

A commentary on lucky's monologue in waiting for godot essay sample

[Religion](#), [God](#)



In Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, perhaps no character is as enigmatic and perplexing as that of Lucky. His role in the narrative of the drama as he is introduced is by and large passé, until he is asked to 'think' by Vladimir. The ensuing verbosity when Lucky dons his hat has spawned innumerable academic interpretations and attempts to decipher the crux of his musings. Most agree that Lucky's speech is not simply meaningless prolixity and can be split into 3 distinct sections or beats (of which the first 2 are examined here). Upon closer inspection of these sections, one can derive Lucky's message. Throughout the course of his speech Lucky makes a startling commentary on the nature of God, the cessation of man, and the degeneration of our species.

As the speech begins, its focus is immediately clear. "Given the existence... of a personal God... with white beard..." He paints a portrait of an archetypal Christian God, one who is wise, magnanimous, and "personal." He goes on to polarize that image with an ecclesiastical construct that is largely opposite and is characterized as being "outside time without extension..." Even if there is a God he is unable to affect us and even if he can, his care and love are subject to "some exceptions." These exceptions become sufferers who are "plunged in torment [and] fire..." This fire is supposedly so strong that it will "blast hell to heaven..."

The implications of these lines further the conflicting effects of a God. Those who are exceptions from his care experience life on earth as hell, and this sensation is so strong that it eventually overrides any mote of hope or belief in a paradise beyond their earthly sufferings. Lucky's cynical feelings are

innately clear. God is an absent projection entrenched in paradox and if not, then he is defined by “divine apathia” or apathy, a lack of interest, “divine aphasia” the inability to understand or express speech, and “divine athambia” the meaning of which is subject to debate but can be understood, according to the Oxford English Dictionary as “imperturbability”. He is unfeeling, unseeing, and inattentive.

Similarly, Lucky's thoughts and opinions are no less cynical or judgmental when considering the human race. Although fragmented by parodies of professors and philosophers, the gist of this beat of the speech can be glimpsed in the spaces in between. “and considering... that... it is established beyond all doubt... that man in Essy... wastes and pines...” Lucky establishes that man is on the decline. His use of the phrase “wastes and pines” suggests not only a physical atrophy, but a mental one as well. This notion is reinforced by specific examples, “in spite of... the practice of sports... penicilline and succedanea...”

Despite our best efforts at advancing ourselves physically and mentally, we are “concurrently [and] simultaneously... fad[ing] away...” Lucky rounds off the beat by making reference to the fact that this “dead loss” of ourselves is a process that begun with “the death of Bishop Berkeley”, a reference to Irish philosopher George Berkeley who pioneered the ideology that the reality is ultimately comprised of nothing more than our cognitive perceptions of it (Flage). What Lucky implies with this reference is that since the death of Berkeley, we have become ensconced in the idea of some

objective law imposed upon us by God, and that this is the cause of our degeneration.

However, contrary to the somber message of the passage, Lucky's tirade is not without the signature jest and humor we expect from the theatre of the absurd. In fact, the use of puns is liberal; nearly every mention he makes of supposed scholars is a veiled witticism. The "Puncher and Wattman" mentioned bears a slight resemblance to the actual scholars, the Scottish inventor James Watt and the French mathematician Louis Poinsot (Cockerham) but in fact can be seen as a humorous Anglicization of the French words *_wattman_* (a tram driver) and *_poinçon_* (a ticket punch or conductor). Another instance of wordplay takes the form of the names "Testew and Cunard" which is open to a number of interpretations. One is that they are derived from the French names, Testu et Conard. Another is that they may be seen as a reference to the French *_têtu et conard_* which is slang for "mulish and stupid."

A far more humorous interpretation is that the names echo the French slang words for testicle (*_testicule_*) and vagina (*_con_*) (Cockerham). Finally, Lucky makes a slightly more esoteric pun in mentioning the names "Steinweg and Peterman." In the case of an English audience, the second of the two names may seem humorous due to its association with the label, cracksman ("cracksman"). To a French audience it may seem humorous due to the fact the French word for flatulence (*_péter_*) is strikingly similar to the first half of the name, effectively re-appropriating the scholar as a human representation of a passing of wind. The obscure part of the pun comes in

the fact that both names reference 'stone' since *_stein_* is German for stone (Harper) and Peter is derived from the Greek *_petros_*, meaning stone (Harper). This serves as an indicator of the last beat, given that 'stone' is mentioned a further seven times in the speech. The ultimate function of all these double entendres is to further emphasize the degradation of man; even in these incredibly austere and profound moments, Lucky himself is bathetic.

In closing, it is easy to appreciate Lucky's lecture for what it truly is, a classically absurd and Beckettian soliloquy. Rife with existentialism and forceful commentary, Lucky delivers his message in a swathe of daunting loquacity. Beckett makes use of interpolative bathos and witticism to remind readers and audiences alike of our supposed cessation, and the irrationality of our religious projections. Some may dismiss Lucky's speech as meaningless drivel but, as is evident, they couldn't be farther from the truth. While the monologue is not necessarily the nub of *_Waiting for Godot_'s* message, there is no disputing that it is the most enthralling and the most memorable.

Works Cited

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. Trans. Samuel Beckett. New York: Grove P, 1954.

Cockerham, Harry. "Pozzo/Lucky." *Samuel Beckett Resources and Links*. 25 Apr. 2010 .

<https://assignbuster.com/a-commentary-on-luckys-monologue-in-waiting-for-godot-essay-sample/>

“ cracksman.” Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. 2010. Merriam-Webster Online.

1 June 2010

Flage, Daniel E. “ Berkeley, George [The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy].” The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 4 Apr. 2004. 25 Apr. 2010 .

Harper, Douglas. “ Peter.” Online Etymology Dictionary. 2001. 25 Apr. 2010 .

Harper, Douglas. “ Stein.” Online Etymology Dictionary. 2001. 25 Apr. 2010 .