

Jadwiga Uchman

University of Łódź

George Berkeley's *Esse Est Percipi* and Martin Buber's I-Thou Relationship in Samuel Beckett's Oeuvre

Abstract: The article discusses selected dramas of Samuel Beckett in reference to George Berkeley's notion of *esse est percipi* and Martin Buber's idea of I-Thou relationship. The playwright was familiar with the Bishop's philosophy and many of his characters express a wish to be seen or heard as this would objectify their existence. At the same time it may be argued that the need to have a companion (be it someone or even something) results from the necessity of having a meaningful relationship as described in Buber's philosophy of the need of the other. There is no evidence that Beckett knew Buber's works yet, taking into account the fact that both of them were interested in existential issues, it is not surprising that the philosopher's views may be a useful tool in analyzing the Nobel prize winner's output. One thing must be stressed here, namely the fact that whereas in the case of the two philosophers the ideas of *esse est percipi* and I-Thou relationship are used as a proof of God's existence, in Beckett's oeuvre God seems to be absent, this being an expression of the playwright's attitude to religion.

Keywords: Beckett, drama, Berkeley, Buber, philosophy

Samuel Beckett's numerous writings, varied as they are, are yet characterised by certain recurrent motifs and a consistent vision of human existence. It might be argued that this Nobel prize winner is one of the artists who, both in his novels and plays, repeatedly deals with the same range of subjects and, in most of his writings, his attraction, among others, to Marcel Proust's novel, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, and Bishop Berkeley's philosophy is noticeable. Beckett's study on Proust was commissioned by a London publisher, written during Beckett's stay in Paris and published in 1931. Even though it contains some shrewd and original critical insights, it seems to be, above all, an excuse for Beckett's diagnosis of his own problems and does not present literary criticism proper until Beckett has allowed himself a long and not altogether relevant discussion of the "Time cancer

and its attributes, Habit and Memory” (1970: 7). Time is defined by Beckett as “the double-headed monster of damnation and salvation” (1970: 1), while human life is characterized by “the suffering of being” (1970: 8) which is a punishment for “the original and eternal sin ... of having been born” (1970: 67).

His characters are lonely, forlorn people who, in most of the cases, yearn for some kind of contact with other similar creatures. In this respect, his artistic vision seems to bear some resemblance to the ideas expressed by Bishop Berkeley. George Berkeley (1685–1753), advanced a theory he called “immaterialism” (later referred to as “subjective idealism”). This theory denies the existence of material substance and concedes that familiar objects are only ideas in the minds of perceivers and, as a result, cannot exist without being perceived. In his philosophic treatise, *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, Berkeley argues: “For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that is to me perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible that they should have any existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them” (1972: 66). The hypothesis assuming the necessity of being perceived in order to exist posed the problem of durability and unity of objects. The solution of this difficulty was provided by another field of Berkeley’s philosophy, namely his spiritualism, which he developed in *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, aptly subtitled *In Opposition to Sceptics and Atheists*, a treatise which proves the existence of God (1972: 220).

While Beckett was staying in Trinity College his teacher was Dr. Arthur Luce, a philosopher, specialising in the views of Descartes and Berkeley. Being also Berkeley’s modern editor, he influenced the views and the output of Beckett (Calder 2001: 4). In the letters written by Beckett at that time there are numerous references to Berkeley which testify to his profound knowledge of the philosopher’s views and also to the artist’s critical attitude to them as discernible in his letter written to Thomas McGreevy on 23rd of April 1933: “And Berkeley’s *Commonplace Book*, which Hone¹ recommended as the beginning is full of profound things, and at the same time of a foul (& false) intellectual canaillerie, enough to put you against reading anything more” (Beckett 2009: 154). Beckett, however, continued reading the eighteenth century philosopher. At his death, his library contained, among others, two of Berkeley’s books: *A New Theory of Vision and Other Writings* (which included *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* as well as *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*) and *Commonplace Book* (Smith 1998: 332). There are good reasons to assume that Beckett’s *Three Dialogues* on the work of Pierre Tal Coat, André Masson and Bram van Velde, representing the debate that went between them in discussions and correspondence, take their form and title from Berkeley’s book.

