

NAMING THE UNNAMABLE:

LANGUAGE AND SILENCE IN BECKETT'S NOVEL



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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, I utilize philosophical tools of analysis to examine one of Samuel Beckett's novels, viz., The Unnamable. Because this work epitomizes Beckett's obsession with language and silence, it has posed certain difficulties for a critical assessment. By the very nature of his experimentation, Beckett has cast aside conventional terms of reference and has created a work showing the struggle between the author and his medium of expression.

In order to get at an understanding of the text, three different philosophies of language have been employed. These are the theories of meaning found in logical atomism, the later Wittgenstein, and Heidegger.

The Unnamable presents a nameless character in the quest for his identity against a background of his relationship to language. No matter how many attempts he makes, he simply cannot seem to situate himself. The names he tries to apply fail to stick, the stories which he tells do not provide definition. He is left, unsuccessful, unsure whether he is among words or in the midst of silence.

In order to grasp the role of subjectivity with respect to language and the place of the metaphysical subject, the work of Russell and the early Wittgenstein comes into play. The assignment of the subject to the limits of language by Wittgenstein and the attempt by Russell to assess the role of proper names in terms of a class of definite descriptions provide us with a means of examining The Unnamable.

Another crucial issue is the unification of the form and the content of the text, whereby the character and themes of The Unnamable reflect and are reflected by the novel's structure. Themes and ideas raised at the beginning of the text are threaded throughout. The picture is that of a family resemblance, where traits shared in common are found in all related areas. The later Wittgenstein enables us to understand these structural elements, as well as the way in which language operates within the novel. Here, Wittgenstein's concept of language games is particularly relevant, as it can be used to examine Beckett's literary display of language games and the character's use of and relationship to language. In this regard, the telling of his stories can be linked to the structure of the text.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein's theory of the meaning of a word as its use in a given context, his discussion of how an individual can get ensnared in the net of language, and his comments on the sorts of consequences arising from a person listening to his own voice are all applicable to Beckett's work. By means of this method of approach, we can grasp the complexity of the language of The Unnamable and see how the form of the work is mirrored by its contextual elements.

The Unnamable presents us with a character trying to arrive at answers on the question of himself, by the only means available to

him -- language. Unfortunately, this option entails the use of words that Others have taught him. His language seems inextricably linked to these Others, and his very sense of himself appears to be enmeshed with theirs. This is an overwhelming concern of the character, on which Heidegger's inquiry into language and being can be brought to bear. Heidegger's notion of the they-self, with its correlative concerns of authenticity and inauthenticity, helps to describe the Unnamable's situation.

Consequently, the structure of this thesis is as follows: Chapter I consists of a discussion of language and literature, along with an overview of the ways in which language and silence have been a persistent, overriding concern of Beckett's fiction. Since this gets its paramount expression in The Unnamable, it is upon the interplay of language and silence within this work that the rest of the thesis will focus. Chapters II, IV, and VI present a brief exposition of the philosophical positions found in logical atomism, the later Wittgenstein, and Heidegger. Using these chapters as the background, we subsequently turn, in Chapters III, V, VII to an examination of the Beckett text from the respective philosophical perspectives.

It is hoped that this thesis will offer a general direction for approaching Beckett's fiction and, in a broader context, approaching other works in which linguistic experimentation reaches literary expression.

INTRODUCTION

Beckett's novel The Unnamable represents one artist's descent into an inner library of Babel, the exploration of seemingly infinite levels of language games, simultaneously the paradise and inferno of his medium of expression.¹ It is a contraction of such intensity and depth, that there is a continual sense of the writer's bumping into the limits of language. The force of the silence that lies beyond all those words is such that it is as if one slip in the narrative, or one lost word, will cause the silence to open and engulf the nameless speaker once and for all. "... it's the silence, a few gurgles on the silence, the real silence, not the one where I macerate up to the mouth, up to the ear, that covers me, uncovers me, breathes with me, like a cat with a mouse, ..." (U, p. 408)

And yet the silence lures as seductively as a siren, creating a work which is both an ode to silence - "... if only this voice would stop, for a second, it would seem long to me, a second of silence." (U, p. 364) - and an embattlement between words and silence.

... there is nothing else, let us be lucid for once, nothing else but what happens to me, such as speaking, and such as seeking, and which cannot happen to me, which prowl round me, like bodies in torment, the torment of no abode, no repose, no, like hyenas, screeching and laughing, no, no better, no matter, I've shut my

¹Samuel Beckett, A Trilogy of Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., First Evergreen Black Cat Edition, 1965). All references will be to this edition, with the novels abbreviated as M, MD, and U, respectively.

doors against them, ... perhaps that's how I'll find silence, and peace at last, by opening my doors and letting myself be devoured, ... (U, p. 391)

There is a power struggle between words and silence, as if the cessation of one would mean the domination of the other. Thus, the character is not content to let one dominate for long, out of fear that too many conclusions will be drawn and the case closed. There is both a lure and repulsion towards words. The character wants words, to take him to silence, yet he is afraid that they'll do just that. On the one hand, "... to have them carry me into my story, the words that remain, my old story, which I've forgotten, far from here, through the noise, through the door, into the silence, ..." (U, p. 413) On the other, "... words ... they're going to stop, I know that well, I can feel it, they're going to abandon me ..." (U, p. 414)

In this thesis, I attempt to demonstrate that Beckett's literary form, using The Unnamable as the paradigm, provides us with a unique kind of fiction. Using philosophical positions as tools of analysis, rather than conventional tools, the novel will be examined from the perspective of each of the three most significant theories of language of this century.

The first chapter surveys language, literature and interpretation, with respect to Beckett's works. Subsequent chapters are expositions of the various philosophies of language, followed by their individual applications to the novel. Together they open doors to much of the Beckett territory. The philosophical views of language, chosen both for their linguistic impact and their value in assessing the Beckett text, are the theories of meaning found in logical atomism, the later

Wittgenstein, and Heidegger. After each theoretical statement is an analysis of The Unnamable in light of the previous chapter. Structurally that means the third, fifth and seventh chapters are the result of employing the philosophical positions, stated in the second, fourth and sixth chapters, as a tool for assessing Beckett.

In order to provide the tightest available format for a study of this kind, we will look at only one Beckett text. The sole use of The Unnamable will allow us to concentrate on the issues, without having to take any other variables into account. Furthermore, I do not think we need to bring in any other theories of meaning than the ones utilized here in order to get a hold on the major areas of the novel, i.e., as an expression of Beckett's exploration of language and silence. The theories of logical atomism, later Wittgenstein, and Heidegger, can perform that service for us.

Samuel Beckett is recognized for his literary experimentation with language and silence.² Using the literary medium, he has tried to take fictional form to its limits. One of his goals is to grasp the way in which writing is done and to confront the struggle of the writer to express. He professes to have an overwhelming desire to explore the literary domain, yet feeling restricted by his vehicle and having nothing to say. This is discussed in more detail in the first chapter.

The kind of exploration undertaken by Beckett is not unique, for many others have probed into this area. Experimentation with

² See, for example, Richard Coe's Samuel Beckett, Hugh Kenner's Samuel Beckett, A Critical Study, and Ihab Hassan's The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett.

language and silence is a compelling issue for 20th century writers. What may be Beckett's distinguishing mark is the unusual persistence he has shown in exploring these concerns.

In these introductory remarks, we will briefly consider various approaches literary critics have taken on The Unnamable, in an attempt to determine what sorts of problems have arisen. Most analyses of Beckett have presented a fairly rigid or restricted inquiry into his literary vision and, to that extent, the range of his contribution. There seems to be some difficulty in coming to terms with his works within a literary framework without, at the same time, losing some of the issues. This can be shown by an overview of selected claims about The Unnamable by foremost Beckett scholars and may provide us with a perspective on the approach of this thesis. It is hoped that the interdisciplinary elements of this investigation might suggest ways of handling the limitations of conventional analyses of unconventional works, such as Beckett's.

Furthermore, the method of approach and the direction of this thesis may point to positive routes for further exploration into Beckett's works. In a more general way, it may suggest broader applications of philosophical tools to texts which, like The Unnamable, express concerns outside the sole domain of literature. This may be able to fuel ideas for drawing separate disciplines closer together, by providing a stronger foundation for their interaction and communication.

Wittgenstein offers a direction for choosing a methodology: look at the use of our terms, and then select the tools that would be the most helpful in obtaining an accurate description of what is happening. The tools may then be used to assess the work of art. Our investigation

is an attempt to obtain a clear picture of what Beckett is doing in the vast experimentation of The Unnamable. Various tools have been selected on the grounds of usefulness and applicability to a discussion of the novel, while keeping the issues of language and silence in the forefront. It seemed wisest to proceed in this manner, without taking into account any stated or implied theoretical indebtedness on Beckett's part. No doubt other approaches could have been chosen, and possibly sharper tools than the ones employed in this dissertation. However, the ones used here appeared to offer the most fruitful means I could find to open Beckett's dense world for our examination.

In addition, I would not think it necessary for Beckett to have knowledge of the philosophies under consideration for us to explore the novel from a philosophical standpoint. It is not intended as part of this thesis that Beckett has utilized these theories in his works, or as underlying themes. Indeed, as we will discuss in the first chapter, works of art, by their very nature, do not carry around theories or ideas, as if art were a platter for service. The philosophical relevance of Beckett's works is on a different level.

John Fletcher examines Beckett's link to philosophy, which he suggests is extensive. He contends that, "I do not believe the true nature and full extent of Beckett's debt to philosophy has as yet been adequately explored, ..." ³ At one point, Fletcher notes the influence of Berkeley and Hume on Watt. He remarks that,

... it is more likely to be their influence at work in the novel than Wittgenstein's, whose writing Beckett has

³ John Fletcher, Samuel Beckett's Art, (London: Chatto & Windus: 2nd Impression, 1971), p. 122.

come across, according to his own admission, only in the last few years. In fact it is difficult to decide exactly where Beckett got these ideas.⁴

With this, he attempts to sweep away Wittgenstein's significance for Beckett. We need not go to this extreme. Indeed, whether or not Beckett has read a particular philosopher is of coincidental interest to the question as to whether they have approached the same issues. Consequently, Fletcher's endeavour to trace the influence of philosophical and literary figures, as more historically than artistically significant, is not relevant to the focus here.

Fletcher is not the only one to look at Beckett from a philosophical perspective: other critics, such as Kenner, Coe, and Robinson, have also delved in this area. Kenner links Beckett to Cartesian dualism; a theme, which Kenner argues, runs throughout Beckett's works. Others see different philosophical themes; as, for example, Coe's and Robinson's arguments that The Unnamable can be interpreted in a Sartrean manner. Coe argues that,

Worm is Beckett's most far-reaching attempt to incarnate conceptually the Neant of the Self - the Sartrean pour-soi. Worm is not-Mahood; he is the "anti-Mahood". He is and yet he is Nothing ...⁵

Robinson discusses the novel in a similar vein. He considers Mahood to be "... the culmination of his predecessor's attempts to eliminate everything superfluous to the Self".⁶ Worm, he says, is

⁴ Ibid., p. 136.

⁵ Richard Coe, Samuel Beckett, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., First Evergreen ed., 1964), p. 74.

⁶ Michael Robinson, The Long Sonata of the Dead: A Study of Samuel Beckett, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1969), p. 197.

"... the most extreme description of that foetal urge which has obsessed Beckett ever since his first book".⁷ In Robinson's view, "... the pour-soi approximates to the Beckettian Self. It is also embodied in the image of Worm, the hero's attempt to create a vice-exister who is at the same time as he is not".⁸

A Sartrean analysis, as Coe and Robinson pursue, does offer an interesting interpretation of the text. A more explicit connection to language, however, can be made by employing a Heideggerian approach, as undertaken in the seventh chapter of this thesis. It also helps us to understand the role of silence for the Unnamable and why he feels incapable of attaining it, other than in unsatisfactory ways. In these regards, we can see the Basil-Mahood-Worm metamorphosis as assimilated into a discussion of language and silence. In fact, it is specifically because of The Unnamable's overwhelming concern with these issues that I have not considered Sartre, Descartes, Berkeley, Hume, or other philosophers who might otherwise be relevant to particular contextual aspects.

However, it should be understood that neither a Sartrean nor a Heideggerian interpretation of the characterization would constitute a complete perspective on the novel. Too many vital issues would be omitted were we to consider the characterizations to be, for all effective purposes, the main constituent of The Unnamable. Simply, this is a novel in which characters do not have a primary role. Instead, they are but one of the aspects of the experiment. The text is operating as a unified whole; so to focus solely on the various characters would prevent us from grasping the extent of Beckett's contribution.

⁷Ibid., p. 198.

⁸Ibid., p. 199.

To get a perspective on the critics' overall approach to The Unnamable, let us continue with a quick survey of some well-known positions. Mercier, for instance, takes Robinson's comments about Beckett's foetal urge one step further, by remarking that, "... the voice in The Unnamable belongs to a soul that has never been born".⁹ The Unnamable is seen by Mercier as an anti-hero whose physical impotence symbolizes his emotional sterility. He extends the foetal metaphor when talking about Worm (he means Mahood, the one in the jar outside the restaurant) and Madeleine-Marguerite. We are asked to admire Beckett's imagination for creating "a strangely human relationship between an imaginary woman and the abortive product of her fantasy".¹⁰ By calling this relationship a "love-affair", Mercier not only diverges from the spirit of the text, but he also implies that the novel can be discussed in traditional terms. We might argue, on the other hand, that the woman's position to Mahood (Mercier's "Worm") is more of perceiver to perceived than woman to man.

Beckett's personae are sexless in the only sense that matters. "For here there is no face, nor anything resembling one, nothing to reflect the joy of living and succedanea, nothing for it but to try something else." (U, p. 363) There is so little that is "strangely human" in The Unnamable, that we could as convincingly claim that Madeleine-Marguerite is Mahood's fantasy as the reverse. Beckett's personae simply do not fit into a mold patterned upon our concept of how humans

⁹Vivian Mercier, Beckett/Beckett, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford University Press Paperback, 1979), p. 55.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 215.

live and behave in reality. "The mistake they make of course is to speak of him as if he really existed, in a specific place, whereas the whole thing is no more than a project for the moment." (U, p. 371)

There are many ways in which these comments about Worm apply equally to the other inhabitants of the Beckett world and particularly those in The Unnamable.

Problems begin to arise when terms, which normally make sense, are brought to bear on texts of this kind. The result is that the inquiry runs aground because of the limitations of its methodology.

The critical short list of The Unnamable should illustrate some of the limitations of the conventional approach. Let us look:

Mercier: "... non-being, in the unperson of the Unnamable, yearns for being."¹¹

Hoffman: The Unnamable is the extreme form of the "un-novel".¹²

Kenner: These fits and revulsion of the Unnamable comes closer to the Cartesian spirit than Descartes himself.¹³

Hassan: With this novel, Beckett reduces the mentalism of Descartes to absurdity ... the hero of this is the (same) hero of all three novels, the hero of an anti-creation myth ... it may be a novel of "anal babble" ... an "anti-novel".¹⁴

Jacobsen and
Mueller: The novel "attempts to describe man in terms of his relationship with others ... attempts to describe man in

¹¹Mercier, Beckett/Beckett, p. 175.

¹²Frederick J. Hoffman, Samuel Beckett: The Language of Self, Preface by Harry T. Moore, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., A Dutton Paperback, 1964), p. 132.

¹³Hugh Kenner, Samuel Beckett, A Critical Study, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 120.

¹⁴Ihab Hassan, The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, A Borzoi Book, 1968), see pp. 152, 163, 165.

theological terms" ... Beckett works "tirelessly to describe the human condition in theological language" ... we are lead to speculate on the relationship with his protagonist and Christ.¹⁵

Hayman: The Unnamable speaks from within the cave of the self in the voice of some obscene male sibyl with "almost disembodied thought" ... the narrator of The Unnamable is a "purgatorial background of good and evil".¹⁶

Federman: The Unnamable, whose "genius for forgetting" is explicitly noted, is much more of a liar than his predecessors.¹⁷

Champigny: "The monologue illustrates in its own way the Paradox of the Liar."¹⁸

Fannizza: With The Unnamable, Beckett "... has achieved the anti-novel, the anti-literature based on the anti-human. He has linked Angst with nausea and has gone beyond them; ..." ¹⁹

There is certainly a range of interpretation here. However, a common thread of the sense of a definitive explanation runs throughout, although it is frustrating to see the application of the language games of literary criticism to The Unnamable. Since the concepts of 'hero', 'novel', 'creation', 'literature', and so on, have questionable application to this novel, we find "anti-" or "un-" getting tacked on to try to obtain

¹⁵ Josephine Jacobsen and William R. Mueller, The Testament of Samuel Beckett, (New York: Hill & Wang, A Dramabook, 1964), see pp. 113 and 125.

¹⁶ David Hayman, "Molloy or the Quest for Meaninglessness: A Global Interpretation" in Melvin J. Friedman, ed., Samuel Beckett Now, 2nd ed., with an Introduction by Melvin J. Friedman, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 130 and 133.

¹⁷ Raymond Federman, "Beckettian Paradox: Who is Telling the Truth?" in Friedman, ed., Samuel Beckett Now, p. 107.

¹⁸ Robert Champigny, "Adventures of the First Person", in Friedman, ed., Samuel Beckett Now, p. 124.

¹⁹ Franco Fanizza, "The Word and Silence in Samuel Beckett's The Unnamable", in J.D. O'Hara, ed., Twentieth Century Interpretations of Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., A Spectrum Book, 1970), p. 75.

a more fitting vocabulary for analysis.

All of the issues raised by the critics are relevant to The Unnamable, as cases of what the later Wittgenstein calls "seeing aspects". The point here is not to deny that examples and instances from the text could be cited to support the various positions. However, we should guard against adopting a point of view that would be too narrow, or too dogmatic. One of the amazing things about this (anti-, un-) novel is that it does lend itself to being examined from many angles, where its elements can be separated and labelled. But that is not to say that a procedure of dissection leaves the work intact. Nor does it imply that, if we were to unwrap each bundle and look more closely, we could obtain a greater understanding of either the author or the text.

One problem with such an enterprise is that it sets in motion a series of language games within language games. It is like Chinese puzzle boxes, with each dividing the previous one, analyzing it further, and sending it onward, where the process is repeated. Such a process would not give us a complete picture of the entire work. A different approach could leave the old vocabulary behind, at the door, like well-worn boots that help us arrive at the starting point, but which must be set aside, lest we leave tracks and muddy everything. As Fannizza recognizes,

The definitive traditional modes with which to approach a reality that is always both discovered and presupposed - the categories, that is, of space, relations, time and substance - are by now useless: They prove themselves inconsistent in B.'s works.²⁰

²⁰Ibid., p. 74.

George Steiner considers Beckett's dynamic of language and silence, and considers the latter as dominating the direction of the works:

Monsieur Beckett is moving, with unflinching Irish logic, toward a form of drama in which a character, his feet trapped in a concrete and his mouth gagged, will stare at the audience and say nothing. The imagination has supped its fill of horrors and of the unceremonious trivia through which modern horrors is often expressed. As rarely before, poetry is tempted by silence.²¹

Poetry is tempted by silence, for silence is, as Steiner says, an alternative. Silence certainly does play an important role in Beckett's works, as we consider in the first chapter. It shows in the context of the poetic style, the rhythm and density of the prose and in the use of a language for which the presence of silence is continually felt. Silence is the backdrop, the stage on which the language of the works dances. But it is by no means a stage which Beckett neglects, for he seems to exert tight control over the use of language, the flow of the words, the interplay of sounds and silences. The resulting recognition of the strength of silence places Beckett, according to Steiner, alongside Wittgenstein, Webern and Cage:

This reevaluation of silence - in the epistemology of Wittgenstein, in the aesthetics of Webern and Cage, in the poetics of Beckett - is one of the most original, characteristic acts of the modern spirit.²²

The banal use of language in contemporary culture has brought a devaluation, in proportion to the glut of words which has been thrust upon us. It seems that we are pressed-upon by words. They weigh

²¹George Steiner, Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman, (New York: Atheneum Pub., 1972), p. 7

²²Ibid., p. 48.

upon our consciousness much too heavily, having accumulated in quantity and historical significance. They have been corrupted, abused, pushed, and pulled to such limits that we rarely find either speakers or writers using words with precision and care. Some, like Beckett, treat words as if they were distillations placed from an eye-dropper onto the page, each carefully arranged to work together. The result is an entity whose inner and outer structures are mutually supportive.

In addition to the treatment of language, there must be a corresponding attention paid to silence. "Without the polarity of silence, the whole system of language would fail,"²³ When language breaks down as a vehicle of communication and no longer acts as a viable means of expression, silence takes over. Silence is the ultimate alternative to language, the most effective escape from speech. Without resorting to music or laughter - the bounds of language noted by Broch - the only feasible option when words fail, would be silence.

It may be language which distinguishes man from beast, but it is silence which makes us alone. Silence draws the partitions between person and person, and must be faced in order to live this side of anguish. "... you launch your voice, it dies away in the vault, it calls that a vault, perhaps it's the abyss ..." (U, p. 409) These engulfing aspects of silence can be used both inwardly and outwardly. We can destroy, punish, or exert social controls with weapons of silence. Its force can be awesome. "... on a rock, lashed to a rock, in the midst of silence, its great swell rears toward me ..." (U, p. 410)

²³ Susan Sontag, Styles of Radical Will, (New York: Dell Publishing, A Delta Book, 1969), p. 19.

Against the background of silence, the concerns which Beckett shows towards language are expressed and interconnected throughout his works. They are clearly at the core of The Unnamable. The philosophical discussions of silence by Heidegger and Wittgenstein are relevant to Beckett. Silence is recognized by Heidegger as the call of conscience (see the sixth and seventh chapters) and by Wittgenstein as the limit against which his inquiry rests (see the second and third chapters).

Silence may only be a theoretical limit to which Beckett's characters aspire, but which they can never reach. It haunts the Unnamable. "... dream again, dream of a silence, a dream silence, full of murmurs ..." (U, p. 414) Words constitute, as Wittgenstein's analogy suggests, the pieces of the game, of the language games. Words are, in Beckett's words, "to add to my collection", yet, simultaneously, that which we must purge ourselves.

The Unnamable presents us with a character trying to use language to deal meaningfully with reality. He wants to find words to be applied to his situation. By exploring the limits of his language, he hopes to place himself as a subject. He struggles with an attempt to name things in his world, while fighting the sense of futility that nothing is namable and his story cannot be told.

Words and images run riot. The character is a nameless thing in a whirlpool of words, seeking to find one to apply to himself, all the while feeling words slip outside his grasp and the names he seeks to apply slide away. This can be understood in light of Brée's statement that,

... the writer never abandons his hand-to-hand combat with language, his unceasing struggle to subject it to

an "unnamable" truth resuscitated by this very combat and by-passed as soon as it is named, his own past-present.²⁴

The very issue of naming is an obsession for the Unnamable.

It is discussed in the third chapter, wherein we look at the character's attempt to locate himself with respect to language. This constitutes a major area of the novel, upon which our examination takes its impetus from the work of the logical atomists. Their search for a logically perfect language forced them to assess the role of the subject. As a result, the proper name's position in the ideal language had to be dealt with. The ways in which Russell and Wittgenstein handled this problem, not to mention the sorts of difficulties that ensued, provide us with a handle for understanding Beckett's expression of these concerns.

Russell's notion of proper names as a class of definite descriptions, along with the resulting absurdities of this view, offer a philosophical instrument with which to consider the Unnamable's sense of absurdity. This is demonstrated in the Unnamable's gradual inability to assume or accept names, or even pronouns, as a means of linguistic identity.

The structure of the novel and the way it reflects elements of the character's quest constitute a fascinating layering of frames within frames. This is most markedly evident in the Basil-Mahood-Worm transition. Stories within one frame incorporate and overlap stories from another, with threads of similarity running through each of the characters. This results in an elaborate and complex text which Wittgenstein's

²⁴ Germaine Brée, "The Strange World of Beckett's 'grand articulés'", in Friedman, ed., *Samuel Beckett Now*, p. 84.

notion of language games can help clarify. The investigations of the later Wittgenstein provide insights into the infra- and inter- structural elements of the novel, by availing us of a way to talk about the various interrelationships. In this regard, Wittgenstein's concept of 'family resemblances' is also applicable.

Champigny discusses the progress of the characters in the novel. Although he makes no explicit reference to Wittgenstein, he provides support for the assessment of the characterizations in light of language games. Champigny refers to these as "character games" and says:

At times, weariness and exasperation appear to set in ... Yet the monologue goes on. Personification slips in again. A new character game begins.²⁵

This is in accordance with the argument in the fifth chapter, wherein the characterizations are seen as an extension of the novel's concerns. That is, they are a literalization of the themes. By personification they come to life and new characters take shape.

Wittgenstein mentions the case of a person listening to himself speak and it seeming as if someone else were speaking. The picture is one of alienation from one's own words - something which seems to occur frequently in The Unnamable. Wittgenstein's discussion shows a way to deal with the listening process of the character. For the Unnamable, this is not only disconcerting, it is also something from which he seems unable to extricate himself.

As he carries listening to an extreme, there is the sense that the Unnamable is being overtaken by the others who appear to be

²⁵ Robert Champigny, "Adventures of the First Person", in Friedman, ed., Samuel Beckett Now, p. 121.

talking through him. They are in control, they are speaking through him, he is their mouthpiece, they are the winds bellying out his sails. Images such as these abound throughout the text, signifying a furtive search on the part of the character to come to terms with those others and rid himself of them. At this point, Heidegger's philosophy of language can provide valuable insights. For example, his concept of the 'they-self' helps us understand how the Unnamable is caught in a web of language which is knotted by his sense of others and the role they play in his relationship to language and the world.

Heidegger links language to Dasein. He sees language and being as complementary terms, involving the concepts of 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity'. Since the role of others is of paramount importance for these concepts, Heidegger's discussion sheds light upon the novel. The Unnamable is not just concerned with the self at the limits of language, nor with the role of names with respect to language. Nor is the novel merely a cool demonstration of Beckett's linguistic finesse with literary language games. For the text also presents us with a character struggling with language in the hopes of understanding its significance to his own life, and how he is a unique human being. In these respects Heidegger is of value.

There are surely other concerns in this novel, and other issues which lie outside of a philosophical analysis. However, it seems that the main issues are among these which I attempt to describe in this thesis. And as long as we keep in mind Beckett's warning that "the danger is in the neatness of identifications" ("Literary criticism is

not book-keeping"!)²⁶, we can avoid approaching the Beckett territory as if it were land to be subdivided, and stringently analyzed, as if by rigid terms of classification. The degree to which this thesis makes identifications is not intended to lock us into a fixed vision. It is meant to show that there is much of Beckett's work to be probed by an interdisciplinary perspective, whereby we gain further clarity using philosophical tools as a means of examination.

²⁶ Samuel Beckett, "Dante... Bruno... Vico... Joyce", in Samuel Beckett and Others, Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress, (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 3 and 5, respectively.

... to know it's life still, a form of life, or-
dained to end, as others ended and will end, till
life ends, in all its forms. Words, mine was never
more than that, than this pell-mell babel of silence
and words ... what is it, this unnamable thing that
I name and name and never wear out, and I call that
words. It's because I haven't hit on the right ones,
the killers, haven't yet heaved them up from that
heart-burning glut of words, with what words shall I
name my unnamable words? And yet I have hopes, I give
you my word, high hopes ...

Samuel Beckett

CHAPTER I

THE "WORDY-GURDY": LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND SAMUEL BECKETT

This chapter consists of three parts: language and literature, Beckett's quest, and Beckett's exploration of language and silence. The first section considers the general area of language and literature, the writer's concern with the medium of expression, and some of the aspects of literary experimentation with language. Beckett is not alone in expressing an interest in the subject of language, as demonstrated by the works of writers such as Conrad, Robbe-Grillet, Sarraute, Barth, Barthelme, and Joyce. The fact that there are many writers pushing and prodding this medium in ways which challenge what once might have been seen as rather fixed limits of the 'novel', only makes Beckett's preoccupation with language all the more interesting.

We will, consequently, undertake an aerial surveillance of the Beckett territory, in order to realize that The Unnamable may be a Beckett masterpiece, but not an isolated work. The issues of language and silence are interwoven throughout all of his works, where themes raised in early works reappear in later ones, with threads of similarities and dissimilarities occurring from one work to the next. (The actual method of such weaving is investigated in the fifth chapter, where the later Wittgenstein's concept of 'family resemblance' is applied to the novel.)

We will proceed in the following way: first, a look at language and literature, and the problems of seeing a work of art in an interpretative way; i.e., in terms of a rigid theoretical position. This weighs upon an examination of Beckett, because he unifies formal and contextual elements in ways which resist a theoretical formulation. The second part of this chapter will be a brief discussion of Beckett's quest for self expression. His struggle is with the compulsion to express, in the face of a literary angst that not only will he fail at his expression, but it is not even clear that he has the means to correctly proceed. He proceeds, nevertheless, yet with a Pythagorean terror that doing so is utterly irrational, and may possibly lead him into an abyss. The final section will look at the central role played by words and silence in the Beckett world. All of his works incorporate the attention to language and silence to what appears to be an increasingly dehumanizing degree. The result is that, from Watt to the trilogy and the later How It Is and Imagination Dead Imagine, Beckett's characters gradually fade to anonymous personae, as linguistic expression grinds away the uniqueness of the characters, leaving them, like Beckett's Unnamable, "amidst a swarm of words" and, seemingly, one in a lifeless heap of others.

Part One: Language, Literature and Interpretation

In this section, we will consider some of the aspects of the writer's relationship to his medium, in an attempt to understand whereby this distinguishes the literary work of art. Beckett is adamant in asserting that the writer is firmly tied to his medium, in which the only path open is its exploration. We might say that, for Beckett, the writer is a magician of words, a linguistic alchemist, using an economy of technique to discover literary heights. As we will see, Beckett suggests that the artist must leave behind the everyday, the level of habits and rationality, and relinquish attention as to what the audience desires. At that point, he partakes in a descent, a contractive "excavation" as Beckett says, leading into alien territory, in which some of the familiar literary elements must be discarded. A number of questions arise with regard to the way in which the literary critic should view the end-product of the artist's quest. There are difficulties for the critical mind in trying to order and assess something which, in essence, asks us to set aside our preconceptions and habits of thinking. In this respect, the artist can be seen as a soothsayer, revealing other worlds to the reader by means of the text.

"Among those whom we call great artists", writes Beckett in "Three Dialogues", "I can think of none whose concern was not predominantly with his expressive possibilities, those of his vehicle, those of

humanity."¹ The writer as consumed and consumer, exploring the depths of his own medium by its very use. This procedure has an inherently different character to it than everyday speech or the trite commonplace applications, where it has come to be degenerated and devalued. In these cases, there is a need for quantity, in order to act as an assurance that something is happening, that something important is transpiring, and that something, at least the speaker, exists. This is reflective of the to-be-is-to-be-heard mentality. There are many examples of this in Beckett's works; e.g., Happy Days, with Winnie's dependence on Willie, Not I's affirmative monologue, and Come and Go's Gregorian threesome, who depend upon the audience for confirmation. This is language in the role of filler, filling in the distance from the void. As filler, it operates as padding or word-swathing, making each person feel less alone and less alienated.

There takes place a different enterprise with language in poetic expression, inasmuch as we find curiosity in operation. Poetry, states Beckett in a discussion of Vico, is born of curiosity, of the passionate and animate exploration of particular things, and not of any dispassionate inquiry into abstract generalities. In discussing the variance between poetry and philosophy, Beckett remarks:

Barbarians, incapable of analysis and abstraction, must use their fantasy to explain what their reason cannot comprehend. Before articulation comes song; before abstract terms, metaphors. The figurative character of the oldest poetry must be regarded ... as evidence of a poverty-stricken vocabulary and of a disability to achieve abstraction. Poetry is essentially

¹Samuel Beckett, "Three Dialogues", in Martin Esslin, ed., Samuel Beckett, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 19.

the antithesis of Metaphysics: Metaphysics purges the mind of the scene and cultivates the disembodiment of the spiritual; Poetry is all passion and feeling and animates the inanimate; Metaphysics are most perfect when most concerned with particulars. Poets are the senses, philosophers the intelligence of humanity.²

Poetry as body, philosophy as mind. The old dichotomy. This is a position Beckett's own work does not reflect, regardless of any claims to the contrary.

The distinction is more likely along the lines of poetry, on the one hand, and metalanguage, rather than metaphysics, on the other. The latter would comment on the entire system of philosophy and language, whereas the former would act as an expression of philosophy and language. Barthes discusses this distinction and emphasizes that "the text liquidates all metalanguage, whereby it is text".³ By this he seems to indicate that the text can have nothing to do with making a statement, a credo, nor in any way analyzing or commenting upon a system as a whole, as would metalanguage by its very distinction from language. Metalanguage surveys language or a language system. A literary text does not survey language, it gives us language in the activity of creation.

Words are not mere polite symbols, Beckett contends. They are not contortions of printer's ink or static objects to be manipulated according to the will of the artist. "They are alive. They elbow their way on to the page, and glow and blaze and fade and

²"Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce", pp. 9-10.

