 20) Andrew K. Kennedy, *Samuel Beckett* (1989; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 43.
- 21) As quoted in Walter Asmus, "Beckett Directs *Godot*," trans. Ria Julian, *Theatre Quarterly* 19 (1975): 21.
- 22) Ibid.
- 23) Kennedy, *Samuel Beckett*, 25.
In the opening of *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1938), Beckett describes the same unchangeable, disgusted situation as this: "The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new."
- 24) Alan Schneider, "Waiting for *Godot*." *Schloss Review* (New York: Autumn, 1958).
- 25) Ruby Cohn, *Back to Beckett* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973), 131-2.
- 26) Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, *Goethe's Faust*, trans. Sir Theodore Martin (1954; rpt. London: Dent & Sons LTD, 1965), 401.
- 27) Doll, *Beckett and Myth*, 1.
- 28) Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 57.
- 29) Cohn, *Back to Beckett*, 135.
- 30) Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, 42.
- 31) Cousineau, *Waiting for Godot: Form in Movement*, 108.
- 32) Cousineau, *Waiting for Godot: Form in Movement*, 109.
- 33) Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Blue Bird*, trans. Alexander Teixeira De Mattos (1909; rpt. London: Methuen & CO. LTD., 1914), 279.