¹ Hone co-authored a book on Berkeley published in 1931 (Casanova 2007: 68).

Critics provide evidence of intertextual references to Berkeley's thought in Beckett's novels, letters and notebooks.² Furthermore, Frederick N. Smith, in his article entitled "Beckett and Berkeley: A Reconsideration" concedes that, while critics notice the influence of Berkeley's thought on Beckett, they do not do so in the case of form. He further argues that the philosopher's youthful *Philosophical Commentaries* and *Siris: A Chain of Philosophical Reflexions and Inquiries Concerning the Virtues of Tar Water* are works in which Beckett "seems to have discovered formal models for the personal, tentative, philosophical fiction of the 'trilogy' and *How It Is*" (Smith 1998: 331).

Beckett's characters almost always exist in couples as, in accordance with Berkeley's doctrine, *esse est percipi*, they need to be perceived by someone else. This someone, however, does not necessarily have to be the philosopher's God, as he seems to be absent in the Beckettian world. In his book, *Einstein and Beckett. A Record of an Imaginary Discussion with Albert Einstein and Samuel Beckett*, Schlossberg argues that for Beckett perception (or being perceived by others) is equivalent to existence (1973: 46). In Beckett's first play, *Waiting for Godot*, there are several instances where a reference to the philosopher's ideas is discernible and his name is mentioned by Lucky in his speech (1969: 44). At a certain moment, Estragon wonders: "Do you think God sees me?" and gets Vladimir's answer "You must close your eyes." Then both of them ask God to have pity on them (76–77). Towards the end of the drama, Vladimir says:

Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the gravedigger 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? (90–91)³

At this moment of enlarged consciousness Vladimir refers to the basic ideas introduced by Beckett in his *Proust* essay: Habit, "suffering of being" and life unavoidably leading to death. Before returning to the state provided by the comforting Habit, Vladimir expresses a hope that at him, too, someone is looking. Is it a reference to the Berkeleyan God who assures continuous existence? It is rather doubtful. At the end of both acts Vladimir asks the messenger boy to tell Godot that he saw them which seems to be yet another reference to the philosopher's ideas (52, 92).

In *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett* in the entry "George Berkeley," Ackerley and Gontarski argue:

In *Waiting for Godot* the essential Berkeley is rehearsed in such instances as the tree (the same as yesterday?), and Estragon's boots which fit today but not yesterday, and may not be the same color, "explained" by the supposition that someone with different-size feet has come in

² See, for instance (Uhlmann 1999: 176; Casanova, 68; Harvey 1970: 247–249; Smith, 332–337).

³ For a discussion of this speech see (Uchman 1987: 19–24).

the night. This reduces to the absurd Berkeley's contention that no causal relationship in time can be proved between two representations of the same "thing." (2006: 50)

While the critics' reference to the philosopher's ideas may be undoubtedly justified, there is yet another possible interpretation. The playwright's oeuvre may be viewed from the point of view of the discrepancy between objective, physical time bringing about change and the subjective, psychological time as perceived by the characters.⁴ The sudden changes occurring in the play may be explained by the fact that, in comparison with the psychological time of the protagonists, which is at a standstill, the physical time is, as it were, speeding up. This point seems to have support of Beckett who argued that the rapid change of the tree happened "Not to show hope or inspiration, but only to record the passage of time" (Roger Blin, qtd. after Bair 1978: 383). As far as Estragon's boots are concerned, Beckett also made a comment on this, writing to Colin Duckworth: "The second day the boots are no doubt the same as the first and Estragon's feet wasted, pined, shrunk and dwindled in the interval. There's exegesis for you" (1973: 99). It is noteworthy to mention here that Beckett provided another interpretation of this issue in an interview with Harold Hobson: "One of Estragon's feet is blessed and another is damned. The boot won't go on the foot that is damned, and it will on the foot that is not. It is like the two thieves on the cross" (1956: 153). Both his interpretations find support in the play — the first one in Lucky's claim that man "is seen to waste and pine" (42) and the second in the story of the two thieves which worries Estragon so much (12–13). Thus, even the playwright himself would sometimes provide two different readings of his plays, and, therefore, the same seems to be permitted in the case of different interpretations offered by critics.