³Roland Barthes, Pleasure of the Text, tr. Richard Miller, with a note on the text by Richard Howard, 1st American edition, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1975), p. 30.

disappear."⁴ To Beckett, words sizzle and burn their mark into the page. His comments about Vico's methodology as a type of reduction seem applicable to Beckett's own style: Vico distills expressive media into primitive economic directness. He accomplishes an exteriorization of thought by fusing primal essences into an assimilated medium. Picture an alchemist's laboratory - the withdrawal of essences and spirits for creation, the bringing forth of magic.

The imagination, Beckett claims, is exercised in vacuo and cannot tolerate the limits of the real. It is within the realm of the real that habits get set and the process of deadening commences. The imagination, itself, cannot fall into habit, since an imaginative flight defies repetition. The numbing effects of habit constitute an explosive for the imagination, by obliterating its acts. Habit-ridden texts are expository and, as such, each work becomes a studied task of memory, a pensum ready for recitation. Such texts are, by their very nature, dull and exhausting. Language, as a vital medium, is made to suffer, with words reduced to signals before a chosen response. Such language is considered by Beckett to be worn and threadbare.

Beckett, like Vico, leans to an economy of form. Words, however explosive or fecund (to the point of the almost multiplicative self-generation of The Unnamable's language), are carefully placed, as if each word played equally as significant a role as any other: Under such strict surveillance, there is no room for sloppiness or excess.

⁴Ibid., p. 15.

Deadening in our habits, our comfort and a considerable degree of our morality rests on a framework of what is non-threatening. As Stein put it, "... to know what one knows is frightening to live what one lives is soothing and though everybody likes to be frightened what they really have to have is soothing and so the master-pieces are so few".⁵

Well, reality is more soothing than the imagination, for the limits of reality are more clearly definable. Beckett reminds us of Baudelaire's definition of reality as "the adequate union of subject and object".⁶ We can view the leave-taking of subject and object as frightening, in that we have left the realm of the tangible and, according to the view presented in Proust, that of time itself. The Proustian solution rests in the negation of time and, as a consequence, the negation of death. Time and death bind us to identity and memory, whose boundaries are negated by the creative process.

Beckett cites Schopenhauer's definition of the artistic procedure as "the contemplation of the world independently of the principle of reason", and, in that way, signifies the importance of the imagination, by means of which the world is apprehended metaphorically by the artist. (P, p. 66) Beckett, who views art as the apotheosis of solitude, describes the artistic process as an excavation, a contractive rather than an expansive tendency.

⁵ Gertrude Stein, Look at Me Now and Here I am, Writings and Lectures 1909-45, ed. Patricia Meyerowitz, with an Introduction by Elizabeth Sprigge, (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1967), p. 152.

⁶ Samuel Beckett, Proust, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1931), p. 57. Henceforth all references will be to this edition, abbreviated as P.

"The artist has acquired his text: the artisan translates it."

(P, p. 64) By this, Beckett suggests that the artist acquires or discovers the text by leaving the level of the surface behind for an immersive contraction of the spirit. That is, the artist must pursue what Beckett considers to be the only fertile research, viz., the descent "to the core of the eddy". (P, p. 48) The centrifugal force of this descent would be the attention to the audience, the search for a receptive reader whom the work would appease. In the honesty of his quest, the artist has to throw aside such values, so the descent will not be impeded. We can draw from Beckett's analysis of Proust the following picture; the text already exists within the artist and only requires careful submersive exploration to be uncovered. That such work must be accomplished in solitude and, hence, without any attendance to a real or imagined audience, is seen by Beckett as a necessary, an even desirable, price for the process of creation.

In Against Interpretation, Sontag discusses the endless list of "those around whom thick encrustations of interpretation have taken hold".⁷ Interpretation, she argues, violates art, by making art into an article for use. It tries to ready it for a mental scheme of categories. Linguistic coffins. Art becomes product: the artist as laborer.

There is a demolition taking place in this. Art is no longer valued as a treasured object, an embodiment of magic, with the artist seen as magician, soothsayer, the one with the third eye. That means

⁷Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation and Other Essays, (New York: Dell Pub., A Delta Book, 1966), p.

the one with the eye to see and to create miracles and whose end-products of creation, the works of art, make such miracles tangible. This view is gone. In its place we find middle management, uniformed personnel in the industry of creation, with finished products open to analysis, criticism and interpretation. In short, quality control.

We anthropomorphize art. We approach it with the dualistic framework by which we view man. Mind/body becomes form/content, with the corpus of both dispensable, merely a repository for something higher, the idea, the transcendent. We make form accessory, notes Sontag. Form becomes an expendable decoration, an accident next to the essential content. Form gets tacked-on like a costume, with critics lining up to view and to judge as tasteful or titillating, and above all, to place into an appropriate slot. Form is an accessory, a masked man in the getaway car, or the getaway car itself. Form is an accomplice to the crime of replacing life with art; and substituting scenario for scene, names with aliases.

In Sontag's view, what is preferable is a vocabulary of forms that can provide, at long last, an approach to the description of literary form. The danger, however, in turning a literary interpretation that dissolves discussion of content into discussion of form - the sort that Sontag rates as the best kind of literary criticism - is that we threaten to replace one realm of categorization and analysis with another, an exchange of similar modes of discourse. However, given the fact that Sontag views content-categorizing with as much receptivity as one might view government bureaucracy, instead of effecting a replacement we might better re-evaluate the nature of the enterprise itself.

Perhaps we could argue for Sontag's position, and claim that replacing discussion of content with one of form will necessarily change the inquiry and, thereby, make all the difference. However, this is not guaranteed a priori. Thus, it seems that a wiser move might be to question the perpetuation of the dualism. The very act of tearing apart mind-content from body-form slants the autopsy in a prejudicial way. Form is content, emphasizes Beckett in Proust. "The one is a concretion of the other, the revelation of a world." (P, p. 67) By so opting for an innate indivisibility, we then may look to the functioning of the two as a unified body. No longer a corpse with soul in limbo before the next incarnation, the literary work is rather a living flesh, with each changing view and use of language acting as a new breath, filling the work.⁸

Of Beckett's novels we aver, the form of the work decides the content. The language, syntax, and structure can be understood in light of the formal structure, just as a piece of music can be seen as a consequence, with any number of varying interpretations, of a musical script. The script is the content of the musical work and, no, wait, the script is the form of the musical work and ... No. We can view the script as form and content - it is difficult to speak as though there were a division - and individual interpretations can be viewed as relatively good or bad presentations of the piece and assessed as interpretations of what the piece is all about. Each playing of a piece of

⁸We consider the unification of form and content in The Unnamable in the fifth chapter, when we examine the ways in which Wittgenstein assesses language and meaning as having applications for the novel.

music offers a new rendering, a new vision, a new interpretation. Similarly, each reading of a text gives a new understanding of the literary work. The depth of the piece is often linked to the need for and interest in undertaking another reading and in seeking further clarity.

The sum total, as we will see in subsequent chapters with The Unnamable, is a unification of form and content as constituting the literary text. How this is done by the individual artist lies at the heart of the activity of creation. It is in this way that producing a literary work becomes a process of exploration. This process does not act as a message-carrier, for to do so risks presenting us with only a static form and would, in general, fail to be a work of art.

"There is no communication", claims Beckett, "because there are no vehicles for communication". (P, p. 47) Art cannot treat form as separate from content, for the artistic work brings style and form to life. It is for this reason that the literary text would inherently fail as a mouthpiece for a theoretical position, or as a platter for an idea. Barthes explains this:

... no voice (Science, Cause, Institution) is behind what it is saying. Next, the text destroys utterly, to the point of contradiction, its own discursive category, its sociolinguistic reference (its "genre") ...⁹

Doctrinal terrorism. The literary text is distinct from an ideological base. Furthermore, it is nihilistic in its inherent inability to act in the name of a theory. Points of view lie outside the text; they are alien to an artistic work.

⁹ Barthes, Pleasure of the Text, p. 30.

The creative work is not an appendage to an idea. Nor is the text a vehicle, a cart carrying the horse, an inanimate something acting to package a transcendent idea. As Gass expresses it, "the lines of the novelist offer no alternatives, they are not likely interpretations of anything, but are the thing itself".¹⁰ It is absurd, Robbe-Grillet remarks, to say that a work has something to say and says it well. "Might we not advance on the contrary that the genuine writer has nothing to say? He has only a way of speaking. He must create a world, but starting from nothing, from the dust ..."¹¹

The writer and his medium, alone with each other. The picture is of the Beckett trilogy: the writer alone in a room, with only a way of speaking, where the only thing to come out of it will be what he himself creates.

We can relate to the text organically, actually, and at times even intimately. The latter is achieved when we, as readers, become receptive to the textual work and the voice, if there is one, of the author. At this level, we are not dealing with the mere organization of words in a literary context. Gass humorously drives this point home to us with his comment:

That novels should be made of words, and merely words, is shocking, really. It's as though you had discovered that your wife were made of rubber: the bliss of all those years, the fears ... from sponge.¹²

¹⁰ William H. Gass, Fiction and the Figures of Life, (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1971), p. 27.

¹¹ Alain Robbe-Grillet, For a New Novel, Essays on Fiction, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Grove Press, 1966), p. 45.

¹² Op. cit., p. 27.

It should not be surprising to us that Cass's point seems so well-taken, however obvious it may seem. Is she merely rubber? Is the text really just made of words? How could I have been so fooled, and for so long? Facts versus gratification. No wonder Barthes speaks of language as seduction, the ultimate temptress and the text as fetish object. "... and this fetish desires me", he emphatically declares.¹³

I desire, I need the author, and as much as he needs me. The text itself, as corpus, is embodied, is an embodiment. We can speak of it in a figurative manner, elaborating upon this image by seeing it, like Barthes, as a body divided into erotic sites. "All these movements attest to a figure of the text, necessary to the bliss of reading."¹⁴

Beckett remarks, in Proust, that normally we are in the position of a tourist, whose aesthetic experience consists of a series of identifications, the naming of categories, labelling. This is the price, in Beckett's eyes, of viewing the object as a member of a family, rather than seeing it as a unique particular, independent of any general notion or concept. The ability to achieve a proper understanding demands that we detach the object, "from the sanity of a cause". (P, p. 11) Once isolated and inexplicable in the light of ignorance, as contrasted with the glaring shadow of reason, then and only then may the object become a source of enchantment. Enchantment for Beckett, bliss for Barthes. Both terms touch upon the magic, the surge of joy

¹³ Barthes, Pleasure of the Text, p. 27.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

and energy implicit in the creative process. For it is here that we attain clarity of vision and an unclouded conceptual framework. This is where "The notion of what he should see has not had time to interfere its prism between the eye and its object", as Beckett says of a character in a Proust novel. (P, p. 15)

Habit and memory are Beckett's furies, threatening us at all times, luring us into the living death, the hell of the fixed mind. And this warning must be carried over to any viewing of the literary work, lest we fall into a kind of seeing which echoes the trained, the uniform memory and routine. (cf., for example, Wittgenstein's comments on "habits of thinking" in the fourth chapter.) This latter condition is seen by Beckett as "an instrument of reference instead of an instrument of discovery". (P, p. 17)

The onus is upon us to prevent literary interpretations from locking us into any framework which might encase our ideas, or restrict our understanding to data-gathering for some theoretical ruse. Gass's comments on philosophers who interpret novels can be brought to bear on this issue:

Philosophers continue to interpret novels as if they were philosophies themselves, platforms to speak from, middens for which may be scratched important messages for mankind; they have predictably looked for content, not form; they have regarded fictions as ways of viewing reality and not as additions to it.¹⁵

What we should aim for, instead, is a catapulting effect, where interpretations and insights give birth to more ideas, further understanding,

¹⁵ Gass, Fiction and the Figures of Life, p. 14.

and a broadening of our scope. In short, the opening of more doors, the perception of more ignorance and the awareness of areas that are unpaved or with alien tread-marks.

Interpretations that are fastened to a theory - without which it seems the work would languish and die - provide security at the cost of the emotion, pleasure and sensuality of relating to a text, over and over again, with intimacy. We must guard against losing the trust that the text can, by itself, draw something out of the reader. If only we let it. Not all works have this capacity, but masterpieces certainly do.

The image of the soothsayer seems so apt here, opening the door for the reader to a magic otherwise inaccessible.

The writer's traditional role consisted in excavating Nature, in burrowing deeper and deeper to reach some ever more intimate strata, in finally unearthing some fragment of a disconcerting secret. Having descended into the abyss of human passions, he would send to the seemingly tranquil world (the world on the surface) triumphant messages describing the mysteries he had actually touched with his own hands. And the sacred vertigo the reader suffered then, far from causing him anguish or nausea, reassured him as to his power of domination over the world ...

It is not surprising, given these conditions that the literary phenomenon par excellence should have resided in the total and unique adjective; which attempted to unite all the inner qualities, the entire hidden soul of things. Thus the word functioned as a trap in which the writer captured the universe in order to hand it over to society.¹⁶

In the next section, we consider one writer's individual excavation into his own universe, by focussing upon Beckett's quest for a self-expression against the fear that we will never, in fact, succeed.

¹⁶ Robbe-Grillet, For a New Novel, p. 24.

Part Two: Beckett's Quest for Self-Expression

In this section, we will explore Beckett's quest for self-expression, where both subject matter and literary style project a sense of impotence. Beckett's resolution is that, with the medium of literature, the very area of impotence might be investigated. In this way he proceeds, although it is with an impending sense of doom that he cannot succeed, for his very medium may turn on him. It seems as if his words may fail to be tools of expression, with, for example, dialogues between characters acting more to create a gulf, than to bridge one. Furthermore, there is the sense that he may end, like Worm, ensnared by the jaws by which language seems to hold him. Our goal here is to touch upon the ways in which these concerns reach expression, with respect to the various inhabitants of Beckett's world, and how they are continually being thrown back upon their own quest. The implication is that there are no higher authorities to whom redress can be made. As a consequence, the picture is that of a purgatory, helicoidal in design, where the structural elements of the novel are continually progressing and regressing, thematically intertwined.

"I have always been amazed at my contemporaries' lack of finesse. I whose soul writhed from morning to night, in the mere quest of it-self."¹⁷ This is Beckett speaking on his own writhing: the quest for

¹⁷ Samuel Beckett, Stories and Texts for Nothing, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), p. 11. Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, abbreviated as S&T.

self and self expression. There is an interplay of the fascination with impotence and the struggle to escape from its accompanying sense of failure. The result is that Beckett is caught in a whirlpool of affirmation and negation. His works are foreshadowed by suggestions and warnings that they cannot succeed, and yet they seem driven by the challenge that, with just one more attempt, failure can be avoided. In trying to align contradictory combinations, he is going toward a silence which, once attained, would be the negation of the journey itself. It is like Wittgenstein's ladder, in the respect that it is to be let go after reaching the goal.

One of the themes underlying Beckett's works is the effort to reach the logically unreachable and refrain from total disintegration. The sense of the impossibility of the enterprise is omnipresent. Beckett addresses himself to this absurdity in "Three Dialogues":

The history of painting, here we go again, is the history of attempts to escape from this sense of failure, by means of more authentic, more ample, less exclusive relations between representer and representee, in a kind of tropism towards a light as to the nature of which the best opinions continue to vary, and with a kind of Pythagorean terror, as though the irrationality of pi were an offense against the deity, not to mention his creature.¹⁸

There are several points raised in this statement which have had repercussions for the assessment of Beckett's work. First, we must consider his position that the history of painting, and by extension, that of literature as well, is one long attempt to overcome a sense of impotence by an active exploration of the medium. The creative force pushes onward, even though it may appear unsettling. Pythagorean terror:

¹⁸Beckett, "Three Dialogues", p. 21.

what we have uncovered is not only unwelcome, it is not permissible within any acceptable (i.e., rational) level of discourse. Beckett attempts the (irrational) reconciliation of the failure to express with the obligation to express. He is an overwhelming need to express, while having nothing whatsoever with which and of which to express. A triple bind.

Beckett sees the force to be destructive, in the sense that the artist - through a creative thrust of the medium of expression - attempts to annihilate the distance between the artist and the work, and between the work and its subject. The denial of an exclusion is the denial of an abyss between the two realms.

One way in which Beckett furthers his creative exploration, as well as uses to help overcome his sense of impotence, is by the unity of formal and contextual elements. Although this is a division artists never drew - it was always a product of the critics' categorizing - Beckett has enough critical distance to be aware of the way critics forced a form/content dichotomy out of something the artist approached and used as a unity. We should not let Beckett's blackness of humour or bleakness of vision blind us to Beckett's use of metaphors.

It is not always a pleasant operation, nor any more agreeable to deal with than the vision of Mahood catching flies in his jar outside the restaurant: Snap! His jaws clack together and we can envisage the teeth clacking, trapping the fly, while the language of the work clacks in unison. The levels of clacking take place together, unified in a total creation. It is an indivisible unit, in which the imagery and language of the passage come alive. This one vision represents the character's own situation, as well as our own, inasmuch as we perceive a connection.

It certainly does not make a pretty picture: clacking all those flies until that fateful day, when one dumb move to trick Madeleine-Marguerite negated these faint pleasures for all eternity. The image fades and is ultimately replaced by the resounding clack of Mahood himself being entrapped within his jar, as jar turns to jaw and Mahood is as fly, caught once and for all within the closed domain of the encompassing container. Clack. The metaphor is the form. It is the container and the containing structure, the image and the content. With this final clack, the picture is then complete and the character is swallowed. We hear no more from, or of him.

Beckett revered Joyce for what he saw as an ability to unify form and content. For Joyce, in contrast to Beckett, the work was one of plenitude, an overabundance of ideas and images running rampant, a vision and mode of expression so rich, so pluralistic, that the resulting works burst with too much of themselves, and the reader risks gastric override in the attempt to handle more than one page at a time. Joyce succeeds in effecting a unity of style which is layered with meaning and images inextricably linked.

Beckett's quest for expression seems a painful confrontation of his own impotence, in which his vehicle is a language containing a self-destruct mechanism. No matter how he tries to acquire an expression that might be able to tell his story and, thereby, permit him rest, he cannot succeed. The very language of the work reflects that state of affairs. He is, like Mahood trapped in the jaws of his jar, imprisoned by the confines of his own language, the boundaries and

restrictions of his very vehicle of expression. Beckett tries to escape those limitations by turning to French, but - regardless of the change, the rejection of his mother tongue for his stepmother's - he still faces restrictions and frustrations and, ultimately, as much impotence in achieving his goal as with his native English. He is still caught within imposing confines, however nice the new domain may seem at first. He is still a prisoner of his expression, his own means to express. Gass touched on this in discussing the ways in which philosophy and literature differ; viz., their differing relationships to language. Gass says that,

The concepts of the philosopher speak, the words of the novelist are mute; the philosopher invites us to pass through his words to his subject: man, God, nature, moral law; while the novelist, if he is any good, will keep us kindly imprisoned in his language - there is literally nothing beyond.¹⁹

Of course, this does not imply that philosophers cannot use language consisting entirely of mute words, however vocal may be the related concepts. The philosopher has no privileged access to language that the novelist does not also have. The philosopher's tongue may be as tied as that of the novelist.

All the writer has is words, the language which constitutes the artistic medium. For Beckett, the writer is a prisoner of language, held in the jaws of his vehicle of expression and from which, to some degree, he can never effect a release. As demonstrated in the Unnamable's telling of stories, the exploration of the expression itself can, by the creative leap of faith, bring about a transcendence

¹⁹Gass, Fiction and the Figures of Life, p. 8.

to a level beyond speech, beyond the mechanized manipulation of words. The masterpiece, though limited to a finite number of words, opens up a myriad of feelings and ideas, and acts as a catalyst for the imagination. In the face of the absurdity of the irrational and what Beckett calls the Pythagorean terror, the artist leaps, having faith that the abyss over which his limbs are flailing will not, in fact, swallow him whole.

Barthes considers the writer to be a pawn of the language he uses. The vehicle of expression acts as the force governing the writer. "As a creature of language", contends Barthes, "the writer is always caught up in the war of fictions (jargons), but he is never anything but a plaything in it."²⁰ The writer is the blind-spot in the system, the joker in the deck. He is necessary to the meaning, or to what Barthes terms "the battle", but is himself deprived of a fixed meaning. The writer's exchange value is to act as a variable of history, a factor of the tactical blows of the struggle.

Based on comments purportedly made in conversation with Raymond Federman, Beckett would seem to agree with Barthes' view of the writer's position with respect to his medium. Beckett is quoted as having said that the English version of Comment c'est is "somewhat of a failure - the English language resisted me - it made me say more than I wanted to say".²¹

²⁰ Barthes, Pleasure of the Text, p. 34.

²¹ Raymond Federman, "The Impossibility of Saying the Same Old Thing in the Same Old Way, - Samuel Beckett's Fiction since Comment c'est, in L'Esprit Createur, Vol. XI, No. 3, Fall 1971, p. 28.

Beckett can be seen as reflecting Barthes' position within his works in his notion of a master, a judge, a chief; that is, an omnipotent figure to whom reference is made and from whom conclusions will be drawn. The characters, and implicitly the works, are put in the position of waiting for assessment, for judgement or for guidance. Dodo and Gigi wait for Godot, but only hear from his messenger. Watt's master is Knott, with whom Watt cannot communicate. Moran looks for Molloy under the orders of Youdi, who, like Godot and Knott, is never seen by the character and never directly interacts with him. Malone's sole visitor speaks, but Malone cannot hear him, nor can Malone make himself understood. The Unnamable frequently makes reference to a master and speaks as if he were his plaything, his victim, his dummy variable. He is the Unnamable's Godot, except that he seems even further removed, with the character having no real contact with any messengers this time.

When all goes silent and comes to an end, it will be because the words have been said, those it behoved to say, no need to know which, no means of knowing which, they'll be there somewhere, in the heap, in the torrent, not necessarily the last, they have to be ratified by the proper authority, that takes time, he's far from here, they bring him the verbatim report of the proceedings, once in a way, he knows the words that count, it's he who chose them, in the meantime, the voice continues, while the messenger goes toward the master, and while the master examines the report, and while the messenger comes back with the verdict ... (U, p. 369)

Man is the servant of language, Heidegger contends (see the sixth chapter for a full discussion). And language is the master of man. We may read language to be the master to which the Unnamable refers in the above passage and, thus, consider the excerpt to be a statement about the situation of all writers. Namely, the character's

dilemma, his position of waiting for the verdict from his master is like that of the writer subservient to a language to which he must refer. Indeed, it is the only source of reference, the only mode open to him. There is no other master which holds such sway over him.

The novel acts to throw the writer back upon himself, back to his own medium. This is the only thing of which he can be certain. The artist, contends Beckett, has a task which is not directed outwardly, because the only thing open to him is to delve deeper, with an ever-narrowing focus. He would seemingly concur with Robbe-Grillet's view that,

As we have already had occasion to specify in the course of this work, the novel is not a tool at all. It is not conceived with a view to a task defined in advance. It does not set forth, to translate things existing before it, outside it. It does not express, it explores, and what it explores is itself.²²

Any attempt to reach outside it is met with futility. Any efforts to appeal to a higher order are met with silence. Witness the wait for Godot, who never answers; the mad quest by Watt for clarity in the house of Knott, a master who, when he chose to speak, could not be understood and whose speech appeared to be unintelligible; the futility of Moran's trying to get or receive communiqués from his master, Youdi; or any other instances of this kind that run throughout Beckett's works. Any attempt to reach a higher authority, to whom reference might be made or questions answered, is met with defeat. No answer is given, the question may never have been received, answers that may have been offered were outside the character's capacity to

²²Robbe-Grillet, For a New Novel, p. 160.

comprehend. In every case, the quest was thrown back upon itself. The questions were returned unanswered. The character was left without recourse.

From man beyond himself, he strives to obtain sufficient clarity that it may be understood. He wants to achieve an assurance that the story has been told, that rest is at hand and things may go silent. Beckett's character in Stories and Texts for Nothing expresses this concern, when he says,

What do I do when silence falls, with rhetorical intent, or denoting lassitude, perplexity, consternation, I rub to and fro against my lips, where they meet, the first knuckle of my forefinger, but it's the head that moves, the hand rests, it's to such details the liar pins his hopes. That's the way this evening, tomorrow will be different, perhaps I'll appear before the council, before the justice of him who is all love, unforgiving and justly so, but subject to strange indulgences, the accused will be my soul, ... (S&T, p. 97)

But tomorrow is no different. There is no council to be held, no justice to be applied to the situation, no redress of grievances. The character is thrust back upon his own awareness, with the result that, however long and convincingly he may plead, he speaks a monologue. There is no answer - never an answer in the Beckett world - nor any indication that an answer is coming. Hope, being the indomitable human characteristic, does not dim. The mere suggestion that an answer could be forthcoming, that there may exist even a negligible degree of evidence to warrant optimism, is enough to act as encouragement. No matter how fully we realize that Godot won't come, that the show, as the Unnamable said, is waiting alone, still there is this given: as long as there is room for hope, it won't be extinguished.

The picture is one of a purgatory. Caught between the awareness of questions and the inability to answer them, he has no further means of exploration than that of asking the old questions, again and again. By raising them into light he hopes to finally discover a key that opens the lock. Stuck in this semi-existence, like all those characters in their containers throughout Beckett's work, he is held in place, having only words with which to transcend the situation. There is no viable alternative. "There is no flesh anywhere, nor any way to die", proclaims the character in Stories and Texts, "And the voices, wherever they come from, have no life in them". (S&T, p. 90) What remains is that, "there is only me, this evening, here, on earth, and a voice that makes no sound because it goes toward none ..." (S&T, p. 92)

What seems one of the purgatorial aspects is that it is always evening in Beckett's works. Dodo and Gigi wait for Godot, or for night to fall. Krapp, in his artificially-lit room, gives several renditions of "Now the Day is Over, Night is Growing Nigh", Malone, dying in his bed, waits for dawn, but finds that he is strangely caught in a time-warp, one of perpetual evening. It is a continual evening so dark that the wall to Malone's room "often looks like the edge of an abyss". (MD, p. 208) On the condition of the fixed time of evening, Malone remarks:

Take for example the light that reigns in this den ... it is bizarre ... Example, there is nothing like examples, I was once in utter darkness and waiting with some impatience for the dawn to break, ... And sure enough little by little the dark lightened and I was able to hook with my stick the objects I required. But the light, instead of being dawn, turned out in a very short time to be the dusk. And the sun, instead of rising higher and higher in the sky ... calmly set ... day closing in the twilight of dawn, ... (MD, p. 220)

The sun will never rise on Malone. He will never see things come to life again. And this is true of all of Beckett's characters. They are too sunk in themselves, embedded in their own skulls (= urns, jars, cans, containers) to come to the surface again. Furthermore, the comments of the character in Stories and Texts For Nothing apply equally to Malone, Krapp, the Unnamable, and most others in Beckett's fiction: "... this evening I'm the scribe. This evening, it's always evening, always spoken of as evening, even when it's morning, it's to make me think night is at hand, bringer of rest." (S&T, p. 98)

In their purgatory, they inevitably turn to their own expression. "While waiting", says Malone, and by extension all the others, "I shall tell myself stories ... they will be almost lifeless, like the teller." (MD, p. 180) Thus the telling begins and continues, without end. In the background, suggests Malone, is an invisible alarm clock ticking like the voice of the silence which will one day triumph, and then all will be still and dark, and forever at rest. But there appears to be no rest for the Unnamable, if we accept Mercier's claim that the mathematical limit of the novel is infinite.²³ Rest would come as a limit-point, hence theoretically and not actually.

The fictional character is itself a limit-point, a purgatorial realm. What Kenner says of the Unnamable's fictional existence has application to all other Beckett characters. "There are lights, there are sounds, but there is no place and he is no one exactly, like a character in fiction, which is what he is, and somehow a projection of

²³ Mercier, Beckett/Beckett, p. 15.

the sedentary author's, which is what he is also."²⁴ The character's purgatory is like the semi-existence of Malone, who, waiting between life and death, has only a language taught to him by others (hence is not uniquely his own) with which to explore or to excavate his own situation.

Beckett sees Dante and Joyce - two of Beckett's, dare we say, mentors - as producing purgatorial work. Discussing the ways they differ, he claims that Dante's purgatory is conical and hence implies culmination, whereas Joyce's is spherical and excludes culmination.

In the one, there is an ascent from real vegetation - Ante-Purgatory, to ideal vegetation - Terrestrial Paradise: in the other there is no ascent and no ideal vegetation. In the one, absolute progression and a guaranteed consummation: in the other, flux - progression or retrogression, and an apparent consummation.²⁵

Beckett explains the purgatorial aspect of Joyce's work by noting its absolute absence of the Absolute. For Beckett,

Hell is the static lifelessness of unrelieved viciousness. Paradise the static lifelessness of unrelieved immaculation. Purgatory a flood of movement and vitality released by the conjunction of these two elements. There is a continuous purgatorial process at work, in the sense that the vicious circle of humanity is being achieved, and this achievement depends on the recurrent predomination of one of two broad qualities.²⁶

Beckett's purgatory may be helicoidal in form, if we may attach significance to the movement of his characters, especially in the trilogy. Molloy, Moran, and Basil all seem to move in a spiral, although they did not always seem very clear on this.

²⁴ Kenner, Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study, p. 63.

²⁵ Beckett, "Dante... Bruno, Vico.. Joyce", p. 21.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

Beckett's purgatory is like that of a spiral, having a catapult attached to the innermost core. That is, there is the frustrating sense of a path without end, more or less circular in kind and yet excavatory, repeating familiar ground with closer and closer steps. This is accompanied by the realization that there is no limit, no matter how tightly the circle draws. It is coupled with the frustration of knowing that, when a point of diminishing returns has been met, the force will be sufficient to thrust the quest back upon itself, retracing all the old steps. And where Dante's absolute progression guaranteed a consummation and Joyce's flux offered only an apparent one, Beckett's spiral guarantees only repetition. Any seeming consummation would be countered by a denial with an accompanying push back onto the path of an outward spiral. Harvey considers this with respect to Beckett's theatre, saying that: "Beckett has, again and again, bent apparently linear chronometric time into the static form of the circle ... Against the monotony of the circle is set the fearful descending line that ends in the grave."²⁷

This spiralling in and out brings to mind Malone's image of the walls of his room rising and falling with his breath, like the expansion-contraction of a lung, or a womb (the latter metaphor perhaps the more fitting, in light of Malone speaking of himself as an old foetus, "hoar and impotent". (MD, p. 225)) The overall picture of this purgatory of Beckett's is of something potentially infinite, whose only bounds are self-imposed, seemingly to prevent things from getting out

²⁷ Lawrence E. Harvey, "Art and the Existential in Waiting for Godot", in Ruby Cohn, ed., Casebook on Waiting for Godot, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), p. 149.

of hand. After a point, the direction of the work reverts and the subject is cast back upon the direction from which it came and, simultaneously, the character is thrown back upon well-trodden ground.

However exploratory the character's quest or the general focus of the text, there is a sense that both are continually being re-examined. The same character, the same subject trying again to focus and refocus, in a painful attempt to bring clarity. Imprisoned within the language and continually hurled back upon it, we find, e.g., the Unnamable:

... trying to cease and never ceasing, seeking the cause, the cause of talking and never ceasing, finding the cause, losing it again, finding it again, not finding it again, seeking no longer, seeking again, finding again, losing again, finding nothing, finding at last, losing again, talking without ceasing, ... (U, p. 385)

The winding and unwinding can be seen in light of Kenner's comment on Beckett's view of man's relationship to language. "He means too that man is man by virtue of speech, and that all speech is an echoing of echoes."²⁸ Language travels its limit, only to be returned, muted or altered each time by the inevitable twists and turns and new intonations.

The language of the work mirrors the character's own condition. Wittgenstein considers talk to be generally a mode of behavior; a position which has relevance to Beckett's unification of form and content. Namely, as form is content for Beckett, so is there a unity of speech and behavior in the characters. The limit-point of one invariably indicates or reflects the limit-point of the other. Where the character comes to life, becomes agitated or excited, so also does the language

²⁸ Kenner, Samuel Beckett, A Critical Study, p. 167.

of the work and the character's own speech. As the character disintegrates, rambles, or becomes confused, so does his speech. As the character is, so he speaks.