It might be argued that the Beckettian idea of the need to be perceived may be associated not only with the Berkeleyan *esse est percipi* but also with the need of the other resulting from a number of different reasons. One of them is to have someone to be with, to talk to and to be a partner in playing various games, these comprising the Habit which enables them to forget, momentarily at least, about "the suffering of being." There are many moments in *Waiting for Godot* when the tramps express their happiness resulting from being together (see, for instance, 9, 59–60). The second scene is telling in a number of ways. First of all, it indicates the ambivalent character of their relationship — they seem to be satisfied with being alone and, at the same time, they hate it. It also demonstrates that they keep on talking in *non sequiturs*, yet go on talking all the same. They do so, because, when the silence falls, they feel the burden of living. That is why, in order to annihilate the silence (which reminds them of their suffering), Vladimir asks: "What do we do now, now that we are happy" and the cruel statement describing their hopeless situation comes: "We wait for Godot" (60). This scene seems to adequately describe their predicament: their fate is to wait for Godot. Waiting is easier when you have

⁴ For the discussion of this issue see (Uchman 1987).

a companion, someone who, thanks to games, conversations (different forms of Habit) will help you forget about your gloomy fate.

Thus the existence of the other is connected not only with the Berkeleyan *esse est percipi* but also with a desire to maintain a satisfactory relationship. This, in turn, evokes the ideas expressed by Martin Buber (1878–1965). There is no evidence that Beckett was familiar with the Austrian-born Jewish philosopher's theories. Taking into account the fact that both of them were interested in existential issues, it is not surprising that the philosopher's views may be a useful tool in analyzing the Nobel prize winner's output. Buber introduced the philosophy of dialogue, a variant of existentialism which focused on the distinction between the I-Thou and I-It relationships. Buber's starting point was the premise of existence as an encounter. He assumed the world is of twofold nature resulting from two kinds of man's attitude towards it:

The attitude of man is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks.

The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words.

The one primary word is the combination *I-Thou*.

The other primary word is the combination *I-It*; wherein without a change in the primary word, one of the words *He* and *She* can replace *It*. (3)

The man who experiences has no part in the world. For it is "in him" and not between him and the world that the experience arises.

The world has no part in the experience. It permits itself to be experienced, but has no concern in the matter. For it does nothing to the experience, and the experience does nothing to it.

As experience, the world belongs to the primary word *I-It*.

The primary word *I-Thou* establishes the world of relation. (5–6)

All real living is meeting. (11)

In the beginning is relation. (18)

Here it becomes crystal clear to us that the spiritual reality of the primary words arises out of a natural reality, that of the primary word *I-Thou* out of a natural combination, and that of the primary word *I-It* out of natural separation.

And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this: without *It* man cannot live. But he who lives with *It* alone is not a man. (34)

There seem to be two common traits in the philosophy of Berkeley and that of Buber. Firstly, both of them argue that the presence of the other is of vital importance for existence — in the case of Berkeley it takes the form of the perceiver-perceived relationship, in the case of Buber that of the I-Thou correlation. Secondly, both of them contend that the ultimate perceiver/Thou is either a personal God (Berkeley) or an impersonal divine principle (Buber). Yet, while Beckett's view concerning the need of the other is, to some extent, similar to the opinions expressed by both Berkeley and Buber, there are no religious implications in his outlook.