This is vividly brought out in the cases of character interaction, where there seems to be an astounding inability to communicate, other than as a parody. The paradigm example is the passage in Molloy relating the final meeting of Moran and Gaber. This is the culmination of Moran's search for Molloy - a search overwhelmed by external obstacles and internal disintegration. The interlude between Moran and Gaber mirrors, and is mirrored by, the physical and psychological deterioration, in addition to the immense gulf between the two individuals. Their lengthy exchange expresses virtually nothing of significance. Demonstrating only a negligible level of communication, their dialogue proceeds by an attempt on the part of Moran to ask Gaber about the master, Youdi. What follows is this:

Is he angry? I said. I'm asking you if he is angry, I cried. Angry, said Gaber, don't make me laugh, he keeps rubbing his hands from morning to night, I can hear them in the outer room. That means nothing, I said. Do you know what he told me the other day? said Gaber. Has he changed? I cried. Changed, said Gaber, no, he hasn't changed, why would he have changed, he's getting old, that's all, like the world. You have a queer voice this evening, I said. I do not think he heard me. Well, he said, drawing his hands once more over his chest, downwards, I'll be going, if that's all you have to say to me. He went, without saying goodbye. But I overtook him, in spite of my sick leg, and held him back by the sleeve. What did he tell you? I said. He stopped. Moran, he said, you are beginning to give me a serious pain in the arse. For pity's sake, I said, tell me what he told you. He gave me a shove. I fell. He had not intended to make me fall, he did not realize the state I was in, he had only wanted to push me away. I did not try to get up. I let a roar. He came and bent over me ... Gaber, I said, it's not much I'm asking you. I remember this scene well. He wanted to help me up. I pushed him away. I was all right where I was. What did he tell you? I said. I don't understand, said

Gaber. You were saying a minute ago that he had told you something, I said, then I cut you short. Short? said Gaber. Do you know what he told me the other day, I said, those were your very words. His face lit up. The clod was about as quick as my son. He said to me, said Gaber, Gaber, he said -. Louder! I cried. He said to me, said Gaber, Gaber, he said, life is a thing of beauty, Gaber, and a joy for ever. He brought his face nearer mine. A joy for ever, he said, a thing of beauty, Moran, and a joy for ever. He smiled ... I said, Do you think he meant human life? I listened. Perhaps he didn't mean human life, I said. I opened my eyes. I was alone. (M, pp. 164-165)

This passage forms a crystallization of all of Beckett's characters' verbal interchanges; which we dare not call 'dialogues'.

At this level, individual words and phrases have lost their significance as a vehicle of communication. They do not act to communicate in any of the subtle and few of the general ways in which language operates in a dialogue. Rather, words here act only as vague, symbolic gestures, or signals. Words as morsels of silence. Words serve, in the Beckett dialogues, to underline the innate solitude of the respective speakers. Words no longer reach the listener as a means of communication but act, if at all, to either create or accentuate distance between the individuals.

This takes many forms throughout Beckett's works. Moran and Gaber, in Molloy, were not brought together by their exchange, as the excerpt indicates. It is not even clear if we can speak of this discourse as an 'exchange', as there seems to be no common ground, no sharing and no meaningful-level on which communication could take place. In cases like Watt and Knott, where Knott's very language is incomprehensible to Watt, the situation defies communication. At times, words accentuate the distance between characters in ways sometimes

humorous, as in the case of Waiting for Godot's Vladimir and Estragon, sometimes painful; though touched with irony, as with Happy Days' Winnie and Willie. The extreme cases of painful and bleak breakdowns of communication are in Malone Dies, with the Lamberts or with Malone and his one visitor, and in Come and Go, with the three characters' simultaneous monologues.

Communication comes to a standstill. Voices weave words in and out together, forming a web of words signifying nothing and having no meaning, other than that obtained by the creation of sounds. The voices form a chorus of insignificance, creating odes to silence, and to darkness.

Harvey discusses Beckett's use of words and gestures in his theatrical self-consciousness. Speaking about Waiting for Godot, but with implications for other Beckett works, he notes,

For Vladimir and Estragon, and even for Pozzo, language is no longer an idol, but neither is it a tool or a toy. Rather it consists of fragments of broken idols, tools, and toys. The characters toss out a theme, a kind of verbal montage, and then they abandon it. Beckett's technique might be called a broken symbolism, for he suggests a symbolic diagram, then destroys it. We are reminded of Joyce's necropolis of symbols, and even more of Wittgenstein's analysis of language.²⁹

So the quest winds and unwinds upon itself, continually falling back upon the old issues of language and silence, going to an unattainable silence and the limit-point of language, the innermost point of the spiral. The nearer we get to silence, the stronger the force

²⁹ Harvey, "Art and the Existential in Waiting for Godot", p. 141. The significance of Wittgenstein will be explored in the fourth and sixth chapters and its application to Beckett examined in the fifth and seventh chapters.

thrusting us back onto the inquiry of language, retreading old ground, telling the story again and again.

The concerns of language and silence are paramount. Consequently, the next section will be devoted to discussing the concerns and the sorts of ramifications they have in Beckett's work, particularly The Unnamable.

Part Three: Language and Silence

All of Beckett's works are concerned with language and silence. Indeed, this very fact is one of Beckett's distinguishing characteristics as a contemporary artist. This section surveys the ways in which the themes of language and silence weigh upon Beckett and get interwoven throughout his works, with the issue coming to a head in The Unnamable.

The pell mell babel of words and silence seems to pound down upon Beckett like Dante's rain of fire, sizzling as it goes out. A hell of an obsession. It is a torment created by the writer's task of finding the right words, fixing upon the right combination of words, so the story can be told and the words put to rest. Naming the unnamable thing, trying to find the killer words that will put an end to the quest, but only after all the words have been said. Words and silence play a central role in Beckett's world, and are of such significance that all other issues feed into this well-spring.

Beckett pushes language and literature to the limits, achieving, by the later works, such as How It Is and Imagination Dead Imagine, a sort of fiction à la symbolic logic. There is such brevity and neutrality of the language, that this later fiction seems to be empty of emotions and subjectivity. At this point of Beckett's most anonymous personae, we find neither a story nor more than tracings of individual literary elements. The result is more of a picture, an image which words

create, than either a statement or tales being told by various characters. The creation of nearly-lifeless works barely stays within the bounds of literature. Unfortunately, Beckett pays a price for his creative leap of faith, for critics lament the loss of the kind of fiction which his middle works represent, where there was the acquisition of such literary heights. And now Beckett has fallen, according to most literary reports. He went too far. His later works are too strange, completely unidentifiable and unlovable. Who or what can we identify with, in these later works?

There is enough confusion with The Unnamable, insofar as critics grapple with the characterization, attempting analyses that would make sense of the novel.³⁰ They frequently demand a sequential identity, that the character be none other than the dead Malone, in order for the novel to have any literary virtue. Indeed, what else could this creature be, if not the corpus crispie, so to speak, of the previous work?³¹

³⁰ See, for instance, Northrop Frye's "The Nightmare Life in Death", in J.D. O'Hara, ed., 20th Century Interpretations of Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1970), p. 32, where he states, "It is difficult to say just where or what the Unnamable is, ..." Consider, as well, Frederick J. Hoffman's Samuel Beckett: The Language of Self, preface by Harry T. Moore, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1964), in which Hoffman says, "The Unnamable cannot be placed or defined. He is any and all of Beckett's M's and W's, and the negation of any and all of them". (p. 133)

³¹ E.g., note Dieter Wellershoff's comment linking the voice of The Unnamable to Malone's: "... in the next book, The Unnamable, the voice continues to speak from that nothingness [in which Malone's movements have been dissolved]..." (Dieter Wellershoff, "Failure of an Attempt at De-Mythologization: Samuel Beckett's Novels", in Martin Esslin, ed., Samuel Beckett, A Collection of Critical Essays, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 101. Take note, also, of Jacobsen and Mueller's move which sweeps all of Beckett's characters under one heading, "Q", to stand for the Beckett protagonist. They contend that all the earlier Beckett protagonists are fragments of Q, whose extensive interior monologue is the text of The Unnamable. (Jacobsen and Mueller, The Testament of Samuel Beckett, p. 114.)

There is no other sense to be made. He, or it, does not obey any other law of literary possibility, for the metaphor, if it is one, must surely be made to fit an objective reality.

Long ago Beckett announced his desire to explore negation, the abyss between language and silence. Diabolical in his demands, with works that require participation, instead of a passive osmosis from the reader, Beckett takes us right into the void with his fiction, into the realm of negation. The Unnamable may mark the farthest Beckett could go in the direction of contraction. As Beckett said in 1956, about The Unnamable "... there's complete disintegration. No 'I', no 'have', no 'being'. No nominative, no accusative, no verb. There's no way to go on."³²

He came to see it as a downward spiral from which he could not extricate himself: "The very last thing I wrote - "Textes pour Rien" - was an attempt to get out of the attitude of disintegration, but it failed."³³ However the work may have drifted from Beckett's intentions, it did not fail to continue the writer's exploration with his medium of expression, to pursue his relationship to language and its relationship to silence.

The result of such an inquiry is that Beckett "... touches the deepest aspiration of the age by touching on its darkest dread: the void."³⁴ By partaking in the quest, we ourselves end up with eyes

³²As quoted in Mercier, Beckett/Beckett, p. 6.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ihab Hassan, The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett, p. 204.

agog, at the edge of words staring into silence. What seemed, at the start of Beckett's works, to be an amusing exercise or a clever parrying of words, as in a harmless game, becomes a struggle with a heavy-weight of silence in the middle works. By the time we get to the later works, we are in dead earnest to keep those words from getting any closer to the abyss.

Throughout Beckett's works we see the movement of the writer's process of creation, his evolving relationship with language, where the fiction gradually changes form, as he quite thoroughly removes traditional fictional elements. There is a slow, but sure, progression from Murphy through the trilogy to the latest works: the fictional form is reduced and pared to a strange literary kernel which is too alien and too dehumanized, for critical acclaim. Beckett's avowed interest in failure and impotence becomes a statement on text and critic alike, as it becomes increasingly difficult to say anything about these works. However scanty the familiar elements are in The Unnamable, by the later fiction we can no longer identify with either the fiction, or its characters. There remain, in the final metamorphosis, no characters, save anonymously and quantitatively. As a result, our focus as readers, is forced away from any individual inhabitant of the Beckett terrain to the interplay of words and silence, without any intermediary roles played by characters. The characters' obsession with words in the early and middle works becomes overshadowed in the later works by the obsession itself.

With these comments in mind, let us look at the extent to which Beckett's characters concern themselves with language, since all of

them make references indicating just how strongly they are aware of the connection they have to words. Frequently, there is a sense that words have a rather forceful effect on the character, from which they cannot escape. Molloy bewails the fact that, "... after all what do I know now about then, now when the icy words hail down upon me, the icy meanings, and the world dies too, foully named. All I know is what the words know, ..." (M, p. 31) For Malone and Winnie, the torment of words has become an internalized hail storm; as evidenced by Malone's statement, "Words and images run riot in my head, pursuing, flying, clashing, merging, endlessly." (MD, p. 198) and Winnie's reflective, "No no, my head was always full of cries. (Pause.) Faint confused cries." (Pause.) They come. (Pause.) Then go."³⁵

All of Beckett's characters seem to have a peculiar link to words. Words play a significant role in the ways in which they relate to things, to others, to the world in general and, most notably, to themselves. Watt, for example, struggles to fit names to things and was tormented by the fact that a name did not adhere to a thing as he would expect, or wanted.³⁶ The fit was not quite right. It was a hairsbreadth off, just enough of a miss-fit to make the matter uncomfortable, without giving any indication that a better choice could be made. In his frustration, Watt would try various names, daringly so at times, just to be sure that a better match could not be found.

³⁵ Samuel Beckett, Happy Days, (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), p. 42.

³⁶ The Unnamable has his own struggle with names, as we will see in the third chapter, when Russell and Wittgenstein's logical atomism is utilized to look at the text.

Thus of the pseudo-pot he would say, after reflexion, It is a shield, or, growing bolder, It is a raven, and so on. But the pot proved as little a shield, or a raven, or any other of the things that Watt called it, as a pot.³⁷

The inadequacy of language, the frustrating limits of language, is indicated in the dilemma of finding more than an arbitrary fit between a name and its object, as in some perverted nightmare of the logical atomist. This hits the level of absurdity when Watt tries to find a name that would fit himself.

As for himself, though he could no longer call it a man, as he had used to do, with the intuition that he was perhaps not talking nonsense, yet he could not imagine what else to call it, if not a man. But Watt's imagination had never been a lively one. So he continued to think of himself as a man, ... But for all the relief that this afforded him, he might just as well have thought of himself as a box, or an urn.³⁸

Against the background of this confusion, it should be no surprise that we find later Beckett characters heaped in sand, encased in jars, stuck in urns, or swallowed up by enveloping containers; and each one as lost as Watt on the issue of identity. It appears that the inappropriateness or misapplication of language with respect to their identity as men lies at the base of the problem. At this stage, names can offer neither assistance nor relief. They are moving closer to edge of language, the edge of a namelessness, but a word away from silence; "I had been living so far from words so long ..." notes Molloy, "And even my sense of identity was wrapped in a namelessness often hard to penetrate ..." (M, p. 31)

³⁷ Samuel Beckett, Watt, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1st American edition, 1959), p. 83.

³⁸ Ibid.

The fear of emerging from the dark thicket of language, to paraphrase Broch, and disappearing into limbo, or silence is horrifying and fascinating at the same time. Drawn by the sirens of muteness, numbness, silence, Beckett's characters are simultaneously being held back by their own language, as well as by all the voices - their own, the author's, the various others (Heidegger's "they").³⁹ The goal expressed in Stories and Texts for Nothing is this: "... get into silence, or another sound, a sound of other voices than those of life and death ... get into my story in order to get out of it ..." (S&T, p. 89)

Beckett's characters face the tireless task of finding words to be applied to their situation, the quest for the right words, the words which will tell their story, at last. All the while they are operating under the implicit optimism that this is, in fact, possible.

"Saying is inventing", claims Molloy.⁴⁰ This hits the front burner in The Unnamable, where we are confronted with a character whose task is to say enough to invent something, preferably himself. A person out of words, make a little person out of words, a little creature in his own image, he his own creation and he his own god. A man out of dust. A dust of words. But without the comfort of a schematic diagram, the character can only start by throwing out words;

³⁹This latter notion, that of "they" in Heidegger's philosophy is discussed in the sixth and seventh chapters.

⁴⁰M, p. 32. Though he immediately retracts this, claiming that nothing is ever invented, the assertion brings the concern forward and, however quickly it is denied, it continues to be an issue throughout the trilogy.

kicking up dust, without knowing when or how to stop. Too much dust, too many words and the vision will be obscured. We simply cannot see what we have any more, there is too much dust in our eyes. Let it settle. Take some of the words away, reduce, restrict, negate some of these words and let us regain our sight. Let us see what kind of creature we actually have here.

The characters in the trilogy, and especially the Unnamable, approach this kicking-up of dusty words, this making of creatures by means of story-telling, as if it were a fascinating, though risky and potentially fatal, game they were playing. "What I need now is stories ...", notes Molloy, which gets echoed by Malone's, "While waiting I shall tell myself stories, if I can." (M, p. 12 and MD, p. 180, respectively) It is further echoed by the Unnamable's comment, "And I see myself slipping, though not yet at the last extremity, towards the resorts of fable". (U, p. 308) Malone's early bravado - "Now it is a game, I am going to play ... I shall never do anything any more from now on but play." (MD, p. 180) - falters at the end of his deadly game - "All is ready. Except me." (MD, p. 283)

In this regard, we should mention what Malone once said; namely, that silence is at the heart of the dark. The darkness created by the smokescreen of words has the ironic effect of silence, an odd sort of silence. The result is like the disorientation of a white-out's blinding effect or, on the other hand, the effect of static whose density results in unintelligible sound, transforming words into operational silence. The game of words is also a game of silence, something which the Unnamable seems more aware of than the others in the

Beckett world. He frequently links the two games together, in fact, by remarks such as, "Listening hard, that's what I call going silent", and "Hearing too little to be able to speak, that's my silence". (U, p. 393)

For the character in The Unnamable, silence is a right, the right to be done with speech. In a word, "... better be silent, it's the only method, if you want to end, not a word but smiles, end rent with stifled imprecations, burst with speechlessness ..." (S&T, p. 83). However, it seems to be a right that is functionally unattainable, as long as the character needs to continue. Turn and turn about, another beginning, a new grouping of words, one more attempt to say it right. Another voice to amend the picture. Another character that had previously been ignored or neglected. Another aspect that had not been stated in an earlier rendition. Another approach will set it right, at last. Another story yet to tell. Edging closer to the right to silence, he seeks the right to be left alone, devoid of speech and speechless, having said what needs to be said in order for the right to become a reality. The quest for silence as a modus operandi. But it just does not seem to work and, paradoxically, may simply be doomed to fail.

Silence is always an alternative. But it is not a simple silence that the character desires. Beckett's creatures, while clamoring for silence, berate the ordinary kind. They consider your mundane, everyday silence to be born of a lack. This sort of silence is a negation, a taking away of words, linguistic abortion. That is not the right kind of silence. The only kind worth having is the one

which puts an end to speech, which acts as a resolution, a victory over, rather than a loss to language. But we need words for that to happen. We need words to create the silence and make clear its significance. And, as long as there is something left to say, stories still untold, the true silence is outside our grasp.

Putting words to rest, so we can rest in peace, and in quiet. What is sought is the real silence, that which is beyond language, rather than the temporary kind which is but a pause between words. Thus the necessity of pushing onward, of persevering against all odds. Try to tell the story of stories, with nothing and nobody left out. This time we get it right. And if not, start again, so when it is said, properly said, we can move beyond this level, this dust of words, leaving language behind - knowing that what needed to be said was finally said. This is the quest.

In order to accomplish this, the text itself becomes the quest, acts as teller, becomes the told. Creator and creation are intertwined:

Yes, I was my father and I was my son, I asked myself questions and answered as best I could ... And this evening again it seems to be working, I'm in my arms, I'm holding myself in my arms, without much tenderness, but faithfully. (S&T, p. 79)

The text as quest. As such, the text presents an active process, rather than a static finished product. Edwin Schlossberg stated this method as follows, "The book was the character. The force was the experience. No story.... Thus it was not the archetype character that

was seen, it was the archetype process."⁴¹

It is difficult to describe the effect this has. It is a kind of turning language into a Mobius strip, ~~it~~ upon itself, as if there were two sets of reflectors beaming back upon each other. It seems impossible to remain at the literal level of words under this kind of manipulation, for to take the words in the text at their surface-value becomes ludicrous. Instead, there is the creation of a metaphorical impression, whereby words become part of a metaphor for a different sort of linguistic reality. Although there are instances in the early works of Beckett literalizing metaphors, it is a widespread practice throughout the later ones.

Watt was constantly struggling with interpretation, finding meaning in his experience or deriving significance from the words he and others used. For Watt, "to explain had always been to exorcize", and he considered that he was unsuccessful when he had failed to do so. Watt was afflicted with a brand of linguistic hypochondria. The words he heard and tried to understand, as well as those he used, and the images and metaphors with which he grappled were incorporated into his ontological and physiological reality. He so thoroughly struggled with language and the permutation of the corresponding reality, that both character and reader, who is no mere bystander, reach levels of madness, simultaneously.

By the time we reach the trilogy, and particularly The Unnamable, we find the character's relationship with language has evolved to

⁴¹ Edwin Schlossberg, Einstein and Beckett, A Record of an Imaginary Discussion with Albert Einstein and Samuel Beckett, Foreword by John Unterecker, (New York: Links Books, 1973), p. 90.

fanaticism, with his obsession no longer concerned with explanation, as was Watt's. At this point, the character is determined to avoid anything that reeks of the "spirit of system", although he feigns ignorance as to the reason for feeling so strongly about this. Exorcism has been replaced by extraction. Through the vast quantity of words and the continual eruption of more words, the character is in the curious position of producing more and more stories in the hope of extracting the truth. He seeks the root story which will have the last word on the subject of himself and be done, once and for all. If "language is fossil poetry", as Emerson claims,⁴² then it seems to give rise, in The Unnamable, to an archeological dig, with the attempt to find the root or true meaning of the teller's own story by sifting through massive mounds of seemingly self-generating words.

Black humour and farce range throughout Beckett's world, from Murphy's position as attendant at the lunatic asylum, the "Magdalen Mental Mercyseat" to the bleak humour of How It Is, with its character whose "mistakes are my life".⁴³ Having surrendered, or possibly never truly sought, his humanity and creativity, he joins "millions and millions" in the mud, whining and wallowing through a questionable sort of existence. This is the prize for the entrance ticket: "... when instead of beginning as traveller I begin as victim and ... instead of

⁴²As quoted by N.O. Brown, Closing Time, (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 97.

⁴³Samuel Beckett, How It Is, translated from the French by the author, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), p. 34.

ending abandoned I end as tormentor."⁴⁴ At this latter point the level of farce is more painful and calls for the participation in something far more black and unhappy than the previous works.

In The Unnamable, however, there is still levity with the laughter and a lightness in even the blackest moments. The physical disintegration shown in the Basil-Mahood-Worm personae in this work takes on the air of a Dadaesque opera or an Absurdist burlesque, where, instead of the stripper's G-string being thrown to the audience, here we have, so to speak, the tossing of limbs, in keeping with the tone of the work. Beckett raises into disdain and humour that which we no longer have, the ways in which we can no longer act, the extent of the impotence and, perhaps above all, the ways in which things can actually get worse. Farce and humour both demystify, by virtue of poking holes in our conceptual frameworks. And for Beckett, whose highest laugh is at that which is unhappy, this means pushing us to look at and find humour in things which we would otherwise avoid.

We find, in The Unnamable, a character, fully adept at the use of irony and farce, interacting with language in such a way as to dissolve it of its hold over him, that is, dissolve it of its significance and especially its stranglehold - its power, in short. For the power of language in the novel is over the character's sense of identity, over his understanding of the world and of others, and over his alleged goal to attain a state of silence. "Yes, in my life, since we must call it so", says the character of The Unnamable, "there were three things, the inability to speak, the inability to be silent, and

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 129.

solitude, ..." (U, p. 396) Alone with only his words and the silence that would come when they, or he, ceased. This is rather Wittgensteinian, in the respect that the view of language laid out in the Tractatus placed, like the Unnamable, an all or nothing emphasis on language. Specifically, as we will see in the next chapter, where there is no language, asserts Wittgenstein, there is no thought. There are words or silence and, as Wittgenstein says, whereof we cannot speak, we must pass over in silence. Alone with only his words and the silence that comes when the words cease. Checkmate.

The player and the played-upon, with language as the board and the only available moves; the character is made up of words, solidified by the language of the text, bound on all sides, by silence, much as the sculpture is by space.

... I say what I'm told to say, that's all there is to it, and yet I wonder, I don't know, I don't feel a mouth on me, I don't feel the jostle of words in my mouth, and when you say a poem you like, if you happen to like poetry, in the underground, or in bed, for yourself, the words are there, somewhere, without the least sound, I don't feel that either, words falling, you don't know where, you don't know whence, drops of silence through the silence, ... (U, p. 382)

The use of silence in the narrative is not due to any compliance with laws of grammar or of reason. A break in the narrative follows no ordinary convention. Rather, silence acts as an integral part of the rhythm of the text, its form, as well as the character's driving concern. The lyrical qualities of the novel are related to the way in which silence is employed. Silence is just as much a part of the text, as in a musical composition. It is written right into the text, into its very structure. The reader, therefore, must deal with the silence

as much as with the language of the work.

There is no reason to believe that this is anything but a conscious and controlled employment on Beckett's part. It is shown implicitly in the novel's lyricism, and explicitly in the numerous remarks on the subject of language and silence. Silence is like the heartbeat of The Unnamable, with the words like voices, bodily sounds, superimposed over it. Silence is ubiquitous, an underlying presence that is frequently obscured by language, but never extinguished. Silence is something forever being tread-upon; something constantly being broken by speech. Both feared and courted, silence is the final resting place, a zone which the character cannot rush into, except momentarily for an invigoration, as it were, in the space of a pause. It is always evening in Beckett's works, always in or near darkness and this is always spoken of, even if it's morning, to make it seem as if night (silence) is at hand and, therefore, rest.

Silence forms the asymptote for the form of the text. The silence is the boundary which the text approximates, more and more closely, and to which it theoretically converges, but which it can never actually become, never intersect, in reality, as long as it is to continue.

This voice that speaks, knowing that it lies, indifferent to what it says, too old perhaps and too abased ever to succeed in saying the words that would be its last, ... not listening to itself but to the silence that it breaks ... (U, p. 307)

Going toward a silence that it knows it cannot reach, the voice cannot stop itself, however .

Beckett calls the farrago of silence and words, a silence that is not

silence, but merely murmured words.

With the character of The Unnamable a word-maker making himself, it is no coincidence that he should give so much thought to his medium, language. Language and silence are intertwined in a web from which the character seeks release, in order to attain a higher language, a language beyond speech.

... I think I'll soon be dead, I hope I find it a change. I should have liked to go silent first, there were moments I thought that would be my reward for having spoken so long and so valiantly, to enter living into silence, so as to be able to enjoy it ... (U, p. 396)

The concern with language and silence is at the core of The Unnamable, as demonstrated by the attempt to create a totality which would be larger than its correlative parts of speech. This is the activity of doing something with the language of the book, providing the exploration of the medium. Barthes' comments regarding the potential of a literary work seem applicable to Beckett's middle and later works, for, as in The Unnamable, the text is in the active pursuit of language. As Barthes stated,

... the text can, if it wants, attack the canonical structures of the language itself (Sollers): lexicon (exuberant neologisms, portmanteau words, transliterations), syntax (no more logical cell, no more sentence). It is a matter of effecting, by transmutation (and no longer by transformation), a new philosophic state of the language-substance; this extraordinary state, this incandescent metal, outside origin and outside communication, then becomes language, and not a language, whether disconnected, mimed, mocked.⁴⁵

With The Unnamable, we find language in process, an unfolding of a struggle with thought and language. This involves a constructive

⁴⁵ Barthes, Pleasure of the Text, p. 31.

process of the medium in such a complete manner that the reader can never simply set the book aside and pick it up later. Not only does the syntax defy any resting points, but the development of the text is inherently cohesive and bonded by overlapping concerns. As a result, to stop at any random point is to take the risk of having to begin anew, back at square one where "I say I, unbelieving".

"All great fiction, to a large extent, is a reflection on itself rather than a reflection of reality", claims Federman in an essay discussing Beckett's forty years of "toying with words".⁴⁵ Or, as Beckett himself put it in Stories and Texts for Nothing: "... nothing ever but lifeless words". (S&T, p. 135) Maybe there are no words for ultimate reality, maybe no words can truly express either ultimate reality or everyday reality. "Name; no nothing is namable, tell, no, nothing can be told, what then, I don't know, I shouldn't have begun." (S&T, p. 126) Thus says the character in Stories and Texts, who gives up on any claim to validity of expression as a correspondence to reality. For that matter, we might wonder whether any work of art is capable of reflecting physical or objective reality. As Beckett notes in Proust, "Reality, whether approached imaginatively or empirically, remains a surface, hermetic". (P, p. 56) Imagination, for Beckett, cannot tolerate the limits of the real.

One of the problems with reality is not what it actually is, since the concept entails an abstraction, but our perception and approach to reality. It is at this point that rationality imposes its

⁴⁶ Raymond Federman, "The Impossibility of Saying the Same Old Thing in the Same Old Way - Samuel Beckett's Fiction Since Comment C'est", p. 22.

presence upon our thought. For it is rationality, not reality, that pursues categories and systems of thought which, in turn, call for particular sorts of analysis, interpretation and representation. What is missing, however, is the element of the imagination, the magical essence, the joker in the deck.

The most successful evocative experiment can only project the echo of past sensation, because, being an act of intellection, it is conditioned by the prejudices of the intelligence which abstracts from any given sensation, as being illogical and insignificant, a discordant and frivolous intruder, whatever word or gesture, sound or perfume, cannot be fitted into the puzzle of a concept. But the essence of any new experience is contained precisely in this mysterious element that the vigilant will reject as an anachronism. It is the axis about which the sensation pivots, the centre of gravity of its coherence. (P, pp. 53-54)

As a consequence of Beckett's above statement, the artist would not try to duplicate or reflect reality by making the art-work a curious sort of literary clone or miniature. Rather, the artist would use imagination and, in Beckett's words, "a subconscious and disinterested act of perception" to reduce the object or aspect of reality to an immaterial or spiritually digestible equivalent. This would result, not in an association, but a centralization of the act of cognition on the artist's part. Beckett describes this in reference to Proust, whose point of departure "is not the crystalline agglomeration but its kernel - the crystallised. The most trivial experience - he says in effect - is encrusted with elements that logically are not related to it and have consequently been rejected by our intelligence ..." (P, p. 55)

Beckett's fiction guides us into watching words construct the character. At the same time, we see the words in a process of becoming

the character, a symbiosis most astutely developed in The Unnamable. The language itself is like no ordinary literary discourse. This would be too comfortable for Beckett, who seems to like the challenge of the impossible, the struggle of his failure to express continually ramming head-on with his compulsive need to express.

The resultant literary expression is a type of language that moves, in Federman's analysis, from the truth of fiction (early Beckett) to the lie of fiction (middle Beckett, which includes The Unnamable) to the impossibility of fiction. The lie, says Federman, resides in fiction's fraudulence, as it moves toward its own negation. The impossibility is the fiction whose only fiction is its own language, the "voice within the voice mumbling to itself".⁴⁷ The later fiction no longer professes to tell a story, but merely acts as a release for a pensum once learned, for rumours, or for ejaculations. Mercier has said that The Unnamable's interior monologue may very well go on to infinity, but if it were to do so, it would approach zero in content; that is, the limit of the content as the length approaches infinity is zero.⁴⁸ This seems to be in accordance with the view that the voice has reached a point, in Beckett's fiction, of mumbling to itself. Picture a meaningless droning, without substance and without end. Flowing words, Beckett writes, "... flowing unbroken, like a single endless word and therefore meaningless, for its the end gives the meaning to words." (S&T, p. 111)

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

⁴⁸ Mercier, Beckett/Beckett, p. 15. Also, cf. above, p. 45.

Less critically, we might see this activity as one necessary component of Beckett's creation of a new fictional form, a form which refuses to conform. Another relevant component may be found in Beckett's remark about the inherent solitude of the artist. Within this discussion in Proust, there is a way in which we can see why Beckett moved to a more esoteric or obtuse form and let go of the identifiable, interesting and sometimes lovable characters, replacing them with anonymous personae. Beckett reveals more about himself than Proust when he says,

The artistic tendency is not expansive, but a contraction. And art is the apotheosis of solitude. There is no communication because there are no vehicles of communication ... Either we speak and act for ourselves - in which case speech and action are distorted and emptied of their meaning by an intelligence that is not ours, or else we speak and act for others - in which case we speak and act a lie. (P, p. 47)

This was written by Beckett in 1931. Much more recently, Susan Sontag discussed this conflict in "The Aesthetics of Silence". She pointed out that language is experienced by the artist as something corrupted and weighed-down by historical accumulation. Consequently, the creation of a literary work means facing two domains of meaning and their relationships. One is the artist's own meaning (or lack of it) and the other is the set of what Sontag termed second-order meanings, that both extend his own language and encumber and compromise it.

Thus,

The artist ends by choosing between two inherently limiting alternatives, forced to take a position that is either servile or insolent. Either he flatters or appeases his audience, giving them what they already

know, or he commits an aggression against his audience, giving them what they don't want.⁴⁹

We desire to be understood, Beckett claims, because we desire to be loved. But the applause, the adoring audience-entails, ultimately, too many compromises for the artistic vision to reach expression. "... no one's going to love you, don't be alarmed." (S&T, p. 86) Letting go of those restrictions may make the artist less accessible but it strips away various linguistic and artistic boundaries. As a result, the artist's own uniqueness, as well as the power of his vision, can be released from what had previously hampered it. And, contrary to the picture presented by the characters' implication of a runaway voice, their vehicle moving out of control, there is complete control by Beckett over his work.

... I invent nothing, through absent-mindedness, or exhaustion, ... I know what I mean, or one-armed better still, no arms, no hands, better by far, as old as the world and no less hideous, amputated on all sides, erect on my trusty stumps, bursting with old piss, old prayers, old lessons, soul, mind and carcass finishing neck and neck, ... making no demands, rent with ejaculations, Jesus, Jesus. (S&T, p. 129)

⁴⁹ Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence", in Styles of Radical Will, (New York: Delta Pub., New Delta edition, 1978), p. 15.

The relation of a dynamical model to the system of which it is regarded as the model, is precisely the same as the relation of the images which our mind forms of things to the things themselves.... The agreement between mind and nature may therefore be likened to the agreement between two systems which are models of one another ...

Heinrich Hertz

Logic is interested only in reality. And thus in sentences only in so far as they are pictures of reality.

Bertrand Russell

A language of that sort will be completely analytic and will show at a glance the logical structure of the facts asserted or denied.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

CHAPTER II

LOGICAL ATOMISM: RUSSELL AND THE EARLY WITTGENSTEIN

Logical atomism had a great impact on philosophy when it was introduced. It influenced, as well as, reflected the influence of ways in which the connection between language and the world was viewed. How the philosophers Wittgenstein and Russell attempted to construct an ideal language goes hand in hand with struggles to confront and manipulate language in disciplines as diverse as logic, linguistics, literature, and drama. The particular approach the atomists took, however clumsy or misguided it was later considered, represents, nevertheless, a significant level in the evolution of man's relationship to language. The linking of words to objects and claims of similarities between the structures of language and the world are aspects of an inquiry which is understandable in its attempt to place things in a proper place, as well as admirable in that its success would have wrapped things up quite tidily and put many questions to rest. This has particular relevance to Beckett, both because of the influence this philosophical position has had upon 20th century thought and because of the specific way it tries to link language to the world.

This section will consist of an exposition of the theory of Russell and the early Wittgenstein. In the next chapter, we will turn to the Beckett text, in order to use this theoretical perspective on

language as a method of analyzing The Unnamable.