Beckett's attitude to questions concerning faith is slightly ambiguous. During the trial in November 1937 (the libel action between Harry Sinclair and Gogarty, where he acted as a witness supporting Sinclair) on being asked whether he called

himself “a Christian, Jew or Atheist,” Beckett replied: “None of the three” (Bair 1978: 268). Beckett’s statement made on this occasion and his other remarks concerning religion indicate that he considered it to be “only irksome and let it go. My mother and brother got no value from their religion when they died. At the moment of crisis it has no more depth than an old school tie” (Driver 1961: 24). As early as in 1935, Beckett wrote about himself to his friend, Tom McGreevy as of one who seems “never to have had the least faculty or disposition for the supernatural” (Beckett 2009: 257). Mary Bryden, who has written a book *Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God*, in which she concentrates on Beckett’s texts, not life, remarks in the “Introduction” (1998: 1): “when Charles Juliet enquired in 1977 whether or not he had been able to rid himself of the influence of religion, he replied enigmatically that this was the case ‘dans mon comportement extérieur, sans doute. ... Mais pour le reste...’ [in my external behaviour, no doubt. ... But as for the rest...].”⁵

Taking into account Beckett’s references to the status of religion in his life, it must be conceded that his understanding of the need of the other, even though bearing resemblance to the views of Berkeley and Buber, does not indicate their conviction that it is a proof of the existence of God. He himself rejected a religious interpretation of *Waiting for Godot* and the assumption that the ever absent Godot was God. When asked about the identity of Godot, Beckett answered: “If I knew who Godot was, I would have said so in the play” (Bair, 382). He also said: “If Godot were God, I would have called him that” (Bair, 282–283) and “Christianity is a mythology with which I am perfectly familiar, and so I use it. But not in this case” (Bair, 186). Peter Woodthorpe, who played Estragon in the British premiere directed by Peter Hall, recalls: “Beckett also said to me about ‘Godot’ that he deeply regretted calling it ‘Godot,’ because everybody interpreted it as God. Now that he saw it in English. And all the things people made of it. He said it had nothing to do with God. He was almost passionate about it” (Bair, 123–124). Despite the rejection of a religious interpretation of *Waiting for Godot*, however, Beckett makes Estragon wonder whether God sees him and Vladimir tell the boy to inform Godot that he saw them. A reference to George Berkeley’s notion of *esse est percipi* (also as a potential proof of the existence of God) is clearly discernible.

The desire to be seen is also one of the *leitmotifs* of *Happy Days*. Embedded in sand at the beginning of the play to her waist and in the second Act to her neck, Winnie is still trying to make the best of her tragic situation. Her Habits, helping her to cope with the incessant “suffering of being” consist mainly of speaking as well as of inspecting the contents of her bag and commenting on them. She is fully aware that her pointless action and talk, to an equal extent devoid of meaning, constitute her escape.

⁵ Charles Juliet. *Rencontre avec Samuel Beckett*. Paris: Editions Fata Morgana, 1986, 50. For the discussion of the importance of religion in Beckett’s output see, apart from the already mentioned Bryden, also, among others: (Butler 1992) and (Zeifman 1975).

Her existence, she seems to argue, is ascertained by her being perceived. At the beginning of the second Act, like Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, she assures herself, saying "someone is looking at me still" (Beckett 1961: 49), yet she does not state who that someone is. Slightly earlier, she said "Strange feeling that someone is looking at me. I am clear, then dim, then gone, then dim again, then clear again, and so on, back and forth, in and out of someone's eye" (40). This sentence seems to be a direct reference to Berkeley's idea and the problem of durability and unity of perceived objects which, according to this philosopher's outlook, is guaranteed by the permanent perceiver — God. One might suppose Winnie has Willie in mind, who "is the Other who is needed to give reality of the self" (Barnard 1970: 122). From early in the play Winnie insists on having eye contact with Willie:

Can you see me from there I wonder, I still wonder. (*Pause.*) No? (*Back front.*) Oh I know it does not follow when two are gathered together — (*faltering*) — in this way — (*normal*) — that because one sees the other, the other sees the one, life has taught me that ... too. (*Pause.*) Yes, life I suppose, there is no other word. (*She turns a little towards him.*) Could you see me, Willie, do you think, from where you are, if you were to raise your eyes in my direction? (*Turns a little further.*) Lift up your eyes to me, Willie, and tell me, can you see me, do that for me, I'll lean back as far as I can. (*Does so. Pause.*) No? (*Pause.*) Well never mind. (Beckett 1961: 28)

On another occasion, she expresses a wish she could see Willie:

Do you know what I dream sometimes? (*Pause.*) What I dream sometimes, Willie. (*Pause.*) That you'll come round and live this side where I could see you. (*Pause. Back front.*) I'd be a different woman. (*Pause.*) Unrecognizable. (46)

The idea of perception being necessary for existence is also extended to the parts of her body. Winnie argues: "And should one day the earth cover my breasts, then I shall never have seen my breasts, no one ever seen my breasts" (38). If the breasts are not seen, they do not exist. In Act II, when her breasts are already covered by the mould, she utters the following monologue:

To have been always what I am — and so changed from what I was. (*Pause.*) I am the one, I say the one, then the other. (*Pause.*) Now the one, then the other. (*Pause.*) There is so little one can say, one says it all. (*Pause.*) All one can. (*Pause.*) And no truth in it anywhere. (*Pause.*) My arms. (*Pause.*) My breasts. (*Pause.*) What arms? (*Pause.*) What breasts? (*Pause.*). (51)

The same Berkeleyan argument is repeated in the Shower/Cooker episode, as reported by Winnie when, not being able to see the lower part of her body, the man wants his wife to ask Winnie about some details (58). In the context of the Berkeleyan philosophy the Shower/Cooker reference seems to deserve some attention. Asserting that they are "the last human kind — to stray this way" (43–44, 59), Winnie is not certain about their name and asks Willie: "Shower — does the name mean anything to you?" (41), slightly later on to enquire: "Cooker, Willie, does Cooker strike a chord?" and "Cooker, Willie, does Cooker ring the bell, the name Cooker?" (41). Superficially, she may be simply asking whether he remembers what their name is. Both their names, however, bring an association with two German verbs "kucken"

and “schauen” meaning “look.” While asked by Alan Schneider, who was directing a production of *Happy Days* in New York in 1961, how Beckett wanted the name Shower to be pronounced, he answered: “*Shower* (rain). Shower & looker are derived from German ‘schauen’ & ‘kuchen’ [sic!] (to look). They represent the onlooker (audience) wanting to know meaning of things” (Harmon 1998: 95).

Winnie expresses her yearning to be assured of the existence of the other on different occasions, however, she does not refer then to being seen but to being heard. Twice she pleads Willie to confirm that he hears her: “Can you hear me? (*Pause*.) I beseech you, Willie, just yes or no, can you hear me, just yes or nothing” (25) and “I shall not trouble you again unless I am compelled to, just to know you are there within hearing and conceivably on the semi-alert is ... er ... paradise enow” (31–32). She expresses this wish also in two lengthy speeches. On the first occasion she says:

Ah yes, if only I could bear to be alone, I mean prattle away with not a soul to hear. ... Something of this is being heard, I am not merely talking to myself, that is in the wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do — for any length of time. (*Pause*.) That is what enables me to go on, go on talking like this. ... (20–21)

She repeats nearly the same thought in Act II:

Someone is looking at me still. (*Pause*.) Caring for me still. (*Pause*.) That is what I find so wonderful. (*Pause*.) ... Say it is a long time, Willie, since I saw you. (*Pause*.) Since I heard you. (*Pause*.) (50)

This speech is, again, important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is yet another reference to the Berkeleyan notion of *esse est percipi*, where, in this case, being perceived is understood as being both seen and heard. Secondly, this monologue is characterised by opposition, contrast and repetition all of which are characteristic features of the drama.⁶ Thirdly, it refers not only to Berkeley but also to Descartes. Benstock (1992: 179) writes that in his “Afterword” to *Happy Days* Knowlson (1978: 113) concedes that Winnie “has rewritten the Cartesian formula: ‘I need to continue to assert my own existence, therefore you, Willie, still exist.’” A similar opinion is voiced by Barnard who comments on this sentence writing it is “a nice distortion of Descartes’ formula into ‘I talk therefore you exist.’ She will even accept that he may be dead, like all the others, but still he is there because she is talking to him” (1970: 123). And, finally, it makes a reference not only to her talking but also to the bag. It might be argued that both of these are used by her, on the one hand, as a “habit” helping her to survive but also, on the other, as a means of asserting her existence, a point made by Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*: “We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?” (69).

When the second Act progresses, we become aware that, till the very last moments, there is no evidence of Willie’s existence as he is neither seen nor is he heard. Yet throughout the Act she keeps addressing him, despite the fact that he

⁶ For the discussion of this issue see (Uchman 2011: 113–119).

never answers, as if to convince herself of the validity of her earlier sentence — “Ergo you are there.” The bag is still there but it is of no use as her hands are buried in the sand, the heap now covering her up to neck. All that is left are words — her monotonous monologues and stories, the only means of escaping the unbearable “suffering of being.” She tries to comfort herself, despite everything, saying:

The bell. (*Pause.*) It hurts like a knife. (*Pause.*) A gouge. (*Pause.*) One cannot ignore it. (*Pause.*) How often ... (*pause*) ... I say how often I have said, Ignore it, Winnie, ignore the bell, pay no heed, just sleep and wake, sleep and wake, as you please, open and close the eyes, as you please, or in the way you find most helpful. (*Pause.*) Open and close the eyes, Winnie, open and close, always that. (*Pause.*) But no. (*Smile.*) Not now. (*Smile broader.*) No, no. (*Smile off.*) *Pause.* What now? (*Pause.*) What now, Willie? (*Long pause.*) There is my story of course, when all else fails. (*Pause.*) A life. (*Smile.*) A long life. (*Smile off.*) Beginning in the womb, where life used to begin, Mildred has memories, she will have memories, of the womb, before she dies, the mother's womb. (55–56)

The reference of the womb brings to one's mind the speeches of Pozzo and Vladimir from *Waiting for Godot* (“They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more” [89] and “Astride of a grave and a difficult birth” [90]). The situation presented in *Happy Days* is different from that in *Waiting for Godot*. While in Beckett's first drama the characters are together most of the time (at times being also accompanied by Pozzo and Lucky), Winnie is left mostly to her own resources. Even though she often expresses a need to be seen and heard, in other words to be perceived, she has to invent her pastimes mostly by herself and that is why her monologues/stories and the bag (a substitute partner) become the main forms of Habit she employs. The situation is still different in the case of Krapp, whose solitary figure is the only human being we encounter on the stage.

In *Krapp's Last Tape*, written in English in 1958, Beckett poses very movingly one of the fundamental preoccupations of all his writings, the meaning of the self by juxtaposing (and, at times, fusing) a man, Krapp, and the tape-recorded manifestations of his past. The comparison of the past Krapp, the one imprisoned on the tapes, and the present Krapp, the one visible on the stage, brings time as such into focus, time both as a destroyer, resulting in change and development which in the Beckettian world is so often equivalent to deterioration, and time the preserver, in which things and people alike, even though changing, in some respects, at least, remain the same.⁷

Krapp's Last Tape could seem to be a monodrama, as there is only one character there, yet, on the other hand, due to the tape recordings of Krapp at the earlier periods of his life, the play is robbed of a true monodrama status. The earlier Krapps are, in fact, different Krapps in many respects, and so different characters to some extent. The focus of the play is centered around the problems of memory and the contrast between the lost past and the sour present. *Krapp's Last Tape* explores a monotonous present by recalling a moment-lit past. Like Proust, Beckett deals with the relation

⁷ For the discussion of this issue see (Uchman 2012).