It was an interrelation between logic, language and the world which obsessed Russell and Wittgenstein during their period of thought which has been referred to as 'logical atomism'. It was an obsession which held them captive and left them searching for the correct prescription which could tidily package the essence or essential structure of the world. As a natural and even desirable consequence, the role of logic would be properly assessed, and most philosophers with their pseudo-problems would be sent scurrying for cover. The logic, Wittgenstein claimed, would speak for itself. The fact that the atomists themselves did a lot of talking about (logic, language, the world, to mention a few) was not at first seen as problematic. In retrospect, however, it was seen as a wedge for the critique of the theory.

The goal of the theory, its underlying metaphysics, with attached presuppositions, the program and its basic criticisms are briefly outlined in this section, with a view to trying to grasp their significance as well as the way in which the philosophers were, as Wittgenstein later suggested, "bewitched". What lies at the periphery of this approach to language, although coming to focus in the following chapter when we discuss Beckett's novel, is the role of the metaphysical subject vis-à-vis language and the world.

In England at the turn of the century, Russell and Whitehead were preparing their monumental work Principia Mathematica (1910-1913), a work of logic and mathematics purporting to offer a logically perfect

language.¹ This was further expounded and elaborated upon through philosophical discussion in Russell's lectures on logical atomism, now contained in Logic and Knowledge.² It was claimed that, with the appropriate vocabulary, a logically perfect language could serve as a description of the world. That is, structurally, they are of the same form. Meanwhile in Austria, Wittgenstein was working on his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1914-1918) which also concerned the quest for an ideal language.³ Like the Principia, it demanded specific formal characteristics, mainly of a logical nature, which would provide a structure to the ideal language like that of the external world.

Their attention was drawn to the connection between language and the world (external reality, matter) and the way in which language could be expressive of the world. Both Russell and Wittgenstein asserted that the logically perfect language had, by reason of its own structure, the capacity to show the structure of the world.

¹Russell, Bertrand and Whitehead, Alfred North, Principia Mathematica, to *56, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967).

²Russell, Bertrand, Logic and Knowledge; Essays 1901-1950, edited by Robert Charles Marsh, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956). Hereafter all references to this edition, denoted LK.

³Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. D.F. Pears and S.F. McGuinness, with an Introduction by Bertrand Russell (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1961). All references will be to this edition, henceforth denoted T, followed by the section number(s).

Indeed, it would not merely show the structure, it would reflect, or mirror, it.⁴ Russell, for example, spoke of the complexity of propositions mirroring the objective complexity of the world. (see LK, p. 197). Wittgenstein expressed it in more grandiose terms, by speaking of the "great mirror", "the all-embracing world-mirroring logic". (Nbks, 24.1.15) Wittgenstein also mentioned the "variously placed great and small mirrors of philosophy". (T, 6.3.15). Their emphasis was not intended to be metaphorical. They believed this reflective, or mirroring, property to be an essential characteristic of the ideal language. Let us not underestimate the significance of this claim.

Their contention was that, by means of logic, we could arrive at a description of the world. The tools of description were to be logical propositions, namely, sentences in the indicative, sentences asserting this or that, rather than, for instance, questioning, commanding, or wishing. With these tools, properly assessed as to truth or falsity, the desired structural information about the world could be ascertained.

If all true elementary propositions are given, the result is a complete description of the world. The world is completely described by giving all elementary propositions, and adding which of them are true and which false. (T, 4.26)

Russell extended this notion of the complete description even further - too far, Wittgenstein contended⁵ - and made reference to the

⁴Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Notebooks, 1914-1916, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), entry 24.1.15. Henceforth all references will be to this edition, abbreviated Nbks, followed by entry number.

⁵Wittgenstein felt that speaking of an inventory of all true atomic propositions or an inventory of the world would imply that logic was not an a priori study, a position he held to be untenable. However, it should be noted that Wittgenstein's comment in Nbks 19.6.15

feasibility of an "inventory of the world". (LK, p. 201) Although he spoke of such an inventory, Russell meant this to be within the realm of logical possibility. That is, Russell believed it theoretically possible to undertake an inventory of the world, as one might of a giant warehouse, but he did not seriously expect that such a move should be made. He did not try, nor did he suggest that someone else should try, actually to take steps to effect an inventory-description. In fact, he later contended that

No logician imagines that such a [logically perfect] language would have practical utility. He is only concerned to say that it is possible, and that its possibility is due to the nature of world-structure.⁶

Consequently, the goal was not to line up logicians and philosophers in any material or abstract toll-taking of propositions or corresponding states of affairs. Rather, it was to outline what was within the realm of logical possibility. They could then make statements about the elements of the world and the ways in which the world's structure could be understood and demonstrated by means of language. This is the significance of Russell's reply to Urmson, in which Russell asserted that neither he nor Wittgenstein, by referring to "atomic facts" as the final residue of analysis, had ever held it essential that such facts were actually attainable. (MPD, p. 221)

would indicate that he once tended toward Russell's position: "There doesn't after all seem to be any setting up of a kind of logical inventory as I formerly imagined it."

⁶Russell, Bertrand, My Philosophical Development, (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1969) pp. 224-225. Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, denoted MPD.

What Russell and Wittgenstein sought was not simply to make certain statements about language or its major characteristics, but to prescribe ways in which language could be utilized. That is, they wanted to use language for a set purpose, while operating under specific restrictions and guidelines. This was to be done in order to obtain an understanding of the world and to express the world's inherent structure, which was considered present and accessible to certain maneuvers of logic. The basic commitment, then, was to establishing the identity of the two structures, i.e., of the world and of language. This is illustrated by Russell's pronouncement, "The business of metaphysics is to describe the world". (LK, p. 215)

Wittgenstein claimed that logical propositions describe the scaffolding of the world, by virtue of its representation. Explicitly, what this meant was that these propositions have no "subject matter" per se, that nothing in logical syntax is arbitrary. He did not consider logic to be a field in which claims were made with the help of signs - we do not express by means of logic - but one in which the "nature of the absolutely necessary sign speaks for itself", (T, 6.124)

Subsequently, to know the logical syntax of the sign-language, as he sometimes referred to it, is to be given, at the same time, all the logical propositions. In turn, it would be possible to give in advance all true, and a fortiori all false, logical propositions. The end result would then be that there are no accidents in logic. As Wittgenstein asserted, "there can never be surprises in logic." (T, 6.1251)

⁷ Emphasis is Wittgenstein's. By convention, any emphasis other than that of the quote's author will be noted as such.

If we couple this with the further claim that "Logic is not a body of doctrine, but a mirror-image of the world" (T, 6.13), an unclaimed, but seeming consequence is that there would be no accidents or surprises in the world either, at least with regard to structural characteristics. We can also arrive at this view of the world by following Wittgensteinian reasoning. That is, the following claims would seem to imply that the world is subject to law:

- (1) "... only connexions that are subject to law are thinkable" (T, 6.361)
- (2) "Thought can never be of anything illogical ..." (T, 3.03)
- (3) "The totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world." (T, 3.01)

As mirrored, or pictured, in thoughts that can never be illogical and, therefore, are without accident or surprise, the world itself would appear to be outside the range of surprise and accident. The picture is one of order and, once all the facts are in, predictability.

The world was understood by the logical atomists to be constituted of material substances accessible to physical (empirical) investigation. Both Wittgenstein and Russell made critical reference to idealist philosophers. And Russell himself openly opposed the sort of idealism found in Hegelian logic, with its inherent monism, which claims that there is only one thing, idea or spirit. In contrast, Russell prescribed an atomistic analysis, contending that the world consisted of "many separate things". (LK, p. 178)

Russell formulated an understanding of the world in terms of sense-experience. He expounded a "principle of acquaintance" which underlined our empirical and contingent experience. It was crucial

that the ideal language be empiricist, in that: Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted. (cf. LK, pp. 179-205) Furthermore, this empiricism finds expression in the very construction of the language. This is implied by Wittgenstein, who said that, "In a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by the senses".
(T, 3.1)

In conjunction with the empirical approach, we find a certain view of the world, namely, that the world consists of "facts" or "states of affairs" which are deemed to be part of the objective world. Thus, the world is not considered to be merely a collection of objects which, given enough time, could be named, but it is also seen as consisting of qualities and configurations of objects. According to Russell: "... the world contains facts, which are what they are whatever we may choose to think about them ..." (LK, p. 182)

Wittgenstein would seem to concur, since he contended that the world "is all that is the case", that the world consists of facts, not things. Since facts determine the world, the demonstration of those facts by means of the ideal language occupied Russell's and Wittgenstein's work. As Wittgenstein explained,

My whole task consists in explaining the nature of the proposition.

That is to say, in giving the nature of all facts, whose picture the proposition is.

In giving the nature of all being. (Nbks, 22.1.15)

Implicit in the theory was an approach that Wittgenstein later traced

back to Plato's Theaetetus,⁸ which interpreted the world in terms of primary elements. In hindsight, Wittgenstein saw Russell's "individuals" and his own "objects" to be just such primary elements, elements which were primitive, in the sense that they could not really be defined. (PI, 46) Consisting of primary elements, the world is seen to have a fixed structure which would be mirrored by the structure of the language the atomists attempted to set forth.

In this regard, we should recognize Russell's remark to Urmson, that neither he nor Wittgenstein were trying to get at "atomic facts" in any empirical manner, but that they were investigating the requirements and conditions for a logically perfect language. Theirs was a logical (philosophical) inquiry and, however much they intended to talk about the state of the world, its structure or man's comprehension thereof, they made no claims to be demonstrating scientific data. As Wittgenstein asserted, philosophy was not beside the natural sciences, but either above or below them. Furthermore, logical propositions actually have no content. They are tautologies. They say nothing whatsoever. What they do is show us the formal properties of language and the world. (see T, 4.111 and T, 6.1 - 6.12)

With respect to the simple object itself, Wittgenstein saw its significance as a presupposition: "... we realize the existence of the simple object - a priori - as a logical necessity." (Nbks, 14.6.15) This was crucial for the logical inquiry to proceed, especially as

⁸ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Third Edition with English and German Indexes, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969), section 46. Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, abbreviated PI, followed by section number(s).

regards the placement of the actual connection - an isomorphism of structural components - between language and the world. It would be impossible for language to mirror the world's structure if the simple object were not an a priori given. It was believed that the logical scaffolding, the structure, could be held above the world, as it were, and, one by one, the structures were lined up together and their identity could be seen. This was the basis of the structural isomorphism, whereby

... the words in a proposition would correspond, one by one, with the components of the corresponding fact, with the exception of such words as 'or', 'not', 'if', 'then', which have a different function. (LK, p. 197)

Wittgenstein appeared to be in accordance with the general idea of an isomorphism; since he outlined in the Tractatus an analogy of names to points and propositions to arrows (possibly intended as vectors) which linked language to reality.

In this way, we see the mirror metaphor being explicated and the actual link-up of propositions to reality being put to the test. Points (names) and vectors (propositions) were to be held, so to speak, above the world. The comparison could consequently be made. The accuracy of the comparison determined the truth-value of the proposition: true if the structures correspond, false if not. As Wittgenstein declared, "A proposition can be true or false only by virtue of being a picture of reality". (T, 4.06) Because of this comparison to propositions, reality was restricted to two alternatives, yes or no. (see T, 4.023 for further discussion).

In his Notebooks, Wittgenstein discussed the correlation of language and the world.. "... the general description of the world is like

a stencil of the world, the names pin it to the world so that the whole world is covered by it." (Nbks, 31.5.15) Furthermore, this was meant to be obvious, for it could be shown by the isomorphic structures. The truth of the comparison between language and reality was meant to be clearly accessible to the untrained eye.

Wittgenstein and Russell both insisted that these descriptive, and other, aspects of the theory be unqualifiedly apparent. Undeniable. The structural isomorphism would be shown blatantly by the propositions themselves. "That a sentence is a logical portrayal of its meaning", said Wittgenstein, "is obvious to the uncaptive eye". (Nbks, 20.9.14)

This claim was in line with the methodology advocated by the two men. Since there were to be no surprises within the theoretical discussion or within the logic, Russell and Wittgenstein both attempted to follow a methodology that would be ordered, predictable and unassailable. They chose a Cartesian approach. Russell discussed this, thinking it best to adhere to an inquiry wherein each of the claims would "result inevitably from absolutely undeniable data" and the actual procedure would not be "the sort of thing that anybody is going to deny". (LK, p. 179, see also MPD, pp. 220, 229-230) For that matter, Russell asserted that the data itself would be "quite ludicrously obvious". (LK, p. 181) Complete clarity was basic to the investigation.

It was Wittgenstein's belief that this goal had been reached in his own work. He announced his success in the preface to the Tractatus, where Wittgenstein contended that the truth of the thoughts contained in the work was not only "unassailable and definitive", but that they constituted the "final solution of the problems". However, by the

time he wrote those remarks (1918) he had begun to wonder how much had actually been achieved when the problems were solved. These doubts deepened in time and finally lead him to question the whole enterprise. At the peak of the atomists' influence, however, the concerns were elsewhere, as Russell and Wittgenstein concentrated on ironing out the finer details which the logically perfect language would necessitate.

Starting with a few axioms, apparently necessary and presumably obvious, the groundwork of the theory was laid. A "principle of atomicity", that "objects make up the substance of the world" (T, 2.0201), was taken to be axiomatic and a belief in analysis established. Russell presented a picture of the situation:

At the time when Wittgenstein wrote the Tractatus, he believed (what I understand, he came later to disbelieve) that the world consists of a number of simples with various properties and simple relations. The simple properties and simple relations of simples are 'atomic facts' and the assertions of them are 'atomic propositions'. The gist of the principle is that, if you knew all atomic facts and also knew that they were all, you would be in a position to infer all other true propositions by logic alone. (MPD, pp. 118-119)

Given the principle of acquaintance, we are faced with names of particular individuals, sense-data in Russell's terminology, and terms for properties of relations between individuals, i.e., sense-data. As Russell indicated in the above statement, the idea of atomic sentences was central to the logically perfect language. These were propositions which assert that a certain thing has a certain quality or that certain things stand in specific relations to other things. Examples Russell offered were "This is red" and "The cup is on the table". Atomic sentences contain only terms whose meaning is in correlation with experi-

ential (empirical) terms. Corresponding to these atomic sentences are atomic facts, which are the simplest kinds of facts, entities which cannot be analyzed into anything more basic. They are primitive. Russell asserted that all knowledge could be stated in terms of atomic sentences and truth-functional connectives, whose employment would then result in "molecular" propositions. It seems that Wittgenstein would have concurred with this, although he would have required the added stipulation (the assertion) that we have given all the true elementary propositions. (see T, 4.26 and see also Russell's above remarks). Wittgenstein compared linguistic expression to projection in geometry. The Tractatus is certainly logico-mathematical in its approach to such expression. Both Wittgenstein and Russell stressed a truth-functional methodology, which Russell developed in a detailed manner in the Principia. The construction of the ideal language depended on the use of truth-functions, for it is by means of 'if's, 'of's, and 'and's that the molecular propositions are constituted. Examples of such propositions are: "If it rains, we will carry an umbrella" and "the cup is on the saucer and the saucer is on the table". The truth-value of the assertion, when applicable, would depend upon the truth-value of the constituent atomic propositional phrases, along with the manner in which connectives are used in the sentence structure.

One of the consequences of an endeavour which set forth requirements that the logically perfect language must fulfill, was that the linguistic manipulations simultaneously create a metaphysical system. Under the presupposition that the structure of language corresponds to that of the world, and this, we are assured, can be demonstrated, it

is by virtue of the ideal language that we arrive at the essence of the world's structure. The correlation will be sought through linguistic restriction. That is, if we restrict the criteria of what constitutes the ideal language by selecting rules of structure and allowing only certain types of words, word-combinations and sentence-constructions, we will be able to arrive at the desired structure.

Effectively, then, language is being employed, or at least programmed for employment, to get outside language, to the world itself. With the proper manipulation of language, we can achieve an essential knowledge of physical entities. By acting upon language in a prescribed manner, we can get to the essence of reality. The connection is between understanding the proposition and understanding the world. An understanding of the one will provide an understanding of the other; the essence of the one reveals the essence of the other. "To give the essence of a proposition", Wittgenstein stated, "means to give the essence of all description, and thus the essence of the world." (T, 5.4711) As a result, the investigation of the formal aspects of language would be, at the same time, an investigation of the formal aspects of the world.

To execute the program, Russell demanded a correspondence between word and object. Specifically, this would mean that, "there will be one word and no more for every simple object, and everything that is not simple will be expressed by a combination of words ..." (LK, p. 197) The feelers extend, word reaches for object, where the configuration of objects in a given situation corresponds to the configuration of simple signs (names) in the propositional sign. The one

is a representation of the other; that is, the proposition is a description of the world. In the Tractatus, Wittgenstein spoke in terms of models and representations. He said that,

A proposition is a picture of reality: for if I understand a proposition, I know the situation that it represents. And I understand the proposition without having had its sense explained to me. (T, 4.021)

Wittgenstein presented a view of language literally depicting reality. The alphabet was itself compared to hieroglyphics and viewed as little pictures, i.e., representations, of the material world. Within the proposition, the name acts as a representation of the object. (see T, 3.22) Furthermore, Wittgenstein went so far as to say that, "the name goes proxy for the object" within a proposition. (Nbks, 29.12.14, my italics)

However, much Wittgenstein influenced Russell on this account (MPD, pp. 113-114), Wittgenstein himself seemed to have been struck by comments made on models in Hertz's work on mechanics. In his Principles of Mechanics,⁹ Hertz set forth a mechanical theory purporting to follow a no-doubt approach capable of an empirical verification which could, potentially, involve descending to (physical) atoms. However, Hertz himself was sufficiently abstract to avoid material confirmation of his ideas.

Hertz' significance for Wittgenstein can be inferred from the number of explicit references made to Hertz in the Tractatus. As well, the influence is implicit in the striking resemblance between Hertz's

⁹Hertz, Heinrich Rudolph, The Principles of Mechanics, presented in a new form, Pref. by H. von Helmholtz, authorized English translation by D.E. Jones & J.T. Walley, with a new introduction by Robert S. Cohen, (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 177.

discussion of dynamical models and the logical atomists, especially Wittgenstein's, view of the structural isomorphism existing between the ideal language and the world. The similarity is worth noting.

Hertz gave the following definition of a dynamical model:

A material system is said to be a dynamical model of a second system when the connections of the first can be expressed by such coordinates as to satisfy the following conditions: -

- (1) That the number of coordinates of the first system is equal to the number of the second.
- (2) That with a suitable arrangement of the coordinates for both systems the same equations of conditions exist.
- (3) That by this arrangement of the coordinates the expression for the magnitude of a displacement agrees in both systems.

Any two of the coordinates so related to one another in the two systems are called corresponding coordinates ...

Corollary 1. If one system is a model of a second, then, conversely, the second is also a model of the first ...¹⁰

Let us now clarify the resemblance with the atomists, by noting some of the axioms and conditions of Russell's and Wittgenstein's position.

First, there is the logical necessity of simple objects. They were to be taken as "givens"; whereby their existence was a presupposition of the theory. Also, it was held to be axiomatic that there existed a numerical identity between proposition and corresponding physical fact. This is expressed, with a side reference to Hertz, in Wittgenstein's claim that, "In a proposition there must be exactly as many distinguishable parts as in the situation that it represents". That is, "The two must possess the same logical (mathematical) multiplicity". (T, 4.04)

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 175.

With these axioms in mind, consider the conditions which parallel those of Hertz given on the previous page. The logical atomists called for: (1) numerical identity of word to simple object; (2) equality of structure of the ideal language to that of the world; and (3) any change in the configuration of objects in the world to necessitate, for a proper description, a corresponding change of proposition. This latter claim is borne out by Wittgenstein's assertion that a proposition is a function of the expressions contained in it. (T, 3.318) It would seem to imply that a change of expression would demand a propositional change, which, in turn, would reflect a different configuration of objects, that is, situation in the world. Similarly, any change in the world would call for a suitable change of expression, hence, of propositional structure.

We form for ourselves images or symbols of external objects; and the form which we give them is such that the necessary consequents of the images in thought are always the images of the necessary consequents in the nature of things pictured. In order that this requirement be satisfied, there must be a certain conformity between nature and our thought. Experience teaches us that the requirement can be satisfied, and hence that such a conformity does in fact exist.¹¹

The conformity considered by Hertz between nature and thought, reality and proposition, was translated in Wittgensteinian terms to a discussion of the picture which language presents of the world. Along with the presuppositions and claims inherent in (1) - (3) of the atomist theory, Wittgenstein also held it to be true of the world that objects are unalterable and subsistent. (see T, 2.0271) Against this background, what has been called a picture-theory is set forth.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 1.

What constitutes a picture is that its elements are related to one another in a determinate way, where the actual connection between pictorial elements was considered by Wittgenstein to be the "structure of the picture". (T, 2.15) In order for the picture to be a model of reality, a mirroring of the facts, there must be a common "pictorial form" between picture and reality. Since the elements of the picture are correlated with things in the world and the correlations themselves are seen as "... the feelers of the picture's elements, with which the picture touches reality", (T, 2.1515) whether the picture is true or false rests on its comparison with reality. Seemingly, there are no gradations here. The picture is or is not a model of reality. As a result, there are no pictures which are true a priori. Rather, it is by a correlation with reality that the truth-value is to be ascertained. Wittgenstein considered a narrower class with pictorial forms, since there could be any number of possible forms in common between a picture and the world. He offered a few examples, specifically color and spatial form. However, in order to be a depiction of the world, the picture must have the "form of reality" (the logical form) in common. The kernel of the theoretical structure has, at this point, been revealed. Logical form is seen to be the structural core, the fundamental property holding between a state of affairs in the world and the corresponding (true) picture. Other types of pictorial form may be present. For example, we may or may not have a spatial form in common, depending whether or not the picture is spatial in kind.¹²

¹² Russell talks about "forms of facts" with regard to the matter of philosophical logic being described as an inventory or, as he once

Against this background, we move to a discussion of the proposition qua picture. The individual word is not a picture of the thing named, but, rather, the proposition is a picture of reality. Wittgenstein developed this concept in the Notebooks, where he remarked, "The name is not a picture of the thing named! The proposition only says something in so far as it is a picture!" (Nbks, 3.10.14)

A given proposition presents a picture of reality by virtue of the inherent logical form holding between the proposition and the world. Indeed, Wittgenstein qualified his interest in propositions vis-à-vis description, by noting the following: "Logic is interested only in reality. . . And thus in sentences only in so far as they are pictures of reality." (Nbks, 5.10.14) In conjunction with this, a proposition cannot be true a priori, since its truth-value rests on a comparison with the world. Narrowed down by the acquaintance requirement, reality itself becomes a function of the speaker's experience.¹³ This is due to the view that reality is constituted of members of the class of things, as well as situations, configurations of objects, with which the speaker is acquainted.

A proposition on the printed page may bear little resemblance to the reality with which it is concerned. Wittgenstein assured us that neither do notes of music appear, at first sight, to be a picture of a

professed, "... a 'zoo' containing all the different forms that facts" have in the world, noting that there were "... a good many forms that facts may have, a strictly infinite number ..." (LK, p. 217)

¹³This is a subject which has interest for us in viewing The Unnamable and, consequently, will be considered in the next chapter.

piece of music. However, they are pictures to the degree that their structural properties are interconnected. It is not the external properties (appearances) that constitute the picture. Instead, it is the internal - structural - properties that distinguish the features of a proposition and link it to a configuration of objects in the world. (cf. T, 4.122, 4.12, and 4.023) We give descriptions of an object by asserting things about external properties, whose validity is empirically verifiable; viz., by seeing if the object "fits the description". So too, we can give propositions which demonstrate the internal properties of a situation, or so Wittgenstein contended. In both cases, verification would be on the experiential level. We compare statement to fact.

Unfortunately, this prescription was later seen by Wittgenstein to unleash a host of problems, most significantly that of effecting the comparison. This he explained in the Notebooks, when he wrote:

The difficulty of my theory of logical portrayal was that of finding a connexion between the signs on paper and a situation outside in the world.

I always said that truth is a relation between the proposition and the situation, but could never pick out such a relation. (Nbks, 27.10.14)

As his own most insightful critic, Wittgenstein clearly delineated this and other problems that beset the theory. And, however nagging the problems were, even in the midst of his atomistic enthusiasm, Wittgenstein was, nevertheless, compelled to work out the details of his program. The pursuance of a logical, though not necessarily realistic, possibility was worthwhile in itself as a philosophic and aesthetic endeavour. This is not to underestimate the force of

Wittgenstein's attitude during the atomist period, his almost gloating insistence that problems were being solved and that the validity of the inquiry was obvious and undeniable.

There is some argument that Wittgenstein's approach should be traced back to science and mechanics rather than to Russell or others more philosophically rooted.¹⁴ The picture theory of Wittgenstein does appear to have a Hertzian mentality behind it, at least on the surface. Comparing the two, we find, on the one hand, Hertz, who claims that,

... We should at once denote as inadmissible all images which implicitly contradict the laws of our thought. Hence we postulate in the first place that all our images shall be logically permissible ... We postulate in the second place that our images shall be avoided by suitable arrangement of definitions and notations, and by due care in the mode of expression ... the dignity and importance of the subject demand, not simply that we should readily take for granted its logical clear-

¹⁴ For interpretations that differ from this perspective, see, e.g., G.E.M. Anscombe's An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus, which considers Frege the major influence on Wittgenstein, or David Pears' Ludwig Wittgenstein, which suggests that Wittgenstein is rooted in German idealism, or Anthony Kenny's Wittgenstein, which, making no mention of Hertz, claims that "the legacy of Frege and Russell" to be affecting Wittgenstein.

Ironically, however great an influence Frege may have had upon Wittgenstein's Tractatus, von Wright's comments suggest that Frege did not support the publication of the Tractatus in its present form and Wittgenstein himself appeared doubtful that Frege understood the work. He notes a letter to Russell, dated October 6, 1919, in which Wittgenstein wrote, "I'm in correspondence with Frege. He doesn't understand a single word of my work and I'm thoroughly exhausted by giving what are purely and simply explanations." And, if von Wright is correct, Frege's assistance in getting the Tractatus published was sought by Wittgenstein, but unfortunately, "From him I received the promise to take over the work if I would mutilate it from beginning to end and, in a word, make another work of it", Wittgenstein writes. (cf, Georg Henrik von Wright's "The Origin of Wittgenstein's Tractatus" in C.G. Luckhardt, ed., Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 114 and 93, respectively.)

ness, but that we should endeavour to show it by a representation so perfect that there should no longer be any possibility of doubting it.¹⁵

Wittgenstein, on the other hand, similarly claimed that

Logic is not a body of doctrine, but a mirror-image of the world. (T, 6.13)

The exploration of logic means the exploration of everything that is subject to law. (T, 6.3)

One might say, using Hertz's terminology, that only connexions that are subject to law are thinkable. (T, 6.361)

The link that Wittgenstein drew between picture/description and reality was this: "The description [of an object] is right if the object has the asserted property: the proposition is right if the situation has the internal properties given by the proposition." (NBs, 16.1.15)

Outlining the extent to which he believed Hertz was linked to Wittgenstein, Griffin, who supports the view of a Hertzian influence, contends that the influence was in the form, rather than the content, of the Tractatus. The basis for this was that Hertz's work gave the characteristics which any language must possess, if it is to follow a mechanistic perspective in providing a description of the world.¹⁶ To the extent that Wittgenstein may be said to be doing meta-science, under the influence of Hertz's work on mechanics, he may be offering us a

¹⁵ Hertz, The Principles of Mechanics, presented in a new form, p. 2.

¹⁶ See Griffin, James, Wittgenstein's Logical Atomism, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), pp. 2-9. Griffin is sold on the view that Hertz dominated Wittgenstein's thought in the Tractatus and went to the extreme of suggesting that "there is point to thinking of the Tractatus as The Principles of All Natural Sciences" (p. 5). That Hertz was significant, Wittgenstein attests. That Wittgenstein was just a disciple of Hertz will not be pursued here.

demonstration that philosophy is above the natural sciences in the way in which metaphysics is above physics.

Whether or not the picture-theory traces back to Hertz, it seemed the case that Russell, like Wittgenstein, went along with the general idea. "The world", said Russell "may be conceived as consisting of a multitude of entities arranged in a certain pattern".¹⁷ Russell conceived these entities, what he called 'particulars' (perhaps as an intended link to Wittgenstein) as analogous, not to "bricks in a building, but rather on the analogy of notes in a symphony". (M&L, pp. 129-130) It should be noted, however, that Russell was not claiming a tie to Wittgenstein so much as attempting to alleviate difficulties in the way in which immediate objects of sense were regarded as physical. It may be merely a peculiar coincidence that he picked music for his analogy.

The mirroring element of the picture theory was echoed by Russell in his contention that the ideal language would "show at a glance" the logical structure of the facts. He intended to present such a language in the Principia. Furthermore, both Russell and Wittgenstein saw this language to be objective and impersonal in the way in which it would act to mirror the world's structure. They held a purposeful, indeed rational, disregard for any subjective considerations.

Let us now turn to the matter of objectivity versus subjectivity, with a consideration of the role of the subject in the theory of the

¹⁷ Russell, Bertrand, Mysticism and Logic (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959) p. 129. Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, abbreviated M&L.

logical atomists. This will be particularly important for the analysis of Beckett in the next chapter, because it is specifically this area that has relevance to The Unnamable.

Russell spoke of the "objective world". It is a world which "... contains facts, which are what they are whatever we may choose to think about them ..." (LK, p. 182) He chose to think of facts as clearly existent, especially from a logical point of view. They all fell into a nicely ordered pattern. There was "an objective complexity in the world" that was mirrored by the complexity of propositions. (LK, p. 197) The world was mirrored by a complexity, as it were mathematically and impersonally.

Russell believed the correct and most orderly methodological approach would be to start from the complexity of the world and proceed to the complexity of propositions. However, it was more feasible to go about it in reverse. Symbols were easier to grasp and, furthermore, the complexity of the fact was definable ("You must just apprehend it"). The subject's role in this is more of a perceiver, a witness to the world's structure. There seemed to be no participatory role for the consciousness of the subject with respect to the constitution of the world's structure. The facts are what they are, whatever we may choose to think of them. Facts are untouched by any conscious process.

Wittgenstein seemed to complement the metaphysical yearnings of Russell by construing the issue in the following way: "The representation of the world by means of completely generalized propositions might be called the impersonal representation of the world." (Nbs, 27.10.14)

Wittgenstein, however, did not directly speak of the world as being "objective". He diverged from Russell with an approach that situated the subject and the role of the subjective as being clearly out of this world, at its limits. The world, itself, was not to be seen in subjective terms. "It is obvious that we must be able to describe the structure of the world without mentioning any names." (Nbks, 19.10.14) Instead, the world could be described by means of "fully generalized propositions".

This raises into consideration the way in which the logical atomists viewed the subject and how they assessed its role in the theoretical discussion. By seeing metaphysics as a descriptive business, where "the business of metaphysics is to describe the world", Russell placed emphasis on the world and away from any psychological conditions of the subject. In this respect, the description of the world was not itself seen to have any direct bearing on the subject: the fact itself is objective, and independent of our thought or opinion about it. (see LK, pp. 182-183)

Wittgenstein's analysis placed the subject at the limits of the world and claimed that there was nothing in the world itself which allowed us to infer the existence of the metaphysical subject. The subject is in no way a part of the world; it simply does not belong to the world. It is the certain absentee. Wittgenstein assured us that, "It is true that the knowing subject is not in the world, that there is no knowing subject". (Nbks, 20.10.16)

The link, however, does exist. What connects the subject to the world is the fact that "the world is my world". (T, 5.641) Wittgen-

stein believed that this enabled us to exclude the metaphysical subject and yet retain empirical foundations for the theory. This has particular consequences for the otherwise sticky conditions which must be met in the formation of propositions influenced by the principle of acquaintance. This brought us directly to the experience of the subject; yet Russell, at least, excluded use of the first person pronoun and restricted use of proper names in propositions. In the Principia, Russell was able to avoid considerations involving the first person, "I", because of the nature of mathematical formalization. Uneasy about the entire issue of proper names, Russell sought their elimination to the point of extending a "proof" that a proper name was only a "fiction". Proper names were undesirable in the ideal language: "A logically perfect language ... could not use proper names for Socrates or Piccadilly or Rumania ...". (LK, p. 198)

The trouble was that 'Piccadilly', 'Socrates', and 'Rumania' have no single correlate constituent, simple or complex. What corresponds to the name is more a series or class of descriptions, and these Russell considered logical fictions. His view was that what pass for proper names are really "abbreviations for descriptions" with no particular referent, but only a complicated series. (LK, p. 200) In Mysticism and Logic, Russell related the discussion to Bergson's analogy of the cinema and noted that a person resembled frames of a film. Thus, except for the continuum of frames in between, the person in the first frame may bear little, if any, resemblance to the one in the last frame. (see M&L, pp. 128-129)

Emphasizing his view of language as descriptive of the world and utilizing the principle of acquaintance, Russell indicated how restricted the use of the names would have to be.

A name, in the narrow logical sense of a word whose meaning is a particular, can only be applied to a particular with which the speaker is acquainted, because you cannot name anything you are not acquainted with.... We are not acquainted with Socrates, and therefore cannot name him. When we use the word 'Socrates', we are really using a description. (LK, p. 201)

This distinction of Russell's is later criticized in the Philosophical Investigations, in Wittgenstein's statement that "... naming and describing do not stand on the same level: naming is a preparation for description. Naming is so far not a move in the language game". (PI, 49)

Similarly, Wittgenstein attacked the existence requirement for a name: "And to say 'If it did not exist, it could have no name' is to say as much and as little as: if this thing did not exist, we could not use it in our language-game ..." (PI, 50) That is, it is just a question of the language game itself, the "method of representation" as Wittgenstein referred to it.

Meanwhile, the consequences of the "method of representation" which Russell employed result in at least one curious off-shoot. This is that linguistic expression becomes highly impersonal, although theoretically more logical in form. This in turn becomes more problematic - even bizarre at times¹⁸ - because of Russell's growing unease

¹⁸Take, for example, Russell's comments in Logic and Knowledge: "An atomic proposition is one which does mention actual particulars, not merely describe them but actually name them, and you can only name them by means of names. You can see at once for yourself, therefore, that every other part of speech except proper names is obviously quite

with proper names and the subsequent turn to the use of 'this' as the name replacement.

Wittgenstein managed to avoid what he saw as an incompatibility of levels with respect to naming and describing by implying that the perfect language could describe the world without mentioning any names. (see Nbks, 19.10.14) The problem then was dissolved before it could arise. The types of propositions produced by the ideal language machine were treated as if they were of uniform thickness and size and no one proposition was to be considered as weightier or more significant than any other. Wittgenstein's criticism of levels picks at a nit compared to the problems in the framework itself, however, and that we shall now consider.

By this time, it should be apparent that a significant number of problems and differences were overtaking the logically "perfect" language. Furthermore, the subjective element could not be eliminated from Russell's or Wittgenstein's later analysis of logical atomism.

On the matter of differences, the personal interaction and criticisms Wittgenstein and Russell levelled at each other provided the impetus for assignment of blame with respect to the problematic areas of the inquiry. Russell criticized Wittgenstein's style in the Tractatus, implying that it had more literary merits than logical ones and observed that, "Wittgenstein announces aphorisms and leaves the

incapable of standing for a particular. Yet it does seem a little bit odd, if, having made a dot on the blackboard, I call it 'John'. You would be surprised, and yet how are you to know otherwise what it is that I am speaking of.... 'This' will do very well while we are all here and can see it, but if I wanted to talk about it to-morrow it would be convenient to have christened it and called it 'John'." (LK, p. 200)

reader to estimate their profundity as best he may: Some of his aphorisms, taken literally, are scarcely compatible with the existence of symbolic logic." (MPD, p. 126)

On a less personal level, Russell contended that Wittgenstein was correct in emphasizing the importance of structure. However, he felt that the doctrine that a true proposition must reproduce the structure of the correlate facts was doubtful, or, if true, not of "any great importance", however fundamental it was to Wittgenstein. This bothered Russell, who thought it to be the basis for a "curious kind of logical mysticism", namely, that the form in common between the true proposition and the fact can only be shown, not said, since it is not another word in the language, but an arrangement of words of corresponding things. (MPD, pp. 113-114)

Russell thought he could dispose of Wittgenstein's mysticism and suggested this in his introduction to the Tractatus, where he contended that things which a given language could not express could be said in a Higher order language that one might construct. Of course, Wittgenstein would reject this outright, because it would necessitate a self-perpetuating series of languages, each to say what the previous one could only show. In addition, it would also be without bound and, hence, would create an infinite number of levels of language, which Wittgenstein's denial of the Russellian axiom of infinity would disallow.

Russell seemed furious at and resentful of Wittgenstein's outrage regarding Russell's treatment of infinity. He was furious because he tried to "enlighten" Wittgenstein and Wittgenstein simply would not

be persuaded. He was resentful because the man was too stubborn to see what Russell believed obvious. Wittgenstein would not allow any statements about all things in the world nor would he allow hypothetical assumptions of any numerical kind ("There is no pre-eminent number." T, 5.553). Russell tells the story in the following way:

When I was discussing the Tractatus with him [Wittgenstein] at The Hague in 1919, I had before me a sheet of white paper and I made on it three blobs of ink. I besought him to admit that, since there were these three blobs, there must be at least three things in the world; but he refused, resolutely. He would admit there were three blobs on the page, because that was a finite assertion, but he would not admit that anything at all could be said about the world as a whole. This was connected with his mysticism, but was justified by his refusal to admit identity.

... It seemed to me a purely empirical question how many things there are in the world, and I did not think that the logician, as such, ought to permit himself an opinion on the subject. I therefore treated all those parts of mathematics which require an infinite number of things as hypothetical. All this outraged Wittgenstein. (MPD, pp. 116-117)

It is not surprising that Wittgenstein would be opposed to Russell's inclination to speak of the world as a (seemingly fixed) whole or to Russell's postulation of an axiom of infinity in order to justify the type of moves he wished to make. However, it is somewhat surprising that Russell extended himself to this position, in light of the Cartesian methodology he considered fundamental to the inquiry and the kind of statements deemed permissible. It had seemed so desirable to have a set theoretical approach, particularly in order to speak of classes (e.g., the set of all things in the world) and a potentially infinite number of elements in sets or hierarchies which a given method might generate. However, the assumptions Russell wanted to employ

require postulation of a kind which is neither obvious nor undeniable, as Wittgenstein himself demonstrated by his rejection of the procedure and its inherent presuppositions.

Wittgenstein contended that "... it is nonsensical to speak of the total number of objects". (T, 4.1272) We simply cannot make statements like "There are books". The problem, suggests Wittgenstein, is that 'object' is a pseudo-concept. That is, it can be used in conceptual notation by a variable name - as in, for example, "There are two objects which ...", expressed in symbols as, " $(\exists x, y), \dots$ ". However, the attempt to use it as a proper concept-word results in what Wittgenstein called "nonsensical pseudo-propositions". Thus, propositions about the number of objects, whether finite or transfinite, cannot be made. And this was meant to apply to all formal concepts. Wittgenstein discussed the various roles of concepts in Tractatus 4.126-4.127, and claimed that, "The propositional variable signifies the formal concept, and its values signify the objects that fall under the concept". (T, 4.127) It is because of this that Wittgenstein berated Russell for what he saw to be a serious logistic error. Whether he talks of objects, or makes use of other words that are formal concepts - e.g., 'complex', 'function', 'number' - the point is that,

They all signify formal concepts, and are represented in conceptual notation by variables, not by functions or classes (as Frege and Russell believed).

'1 is a number', 'There is only one zero', and all similar expressions are nonsensical. (T, 4.1272)

Wittgenstein accused Russell of committing nonsense. Russell accused Wittgenstein of profundity at the cost of reason, along with a display of mystical inclinations. Both suggested that the other made

errors. Nevertheless, the general prognosis seemed to be that, given a little tune-up or overhaul, the theory could retain much of its force. In time, however, both let go of their atomistic leanings and Wittgenstein in particular came to confront the various problems directly or indirectly created by logical atomism.¹⁹

Hence, our next move is to investigate some of the general problems that beset the atomist theory. First, there is the failure to uphold the Cartesian methodology. As mentioned previously, Russell lost hold of his methodology in the conflict with Wittgenstein over the totality of objects by using formal concept words and postulating an axiom of infinity to justify his procedure. Rather than follow the Cartesian method, Russell opted for dogmatism over indubitability.

Wittgenstein himself appears a bit dogmatic in light of the announcement style of assertions which are short on explanation. Over and over again, we find statements like "It is obvious ..."; "And if we penetrate to the essence of ... we see that ..."; "It is clear that ..."; "The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that ..."; "The world is ..."; "Mathematics is ..."; "Logic is ..." and so on. There is little room for questions about the obviousness of these claims. That so many of Wittgenstein's disciples, as well as critics, misunderstood or misconstrued him may stem, at least in part, from the exclusions brought about by the style of Wittgenstein's discussion.

¹⁹Such problems as Wittgenstein himself confronted will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

Another area of difficulty is the theoretical structure of logical atomism, as appended by a number of presuppositions. Although Wittgenstein asserted that logic is transcendental, not a body of doctrine, (T, 6.13), it seems clear that a theoretical structure did, in fact, exist.

Let us first look at the enterprise of constructing, or unveiling, a logically perfect language.. It was assumed, at the outset, that linguistic manipulation was both possible and acceptable. That is, they presumed it possible to manipulate language - via restrictions, rules, or conditions - without, at the same time, altering or somehow changing the nature of language or incorporating a peculiar view of what constitutes language. Wittgenstein seemed aware of the latter in the Philosophical Investigations, when he said

But how many kinds of sentence are there? Say assertion, question, and command?— There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (We can get a rough picture of this from the changes in mathematics.)
(PI, 23)

With respect to logical atomism, it is crucial that we note the two criticisms in the above; first, that there are countless kinds of uses of the structural components of language and syntax and, secondly, that the multiplicity is not a fixed unit, set and unchanging. Indeed, language is much more amorphous than had previously been assumed. The application of this to his earlier work was not lost on Wittgenstein, for he conceded:

It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.) (PI, 23)

Connected to this is the assumption that the ideal language corresponds to the world in such a way that by virtue of that language we can understand the world, i.e., by penetrating its essence. There is a problem here in the view that this language can present us with a picture of the world, for the very nature of a picture is a fixed entity, static and lifeless. The world it would represent would be etched in stone, as it were. Fixed for eternity. "Remember the future!" implies Wittgenstein later in the Philosophical Investigations, when he assessed the philosophical presumptions of the Tractatus. There is obviously no room for change in the states of affairs. Not only does the ideal language have a very rigid structure, so must the world have one.

Wittgenstein did not deny this. In fact, he implied that there existed this granite quality to the world and even declared in the Notebooks that, "The world has a fixed structure". (Nbks, 17.7.15) Objects, seen as unalterable and self-subsistent, stand in a determinate relation to one another. In the Tractatus, the interrelation of objects was outlined. "In a state of affairs", Wittgenstein wrote, "objects fit into one another like links of a chain". (T, 2.03) The world is seen to be peopled by things, objects whose existence was presupposed. "There must be objects, if the world is to have an unalterable form." (T, 2.026) And the world must have an unalterable form for there to be a linguistic-stencil that could be held over it and

locked into place as a propositional reflector. Hertzian to this degree: the world is pictured as structurally static, so that the world itself is orderly, predictable and where all its elements obey fixed laws. A mechanistic image.

Russell seemed trapped by this and resented Wittgenstein's escape-hatch of mysticism. That is, Wittgenstein could devalue the atomist inquiry by implying that, after a point, its limitations become self-evident and act as stepping stones to a higher plane or a more enlightened mentality. So his parting remark, "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence", has buddhistic implications as to the number and depth of topics left out of the discussion, without being specific about what was omitted.

One of the consequences of the picture theory, Anscombe notes, is that "... a proposition and its negation are both possible; which one is true is accidental".²⁰ The fixed nature of the world's structure necessitates that meanings and values be seen as distinct from the essential structure. Also, even though we can say that "The totality of true thoughts is a picture of the world" (T, 3.01) the truth-value is purely accidental. That is, it is not inherent to the structure of either language or the world.

This also applies to other values, as Wittgenstein stated in the Tractatus when he said,

The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists - and if it did exist, it would have no value. (T, 6.41)

²⁰ Anscombe, G.E.M., An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1959), p. 170.

We impose values upon the world, they are not to be found within it. Neither good nor evil announces itself in the world. We are the ones who see it, and place judgement.

This aspect of Wittgenstein is traced by Anscombe back to his tie to Schopenhauer, who viewed the world as my will and idea. In contrast, Wittgenstein said, "The world is independent of my will. Even if all we wish for were to happen, still this would only be a favour granted by fate, so to speak ..." (T, 6.373-4) There is no logical connection between my will and what actually happens in the world. For this reason, Wittgenstein sees actions in the ethical sense to be in the realm of what he considered transcendental. They are not a part of the world itself. Anscombe suggests a clarification of this:

The connection of will with the world is that 'the facts' belong to the task one is set. [In T, 6.4321 Wittgenstein said, 'The facts all belong to the task set, and not to the solution'. And to the end of his life, Wittgenstein was said to use the analogy. 'Life is like a boy doing sums'.] If one has reached a solution, not by any alteration of the facts that may have taken place - any such alteration, even if one intended it, is accidental and merely a 'grace of fate' - but by an alteration 'in the limits of the world' (6.43).²¹

Anscombe sees this to be the part of the Tractatus that is "most obviously wrong"; i.e., in seeing the will as having no effect on the world itself, but only as potentially altering the 'limits' of the world, where the subject rests. The curious banishment of the subject to the edge reflects the static view of the world found in logical atomism along with the apparent discomfort of Wittgenstein and Russell over the role of subjectivity. As Wittgenstein later wrote, "Did

²¹ Ibid., p. 171.

not your intention (of which you are ashamed) reside also in what you did?" The Tractatus could not permit "what happens" to include actions, in the sense to which we might assign them a value.

Ironically, the theory was value-laden, insofar as criteria were actually set forth and systematically detailed characteristics were outlined for the right way in which to achieve the ideal language. The inquiry did not do what it prescribed. Specifically, according to the theory, a proposition could be significantly stated either if it corresponds to some atomic fact or if it is a truth-function, a molecular proposition made up of atomic statements. However, most of the statements made by the logical atomists were not of these kinds. They did not state facts or attempt to state facts. Rather, most of the claims were about facts and, in particular, about the relationship between language and the factual world. The consequence was a discussion of an ideal language - not, in fact, an elucidation of what such a language would actually consist of. In that respect, Wittgenstein's remark in Tractatus 6.54 admit this, for at that time he stated that his propositions are elucidations so far as "anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them - as steps - to climb up beyond them".

Of course, one might argue that the inquiry was never meant to be anything other than a logical inquiry, and no one was morally bound to set the theory in motion. They did not have to give us examples or a finer picture of what the ideal language would really look like, even though it certainly would have provided more force and clarity. In the Notebooks, Wittgenstein contended with this problem, for he admitted

that "Our difficulty was that we kept on speaking of simple objects and were unable to mention a single one". (Nbks, 21.6.15) Even more troubling is the realization that "... it seems that we have so to speak, no guarantee that our proposition is really a picture of reality". (Nbks, 20.6.15)

Wittgenstein's criticism of his early thought is developed in the Philosophical Investigations, where he questioned the so-called indubitability of the atomists' claims about language and the structure of the world. He attacked, for example, his criteria of the indestructibility of objects by the remark, "I must not saw off the branch on which I am sitting". (PI, 55) The illustration he offered to clarify the point is, interestingly enough, about names and individuals. "In a sense, however, this man is surely what corresponds to his name. But he is destructible, and his name does not lose its meaning when the bearer is destroyed ..." (PI, 55)

Another case of rigidity later acknowledged by Wittgenstein is that the theoretical perspective was frequently one of either/or, black or white. The multiplicity of things, qualities, and especially of the tools of language had been forgotten or ignored. The essential vs. accidental distinction was considered by Wittgenstein to be one such conceptual flaw operating in the Tractatus. This he no longer saw to be true, for as he stated there is "... not always a sharp distinction between essential and inessential". (PI, 62)

Wittgenstein's critical remarks did not stop there: he attacked the narrow way in which the terms 'simple' and 'composite' were used. As he pointed out, we cannot speak of any object being composite outside

a particular language game and if we want to make certain moves for specific purposes we must say so. "... The question 'Is what you see composite?' makes good sense if it is already established what kind of complexity - that is, which particular use of the word - is in question." (PI, 47) Wittgenstein rejected the question, "Is the visual image of this tree simple or composite?", implying that the logical atomists had an awfully queer way of speaking. He felt it important to realize that "We use the word 'composite', (and therefore the word 'simple') in an enormous number of different and differently related ways". (PI, 47)

The concept of naming, along with the relation between name and object, came to be thought of as rather odd by the later Wittgenstein. It was seen as part of an "occult process":

Naming appears as a queer connexion of a word with an object. And you really get such a queer connexion when the philosopher tries to bring out the relation between name and thing ... (PI, 38)

Such narrowness produces a kind of "baptism of an object", Wittgenstein acknowledged. (PI, 38) He suggested that this peculiar way of using words was found only in philosophy. The problems arise when language gets taken out of its everyday context and molded in a strange manner which comes to be seen as the right, indeed the only sensible, way to approach a specific issue.

We mesmerize ourselves by our theories. We think we have made a remarkable discovery, but, with respect to logical atomism remarked the later Wittgenstein, "... the most that can ~~be~~ said is that we construct ideal languages". (PI, 81)

Similarly we must be on guard against mirroring the postulates and rules of another system without close examination of what is being done. We found this with respect to mathematical systems, which the atomists held in reverence and tried to mimic. The danger lies in changing the nature of language or in producing a linguistic system with limited applicability.

... in philosophy we often compare the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language must be playing such a game. - But if you say that our languages only approximate to such calculi you are standing on the very brink of a misunderstanding. For then it may look as if what we were talking about were an ideal language. As if our logic were, so to speak, a logic for a vacuum. - (PI, 81)

A logic for a vacuum. That is surely one of the most indicting assessments of the atomist inquiry, although he does not stop there. Wittgenstein undercut the whole endeavour when he pursued the question, "in what sense is logic something sublime?"

They had acted as if logic were the key to the treasure, for there seemed to be a "peculiar depth" to logic. "Logic lay, it seemed", said Wittgenstein, "at the bottom of all the sciences". (PI, 89)

Logic gets its force from the desire to reveal the basis, or essence, of everything empirical. But this is at the crux of the problem, for it was not simply a matter of unveiling hidden depths, but of assessing something on the surface. Our goal, Wittgenstein asserted, is that "We want to understand something that is already in plain view. For this is what we seem in some sense not to understand". (PI, 89)

The mistake was to think that something had to be penetrated, dug out from underneath layers that had long obscured it.

This finds expression in questions as to the essence of language, of propositions, of thought. - For if we too in these investigations are trying to understand the essence of language - its function, its structure, - yet this is not what those questions have in view. For they see in the essence, not something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies beneath the surface. Something that lies within, which we see when we look into the thing, and which an analysis digs out.

'The essence is hidden from us': This is the form our problem now assumes. We ask: 'What is language?', 'What is a proposition?' And the answer to these questions is to be given once and for all; and independently of any future experience. (PI, 92)

Frozen in time by their own rigidity. The atomists, suggested the later Wittgenstein, misunderstood "the role of the ideal in our language". (PI, 100) They were absorbed in a search for their ideal, having declared that it must be found in reality. But, meanwhile, they were oblivious to the way it occurs there or to what degree it would be found. Overtaken by their own preconceptions, they ended up sliding on ice. "For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course not a result of investigation: it was a requirement." (PI, 107)

The only way off the ice and not, in the final analysis, flat on their arses, was "Back to the rough ground!" (PI, 107) With that move, the formal unity that was held to be so necessary in the early work was given up. The only way out was off the ice, for "The pre-conceived idea of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination round". (PI, 108)

In time, the examination was indeed turned round and much of the theory was left behind for new paths in the philosophy of language, as we shall see in Wittgenstein's case in the fourth chapter. Something, however, has remained of the crystalline purity of the inquiry that the

logical atomists undertook. And even though it has become lodged in a rather provincial, historical setting, it stands as a jewel in contemporary intellectual history. It has remained a realm of thought that we must journey into before we can get a full grasp of developments in 20th century philosophy and linguistics.

The ways in which it allows us to get a fuller grasp of Beckett will be examined in the next chapter. There we take that kernel of frustration for Wittgenstein and Russell - the place of the metaphysical subject and the role of subjectivity in language - and see the extent to which this is the Unnamable's frustration. For, like the logical atomists, the Unnamable is trying to understand the way language and silence operate in his world and how he, as the subject, rests at the "limits of language", always, it seems, beyond the ability to give it a proper definition.

... 'I' means 'the subject-term in awareness of which I am aware'. But as a definition this cannot be regarded as a happy effort. It would seem necessary, therefore, either to suppose that I am acquainted with myself, and that 'I', therefore, requires no definition, being merely the proper name of a certain object, or to find some other analysis of self-consciousness.

Bertrand Russell

... if only I knew. How could I know myself who never made my acquaintance....

Samuel Beckett

The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

CHAPTER III

THE SUBJECT AT THE LIMITS OF LANGUAGE: THE UNNAMABLE

IN TERMS OF LOGICAL ATOMISM

When Russell and Wittgenstein were immersed in their period of logical atomism concentrating on the logically perfect language, it was still the case that a position had to be formulated on the metaphysical subject. Their assessment of the role of subjectivity provides us with an invaluable tool in the examination of Beckett's presentation of the Unnamable's sense of himself as an unnamed subject treading the limits of language. Both Wittgenstein and Russell are relevant here: Wittgenstein because he placed the subject at the limits of language and Russell because his analysis of proper names helps us to understand why the character could not be named. We will look at both of them in turn; first, the application to The Unnamable of Wittgenstein's philosophical insights on the position of the metaphysical subject and, afterwards, that of Russell's recommendations regarding the handling of proper names within the framework of an ideal language.

The inquiry of logical atomism made no room for the subject in the theoretical structure. The subject lingered at the periphery, at the limits of the world and at the limits of language.

There was no way to turn the light of consideration upon the subject, either, for it was simply too elusive. No amount of focussing on the subject could bring it into the center, to the foreground of any

philosophical study: by the very nature of the subject and of language, the metaphysical subject could no more be studied than the eye could include itself in the visual field. There is nothing in the visual field itself which allows you to infer that it is seen by the eye. That the eye exists cannot be ascertained by any element within the visual field. For analogous reasons, Wittgenstein claims there is no such thing as a subject who thinks or entertains ideas.

If I wrote a book called The World as I found it, I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in that book.- (T, 5.631)

In The Unnamable, we find the character attempting to isolate the subject and finding, as Wittgenstein predicted, that the attempt would meet with failure. As such, the novel represents a literary expression of this philosophical quest and the course which this takes is best seen in light of logical atomism.

What we are faced with in the novel is a character attempting to isolate the subject, himself. No matter what angle or ploy he takes, however, the subject lies outside his grasp, lies outside his language and, indeed, is the one thing that he cannot mention in the context of the work.

The situation in the novel is this: beset by doubts and uncertainties, the character commences his inquiry. "I, say I. Unbelieving." (U, p. 291) With his disbelief centered on the existence of that "I", he sets forth his task, to speak of himself and his place in order to reach peace and, determine the nature of this metaphysical

subject and where it is situated.

As in the case of The World as I found it, Wittgenstein's suggested book, Beckett's character starts with a description of place and body, where his report on his body is given with the detached air of the empiricist ticking-off the characteristics of a broomstick, dispassionately listing the correlative elements under few, if any, preconceptions. The claims made are substantiated by the physical particulars,

I, of whom I know nothing, I know my eyes are open, because of the tears that pour from them unceasingly. I know I am seated, my hands on my knees, because of the pressure against my rump, against the soles of my feet, against the palms of my hands, against my knees. Against my palms the pressure is of my knees, against my knees of my palms, but what is it that presses against my rump, against the soles of my feet? I don't know. My spine is not supported. I mention these details to make sure I am not lying on my back, my legs raised and bent, my eyes closed. It is well to establish the position of the body from the outset, before passing on to more important matters. (U, p. 304)

And so the character continues, reporting on the position of his back, neck, eyes, the flow of tears, the lack of clothing, and the state of motion, or lack of it.

Following the "report on my body", Wittgenstein suggests that the next report in The World as I found it would be to say which parts were "subordinate to my will" and, thereby, try to isolate the subject. Beckett's novel is not explicitly able to take this step, since it has extended the Cartesian doubt to include the ultimate doubt, that of the thinking subject, the existence of the "I" who thinks, the "I" who doubts.

We should recognize that the methodology adhered to by the logical atomists provides the foundation for the Unnamable's own approach. This is the Cartesian method of placing into doubt anything of which we are not certain. Descartes proceeded as follows: any proposition whose veracity could not be considered certain beyond all doubt was removed from the arena of consideration. The goal was to peel away a sufficient number of layers until he could say, without any room for doubt, that this much he knew to be the case.¹ As it turned out, the indubitable was found by Descartes to be the fact that there had to exist a doubter, raising the questions. It was for this reason that Descartes arrived at the well-known formula, "I think therefore I am". In the case of the atomists, the Cartesian method was considered the best approach to the problems. They sought to proceed on grounds that they could deem both certain and beyond question and, in so doing, avoid erecting a system based on inflated presuppositions, axioms and givens.²

The character in The Unnamable, Kenner has suggested,³ comes "closer to the Cartesian spirit than Descartes himself", by taking his doubts all the way and, unlike Descartes, foregoing theological limits. Starting with an acknowledgement that the "spirit of system" is, above all, to be avoided (U, p. 292), the Unnamable casts aside a belief in

¹ See René Descartes, Philosophical Writings, translated and edited by Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach, with an Introduction by Alexander Koyré, (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1954), pp. 61-66 (the "First Meditation").

² See pages 82-83 in the last chapter.

³ Kenner, Samuel Beckett, p. 120.

innate knowledge (U, p. 297) and proceeds with all due skepticism. He remains on the watch for oversights or assumptions sneaking in without warning. "I can't suppose anything", he announces. (U, p. 403) The force of that claim shoots throughout the novel, affecting the way in which everything gets discussed and shadowing the way in which the Unnamable sees his world. He wants the inquiry to be free of doubts, giving sufficient attention to any elements of importance that may weigh upon his investigation.

It is in this manner that the Unnamable provides the foundation of the inquiry which follows. It is also the foundation of the atomist methodology. Both obtain similar results on the role of the subject and the position of proper names.

As a consequence of calling the thinking subject into doubt, the Unnamable follows the "report on my body" with an attempt to isolate the subject. He proceeds by means of fable. That is, by means of what he calls his delegates or surrogates - characters which he creates in the telling of stories - he gives symbolic representation to the dilemma of isolating the subject. This he does by means of eliminating the physical aspects which are not subordinate to the will. "... mutilate, mutilate, and perhaps some day, fifteen generations hence, you'll succeed in looking like yourself, among the passers-by." (U, p. 315) If he can hack off limbs, organs, senses, physical attributes which are distinct from or which are not subordinate to the willing subject, perhaps he will slowly arrive at the kernel of self-hood, the core of the metaphysical subject. Elimination, not construction, will be the way to his goal.

First I'll say what I'm not, that's how they taught me to proceed, then what I am, ... I never desired, never sought, never suffered, never partook in any of that, never knew what it was to have, things, adversaries, mind, senses. (U, p. 326)

For this reason, the story of Basil-Mahood-Worm is evolved in the character's effort to isolate the self. First, there is Basil in a spiral motion around the rotunda with his family members inside, losing here a leg, there an arm. Then comes the limbless Mahood stuck inside a jar outside a restaurant facing, all too ironically and not too subtly, a slaughterhouse. Finally, there is the story of the encapsulated Worm. The elimination of the insubordinate bodily parts takes place, and Wittgenstein's suggested goal is achieved. One by one the limbs go, the senses decline, the operation of the body becomes less feasible and the evidence through the senses less dependable. In this way, the metaphysical subject gets hemmed-in. Proceeding by negation and a metaphysical epoché, he operates with the hope that, given enough area removed from his consideration, the character may find definition at last, by virtue of what remains, the not-negated. Through negating those bodily parts and perceptions that can be said not to be subordinate to the willing subject, certainty may be achieved.

Unfortunately, this goal seems unattainable. When the time comes for scrutiny, label and identification of the thinking subject, nothing remains, owing to the fact that the final disintegration, as symbolized by the characterization of Worm, is an extensionless being who can neither move nor speak. He is, at best, an object of study. Others peep into his container, as if looking for him, trying to situate him within his domain. However, they find nothing there, and the more they struggle

to locate him, the more elusive he becomes. He vanishes upon circum-
 spection and is as transparent as quickly dispersing smoke. Words no
 more define him or locate him than the word 'air' points to an object
 that we can grasp.

We can regard Worm as the last stop on the long line of the seedy
 solipsists which Beckett's characters are frequently seen to be. With
 the situation of Worm, the self has been isolated to a pinpoint.
 Wittgenstein inadvertantly describes Worm's state in the Tractatus when
 he discusses solipsism. "The self of solipsism", remarks Wittgenstein,
 "shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality
 co-ordinated with it". (T, 5.64)

This is Worm: a point without extension but with an undeniable
 reality. And, as we have seen from the progressive decay, the elimina-
 tion, of the "carnal envelope" to which the Unnamable refers (U, p. 330),
 the willing subject becomes no more than a pinpoint from which little,
 if anything, can be ascertained and from which little, if anything, can
 be learned. The image is that of a degenerate circle, where the radius
 has gone to zero and the graph is but a point. The characterization of
 Worm rests on a similar level of degeneration.

Perhaps the greatest frustration ~~on~~ the Unnamable's part is the
 result of the inquiry. Undertaking a physical report and then trying
 to isolate the willing subject by the negation of will-less bodily
 parts, he ends up with the persona of Worm and, with that, a situation
 from which little self knowledge can be derived. In fact, the character
 comes to realize the futility of this endeavour. No matter how many
 refinements he might make, no matter how many characters or "puppets"

he might create, he will necessarily fall short of the mark. That is, given a hundred characters, he would need a hundred-and-one to tell his story. Given a hundred-and-one, he would need a few more. There is no point at which he could declare, "This is it" and feel safe that he has not neglected something. To assert a stopping point would be to omit some aspect of himself or another story that needs to be told.

His goal of reaching himself is again thwarted, although the clarity of the methodology had seemed so evident and the method itself so plausible. Nevertheless, the resulting Worm, the residue of self remaining after all the shredding has taken place, imparts little knowledge. When we approach a limit-point for the variable, the character, it is as if the limit of the function is Zero. There is nothing to lay our hands upon that will contribute any knowledge of the subject. Indeed, there seems to be nothing there.

All that can be said to have been shown by the inquiry is that there is no subject to be found. The dissection effected by the telling of Basil-Mahood-Worm has ended in failure. All the bits and pieces that were not self were chopped off, tossed aside, so that, little by little, the variables were eliminated until nothing remained. Instead of arriving at the nugget, the metaphysical atom which would constitute the residue of analysis, there is nothing found, nothing arrived at, nothing gained. Wittgenstein's warning is thereby confirmed for the Unnamable. It was truly a "self"-destructive act, a metaphysical autopsy which yielded no worthwhile result.

All this business of a labour to accomplish, before I can end, of words to say, a truth to recover, in order to say it, before I can end, of an imposed task ... I invented it all, in the hope it would console me, help

me to go on, allow me to think of myself as somewhere on a road, moving between a beginning and an end, gaining ground, losing ground, getting lost, but somehow in the long run making headway. All lies. (U, p. 314)

Wittgenstein's prediction appears to have been demonstrated:

"... of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it alone could not be mentioned in that book.-" (T, 5.631) The subject lies outside The World as I found it. The subject defies, or escapes, definition and, in that sense at least, the subject itself is an unnamable. It is a frustrating realization that is hard to come to terms with.

Analogous is the position of the Unnamable, for whom "... it's not I speaking, it's not I hearing, let us not go into that, let us go on as if I were the only one in the world, whereas I'm the only one absent from it ..." (U, p. 401) No attempt to locate the self on the part of the character has led anywhere. The more he tried to dispel "subordinate" body parts, the less he found, to the extent that the final move in his negating analysis found the subject had escaped. No attempt has succeeded:

... I have passed by here, this has passed by me, thousands of times, its turn has come again, it will pass on and something else will be there, another instant of my old instant, there it is, the old meaning that I'll give myself, that I won't be able to give myself, ... (U, p. 400)

Like the rolling eye unable to see itself, no amount of manipulation or alteration was able to move the character any close to locating himself. It was like a brick wall that he kept running into and beyond which he could not go. "... it has not been our good fortune", notes the Unnamable, "to establish with any degree of accuracy what I

am, ... (U, p. 388)

It cannot be ascertained by analysis. It cannot be packaged by words. It cannot be told by stories. It cannot be named. And though the character calls himself "the teller and the told", he can tell, but he cannot be told.

His own story has yet to be told. The most he can hope for is to arrive at the threshold of his own story. True to Wittgenstein's suggestion, no matter how the focus is maneuvered the metaphysical subject will not reach center stage. Rather, it is destined to remain on the limit of the world and never to be found within it. "I like to think I occupy the center", says the Unnamable, "but nothing is less certain". (U, p. 295) There is no phrasing of language, no new fable, no redefinition of the problem that will change this basic fact.

No matter how many configurations of language are made by the character, he seems incapable of locating himself. This is not for lack of trying. Having met with frustration on one level, the Unnamable has no qualms about taking a new angle, by narrowing or broadening his focus, as the situation necessitates.

One of the ways in which the Unnamable tries to focus upon the subject is by employing the notion of time. That is, if he could assign temporal bounds to his self, he might open a channel that would allow him to close in on the subject. In so doing, he might possibly attain a sense of his own identity. But this is not easy, for the subject seems to defy definition with the aid of beginnings and ends.