of the self, possessed by Memory and Habit, within Time. In the play we observe an old man trying to recreate his identity through two kinds of his memories, those recorded by means of the machine and those he stored in his mind. Those two kinds of memories, being quite often different, seem to present the Proustian concepts of “voluntary” and “involuntary” memory (Beckett 1970: 19, 4). Beckett’s understanding of these two kinds of memory allows him to write a dramatic study of the changing and changeless self, addicted to Habit, imprisoned in Time. It is quite clear that the tapes present Krapp by means of what Beckett called “involuntary memory,” the kind of memory that has special freshness and force when recalled, because, having been lost to consciousness, it has never had a chance to become dimmed in its lines of habituation. A memory of this kind brings not only the past events but also the self that experienced them, quite a different self than the present one.

It can be argued that the tape recorder visible on the stage, whose tapes have preserved the past *egos* of Krapp, fulfils the function of a character or even characters. Furthermore, it becomes Krapp’s other — lacking a contact with people Krapp has a relationship and rapport with an object and thus establishes the Buberian I-Thou relationship. In this respect, the tape recorder is not merely a thing but also, as the bag in *Happy Days*, in a sense, at least, a partner of the main protagonist, or to put it in Buber’s terminology, the other.

Beckett devoted quite a lot of attention to the machine in his directorial notes written during the rehearsals at Schiller-Theater Werkstatt, in Berlin in 1969, featuring Martin Held. His memoranda read:

Tape-recorder companion of his solitude. Masturbatory agent ... Anger and tenderness of Krapp towards the object which through language <becomes> has become the ‘alternen Idioten’ [‘stupid bastard’] or [erasure] the girl on the lake.

Tendency of a solitary person to enjoy affective relationships with objects, in particular here with the tape recorder. Smiles, looks, reproaches, caresses, taps, exclamations ... A little throughout. Never forced.

Like many lonely people he tends to have an emotional rapport with material objects.⁸ (Knowlson 1992: 181, 205, 248)

Commenting on his experiences while being directed by Beckett in the 1970 production of the play in Théâtre Récamier, Jean Martin wrote: “And he wanted Krapp to bend over more and more toward the tape recorder as the play went on, in order to end up completely lying over it, and almost to give the impression that Krapp acts with the tape recorder as he had been acting with a woman in the boat” (McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988: 257). The tender attitude of the old Krapp towards the tape recorder and his beloved from the past is noticeable not only in Beckett’s directorial approach but also in the very text, stage directions included.

⁸ The typographical note states: “Text between square brackets [] has been added to the original English text. Text between pointed brackets {} has been revised. A pair of angle brackets <> indicates that a section of text has been cut from the original English text” (Knowlson 1992: 2).

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be concluded that Samuel Beckett's output is characterised by numerous references to the philosophy of Bishop Berkeley of which the Nobel prize winner had a profound knowledge. It must be stressed, however, that the intertextual references to this philosopher's ideas are, by no means, devoid of severe, at times, criticism. On the one hand, Beckett's application of *esse est percipi* does not lead him to the proof of God's existence as the case with Berkeley is because for the philosopher the immaterialism leads to spiritualism. Concentrating on the existence of individual human beings, Beckett treats the philosopher's concept rather as a way of demonstrating the need of the other and, therefore, his approach is close to that of Martin Buber and his idea of I-Thou relationship. His characters express a wish to be seen and heard mainly because of a need to have a companion who will help them to stand the terrible "suffering of being." When another person is hardly responsive, as the case with Willie is, or not available at all, as in the situation of Krapp, they initiate relationships with objects: Winnie with her bag and Krapp with the tape recorder.

One final remark is necessary: Beckett undertakes a dispute with the philosopher's idea in a work meant for cinema which has the generic title *Film*. Starting from the philosopher's basic assumption of *esse est percipi*, he contends; "All extraneous perception suppressed, animal, human, divine, self perception maintains in being" (1984, 163). The discussion of how he manages to present a philosophical debate by means of film technique deserves a separate analysis.

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