The Unnamable tackles the matter a number of ways, but he fails to meet with success. In addition, the act of taking a beginning to be

axiomatic seems inconsistent with his chosen methodology that there be no hypotheses. Yet it appears necessary. How else could he begin to locate the self if there were no temporal limits? He deals with this problem by contending,

... I am obliged to assign a beginning to my residence here, if only for the sake of clarity. Hell itself, although eternal, dates from the revolt of Lucifer. It is therefore permissible, in the light of this distant analogy, to think of myself as being here forever, but not as having been here forever. (U, pp. 295-296)

Although Wittgenstein repeatedly tells us that what brings the self into philosophy is the fact that "the world is my world", it seems that only by knowing the limits of the world can we get closer to the subject itself. It is because of this that the Unnamable feels "obliged" to assign a beginning and, in so doing, define at least one of the limits on his world. However feasible the postulation, he still feels timeless - as if he has been and will be there forever. There are no temporal limits which can be placed around the self. Wittgenstein remarks that, "If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present". (T, 6.4311)

Death itself has no bearing on life - it sets a limit that we cannot experience. Our world, the world, ends with death. Death does not change the world, nor do we experience any change in our lives - because of death, simply because our death lies outside of our life. Death is not an event in life.

Although Wittgenstein does not raise the issue, it could be said that birth is not an event in life either. We experience dying and we experience being born, but death and birth are not experiences of life.

They are at its most definitive limits, but ones we can never understand, save in an abstract way.

As a consequence, it is no wonder that the Unnamable is frustrated when he attempts to assign himself a beginning. There simply is no beginning within the realm of his life. Beginnings and ends lie outside his life, as boundaries he can never really know. "Our life has no end", comments Wittgenstein, "in just the way in which our visual field has no limits". (T, 6.4311)

The problem of duration. All too aware of the two boundaries, of birth and of death, not to mention the question of identity over time, the Unnamable avoids as much of the quagmire as possible by suggesting that he locate himself, or each of his selves, in the present. He declares, "I'm three seconds long", a mere moment of time. He is a timeless instant; his self a succession of selves. Images over time and space.

Similar to temporal duration with respect to the limits of our world is the matter of spatial boundaries. Only after several frustrating attempts to situate his self in a place, does the Unnamable arrive at Wittgenstein's position that "The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time". (T, 6.4312) It is this solution that the Unnamable opts for in the end, and speaks of it with regard to his most elusive persona, Worm. "The mistake they make of course", he says of Worm, "is to speak of him as if he really existed, in a specific place, whereas the whole thing is no more than a project for the moment". (U, p. 371)

The implications of this lead us to the stalemate arrived at by applying a Cartesian doubt to subordinate parts in the attempt to isolate the subject. However confined the spatio-temporal dimensions are, we will not find any answers to the inquiry by fixating on those limits. Push the boundaries, try to fence the subject in - but little knowledge will be attained. The futility, as the later Wittgenstein outlines, lies in the fact that the approach yields only an analysis of the framework itself.⁴ The inquiry deteriorates to a fruitless tracing of the dimensions of the framework, leaving the subject untouched. "... where am I, where is the place where I've always been ..." (U, p. 385)

The Unnamable's inquiry runs aground. But he refuses to give up. Nothing is less certain than that he occupies the center. This the character admits, yet only begrudgingly. He tried and tried again to locate the subject, to find a name for himself, to find the right words to apply to his situation. The tighter the focus, however, the less he found: language runs adrift into silence, as he tried to tell but couldn't be told. To this degree, Wittgenstein's parting remarks of the Tractatus are brought home to rest on the Unnamable's search: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." (T, 7)

Given the Unnamable's aversion to system and his will to refocus in order to squeeze a bit more out of his search, let us now turn to a different angle of logical atomism and, with this, launch a Russellian analysis. Selecting the most appropriate element of Russell's theory, we shall see what happens when the subject meets head-on with the issue

⁴We will see, in the next chapter, how this gets handled by the later Wittgenstein.

of proper names, the subject's linguistic correlate.

The problems of space and time are also treated by Russell, in his lectures on logical atomism, where he incorporates his assessment within his discussion of proper names. And though Russell's solution, as we shall see, gets us into the Tar Baby Syndrome, it has important repercussions for the novel. As well, there is something fearless about Russell's approach, since he sets no limits on the applicability of a mathematical model to the construction of a logically perfect language. He seemed to have no qualms and few questions about the assessment of the status of subjectivity and the role of proper names.

We can enter the discussion by noting Russell's confession that, "... the whole matter of proper names is rather curious..." (LK, p. 200) Curious, indeed! Russell contends that proper names, 'Socrates' or 'Piccadilly', for example, could not be utilized in light of several difficulties. First, they are descriptions, not definitions. They do not point to a specific object in the world, but function more like a series of classes.

The concept of names being just abbreviations for descriptions runs into problems of duration and, furthermore, difficulties arise in application, since names can only be used to apply to particulars with which the speaker is acquainted. A proper name seldom means the same thing from one moment to the next. With the further stipulation that proper name "does not mean the same thing to the speaker and the hearer" (LK, p. 201), we encounter problems with time as well as with communication. Specifically, what is implied is a privacy of language, where proper names used by the speaker and heard by the listener and

vice versa have no common reference. In Russell's view, "When one person uses a word, he does not mean by it the same thing as another person means by it". (LK, p. 195) This implies that there is an inevitable linguistic gap between speaker and listener and an unbridgeable gap between the proper name spoken of by the speaker and understood by the listener. That which is said is not that which is heard. Though the names are grammatically the same, there is no referential meeting ground.

Since one person's experiences differ from another's and, thus, each person is acquainted differently and at different spatio-temporal moments with a given particular, the references corresponding to any given word vary from one speaker to the next. Russell offers the example of 'Piccadilly'. A person who has been to London attaches quite a different meaning to the word than would a person who had no acquaintance with the place. Each speaker has different associations for the words she uses than those of any listener. This is due to the uniqueness of her knowledge, spatial location, sense-perceptions, memories, and so on. Russell admits that this creates a disadvantageous ambiguity to the words we use. "If you were to insist on language which was unambiguous", writes Russell, "you would be unable to tell people at home what you had seen in foreign parts". (LK, p. 196) As a consequence of the extremity of his position, Russell paints himself into a corner:

A logically-perfect language ... would be very largely private to one speaker. That is to say, all the names that it would use would be private to the speaker and could not enter into the language of another speaker. (LK, p. 198)

It becomes virtually impossible for a listener to pinpoint the proper name used by a speaker and give it the same meaning and significance as intended.

Words could hardly mean the same thing on one occasion as on the next - with the passing of time, a proper name would fail to signify the same thing. In fact, there is no particular entity that it would name, but merely a set of qualities, relations, impressions, etc. that would constitute the "knowledge" (by acquaintance) on the part of the speaker. In this manner, a proper name acts as an abbreviation.

With the demand for acquaintance, in addition to the vacillation of the meaning of a proper name from one moment to the next, Russell's position seems increasingly extreme. Because the elements of acquaintance are apt to change, that which the name is an abbreviation of similarly alters. The entire issue is compounded by Russell's claim that, "A particular, as a rule, is apt to last for a very short time indeed" (LK, p. 203), not to mention his assertion that a proper name "does not mean the same thing to the speaker and to the hearer". (LK, p. 201) At this point, we are faced with the issue of privacy, for "It does not appear probable that two men ever both perceive at the same time any one sensible object ... there will always be some difference ..." (M&L, p. 138) This problem of proper names hits the Unnamable square on the head. He wrestles with the issue of his own name and those of others. As for himself, he realizes that, "... there is no name for me, no pronoun for me, all the trouble comes from that ..." (U, p. 404).

This has further significance for all the characters - Worm, for example. The Unnamable observes that, "... Worm, what can I say of

Worm, who hasn't the wit to make himself plain, what to still this gnawing of termites in my Punch and Judy box, what that might not just as well be said the other?" (U, p. 319) The names overlap in his mind: "Worm, I nearly said Watt ..." (U, p. 339) And again, "I knew I had only to try and talk of Worm to begin talking of Mahood". (U, p. 339) Worm's name seems unable to fit any application: the reference appears to be missing. The proper name eludes the grasp. The linguistic feeler dropped from the name onto the world clutches in vain.

There is just too much flux between word and correspondent. Even as a description, the name creates problems. However, Russell's suggestion of a series or class inherent in his notion of name-as-description seems to apply to the literary expression of the problem as it is raised in The Unnamable.

The problem seems to relate as much to the other characters of the novel as it does to Worm. Look at Mahood. Mahood is confused with Worm to such an extent that it is a matter for debate where one character ends and the other begins. The distinction is nearly impossible to draw, with the result that these vagaries of distinction create much of the force behind the suggestion that the novel is more the Unreadable than The Unnamable.⁵ Does Mahood cease to be when the character gets situated inside a jar, outside the chop-house? Or is it when the character has become "entirely enclosed"? Or possibly in the transition, that realm between one state and another, that Mahood reaches his demise? Yet another possibility is that Mahood never ceases

⁵See, for example, A. Alvarez, Samuel Beckett, ed. Frank Kermode, Modern Masters Series, (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), p. 63.

to be, but rather the fault is in the correspondence between the name and its reference. That is, one loses hold of the other and the two float apart, adrift in a linguistic void, like objects forever lost in space until some black hole sucks them in.

And it doesn't even stop there. The Unnamable also suffers the confusion with Mahood. Here too, identities overlap, collide and act to disperse modes of locating the references. Name slides away from object. Or worse. Perhaps it's not even a one-to-one-function any more. The Unnamable wonders early in the novel whether he can distinguish himself from Mahood, whether Mahood's name might also be his own, at least in part. In one instance he questions whether he should not just admit that, "... I am Mahood after all and these stories of a being whose identity he usurps ..." (U, p. 311) Shortly thereafter, he pulls back from a position of total agreement between 'Mahood' as name and himself as referent. Instead, he wonders if he should not see the issue in light of temporal duration. Mahood might even be considered the name of an aspect of himself, a role he played, a character he was ostrived to be, but has since relinquished. "Mahood ... I've been he an instant, ... I say an instant, perhaps it was years." (U, p. 316)

Uncertainty overtakes him. The Unnamable is unclear about the applicability of the name 'Mahood' to his own personage, although he suggests and frequently implies a definite connection. Furthermore, he questions the applicability of the name 'Mahood' to the character intended as its referent. This character simply does not seem to possess the requisite reality, that dimension of humanity which consti-

tutes the uniqueness and liveliness of a specific individual, for whom 'Mahood' is the name.

In other words, the Unnamable finds reason to doubt that 'Mahood' has a corresponding human referent. He seems more like a cardboard figure, a stereotype. "... it's Mahood, this caricature is he", offers the Unnamable in a moment of frustration at the course the investigation has begun to take. (U, p. 315) It is as if Mahood were hollow, a role that different persons could assume, or a part to be played, instead of the name of an individual with head, heart, entrails, not to mention thoughts, feelings, beliefs. The Unnamable turns upon this idea of Mahood being a caricature and demands, "Here, in my domain, what is Mahood doing in my domain, and how does he get here?" (U, p. 315)

It is the latter question that is most frightening. How does he get here? Until an acceptable answer can be found, there is little hope of ousting the character of Mahood or of preventing him from closing in, or impinging, on the Unnamable's character in the future. This may present a consequence to the sort of analysis Wittgenstein and Russell offered in their logical atomism, particularly as it refers to the role of the subject. For Russell enters the discussion with a building-block mentality,

- with talk of series of class of description (LK, pp. 191, 200-201)
- which pertain to a proper name (LK, p. 191)
- that, in turn, points to one individual (M&L, p. 216)
- who, by virtue of the adequacy of the correspondence, fits the description (LK, pp. 200-201, M&L, pp. 216-217)

- and can, thereby, be understood to be the person whose name is uttered (LK, p. 201, M&L, p. 217)

and if we permit this manner of analysis from the outset, we have thereby allowed a peculiar approach to the notion of a person to be rolled out and, upon which, all further discussion stands. Once this reaches the literary expression Beckett undertakes in The Unnamable, it is no far cry to speak in terms of caricatures.

Can we accept the proper name as "really abbreviation for descriptions", as Russell contends? (LK, p. 200) And the referents not particulars, "but complicated systems of classes or series"? (LK, p. 200) May we further stipulate that names can only be employed when the referent is known, through acquaintance, actual and experiential, by the speaker? It is no wonder that the marriage of name and self falls into a mire of caricature in The Unnamable.

Of course, the logical atomists were only undertaking a theoretical inquiry. Possibly Russell's discussion of proper names was intended to lie at the periphery of a logical investigation into the nature of the ideal language which would provide a description of the structural aspects of the world. That the inquiry ran into quicksand on the issue of proper names should not be surprising, particularly when subjectivity was ruled out of the ideal language. If he could only have placed the subject in the bleachers, far removed from the arena of discussion, then Russell's investigation might have been less problematic. However, as soon as we focus upon these periphery-bound subjects, especially with regard to the status of proper names in any ideal language, certain problems become evident.

In The Unnamable, the discussion shows the kind of confusion that results from trying to apply the proper name to its referent. The central character asserts unnamability and avoids the problem by default. All others slip and slide amidst a nominalist mudpie. Their names not only fail to stick, they have the rather eerie characteristic of attaching themselves to other subjects, at least for a time, until, once again under scrutiny, they fall off and reach out for another "abbreviation for description". Because of this, the Unnamable confuses Watt with Worm, Worm with Mahood, Mahood with Basil, and his own characterization with all others. As well, he considers his own thoughts accessible to Malone, who, in turn, gets confused with Murphy and Molloy. And so on.

It seems endless and it probably is, at least within the framework of the novel. The "abbreviations for descriptions" do not suffice to label the particular. They slip off and the particular escapes definition. The knowledge by acquaintance itself seems dubious, hard to prove, impossible to substantiate. They cannot trust their own perception. There seems little, if any, veracity in their sense experience. And their own positions as objects of acquaintance seems to disintegrate into a confusion.

This was seen in the text with the case of Mahood-Worm, whose own validity was questioned when the proprietress, Madeleine-Marguerite, herself of uncertain name, gets overly solicitous, checking in on him far too often for comfort - as if there is now cause to doubt his existence. Once the character realizes that his certainty as an object of acquaintance is questionable, he has reason to fear for his existence

and a justifiable paranoia sets in. This gets expressed in the following situation within the novel. Outside a restaurant and inside a jar, the character Mahood-Worm, limbless and senses failed or failing, seeks the reassurance which would testify to his existence. Any attention would suffice at this point.

And I for my part have no longer the least desire to leave this world, ... without some kind of assurance that I was really there, such as a kick in the arse, for example, or a kiss, the nature of the attention is of little importance, provided I cannot be suspected of being its author. (U, p. 342)

But his social world is minimal. The passers-by give him no recognition, no acknowledgement that he presides over the menu at which they are staring and the only person for whom he might qualify as an "object of acquaintance" is not credible as a witness.

Her attentions do not sufficiently attest to his presence, they fail to convince the character of his substantiality. He is drowning in doubt. The existing evidence is unallowable, "highly subject to caution", as the character asserts, because of what appears to be a mounting cause for suspicion. Earlier the occasional appearance of the woman to empty the sawdust, place or remove a tarpaulin, as weather necessitated, would certify his existence by virtue of the attention paid. Now there is cause for worry. An alteration has taken place. Instead of the weekly visit, the proprietress now lavishes her attention on him, looks in far in excess of need.

No, there is no getting away from it, this woman is losing faith in me. And she is trying to put off the moment when she must finally confess her error by coming every few minutes to see if I am still more or less imaginable in situ. (U, p. 343)

As the doubts surface, there is a proportionate withdrawal (and dis-

appearance) of the character. "That the jar is really standing, where they say, all right, I wouldn't dream of denying it", he informs us, "... I merely doubt that I am in it." (U, p. 343) The character fades as the credibility of his only witness is brought into question. The ensuing doubts topple the edifice, with all the inevitable literary consequences. In the absence of a perceiver, there is no acquaintance-ship. The character subsides with the rising doubts.

Fade out, fade in. Mahood ends and Worm begins. With that, we move from a character inside a jar to one completely enclosed. This character, the final manifestation, Worm, is referred to as the "anti-Mahood". He has reached a level of minimal physical attributes, with no capacity for mobility or action. Furthermore, there is no capacity for self recognition by means of sense-perception. His only testimony must come from outside him, from others:

His senses tell him nothing, nothing about himself, nothing about the rest, and this distinction is beyond him. Feeling nothing, knowing nothing, he exists nevertheless, but not for himself, for others, others conceive him and say, Worm is, since we conceive him ... (U, p. 346)

This character seems to be the zero-point of subjectivity, where the only acknowledgement of a metaphysical subject can come from others, for whom he can, at best, be an object of acquaintance. By Russell's analysis, a proper name "seldom means the same thing two moments running", i.e., the lapse of time directly affects the meaning and, hence, the use of names. The Unnamable's response, apropos himself, is that "I'm three seconds long". His own identity suffers at the hands of time. Duration takes its toll, as shown in the Basil-Mahood-Worm confusion. The concern with the character's identity stems from the basic

problem of continuity over time. If a name rarely means the same thing two minutes running, then one's own name, one's own linguistic identity is brought to the rack.

Consequently, one cannot speak of oneself in the same way, as the same person, without an accompanying discomfort and incredulity over even the slightest temporal alteration. At least the Unnamable reacts in this fashion, carrying out the implications of Russell's program for arriving at the logically perfect language. Unfortunately, the perfect language, logically speaking, has no room for persons, in the linguistic guise of the proper name. Proper names simply cause too many problems, their removal is mandatory lest the world's structure fail to be described. What happens, then, is that, having pursued Russell's program and seen its consequences in the characterization of the novel, we have circled back to a Wittgensteinian picture. Weary now, though, from the search for an alternative. The Unnamable does not appear to be overly concerned with describing any world structure, his obsession is with the subject's place, yes at the "limits of language", however frustrating that might be.

He looks for the metaphysical subject in the world, but cannot find it; it is the one thing missing. He tries to assign a name, or names, but does not succeed. Names fail to stick to the possible referent(s). He hopes for a knowledge by acquaintance, his own or another's, but his own is dubious and that of others lacks credibility. There is too much room for uncertainty. In addition, the discontinuity over time fosters doubts, and not only for the personal identity of the character-subject. In linguistic terms, the discontinuity undermines

the whole matter of a coherent use of names from one moment to the next.

We would still fall short, even if a person were able to slap on a label (or a name) for differing aspects (or personae). Even if we spoke, in Russellian terms, of these name-labels as elements of the class which constitutes the description for which the name is an abbreviation, we would still fail, if for no other reason than duration. Any tabulation of names sufficing to identify the characters or the characterizations of a person could never be definitive. Time would require additions. As Russell notes,

The real man, too, I believe, however the police may swear to his identity, is really a series of momentary men, each different one from the other, and bound together, not by a numerical identity, but by continuity and certain intrinsic laws. (M&L, p. 129)

For that matter, the future, even three seconds hence, would lack recognition of any form of description or class thereof. This seems to indicate the sort of discomfort which afflicts Russell when he tries to come to terms with proper names or their theoretical status. Thus, it is not surprising that the curious problem of proper names and the unbearable complications lead Russell to metaphysical disgust.⁶ The upshot of this is that Russell must completely expel them from the logically perfect language. Too deviant for a well-behaved language, proper names simply have to be cast out, in the hope that something more palatable, less problematic, can be discovered.

⁶See LK, pp. 200-202. Russell believes that proper names are simply too imprecise. For instance, "We are not acquainted with Socrates, therefore cannot name him.... That makes it very difficult to get any instance of a name at all in the proper strict logical sense of the word." (LK, p. 201)

In their place, we are offered the more ambiguous 'this' and 'that', under Russell's assurance that "One can use 'this' as a name to stand for a particular with which one is acquainted at the moment". (LK, p. 201) Lest we think the cost of such radical surgery too high, we are dutifully assured that 'this' will remove that sticky mess caused by proper names.

Mind you, although some of the problems inherent in the use of proper names are alleviated, we have yet to overcome the one posed by duration. 'This' doesn't quite answer that. In fact, it seems that the only way Russell sees out of the dilemma is speed: if we manage to talk fast enough, we may be able to make a statement with the referent still within the grasp of the 'this' or 'that'.

Russell elaborates in the following question-and-answer in the logical atomism lectures:

QUESTION: If the proper name of a thing, a 'this', varies from instant to instant, how is it possible to make any argument?

MR. RUSSELL: You can keep 'this' going for about a minute or two. I made that dot and talked about it for some little time. I mean it varies often. If you argue quickly, you can get some little way before it is finished: I think things last for a finite time, a matter of some seconds or minutes or whatever it may happen to be. (LK, p. 203)

Propped up only by seconds, 'this' cannot stand through a conversation. The result over time is that the limit of our function goes to zero and language becomes calculus, with the variable (the analogy of the subject) forced through a transformation to oblivion. It makes sense that a language constructed upon a mathematical model would arrive at such a solution - for it not only wrestles down the most stubborn

variable and makes it ordered, hence controllable, it carries it one step further, to the safest logical extreme - by forcing it to zero, or to some constant.

It is not necessarily abhorrent, either. If we can see it from the standpoint of a mathematical aesthetic, it is a move that had to be made were we to truly honor the construct of logical atomism, especially as detailed by Russell, who tried the hardest to iron out the specifics. Regardless of any disgruntlement we might feel about sweeping them under the rug, or to the "limits of language", it is hard to offer an alternate handling of the metaphysical subject and of proper names in a logically perfect language. Within the concept of the logically perfect, there must be nothing unaccounted for, nothing for which symbolism does not make sense and the properties of which cannot be used in an axiomatic way. The structure and methodology won't permit anything else. Wittgenstein knew this, as he later expressed in his Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics, where he looked at Frege's reactions to contradictions in his theory; and Wittgenstein wondered if Frege needed to have been so devastated.⁷ But he was, as he logically should have been.

Frege aside, Wittgenstein's musings indicate something crucial. Namely, mathematical order demands subservience to the structure. This means that there is no room for contradictions within the theory itself and there is a set procedure for handling problems. We avoid division

⁷Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics, eds. G.H. von Wright, R. Rhees, G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, first paperback edition, June 1967), p. 171. Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, abbreviated as R.

by zero by saying it is "undefined" and thereby setting the ghost to rest. Similarly, a system which patterns itself after mathematics would treat problem areas in an analogous way to those of the prototype system. And since one of the biggest structural problems in devising a logically perfect language is assigning a role to subjects and their linguistic representatives, i.e., names, we should hardly be surprised that proper names are treated as undefinable or treated as if they were a limit problem. They are a limit problem. Wittgenstein says it and Russell shows it. And Beckett illustrates it by literary fiat. The limit of the subject as the character approaches Worm is Zero. Nothing is left to the character and the only value it has is assigned to it by the analyses of others.

I wonder what the chat is about at the moment. Worm, presumably, Mahood being abandoned. And I await my turn. Yes indeed, I do not despair, all things considered, of drawing their attention to my case, some fine day.
(U, p. 375)

... it's my turn, I too have the right to be shown impossible. (U, p. 375)

One must start out with error and convert it into truth.

That is, one must reveal the source of error, otherwise hearing the truth won't do any good. The truth cannot force its way in when something else is occupying its place.

To convince someone of the truth, it is not enough to state it, but rather one must find the path from error to truth.

I must plunge into the water of doubt again and again.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

CHAPTER IV

WITTGENSTEIN'S LATER DISCUSSIONS

ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Much of Wittgenstein's later discussions concerning language focusses upon correcting attempts philosophers, himself included, had made into the nature of language and the world, and thereby rescuing language from the level of the abstract, or theoretical, in order to bring it back to the level of the real.

Wittgenstein came to regard earlier work, epitomized by the Tractatus, as directed towards a set goal, namely the construction of a theory about language and the world which aimed at unveiling essences by means of explanatory analyses and restrictions upon language. He and Russell had thought that conventions, rules and prescriptions could be employed to build a logically perfect language. Wittgenstein considers the sorts of errors and misguided views that were operating in the logical atomist theory, in the hopes of overcoming the problems that subsequently arose. The investigation he undertakes demonstrates the limitations of the rigid methodology of atomism and suggests a mode of release against getting trapped, as did he and Russell, by conventions. Both his focus and methods of discussion suggest a way of preventing philosophical quests from getting locked inside their own conceptual frameworks. Against the background of these concerns, Wittgenstein's later investigations into the philosophy of language take place.

This section offers a look into the ancient city of language, which Wittgenstein reveals to us by means of extensive discussions upon the diverse areas of language, including its relationship with the world. Like a city, with its suburbs and boroughs, there are many different branches and correlated areas of Wittgenstein's investigations. His writings exemplify the distaste he feels for a theoretical system by a rejection of conventional philosophical discourse for an inquiry that proceeds by an overlapping of questions, descriptions, examples, contrasts, and analogies. Because he has avoided a formal approach, Wittgenstein is able to explore many different routes and lay open for our consideration numerous aspects of issues touching upon language and meaning.

Owing to the nature of Wittgenstein's style and the overall focus of his work, no exposition could be inclusive; but we can obtain a good aerial view of his philosophy of language. To do this we will examine some of his crucial concepts and concerns, which are so intertwined and interrelated that a general understanding of both the topics and the mode by which they are expressed should provide us with a firm sense of what the inquiry involves. The intent is to touch upon the major elements of Wittgenstein's later investigations, in order to understand how his view of language differs from that in his earlier work. First, then, we turn to Wittgenstein. Only later, in the fifth chapter, will we utilize, among those elements mentioned here, those which have literary applications. The following areas will be the object of this chapter's study: Wittgenstein's focus and method of approach; his rejection of both the main tenets and doctrinal characteristics of logical atomism;

the concepts of "language-games" and "family resemblances"; Wittgenstein's theory of 'meaning' as 'use'; the role and application of rules and criteria; and the denial of a private language. When possible, other relevant topics will be mentioned.

Wittgenstein's descriptive methodology, his vital concepts of "language-games" and "family resemblances", as well as their implications for understanding our relationship to language, will be utilized in the next chapter. There we will examine The Unnamable's structure and the way in which it reflects considerations raised within the text by the character's own philosophical inquiry. Let us now turn to Wittgenstein, who, sounding like the Unnamable, writes:

It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways.

For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed complete clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should completely disappear.

The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.- The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question.- Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off.- Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a single problem. (PI, 133)

Wittgenstein wants his inquiry to show us how to break through boundaries formed by dogmatic theories, with their outworn assumptions and ways of talking about language. Wittgenstein considers such investigations into the essence, or nature, of language as threadbare and presumptuous, and he endeavours to show this by making frequent reference to his earlier work. The errors and misinclinations of the atomist period provide a target for attacks launched throughout all of Wittgenstein's later works. Philosophers, he reasons, were too caught up in

a process which approached language as if it were an alien entity with only a few, rigidly discernable aspects. This view entails a host of problems, which his work now intends to confront. "What we do, he asserts, "is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use". (PI, 116)

We will be able to see, as a result of the examination in this chapter, the extent to which the context of viewing language has broadened since the logical atomist theory, when, as we saw in the previous two chapters, its focus was narrow and goal-oriented (i.e., to construct an ideal language). His philosophical position on language radically changed in his later work, as he came to see that his earlier obsessions had lead him into a mathematically-inclined mold which tried to apply certain aspects of language while ignoring or denying the numerous other aspects and applications. At the final stages of his philosophical development, however, Wittgenstein perceives language to be inseparable from forms of life. As he told Malcolm, "An expression has meaning only in the stream of life", which would indicate his critical attitude towards the atomist theoretical machine.¹ The logical atomists had taken language from its roots in ordinary living and put it onto a hypothetical, abstract level with questionable links to the language of everyday. Philosophical problems arise, Wittgenstein comes to realize, when "language goes on holiday". (PI, 38) Language is a fact of human life and, consequently, to analyze language as if it were detached from the activities of which it is a part would be to take the

¹Norman Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 93.

philosopher on a roller-coaster ride of his own making.

Logical atomism symbolizes what happens when language is pulled away from the context of everyday and forced into essence-seeking employment. All the talk of 'essence' within logical atomism illustrates more about the need for conventions than about the nature of language, Wittgenstein suggests. As he contends, "to the depth that we see in the essence there corresponds the deep need for the convention". (R, p. 23) Russell and Wittgenstein had allowed the conventions to assume control over the operation of the mechanism, with the result that it began moving under its own steam, so to speak, forcing out of the way anything that did not fit into the confines of the theory.

It is possible of course to operate with figures mechanically, just as it is possible to speak like a parrot: but that hardly deserves the name of thought. It only becomes possible at all after the mathematical notation has, as a result of genuine thought, been so developed that it does the thinking for us, so to speak.²

The laws of logic are indeed the expression of 'thinking habits' but also of the habit of thinking. That is to say they can be said to shew: how human beings think, and also what human beings call "thinking". (R, p. 41)

Logical notation, mathematical notation, and philosophical notation have all been developed to do "the thinking for us", to the extent that deviation from the habitual mode requires awareness and detachment. Habits of thinking are so firmly embedded in (realms of) thought and discourse that we risk being oblivious to their strength and rigidity. This is one of the problems with the vision of the logical atomists: various philosophical conventions (habits of thinking) lay the ground-

² Gottlob Frege. Foundations of Arithmetic, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), p. iv.

work for their enterprise and set an entire process into motion. The logical atomists were overwhelmed, as he came to see later, by the strength of their conventions. "By being educated in a technique, we are also educated to have a way of looking at the matter which is just as firmly rooted as that technique." (R, p. 124)

Wittgenstein wants to confront that rootedness in conventional techniques, by means of a methodology which emphasizes description over explanation and by a philosophical investigation which would raise questions, rather than suggest answers. He is nihilistic to the degree that would be necessary to stop the old boards from weakening the foundation for the new inquiry. "What we are destroying", Wittgenstein expresses, "is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand." (PI, 118)

Wittgenstein's intention is to replace the old quest for depth, the dredging of essences, for a survey of what is before us, the familiar, the ordinary. He contended that depths are illusory, or disguised nonsense, suggesting that we focus instead upon what is already there, before us. "... it is, rather, of the essence of our investigation that we do not seek to learn anything new by it." (PI, 89) His constant questioning of conventions involves that, "... first and foremost do the simplest thing ..." (R, p. 116) Take nothing for granted, allow no one thing to be inscrutable, keep in mind that "The motto here is: Take a wider look round". (R, p. 54) Come out of the ozone of the metaphysical into the atmosphere of the everyday. Pears contrasts Wittgenstein's position in his later works with his earlier one and notes that,

... when he rejected the essentialist theory of the Tractatus, he was at the same time doing something much more general. He was abandoning the old, high, a priori investigation and starting something quite different in its place, an investigation of the human phenomena of language which would be empirical, pedestrian, and even homely.³

Wittgenstein's attack on the doctrines of the atomists far-reaching and forceful, sparing no mercy for himself as one of its authors. Some of the crucial concepts were hit broadside in the Philosophical Investigations, as he calls into question the notion of 'simples' and 'composite' facts or states of affairs, the picture theory of language, the use of rules, and the very enterprise of pursuing a logically perfect language. His later works constitute a strong reaction to stances such as those held by the logical atomists - so much so that it would be difficult to grasp the significance of his later work without some familiarity with the theory and procedures of this earlier period. It is seen as fundamental that we recognize the "grave mistakes" of the Tractatus in order to realize the significance of his later work, for he himself declares that "... the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking". (PI, p. x) With that in mind, let us briefly turn to a consideration of what he now considers to be among the grave errors of the search for the ideal language which had so obsessed him and Russell.

As mentioned previously in the chapter on logical atomism, Wittgenstein traces the idea of 'simples' back to Plato's

³ David Pears, Wittgenstein, (London: Fontana/Collins, 1971), p. 107.

Theaetetus.⁴ (PI, 46) However interesting this notion may be in the abstract, it becomes absurd when we attempt to apply it to reality.

"What are the simple constituent parts of a chair?" Wittgenstein asks.

(PI, 47) "The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms?" (PI, 47) They had asserted that 'simple' means 'not composite'. However, there are many senses of 'composite' that we might utilize. "It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair'." (PI, 47)

He extends this criticism to the idea (now seen as ludicrous) that was held about "further analyzing" propositions or aspects of reality, driving his point home with an example:

When I say: "My broom is in the corner", - is this really a statement about the broomstick and the brush? Well, it could at any rate be replaced by a statement giving the position of the stick and the position of the brush. And this statement is surely a further analysed form of the first one. - But why do I call it "further analysed"? - ... Suppose that, instead of saying "Bring me the broom", you said, "Bring me the broomstick and the brush which is fitted on to it." - Isn't the answer: "Do you want the broom? Why do you put it so oddly?" - Is he going to understand the further analysed sentence better? - This sentence, one might say, achieves the same as the ordinary one, but in a more roundabout way. - (PI, 60)

This example shows the extent to which Wittgenstein had come to see the procedure of breaking things into ever-smaller parts - the search for the atomistic simple at the root of every composite - was misguided. It had attempted to unveil essential structures or essential states at any price: but the price is too high and the purchase is of questionable worth, he now implies. By ignoring the familiar structures and the everyday uses of language, he had been carried off by a strangely-

⁴ See pages 82-83 and 113, above.

operated vehicle into peculiar territory. To deliberately overlook the varying roles and applications of our words, sentences, etc. seems destined to lead to problems. What he and Russell had done was to lose sight of the fact that all along they had been cultivating one point of view, with a specific angle of interpretation and limited applicability. "A main cause of philosophical disease - a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example." (PI, 593)

The "grave mistakes" that accompanied logical atomism illustrate for Wittgenstein how unhealthy the matter had become. A one-sided position had fixed their thinking and deceived them about the use they were making of various terms. They had taken concepts away from their ordinary use and placed them into particular roles, without the clarity of how extreme was their enterprise. For instance, 'simple' and 'composite' were treated as if they had only one function; whereas, in fact, there are many functions and various senses pertaining to each term. Wittgenstein observes that,

We use the word "composite" (and therefore the word "simple") in an enormous number of different and differently related ways. (Is the colour of a square on a chessboard simple, or does it consist of pure white and pure yellow? And is white simple, or does it consist of the colours of the rainbow? - Is this length of 2 cm. simple, or does it consist of two parts, each 1 cm. long? But why not of one bit 3 cm. long, and one bit 1 cm. long measured in the opposite direction?) (PI, 47)

In terms of what Wittgenstein advocates, the best thing to do when confronted with questions of this kind is not to offer an answer, but to reject the question altogether.

For similar reasons, Wittgenstein rejects Russell's idea of replacing names with definite descriptions, contending that there is not

one description, there are many that could be found. In addition, to make a statement about an individual need not entail a readiness to substitute some description in place of the name, since there is rarely any fixed or unequivocal use of a given name. (cf. PI, 79)

This criticism can be brought to bear on the picture theory held by the early Wittgenstein, for, once again, a specific use and set procedure had been decided upon to carry out the idea. There may be some picture that corresponds to the use of a term and, indeed, there may be some method of projection that the picture itself may be seen fit. However, there might very well be other senses or uses of the word, as well as other pictures that could be imagined. "If we compare a proposition to a picture, we must think whether we are comparing it to a portrait (a historical representation) or to a genre-picture. And both comparisons have point". (PI, 522)

Perhaps what was going on during his atomist phase, Wittgenstein suggests, was that he may have been under a psychological, not logical, compulsion to find a picture forcing a particular application on him. "What is essential is to see that the same thing can come before our minds when we hear the word and the application still be different. Has it the same meaning both times? I think we shall say not." (PI, 140) Sometimes one picture comes to mind, sometimes other pictures. There is simply no rule designating which picture(s) may be seen as fitting to a word. Our language resists such prescriptions. Indeed, "It is only in normal cases that the use of a word is clearly pre-

scribed; ..." (PI, 142)⁵

These criticisms are meant to indicate how the rigidity and rule-bound inclinations of the earlier inquiry resulted in a distorted view of language. Wittgenstein contends that language cannot be stripped of its multi-layered aspects or its interweaving concerns. Nor can it be sliced away from the reality of the human beings who give it its use and significance. Trying to make language into calculus will undoubtedly lead to a deformation of thinking. (cf. R, p. 156) Wittgenstein realizes that,

... in philosophy we often compare the use of words with games and calculi, which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language must be playing such a game. - But if you say that our languages approximate to such calculi it may look as if what we were talking about were an ideal language. As if our logic were, so to speak, a logic for a vacuum... the most that can be said is that we construct ideal languages. But here the word "ideal" is liable to mislead, for it sounds as if these languages were better, more perfect, than our everyday language; and as if it took the logician to shew people at last what a proper sentence looked like. (PI, 81)

Their mistake had been, in this regard, to think that anyone who says a sentence and means or understands it must be operating as if it were a calculus with definite rules. Wittgenstein considers a great deal more about rules than the problems faced by the logical atomists. They had erred in taking a mathematical paradigm, applying it to language, while bringing along much of its baggage - such as its orderliness, its formality and use of notation, its coherence with the structure formed by axioms, theorems, and specified modes of operation,

⁵As we will see in the next chapter, this has ramifications for The Unnamable.

and its rule orientation. The problem lay in thinking that language could be treated in the same sort of way. In that sense, as well as most others, the quest for a logically perfect language had been based upon a misunderstanding.

On the one hand it is clear that every sentence in our language 'is in order as it is'. [He is referring here to a position held in the Tractatus.] That is to say, we are not striving after an ideal, as if our ordinary vague sentences had not yet got a quite unexceptionable sense, and a perfect language awaited construction by us. - On the other hand it seems clear that where there is sense there must be perfect order. - So there must be perfect order even in the vaguest sentence. (PI, 98)

The atomists had been bewitched in viewing mathematics as a glorious edifice which our language might simulate by careful construction, so long as we use as a basis the same sort of conventions that keep mathematics in working order. However, such an enterprise is destined for futility because of inherent differences between mathematics and ordinary language. Furthermore, the attempt to enforce a value system which sees mathematics as a higher kind of language than our ordinary one is bound to create problems. Wittgenstein now realizes how misguided it had been to try to restrict language in order to attempt the construction of a logically perfect one, especially since its accompanying position on language and the world he now considered completely off base.

A more worthwhile goal, as outlined by Wittgenstein, is not to try to change language, but to understand it as it is. He has, by now, quite thoroughly diverged from his earlier position which ignored the familiar in favor of something deep and mysterious. "I believe that the attempt to explain is certainly wrong, because one must only correctly piece together what one knows, without adding anything, and

the satisfaction being sought through the explanation follows of it-
self."⁶

Wittgenstein advocates that we approach problems in an unassuming way, as if we were seeing the landscape for the first time. Examine the elements of language anew by removing our blinders, in the form of pre-conceptions, theories, analytical fixations. Let us make the form of a philosophical problem: "I don't know my way about". (PI, 123) Proceed in the absence of "habits of thinking" so that we don't fall into the trap of not being able to see what is before us, as that would leave us tracing the outlines of our conceptual frameworks, like fingers tracing glasses, round and round.

The aspects of a thing that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity: (One is unable to notice something - because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless that fact has at some time struck him. - And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful. (PI, 129)

The method of approach to handle what is "already in plain view" (PI, 89) will be descriptive, not explanatory, Wittgenstein contends. ("Every explanation is an hypothesis."⁷) This will involve asking questions, pointing out established procedures, drawing out analogies and disanalogies, and trying to realize the many different uses of aspects of our language. Instead of proclamations, we encounter: "One would like to ask ...": "One ought to ask ..."; "Consider ..."; "How

⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough", trans. John Beversluis, in C.G. Luckhardt, ed., Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 62-63.

⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

does ..."; "When I say.... what is ..."; "The difficulty here is ..."; "Imagine ..."; and so on. With nothing hypothetical, with no givens, everything will then be subject to a probing investigation. Presumptions, presuppositions, and conventions must all be considered undesirable ways in which we alter the seeing of our world, and of language.

Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness. I want to say here that it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or to explain anything. Philosophy really is 'purely descriptive'.⁸

We need a new way of looking at the old terrain, a closer scrutiny which neither tries to imitate the scientific nor assumes anything to be certain. "Compared with the impression which the description makes on us, the explanation is too uncertain."⁹ Wittgenstein steers away from a specific method of analysis, offering, instead, a variety of methods, with the implication that others could be added in order to keep the inquiry from going stale or at all rigid. In this respect, he says, "There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies". (PI, 133) If, for example, we want to examine two concepts, say those of 'thought' and 'pain', in order to see whether they could be construed as similar or analogous, any parallel we draw would have to take into account both similarities and dissimilarities, employing examples and contrasts,

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, Harper Torchbooks, New York: Harper & Row, 1965, p. 18. Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, abbreviated as BB.

⁹ Op. cit.

before we could form any sort of conclusions.

Let us look at an instance. Wittgenstein frequently goes after concepts or ideas which we have come to take for granted. His discussion on "What is thinking?" provides us with a good example of his treatment of such an "obvious" concept. He starts by asking whether one can think without speaking, after which he inquires, "And what is thinking?". His reply follows:

Well, don't you ever think? Can't you observe yourself and see what is going on? It should be quite simple. You do not have to wait for it as for an astronomical event and then perhaps make your observation in a hurry.

Well, what does one include in 'thinking'? What has one learnt to use this word for? - If I say I have thought - need I always be right? - What kind of mistake is there room for here? (PI, 327-328)

This serves to exemplify Wittgenstein's approach. He picks up a concept (in this case 'thinking'), turns it over and about, as if it were a curious object not previously encountered, and tries to look at it from as many perspectives as possible. Asking what the uses of the term indicate, he provides catalysts for our understanding by asking further questions, making comparisons, and contrasting different uses. Through attaining clarification of the latter concerns, we manage to shed light on the initial question (in this case, what 'thinking' entails).

Wittgenstein seems to draw an analogy between this aspect of his method and that utilized by a doctor, in the sense that the doctor asks many questions and makes note of what sometimes seem to be a network of similarities and differences before offering a statement or a diagnosis. "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an

illness." (PI, 255) The treatments themselves diverge, however, because it is "... possible for the sickness of philosophical problems to get cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life, not through a medicine invented by an individual". (R, p. 57) For philosophical problems to be resolved, it may be necessary to omit established techniques completely and, consequently, to try out new methods, further modes of clarification, or raise more questions.

Fann considers Wittgenstein's philosophical therapy to be similar to psychotherapy: both seek the cause of the illness, both seek to get rid of the illness, and both wish to restore the patient's sanity.¹⁰ Following Wittgenstein's lead, we should be aware of some disanalogies that Fann fails to cite. Specifically, the psychoanalyst seeks to delve, or get the patient to delve, into his past and uncover repressed thoughts and feelings. By bringing them into the open and having the patient examine them, the psychoanalyst hopes to restore the patient to sanity. This differs from Wittgenstein's approach, since Wittgenstein does not recommend that we delve into sublimated or buried causes of philosophical problems. Indeed, this very aspect of probing for repressed thoughts would most likely be discouraged by Wittgenstein as a method of handling philosophical issues, since it is all too common in traditional ways of doing philosophy (and we know what sort of problems that created!). He gives us a warning:

... it is easy to get into that dead-end in philosophy, where one believes that the difficulty of the task consists in our having to describe phenomena that are hard

¹⁰ K. T. Fann, Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 72.

to get hold of, the present experience that slips quickly by, or something of the kind. (PI, 436)

Furthermore, Wittgenstein emphasizes that the investigation is into something which is an active part of life: the language we use is not to be approached as if it were a static body of inert expressions which get manipulated according to a rigid structure of rules. He likens language to a game and speaks of different "language-games" overlapping and intertwined with one another. And just as there are many types of games, with varying degrees of similarities and differences, so too are there many sorts of language games. The concept of a language game is crucial to the later Wittgenstein and receives considerable attention throughout his works.

Wittgenstein frequently speaks of language games, developing and modifying the concept in his discussions. Initially, he refers to language games as primitive forms of language, or as primitive languages. (See PI, 7 and 23) As such, these are ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our dense and complex ordinary language. For instance, "Language games are the forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words". (BB, p. 17) Ostensive teaching of words represents one language game used with children in language training. Furthermore, we can think of the whole process of playing word games, naming stones, games of word repetition, etc., as language games. Wittgenstein indicates that the concept is to include the language, as well as the actions into which it is woven. (cf., PI, 7)

The idea of a language game as a complete language system gets broadened later to include a specific form of language within the con-

text of a language system; as, for example, technical languages would represent. (See BB, p. 81) Since our language is so incredibly complicated and multi-dimensional, the ability to narrow our focus, by employing the notion of 'language-games' can be highly beneficial. This advantage is explained by Wittgenstein as follows:

If we want to study the problems of truth and falsehood, of the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality, of the nature of assertion, assumption, and question, we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language in which these forms of thinking appear without the confusing background of highly complicated processes of thought. When we look at such simple forms of language the mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. (BB, p. 17)

Wittgenstein offers many examples of language games (see PI, 23, 27, 288, 654), some of which are: giving or obeying orders, providing a description, play-acting, making up or telling a joke, solving arithmetic problems, translating languages. The list could go on and on. Not only do games like "ring-a-ring-a-roses" fall under the heading 'language-game', but, Wittgenstein asserts further, "I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the 'language-game'". (PI, 7)

Wittgenstein points to the game of chess as being like a language game, with the words like chess pieces. Analogous to chess, language games have rules which are applicable, but only to the extent that they act as a general structure, within which numerous very different sorts of moves can be made. The rules are complex, though fairly flexible, with the speaker (player) having an active role in the manner in which words (pieces) are used and rules applied. Someone who has acquired facility with the language (like chess) can operate in such a

way and with a sufficient number of moves that the game itself is actually added to, or expanded. "To understand a sentence", Wittgenstein writes, "means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique". (PI, 199) The degree of facility can be as developed, in its way, as that of a chess-master.

As Kenny notes,¹¹ Wittgenstein's once favorite expression 'calculus' has been replaced, in the transition to his new view of language, by the term 'game'. This shift symbolizes Wittgenstein's turn away from an approach trying to emulate the rigidity and "crystalline purity" of calculus to one which sees language as a part of human activity, where the model comes under the less-structured and more diverse heading of 'games'. Even the most demanding of games is not strictly rule-bound, however much there may exist general rules for making moves, scoring, challenging an opponent, etc.

One might say that the concept 'game' is a concept with blurred edges. - "But is a blurred concept a concept at all?" - Is an indistinct photograph a picture of a person at all? Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one often exactly what we need? (PI, 71)

These comments point to one of the troubles with the logical atomists: they demanded too much sharpness in their concepts, and narrowed their focus in a detrimental way. The denotative theory of meaning, with its stencil view of names and objects, along with its accompanying picture theory, simply had to go. In its place was offered something blurred, but for a purpose; viz., to handle those very areas

¹¹ Anthony Kenny, Wittgenstein, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 162.

that the atomist theory could not deal with. In that respect, Wittgenstein may have substituted blurred concepts for brittle ones, but the very aspect of being slightly ambiguous was considered advantageous. The elements of language which the atomists had to sweep under the rug, because of the problems created by their presence, could not be examined.

At this point, it should be apparent just how much has been chipped-away from the theory of language held in Wittgenstein's early work. As he broadens his view beyond logic (and the logically perfect language), his philosophical inquiry extends to other disciplines (and to other aspects of language). He acknowledges these changes when he says,

We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another. - But what becomes of logic now? Its rigour seems to be giving way here. (PI, 108)

As the rigour gives way, language comes to be accepted as an activity that is inherently a part of our lives.

We can also look at it as an instrument and its concepts as instruments which we employ. (PI, 569) Sometimes we may think of language as playing a specific role or having a particular application and, likewise, we may think of concepts as having a prescribed employment. Like instruments, however, aspects of language, such as concepts, may have, not just one, but a whole range of functions, and prescriptions may have only limited value.

Language does not appear to have the simple structure that Wittgenstein once envisaged. The diversity of language games and the

varying realms of applications to many types of discourse indicate a complex network of interwoven elements. And there does not seem to be any common element which is threaded through all the language games that constitute our language. Indeed, we might say of language games that "... they are related to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all 'language'". (PI, 65) Wittgenstein compares all the different sorts of games - board games, card games, ball games, etc. - and remarks that, if we look at the class of games, "... we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: Sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail". (PI, 66)

Wittgenstein pursues the similarity with games to develop his idea of "family resemblances", a concept which, in turn, is correlated to language games. Speaking of the complex web of similarities and dissimilarities running through members of a family, he notes that, as with a family, games are characterized by certain family resemblances. "I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. - And I shall say: 'games' form a family." (PI, 67) Here this in common, there another thing, with traces of this and that interconnecting the various members and identifying them all as members of the family. As with games, so too with language games. Like threads of a rope, there is a continuous overlapping of fibers and, with respect to language, a

continual overlapping of language games with common threads running from one to another. This concept is even extended to individual words, as indicated by Wittgenstein's comments: "How did we learn the meaning of this word ('good' for instance)? From what sort of examples? In what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings." (PI, 77)

One of the principal means of tracing the relationships between elements of language is to examine the way in which the term is used. This led Wittgenstein to a significant claim whereby the meaning of a word, in the majority of cases, is to be ascertained by looking at its use or uses in our language. (See PI, 43) With sweeping ramifications, this view brushes aside the denotative theories of meaning found in philosophers from Plato to the early Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein now wishes to dispel the view that a word's meaning can be strictly defined, as if from a table of data or by means of specified rules. In its place, we are told to look for the meaning of a word in the context of its everyday use. "The use of the word in practice is its meaning." (BB, p. 69) Furthermore we cannot say that a word has a given meaning if it is never used.

The meaning of a phrase for us is characterized by the use we make of it. The meaning is not a mental accompaniment to the expression. Therefore the phrase "I think I mean something by it", or "I'm sure I mean something by it", which we so often hear in philosophical discussions to justify the use of an expression is for us no justification at all. We ask: "What do you mean?", i.e., "How do you use this expression?" ... I want to play chess, and a man gives the white king a paper crown, leaving the use of the piece unaltered, but telling me that the crown has a meaning to him in the game, which he can't express by rules. I say: "as long as it doesn't alter the use of the piece, it hasn't what I call a meaning". (BB, p. 65)

Think of words, Wittgenstein suggests, as instruments characterized by their use. Think of the use of a hammer, the use of a chisel, the use of a square. (See BB, pp. 65-67) "Look at the sentence as an instrument, and at its sense as its employment." (PI, 421) Kenny discusses this metaphor and argues that - since tools work on the world in isolation, whereas words must be, on the whole, put together in sentences to affect the world - it would have been more helpful if Wittgenstein had said that in our language we have a kit for assembling tools rather than a tool-bag.¹²

Words come to life as we employ them to express our thoughts, convey our suspicions and doubts, deny or affirm statements, write documents or create poetry, conduct anthropological studies or undertake philosophical investigations. "Every sign by itself seems dead. What gives it life? - In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there? - Or is the use its life?" (PI, 432) There are no rules to prescribe how our words function, no method to ascertain meanings in order for us to grasp the use or significance of a term. What we need to do is to look at its use and learn through our observations. Let us not forget, Wittgenstein warns us, that a word has no meaning given to it by some power independent of us and, consequently, there could be no investigation into what a word really means. The meaning of a word is given to it and, as Wittgenstein notes:

There are words with several clearly defined meanings. It is easy to tabulate these meanings. And there are words of which one might say: They are used in a thousand different ways which gradually merge into one

¹²Ibid., pp. 167-168.

another. No wonder that we can't tabulate strict rules for their use. (BB, p. 28)

Wittgenstein realizes that prejudices and preconceptions stand in the way of our learning from observing the use of an expression and, consequently, there are difficulties in trying to achieve a use-oriented description. (See PI, 383) These prejudices create a picture around the word or expression to form, so to speak, a mold which prevents us from understanding or acknowledging the fact that there are numerous possible uses. "You cannot survey the justification of an expression unless you survey its employment; which you cannot do by looking at some facet of its employment, say a picture attaching to it." (R, p. 63) This had been a problem with the logical atomists. A mold of interpretation had taken hold and caused their perspective to narrow, leading them into an inquiry which they had not properly assessed. It was "... like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off". (PI, 103)

One picture which ensnared the atomists was that of seeing names pointing, as it were, to objects in the world. Now Wittgenstein offers the following analysis:

"To mean him" means, say, "to talk of him". Not: to point to him. And if I talk of him, of course there is a connexion between my talk and him, but this connexion resides in the application of the talk, not in an act of pointing. Pointing is itself only a sign, and in the language-game it may direct the application of the sentence, and so shew what is meant.¹³

¹³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Zettel, eds., G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), section 24. Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, denoted Z, followed by the section number(s).

In addition, the logical atomists had misled themselves about the power of rules. Wittgenstein is concerned to show the nature of the mistakes made regarding the role of rules, with the intent of removing the spell under which he and Russell had fallen. To accomplish this, he sets out to demonstrate the ways in which rules do or do not prescribe how language is used. Once again pointing to games, he notes that someone may say he is playing a game and following definite rules - but aren't there also cases where we play and make up rules as we go along? Or even alter the rules as we play? (PI, 83) We mustn't get stuck, as did Wittgenstein in the Tractatus period, with seeing the application of a word as being everywhere bound by rules. As he comments in The Brown Book, "But what does it mean to follow the rule correctly? How and when is it to be decided which at a particular point is the correct step to take?" (BB, p. 142)

There is no justification for the belief that our language is rule-bound. Even though rules have significance for the employment of words and sentences, there are neither definite patterns in existence nor rigid prescriptions for language use. If we look at the applications of rules, we find much more flexibility and room for creative employment than had been previously recognized. This is just the point, Wittgenstein claims. "The rule which has been taught and is subsequently applied interests us only so far as it is involved in the application. A rule, so far as it interests us, does not act at a distance." (BB, p. 14)

In Wittgenstein's assessment, both he and Russell had been caught in their own system of rules. They did not try to describe

things by making note of the applications of rules, but rather they attempted to use rules to discuss and explain, as if the rule came first and language were secondary. This is upside-down.

The fundamental fact here is that we lay down rules, a technique, for a game, and that when we follow the rules, things do not turn out as we had assumed. That we are therefore as it were entangled in our own rules.

This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand (i.e. get a clear view of). (PI, 125)

Philosophy should not be approached as a method for resolution or for explanation, but as a procedure for putting "everything before us", and in "assembling reminders". (PI, 126, 127) By trying to set out and follow a system of rules (as it were, trying to fit language into the system and then finding it the wrong size, we try to force the one into or around the other) we run into problems and this, implies Wittgenstein, should not take us by surprise. We get entangled without having assessed, at the first indication of difficulty, where the procedure may have gone askew or been out of place. We cannot assume that the inquiry a priori makes sense.

If you use a rule to give a description, you yourself do not know more than you say. I.e. you yourself do not foresee the application that you will make of the rule in the particular case. If you say "and so on", you yourself do not know more than "and so on". (R, p. 116)

Wittgenstein introduces the concepts of 'criterion' and 'symptom' as a way of dealing with a certain philosophical problem and loosening the hold on a picture of the working of language. The latter is the idea that words are learned as well as used according to strict rules and that there exists some common element in all applications of a

general term.¹⁴ In The Blue Book, Wittgenstein indicates that he is introducing the terms 'criterion' and 'symptom', "in order to avoid certain elementary confusions" that arise out of asking questions about what is knowledge or what is expecting, and so on, while trying to find a core that fits each of the different uses. (BB, pp. 24-25)

In thinking that the use of a word could be prescribed by any given rule, that there is such a thing as defining criterion, we would have to say of a particular case that there would be evidence, a symptom, to show that the term is applicable. (See BB, p. 27) Wittgenstein's investigations, however, point to the fact that there can be no such thing as defining criterion, for we rarely use language as though it were a calculus and, subsequently, there are no clearly-set definitions for the concepts we use. We do not "... use language according to strict rules - it hasn't been taught us by means of strict rules, either". (BB, p. 25) There does not exist one criterion that would justify or prescribe the use of a word in a specific instance. For particular cases in everyday life we could find details that might be relevant to the word's application and, for this reason, we could consider behavior, thoughts, sensations, etc. to be among things Wittgenstein would count as criteria. (cf. PI, 160, 179, 354) If we try to pin down what may qualify as criteria and eliminate from our consideration anything that seems like a varying detail of a particular case,

¹⁴This view is supported by lecture remarks given to me by John Cook (to whom this section is indebted) and more fully explicated in his article, "Wittgenstein On Privacy", in Philosophical Review, Vol. LXXIV, No. 3, July 1965, pp. 281-314. Cook argues that Wittgenstein's denial of the private language argument is, simultaneously, a rejection of the Cartesian notion of the human being.

we may find that we have little left. Compare the stripping-off of artichoke leaves;

In case (162) the meaning of the word "to derive" stood out clearly. But we told ourselves that this was only a quite special case of deriving; deriving in a quite special garb, which had to be stripped from it if we wanted to see the essence of deriving. So we stripped those particular coverings off; but then deriving itself disappeared. - In order to find the real artichoke, we divested it of its leaves. For certainly (162) was a special case of deriving; what is essential to deriving, however, was not hidden beneath the surface of this case, but this 'surface' was one cause out of the family of cases of deriving.

And in the same way we also use the word "to read" for a family of cases. And in different circumstances we apply different criteria for a person's reading. (PI, 164)

If we want, therefore, to understand how a concept is used in the language game, we should look at the similarities (family resemblances) and dissimilarities running throughout the various uses we might make of the word and, afterwards, survey its application. If, however, we search for a hidden thread, the common element woven in and out of every instance of a concept's application, we risk losing sight of the concept itself. That is, we will have taken so much away that what remains will be left in confusion. Wittgenstein finds this in his questions about 'understanding':

We are trying to get hold of the mental process of understanding which seems to be hidden behind those coarser and therefore more readily visible accompaniments. But we do not succeed; or, rather, it does not get as far as a real attempt. For even supposing I had found something that happened in all those cases of understanding, - why should it be the understanding? And how can the process of understanding have been hidden, when I said, "Now I understand" because I understood?! And if I say it is hidden - then how do I know what I have to look for? I am in a muddle. (PI, 153)

The point here, and one made throughout the Philosophical Investigations, is that there is no body of rules or defining criteria to prescribe the application of words and sentences. Wittgenstein denies any connection between the learning of language and the acquisition of an ability which would compel us to use a term in a specific way.

How could human behavior be described? Surely only by sketching the actions of a variety of humans, as they are all mixed up together. What determines our judgment, our concepts and reactions, is not what one man is doing now, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action.

Seeing life as a weave, this pattern (pretence, say) is not always complete and is varied in a multiplicity of ways. But we, in our conceptual world, keep on seeing the same, recurring with variations. That is how our concepts take it. For concepts are not for use on a single occasion.

And one pattern in the weave is interwoven with many others. (Z, 567-569)

We find in the direction of this discussion the groundwork for one of Wittgenstein's central concerns, viz., the rejection of a private language (that of sensations, e.g., pain). It is implicitly and explicitly a focus of his later works, with ramifications for personal identity, the problem of other minds, and many other correlative areas.

We can slide into his discussion of private language by noting Wittgenstein's suggestion that we get a grasp of more complex language games by looking at simpler versions, the so-called primitive language games. In Zettel, we find this theme more fully developed, as the following case may illustrate. Wittgenstein remarks that we infer from observing a person's behavior that he should go to the doctor, but we do not make any such inferences about our own behavior, at least not

in the same way. He goes on to emphasize primitive language games regarding 'pain', and speaks of our tendency to respond to another's pain behavior. He calls this pre-linguistic, in the sense that "it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought". (Z, 541) Language itself is to be understood against this background: "Our language-game is an extension of primitive behavior. (For our language-game is behavior.) (Instinct)." (Z, 545)

By considering language to be a part of life, as behavior, Wittgenstein has effectively moved away from the restricted point of view held by the logical atomists, as well as by other philosophers. Primitive language games and pre-linguistic activity are seen as the foundation or precursors of more advanced (i.e., more complex) language games. And since we learn these advanced language games as we develop in our lives, language has to be considered an auxiliary part of human life.

This position is extended and strengthened by rejecting the notion of a private language and its accompanying view of what a person must be like. Wittgenstein seems to oppose a dualistic approach, by implying that such a position appears preposterous once we have observed primitive language games, especially of children. Wittgenstein deals extensively with the private language argument in an attempt to dispel what he considers a mistaken approach.

He claims that we find as much sense in a person giving himself a private definition of a word - as "if he has said the word to himself and at the same time has directed his attention to a sensation" (PI, 268) - as the sense made out of the idea that a person's right

hand can give his left hand a gift. Though the left hand takes the thing, it would be absurd to see the practical consequences as that of a gift. We really do not speak like this at all, it is quite ludicrous and, consequently, we should reject "the grammar which tries to force itself on us here". (PI, 373) What is required is a broader view of language: we must break with the idea that language functions only in one way or another and leave behind the fixed concept of language serving only the purpose of conveying thoughts. (See PI, 304)

Look at the blue of the sky and say to yourself "How blue the sky is!" - When you do it spontaneously - without philosophical intentions - the idea never crosses your mind that this impression of colour belongs only to you. (PI, 271)

Sensations should be considered natural states of the human being and, similarly, words of sensations should be seen as woven into the natural expression of sensations. It is the person, not the body, who experiences pain. Try to imagine otherwise and see what problems arise. "... if someone has a pain in his hand, then the hand does not say so (unless it writes it) and one does not comfort the hand, but the sufferer: one looks into his face." (PI, 286) The hand is not in pain. The person is. Nor is the body in pain, the person is. "It comes to this: only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious." (PI, 281)

With the rejection of a private language, Wittgenstein's investigations have led to significantly broader and more diverse territory than a simple denial of the logical atomist's enterprise. By attempting to move from error into truth, having a methodology with a myriad of

approaches and ways of casting an ever sharper light onto the philosophical issues that language touches upon, he has greatly contributed to a dismantling of the conventions and the "habits of thinking" that have so frequently beset a philosophical inquiry. And, although Wittgenstein insists that,

Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language, it can in the end only describe it.

It leaves everything as it is ... (PI, 124)

his penetrating questions and insights into the "obvious" have resulted in a much clearer view of philosophy, mathematics, conceptual systems, language games, and aspects of our language. Furthermore, Wittgenstein has helped sharpen the manner in which we understand "the actual use of language" and, in so doing, Wittgenstein did not "leave everything as it is". If in no other way, his investigations have had an enormous impact upon the realm of philosophical analysis and his methods have already altered the ways in which philosophy is done.

The concepts explored in this chapter - those of Wittgenstein's philosophical concerns and methods, his confrontation with the "grave mistakes" of the Tractatus period of his development, the refusal to see language as a rule-bound system where correlative elements can be clearly defined and their applications prescribed, his view of the meaning of a word as being its use within a given context, his idea of language games and family resemblances woven together in our language, and the attack on private language and its metaphysical implications - by no means exhaust the areas which Wittgenstein's investigations have directly and indirectly touched upon. Both the range of his concern

and the fine details of the topics we have examined must lie outside a brief exposition of this kind.

If we wanted to make critical remarks about Wittgenstein's approach to language in his later work, we could do so by considering his philosophical advantages in a disadvantageous light. The very breadth of his inquiry leaves many particular cases and individual problems for others to confront. His methods are so diverse and often so atypical of conventional philosophical reasoning and analysis that subsequent confusion may be created over what he intended or what a specific example may be said to signify. The fact that many questions raised by Wittgenstein are left unanswered, only exposed to view, means that others trying to understand the questions and their applications must be willing to seek those answers themselves. We have to face the reality that much of Wittgenstein's investigations is left for us to continue. It is, as with his image of family-likenesses, like a rope without end and the fibers of which thread into each other, overlapping and intertwined, with elements running through each - here connected, there at odds - with the result that, though we can cut the rope, we are the ones who have wielded the axe. The inquiry itself has no fine finish.

In the next chapter, we will utilize some of the issues and concepts, principally those of 'language-games' and 'family resemblances' and the theory of meaning as use, to apply to The Unnamable. We will see how the structural elements of the novel and their extensions within the context of the work can be clarified using Wittgensteinian tools.

We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems.... The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Strange notion, in any case, and eminently open to suspicion, that of a task to be performed, before one can be at rest. Strange task, which consists in speaking of oneself. Strange hope, turned towards silence and peace. Possessed of nothing but my voice ...

Samuel Beckett

CHAPTER V

THE METAPHOR AS THE FORM: THE UNNAMABLE IN LIGHT OF THE LATER WITTGENSTEIN

Applying the insights of the previous chapter, we can consider the structure of the novel as a whole and the overall situation of the character. The Unnamable professes to be nameless in the sense that the only names he has are assigned by others and, consequently, his central struggle is with his own identity, or lack of it. The struggle takes form in the encounter of the Unnamable with his language. He is torn between words and silence, where silence is just a word away. His is a testimony of words to silence. The novel presents us with a series of narratives, packed upon and within one another, with the characters expressing concerns and telling stories which are interwoven in the various narratives. It is a veritable layer of stories, subjects, and dissertations upon language.

In The Unnamable we find a character obsessed with language to such degree that he must constantly fight from becoming so bewitched by language that he cannot complete his inquiry. The novel can be seen as an attempt by the Unnamable to come to terms with his own language, where experiments with language occur in the structure of the text and within the text's multiplicity of stories. An examination of The Unnamable, with respect to these areas, can be achieved by bringing the philosophy

means for insight into Beckett's novel.

The later Wittgenstein is specifically valuable here - as contrasted with other theories of language, such as those of the logical atomists and Heidegger - because of his insights into the interrelated aspects of language, which were discussed in the last chapter. To tighten our understanding of Beckett's task in The Unnamable, we will draw upon Wittgenstein's notions of language game, family resemblance, meaning as use, along with Wittgenstein's awareness of the net of language and his emphasis on description, rather than explanation, as the correct methodology. These elements will be taken to the novel in order to obtain a fuller picture of Beckett's concerns with language, as expressed through both the character's task, and the novel's structural aspects. With a view to getting a sense of the structure of the novel and its correlative elements, we shall proceed, by considering first the methodology employed by the character. Subsequently, we will examine the way in which language games operate in the novel, the structural results of the literary form of Wittgenstein's meaning-use assessment as well as the interrelated topic of family resemblances. These concerns come together in the net which the character sees language forming around him, as expressed in the telling of his stories.

Throughout the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein makes a detailed and illuminating search, generally of a descriptive nature, into the levels of language, the kinds of language, the many differing aspects of language. The issues which he brings to light, in addition to the methods involved in a philosophical inquiry of this kind, have a direct bearing upon the situation of the Unnamable, who has focussed

upon the aspects of language and the roles language plays in his domain. The way in which Wittgenstein attempts to "cure" philosophical cramps provides us with the means for examining the Unnamable's linguistic malaise.

Language is of paramount significance in The Unnamable, where the unnamed subject is riveted to his relationship to language and to the struggle to obtain a sense of his own identity with respect to language. In a desperate attempt to reach a level of silence beyond the sway and power of words, the character undertakes an investigation into his own understanding with a hope of putting an end to all his questions. "The search for the means to put an end to things, an end to speech, is what enables the discourse to continue." (U, p. 299)

The path which the inquiry takes in The Unnamable can be seen in light of the Wittgensteinian method, where the quest for a clarity which permits of silence and peace, is faced by one nameless individual whose confrontation with the net of language in which he has gotten ensnared is one where the only release - silence - he cannot permit himself. Wittgenstein sought the discovery which would give philosophy a peace beyond the torment of questions calling itself into question (PI, 133) and the Unnamable seeks the discovery which would set his mind at ease so that so that he would no longer be tormented by questions which bring his entire personage into doubt and leave him an unnamed subject.

The approach must be one without preconceptions: both Wittgenstein and Beckett assert this. As discussed in the chapter on logical

atomism, where the Cartesian method was elucidated,¹ the later Wittgenstein held to it by saying, "There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations". (PI, 109) Although this is something the Unnamable desires, he cannot seem to actually attain such a level of thought. However he tries to strip them away, the hypotheses keep popping up. They have such an illusory nature. The Unnamable surmises that hypotheses are as fabrication the presence of which is intended to help him along, but which he would like to dispel. He is constantly on the alert, afraid that he will box himself in by his language or end up fixed in a theoretical position or state of mind which would cloud his vision, obscuring his understanding. He is nervous that he may end up the prey of his own language. Almost every statement that he makes is doubted, causing the discourse to proceed by fits and starts, with assertions frequently being questioned, or completely scrapped, by denials. He cannot always articulate what seems to be a running fear: "The thing to avoid," he notes, "I don't know why, is the spirit of system". (U, p. 292)

The Unnamable does not appear to seek explanations about his situation, indeed, it is not clear that, as far as he is concerned, there is anything to explain. Nevertheless, he wants to give a description which would, given sufficient accuracy, act to situate himself and provide a sense of definition. In this regard, his undertaking can be understood against the background of Wittgenstein's declaration: "We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place." (PI, 109) To Wittgenstein, explanation was merely theory

¹ See pages 85-86, above.

cast in an interpretive mold, whereas description could provide a statement on the geography "as it is now". Description would enable us to bring the aspects of a thing into light, Wittgenstein implied, and make apparent the various roles and uses which a thing has.

Wittgenstein did not hesitate to present philosophical scenarios, invent new expressions, or approach problems in new and ingenious ways in order to carry on his investigations. "... the point of a new technique ...", Wittgenstein wrote, "is to supply us with a new picture, a new form of expression; and there is nothing so absurd as to try and describe this new schema, this new kind of scaffolding, by means of the old expression". (R, p. 61)

This is of extreme relevance to the Unnamable, who is in a constant struggle to describe each new schema, when all he has at his disposal, it sometimes seems, is the old expression. Wittgenstein realized that one course open to him was to invent new terms of expression to talk about the scaffolding. This he discussed in the Blue Book, saying "... our method is not merely to enumerate actual usages of words, but rather deliberately to invent new ones, some of them because of their absurd appearance". (BB, p. 28) Indeed, his terms are now famous and have themselves been incorporated into the language of philosophy. The Unnamable did not seem to see this course as an option. For the Unnamable, it was but a source of frustration and sarcasm, as he expressed with phrases such as "Live and invent", "Rhetoric!", and said in apparent exasperation, "... my mouth spent in vain, with vain invention all other utterance but theirs". (U, p. 308)

The move that Wittgenstein took - that is, to invent new expressions

for describing the "geography" - did not seem to be open to the character. Instead of expression, he turns to fable, the invention of stories in an attempt to get to a description of the scaffolding of his situation. We will soon see the way in which these stories unfold.

Description can take various forms, play different roles and have different uses. Wittgenstein points out the many kinds of sentences and the diversity in uses of words within our language system. The particular use we make of any given word "is only one use within a family of usages" (BB, p. 119) and, thus, it avails us to recognize the possible range of meanings. In the "family of usages" of a term, there exist various criss-crossing similarities, or traits, with the result that we see some meanings resembling each other in this way, some in that way. Wittgenstein refers to this phenomenon as the "family resemblances" existing within the body of a word's meanings. As we saw in the last chapter, the concept of family resemblances is connected to Wittgenstein's view of what he calls "language-games".

More or less akin "to what in ordinary language we call games" (BB, p. 81), the concept includes simple ("primitive") language systems, as we might find in children's word games or in the language of a primitive society, as well as "special technical languages", as we might see with chemical symbolism, descriptive geometry, the use of charts and diagrams. "It has come to mean the study of any form of use of language against a background context of a form of life."² Wittgenstein offers many examples of language games, some of which are: children calling out names for a group of objects, repeating words

² Kenny, Wittgenstein, p. 166.

after someone, speculating, forming hypotheses, guessing riddles, translating, praying, describing someone, questioning, commanding, and exclaiming, etc.

There is a veritable multiplicity of language games, about which Wittgenstein notes: "... this multiplicity is not fixed, given once for all, but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten."

(PI, 23) Wittgenstein's comment underlines his recognition of the changing quality of language and demonstrates his desire to avoid the rigid, "This is the way things are" attitude preponderant in his logical atomist period. Just as importantly, he realizes that we might not easily see language games in operation, owing to the complexity of everyday language. Wittgenstein explains this point as follows: "We remain unconscious of the prodigious diversity of all the everyday language-games because the clothing of our language makes everything alike. Something new (spontaneous, 'specific') is always a language-game." (PI, p. 224e)

Within the structure of The Unnamable, we see a range of employments of words, many of which we might consider to be literary language games. There is description, asserting and denying statements, discussion of hypotheses, telling stories, singing, creating puns, asking questions and seeking solutions. There are countless channels through which the Unnamable tackles his search and attempts to get a tighter hold over the inquiry. Some of the specific uses of language made by Beckett could possibly be seen as language games, although Wittgenstein himself only indirectly touches upon literary uses of words and

sentences. (As, e.g., in PI, 23)

The range of Beckett's experimentation is a vital element of the renown he has acquired by virtue of the trilogy. We could, therefore, benefit from observing some of the more striking uses he makes of language in The Unnamable, particularly since the character approaches language in such a game-like fashion (albeit a rather dangerous game, with what would seem to be nearly fatal consequences should he fail to use his language in the "right" way). With that in mind, let us examine the more interesting, and certainly extensive uses and literary language-games operating in the text:

(1) Contradiction of assertions.

No more questions. Is not this rather the place where one finishes vanishing? Will the day come when Malone will pass before me no more? Will the day come when Malone will pass before the spot where I was? Will the day come when another will pass before me, before the spot where I was? I have no opinion, on these matters. (U, p. 293)

(2) Controlling the narrative.

"But not so fast. First dirty, then make clean."
(U, p. 300)

"I could also do, incidentally, with future and conditional participles." (U, p. 300)

"Next instalment, quick." (U, p. 314)

(3) Repetition of word or phrase.

"The supreme perhaps.... perhaps I malign him unjustly, my good master, perhaps he is not solitary like me ..." (U, p. 313)

"Idle talk, idle talk, ..." (U, p. 314)

"For if by dint of winding myself up, if I may venture that ellipsis, it doesn't often happen to me now, if by dint of winding myself up, I don't seem to have gained much time, if by dint of wind-

ing myself up I must inevitably find myself stuck in the end ..." (U, p. 317)

(4) Puns.

"No, we have no conversation, never a mum of his mouth to me." (U, p. 313)

"While there's life there's hope ..." (U, p. 333)

"... unravel my tangle ..." (U, p. 315)

"Innate knowledge of my mother, for example, is that conceivable?" (U, pp. 297-298)

(5) Black humour.

"... my next vice-exister will be a billy in the bowl, that's final, with his bowl on his head and his arse in the dust, ..." (U, p. 315)

"Then a little hell after my own heart, not too cruel, with a few nice damned to foist my groans on, ..." (U, p. 306)

(6) Double Entendre.

"Come, my lambkin, join in our gambols, ..." (U, p. 316)

"My speech-parched voice ..." (U, p. 310)

"Then I'd know for certain and giving up the ghost be born at last ..." (U, p. 342)

"What balls is going on before the impotent crystalline ..." (U, p. 362)

(7) Alliteration.

"... fomenters of fiasco ..." (U, p. 338)

"... among my compatriots, contemporaries, coreligionists, and companions in distress." (U, p. 326)

(8) Warmed-over clichés.

"... food for delirium ..." (U, p. 335)

"... inciting to alms ..." (U, p. 327)

(9) Rhyme.

"I'm a big talking ball, talking about thins that do not exist ..." (U, p. 305)

"... their billions of quick, their trillions of dead, ..." (U, p. 335)

(10) Metaphor.

"... it looks well, sprinkled through the perjury." (U, p. 329)

"... the terror-stricken babble of the condemned to silence." (U, p. 354)

"... this dead tongue of the living." (U, p. 337)

"... I'm something quite different, ... a wordless thing in an empty place ... like a caged beast born of caged beasts born of caged beasts born of caged beasts born in a cage and dead in a cage, born and then dead, born in a cage and then dead in a cage, in a word like a beast, in one of their words, like such a beast ..." (U, pp. 386-387)

In The Unnamable, Beckett took upon himself the task of breaking through the maze of voices with a new route of linguistic expression. As the above list suggests, there are many different possible routes, many different modes of expression, modes of experimentation and application of uses to which language might be put in the literary medium. Some of these uses are familiar and well worn, some are unfamiliar or unusual in their implementation within the work and the role they play in the novel.

It would seem that Wittgenstein endorses the ways in which Beckett's literary display of language games makes demands upon the reader, for Wittgenstein himself sought more than a passive receptacle on the part of his own readers when he indicated that: "I should not like my writings to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But,

if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own." (PI, p. 30x)
 Wittgenstein does this with an extensive display of questions, suggestions, imagined situations and philosophical vignettes which bring a topic up for discussion by many diverse methods.

Beckett similarly requires an active audience. The work has a voluminously compressed quality, with its dense and interlaced imagery. The result is a near detonating effect on the mind of the reader, who becomes a participant in the character's search, whereby any breakthroughs in the inquiry are ones which the reader is only too painfully aware of. The text demands that the reader take part in the Unnamable's quest for an understanding of the way in which language has a stranglehold on the character. We find him constantly wishing he were able to get out from underneath the weight of his words long enough to grasp where he stands with respect to language, all the while hoping to attain a level beyond speech and into silence. Refusal on the reader's part to join in the search is only possible by setting the novel aside. The extensive struggle of the character to come to terms with his medium of expression and its enactment through the numerous and multi-layered applications of language within the text necessarily enlist the reader into becoming an accomplice.

Beckett puts his task into effect by examining and employing the many faceted aspects of language, the fact that language can be used to do far more than present paltry verses or assert logical truths. This position echoes Wittgenstein's own approach to language and the ways he shows that language has descriptive roles that it can play. Beckett moves language from the role of passive voice to that of active voice, where

language is being made to do something as a totality. The novel functions as a unit, in which its effectiveness and the impact of its expression ranges beyond the individual words, phrases, and sentences of which it is constituted. We find, for example, images that appear early in The Unnamable occurring later, often without reference or direction. Symbols that we metaphors in the beginning stand alone, as if symbolically, at the end. For the reader, the resulting layer of images must be grasped as a whole. Although the novel is dense and highly complex, it is, as a mode of expression, as strongly interconnected as one long sentence, or one long metaphor. It is for this reason that Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance is appropriate in viewing the text.

The interplay of language games, their diversity and relation to the novel as a whole must be kept in mind when trying to outline the various types of expression in operation. These items act within the greater framework and, thus, cannot be examined atomistically. In fact, their very quantity affects the reader, as does their combination. For this reason, we stand to lose by carrying the process of dissection too far. The forcefulness of the language games is depreciated by the separation from the organic whole.

What is surely the greatest obstacle to the unarmed reader is that the novel is not only complex, it is also an intricate web of all the various ideas and dissertations. They act as a web around the reader, too, by entangling him in the novel's sometimes exhaustive language. Obviously, The Unnamable is not a novel made of words constituting plot, action, etc. It is an experiment with language of such a

vast extent that the novel itself falls victim to the results of the experiment. Whether or not we might even term The Unnamable a novel is a matter for dispute.

It is more like a metaphor, a long and layered metaphor of the novel and a metaphor of language itself. The novel stands as a statement of language upon language, and it does so in metaphorical form. As an extensive metaphor, it symbolizes both the words and the images that it encompasses and, in so doing, points to another level of linguistic reality. The Unnamable, as metaphor, uses words and images to present a nameless character in search of himself, having only language as the vehicle for his quest. In another sense, the text, as metaphor, transcends the level of the character's story (or his attempt to tell one) to the level of the non-story. As such, it can be seen as a statement on the attempt to come to terms with language, to rise enough above its limitations to get a sense of its boundaries, and some idea about where the individual stands beside those limits. We can also see the novel as reflecting upon the role which silence can be said to play in this quest.

We might view this in a Wittgensteinian way if we consider the extent to which the Unnamable has fallen under the power of his own words. It looks as though he were caught in a net which language has formed around him and is now holding him captive. We can learn from a story that Wittgenstein tells about a man who got trapped by language:

Now - if someone tried day-in day-out 'to put all irrational numbers into a series' we could say: "Leave it alone; it means nothing; don't you see, if you established a series, I should come along with the diagonal series!" This might get him to abandon his undertaking.

Well, that would be useful. And it strikes me as if this were the whole and real purpose of this method. It makes use of the vague notion of this man who goes on, as it were idiotically, with his furious work, and brings him to a stop by means of a picture. (But one could get him to resume his undertaking by means of another picture.)

The procedure exhibits something - which can in a very vague way be called the demonstration that these methods of calculation cannot be ordered in a series. And here the meaning of "these" is just kept vague.

A clever man got caught in this net of language! So it must be an interesting net. (R, pp. 54-55)

The Unnamable is not, like the man above, concerned with putting irrational numbers into a series, although he has set up a project for himself that, however interesting, risks ensnaring him. This is the task he set himself. Just as irrational numbers are the obsession for Wittgenstein's man - the Unnamable's relationship to his own words fanatically concerns him, for he fears that he will be cornered by the use he makes of words - words which he suspects that, to a great degree, his very existence depends upon. He is drawn by the very thing that he fears the most - words. On the one hand he cites his dependence. "... blank words"; the character exclaims, "but I use them, they keep coming back, all those they showed me, all those I remember, I need them all, to be able to go on ..." (U, p. 408) On the other hand, their lure seems to be like that of sirens calling the sailors to leap over board: "And yet I am afraid of what my words will do to me." (U; p. 303)

This is a fear that Wittgenstein also felt, as his criticism of his work from the Tractatus period attests, for he regards that to be a case in which he and Russell had gotten cornered by their language. "A picture held us captive", Wittgenstein reasoned later, "And we could

not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably". (PI, 115)

The Unnamable seems aware of this danger of entrapment and is terrified that he may be captured by one of the pictures which his words create. He simply does not feel that he has enough control over his language, as the following suggests:

... all the words they taught me, without making their meaning clear to me, ... these nameless images I have, these imageless names, ... (U, p. 407)

However much he uses words, the Unnamable frequently withdraws from implications as to their meaning. He hesitates to use words, he worries about their applications and he doubts that he has control over their meaning and power.

... that's all words they taught me, without making their meaning clear to me, that's how I learnt to reason, I use them all, all the words they showed me, there were columns of them, oh the strange glow all of a sudden, they were on lists, with images opposite, I must have forgotten them, I must have mixed them up, ... (U, p. 407)

Each word is like a loaded weapon that may, at any moment, explode. The Unnamable cannot use words suavely; he is simply too uneasy about their range and the extent of their power.

Wittgenstein's discussion of the way we manifest our attachment to words has relevance to the Unnamable's linguistic angst. For Wittgenstein:

The familiar physiognomy of a word, the feeling that it has taken up its meaning into itself, that it is an actual likeness of its meaning - there could be human beings to whom all this was alien. (They would not have an attachment to their words.) - And how are these feelings manifested among us? - By the way we choose and value words. (PI, p. 218e)

The Unnamable certainly seems to manifest an alienation from his own words, as exhibited by his method of handling words and the sort of attachment he has to them. It cannot be surprising that the Unnamable is unable to tell the "right" story: With his apparent loss of control over his words, he would inevitably be frustrated in story-telling. His way of choosing and valuing words simply suggest that there are no right words, in his estimation. Consequently, his fear that a word may end up meaning something else altogether never allows him any satisfaction that his stories won't undergo transformation. Wittgenstein says:

How do I find the 'right' word? How do I choose among words? Without doubt it is sometimes as if I were comparing them by fine differences of smell: That is too, that is too, - this is the right one. - But I do not always have to make judgements, give explanations; often I might only say: "It simply isn't right yet". I am dissatisfied, I go on looking. At last a word comes: "That's it!" Sometimes I can say why. This is simply what searching, this is what find, is like here. (PI, p. 218e)

Consider the Unnamable's relation to words, how he searches for the right word, but, dissatisfied, must go on looking. He cannot rest assured that he will ever be able to cry, "That's it!" for any of the words that he uses. Such an exclamation seems outside his domain.

... there's nothing to be got, there was never anything to be got from those stories, I have mine, somewhere, let them tell it to me, they'll see there's nothing to be got from it either, nothing to be got from me, it will be the end, of this hell of stories ... (U, p. 380)

There is a boomerang effect to the way in which words come back to us. At one point Wittgenstein said that, "We talk, we utter words, and only later get a picture of their life". (PI, p. 209e) This is a real problem for the Unnamable, who, one having spoken, cannot escape the

resounding, proactive and retroactive effects of his words; their ability, once used, to return: "... they keep coming back." (U, p. 408)

Wittgenstein left behind traditional philosophical views of language by stating that the meaning of a word is its use. Look at a word's use in the language game and we will be able to get an understanding of its meaning. Wittgenstein would probably see the Unnamable's confusion and discomfort with the use of his words as understandable, in light of the lack of such precision within our language. According to Wittgenstein's analysis:

It is only in normal cases the the use of a word is clearly prescribed; we know, are in no doubt, what to say in this or that case. The more abnormal the case, the more doubtful it becomes what we are to say. And if things were quite different from what they actually are - ... - this would make our normal language-games lose their point. (PI, 142)

Our general lack of understanding is traced by Wittgenstein to our failure to command a clear view of the use of our words. By his assertion, our grammar does not have this sort of perspicuity. (cf. PI, 122)

It is, nevertheless, crucial, as Wittgenstein indicated:

The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of an account we give, the way we look at things. (is this a 'Weltanschauung'?) (PI, 122)

This very earmarking touches upon the Unnamable's fears; and we can infer from his exclamations that it is just cause for his obsession with the power of words and their ability to define and limit a person. He tries to assume control over the accounts he gives. This is demonstrated in his telling of stories: the more stories told, the more difficult it is to come to terms with the character's identity and qualities. One of the central problems is whether the stories are about

him or others. His accounts are all of an elusive kind, for they appear to be about him as well as others who are distinct from himself.

It is as if the others were mere "puppets", as he sometimes suggests; creatures invented as diversions to escape the task of facing the issues of his existence and handling the sorts of doubts he has about his relationship to language and the way in which his inquiry is going.

This elusiveness illustrates the Unnamable's approach to his grammar. Furthermore, the way in which he views words, with their ominous and active power is extended to the way in which he uses words—the form of accounts that he gives and the stories that he tells. Continually worried that he will be (or is already) caught in the net of language, he creates stories to elude such entrapment. The stories can be seen as reflecting his "weltanschauung" and as presenting a cat-and-mouse game, with the characters escaping definition. This forces the reader into a position of uncertainty regarding who is actually telling the story and who are the characters, as distinct from one another — or to what degree they are in any way distinct.

As already been noted by Pearce³, this technique of having frames within frames is often employed in Beckett's works (and is also found in Wittgenstein), having perhaps its greatest significance in The Unnamable. The frame acts as a literalization of the Unnamable's mental configurations, his own entrapment in the net of language, which, of course, the later Wittgenstein is trying to lead us out of. With the novel's focus upon the layers of language and the character's

³Pearce, Richard, "Enter the Frame", from Tri-Quarterly No. 30, Spring 1974, pp. 71-82.

attempt to situate its source, we find the source always seems outside his grasp. It comes from and leads to the words of others - words that seem to stem from voices other than his own. Within the text, we find the frames, the levels of narrative, also to be of an elusive nature, with each frame tangential to the character's sense of self, each frame approaching a description or definition of his situation and his concerns, but each escaping onto another level with other subjects. Wittgenstein helps us recognize that these are not at all distinct or loose threads, or bereft of a common link.

The picture is of intertwining, interwoven language, stories, characters, voices running over, under and through other narratives, frames within frames, characters within characters usurping other characters. The resulting web forms the very substance and life of the novel. The Unnamable may be regarded from the perspective of a "family resemblance"; i.e., the metaphor which Wittgenstein employs to discuss the ways in which language games interact within the context of a language system. Admonishing us, when drawing the analogy of language games to games, with his comment, "don't think, but look!" (PI, 66), Wittgenstein suggests that our looking would reveal a complicated network of similarities. Because we would see "sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" (PI, 66), we can characterize these similarities as a "family resemblance". That is, they operate in a manner analogous to the overlapping similarities (such as looks, temperament, gestures, etc.) of the members of a family. Such family resemblances run in and out of the stories and frames, as well as the other structural elements of the novel.

The Unnamable corresponds to Wittgenstein's rope metaphor: it is, so to speak, made up of fibers interconnecting and overlapping to form a whole. The relationship of one fiber and the next, one frame, and another, one story or character and other stories or characters, are as members of a family. Themes run in and out of these constitutive elements in ways in which names, images, characters, and concerns are completely interwoven. You cannot separate fibers from the rope and have left anything which even resembles a rope, or functions as one. Nor can you separate the literary fibers of the novel and retain a picture of what The Unnamable is about. It functions so much as a totality, that any attempt to pull apart its elements brings disintegration. The character's own quest is affected by the interweaving of his perceptions, memories, ideas which causes his own method of analysis difficulty.

"... you must go on thinking too, the old thoughts, they call that thinking, it's visions, shreds of old visions, that's all you can see, a few old pictures, a window, ..." (U, p. 405)

Themes and stories lace in and out of one another, encompassed and encompassing. Thus we find Beckett telling us the story of the Unnamable, who tells us the story of Mahood, telling us the story of his relatives who tell one another the story of Mahood. And we find the story of the Unnamable telling us the story of Worm. We find both of these stories being amended and altered by Malone, Murphy, Watt, or someone else. Throughout the novel we find this structure: stories inside one story are outside another and tellers of one story are being told by another.

In addition, the nearer the Unnamable comes to silence, to the end of his story, or rather to the "threshold of my story" (U, p. 414), the more stories there are. A multiplicity of stories frantically

being told, as though it were a last ditch effort. To do what? To get out of one story and into another? To elude entrapment within the context of one story?

The horrid fear of the power and limitation of words. This is a fear which both Beckett and Wittgenstein had to grapple with.

Thus we find Beckett telling us the story of the Unnamable who, in turn, tells us the story of Mahood, who tells us the story of his family who, waiting for his arrival, tell stories about Mahood. This begins with the story of the Unnamable offering a "Preamble" in an attempt to situate himself before another story begins, before "... the statement ... that will dispose of me": (U, p. 302) Describing the lights, the place, the beings around him, the Unnamable wonders if the place is not "... merely the inside of my distant skull where once I wandered, now am fixed, lost for tininess, or straining against the walls, with my head, my hands, my feet, my back, and ever murmuring my old stories, my old story, ..." (U, p. 303) First comes Basil giving his report, or so the Unnamable tells us, about the Unnamable, who tells us that Basil is trying to reform him; that is, make up stories about him or talk through him. "And I see myself slipping", he notices, "though not yet at the last extremity, towards the resorts of fable". (U, p. 308)

So the Unnamable tells us about Mahood, who, in turn, tells his own stories about the Unnamable. As the Unnamable realizes, "It was he told me stories about me, lived in my stead, issued forth from me, came back to me, entered back into me, heaped stories on my head". (U, p. 309) Wittgenstein's metaphor of family resemblances as threads in

a rope seems apropos here, as the voices intertwine and the narratives become more difficult to separate. The Unnamable, for example, offers to "tell one of Mahood's stories" (U, p. 309) - but it is as if Mahood were speaking through him. The uncertainty, however, is sufficient for him to conjecture that it may be another speaking, for he says, "This sounds like one of Malone's anecdotes". (U, p. 312) At this point, it is becoming increasingly unclear wherein lies the source for the words he speaks and for the stories he tells.

It continues. Within the Unnamable's story about Mahood - or is it Mahood's story about the Unnamable? - other stories are told, the narrators now the family members who are assessing his progress. Meanwhile, another assessment is being made, stemming from a character outside this story, yet inside another entirely distinct from this story here. This character is Malone, who has had his story told in the second book of the trilogy, yet who has something to say about the story here and about the character in this novel. The Unnamable turns to Malone.

... what were my own feelings at this period? What was I thinking of? With what? Was I having difficulty with morale? The answer to all this is this, I quote Malone, that I was entirely absorbed in the business on hand ..."
(U, p. 320)

Stories within stories. And so the stories multiply throughout the novel, with each story a kind of language game in itself, where the words act as pawns. The character, like the king, must be defended, his battles fought, with these pieces. The fear of an endgame holds him in check. But the king here has become a part of the game. It is still possible to knock the pieces over and start anew. A new game

this time and with new rules. But the rules must be known or there could be no game and no way of playing. Given new rules, it would be possible for another game to start - and this one be different from the last. But it is still a game.

The novel proceeds from one narrative to another, being told by one narrator or another - or simultaneously by several narrators, or several narratives being told by one, or several, narrators. The narrative voices become increasingly difficult to tell apart.

The Unnamable, purposely it seems, reinforces, if not creates, such confusion. This is most evident at the end of the novel, where the stories accelerate and accumulate. In conjunction, there is an avalanche of the Unnamable's fears of the power of language, fears of its limits, and fears of being packaged at last by a finite number of words. It is as if he is sending out a smoke screen of stories. The Unnamable seems frantic in his search for a way out, out of words into silence, out of these words into other words, or out of these stories into other stories. There are so many fibers, and it does not seem as if this rope has an end.

Notice the confusion of identities in character and speaker (teller and told). Notice whether what is being said is a story or memory, imaginary or real. Notice how one of the threads in the early part of the text - "... another question, what am I doing in Mahood's story, and in Worm's, or rather what are they doing in mine, ..." (U, p. 377) - is woven into these later threads. We find the Unnamable observing that,

And yet I have memories, I remember Worm, that is, to say I have retained the name, and the other, what is

his name, what was his name, in his jar, ... Mahood, he was called Mahood, ... I must have talked about him, the same words recur and they are your memories. It is I invented him, ... (U, p. 395)

The confusion of identities is linked to the Unnamable, who is confused about their connection to himself. Again, there is the confusion over the story; i.e., whether it is of him or of another.

... what's this story, it's a story, now I've told another little story, about me, ... But once again the fable must be of another, I see him so well, coming and going among his casks, trying to stop his hand from trembling, ... it must have been I, but I never saw myself, so it can't have been I, I don't know, how can I recognize myself who never made my acquaintance, ... (U, p. 398)

In the search for an escape from his words he offers yet another story, suggesting that:

... if I could put myself in a room, that would be the end of this wordy-gurdy ... first the place, then I'll find me in it, I'll put me in it, a solid lump, in the middle, or in a corner, well propped up on three sides, the place, if only I could feel a place for me, I've tried, I'll try again, ... (U, p. 399)

He thus sets the stage for another story, needing another story to set up a stage for himself. So he imagines a different place, where other tales could be told: "... if I could be in a forest, caught in a thicket, or wandering round in circles, it would be the end of this blither, I'd describe the leaves, one by one, ..." (U, p. 399)

The stories can at best be used to construct boundaries of identity and, as such, form both the answer to his questions and the grounds for ending his search. If he could just be assured that the story was really about him. If he could only feel certain that the story was really about him and not another. If he could only place himself, or be placed, in a story, then the search could end and he

could put a stop to all these doubts. He is cautious:

... you try the sea, you try the town, you look for yourself in the mountains and the plains, it's only natural, you want yourself, you want yourself in your own little corner, it's not love, not curiosity, it's because you're tired, you want to stop, travel no more, seek no more, lie no more, speak no more, close your eyes, but your own, in a word lay your hands on yourself, ... (U, p. 400)

Consequently, more stories are told. One "to teach me the nature of emotion" (U, p. 406) and another one "who bolted the door" (U, p. 407). But he has lost the definition that these stories would provide. He wonders, "... is it the return to the world of fable, no, just a reminder; to make me regret what I have lost ..." (U, p. 407)

If there could really be a story about him, a story which could say his words at last, then he would know that his story would have been told. "... pick your fancy, all these stories about travellers, these stories about paralytics, all are mine, I must be extremely old, or it's memory playing tricks, if only I knew I've lived, ..." (U, p. 412) Unfortunately, his story has eluded the grasp of the teller, his is yet to be told. His words are still to be said; those said have not said enough.

... his story the story to be told, but he has no story, unimaginable, unspeakable, that doesn't matter, the attempt must be made, in the old stories incomprehensibly mine, ... in the end I'll recognize it, the story of the silence that he never left, that I should never have left, that I may never find again, ... (U, p. 413)

With this we come to the end of the novel and, though structurally at its completion, we have no sense of any grand finale, any resolution, any closure. Instead, the rope implicitly continues, since, as the character indicates, we are only at the edge of "... the door that

open on my story ..." (U, p. 414) The structural picture, on that note, gives us an image of interwoven fibers which could, conceivably, keep right on going.

If we look within the context of the novel, we can see how Wittgenstein's concepts of language games and family resemblances can be utilized in ways to shed light upon the level of the search itself. The literary structure of this search is a reflection of the character's inquiry. Of particular interest is the interplay of the narrative voices and the ways in which they occur in the novel.

Just as we skirt the edge of madness in trying to separate the voices, so does the character. The desire to sort them out tugs at him constantly and will not leave him at peace. It becomes a central focus for him and increasingly an obsession. The form the problem takes is this: how can he separate the many voices and find his own?

Wittgenstein considers the way in which we relate to our own speech and observes just how peculiar it becomes.

My own relation to my words is wholly different from other people's.

.....

If I listened to the words of my mouth, I might say that someone else was speaking out of my mouth.

"Judging from what I say, this is what I believe."
Now, it is possible to think out circumstances in which these words would make sense.

And then it would also be possible for someone to say "It is raining and I don't believe it", or "It seems to me that my ego believes this, but it isn't true."

One would have to fill out the picture with behaviour indicating that two people were speaking through my mouth. (PI, p. 192e)

If we look at the rules we've set and try to fixate on the language we speak every day and is spoken to us, it would seem that the more obsessed we became, the more we would tend to listen to the voices around us and our own voice. However, the more we listen, the more unreal it seems, till there arises an uncanny feeling about the voices and the words being spoken. Wittgenstein's comments in the above, with its accompanying implications, can be viewed as an underlying activity of The Unnamable. This is demonstrated in both the topic of discussion of the novel's monologue (or multilogue) as well as in the succession of the characters. Namely, the subject expressed and the subject expressing are literary enactments of the sort of solipsistic listening process raised in the Philosophical Investigations, with the style of the overlapping voices an enactment of Wittgenstein's family resemblance theory.

Turning to a consideration of the manner in which this is accomplished we find that, throughout the novel, there is a continual reminder that the Unnamable is listening to his own voice. It is as if he is spoken through by others. Picture a kind of speaking in tongues, with the words intelligible. This is a recurring image in The Unnamable, where Beckett can be seen as imagining the case, raised by Wittgenstein, of relating to one's own words. Here is the situation:

It is his voice which has often, always, mingled with mine, and sometimes drowned it completely... But his voice continued to testify for me, as though woven into mine, preventing me from saying who I was, what I was, so as to have done with saying, done with listening. And still today, as he would say, though he plagues me

no more his voice is there, in mine, but less, less. And being no longer renewed it will disappear one day, I hope, from mine, completely. But in order for that to happen I must speak, speak. And at the same time, I do not deceive myself, he may come back again, or go away again and then come back again. Then my voice, the voice would say, That's an idea, now I'll tell one of Mahood's stories ... But it would not be my voice, not even in part. That is how it would be done. Or quietly, stealthily, the story would begin, as if nothing had happened and I still the teller and the told. But I would be fast asleep, my mouth agape, as usual, I would look the same as usual. And from my sleeping mouth the lies would pour, about me. No, not sleeping, listening, in tears. (U, pp. 309-310)

Voices of others seem to be woven into the voice of the character, to the extent that, when he turns his attention to himself and listens to his voice, it seems as if it is not he, but others, who are speaking through his mouth, where all that is left for him is to hear them speaking, through him. The expression of this theme appears frequently, stated in varying degrees of emphasis.

From the standpoint of the Unnamable, each recurrence gives rise to doubts about the authorship of the voice or voices and he is left to wonder wherein lies their source - in others or in himself.

We can see the manner in which this operates by watching the theme develop. The theme's direction, vis-à-vis the character, appears helicoidal, for it acts as a kind of spiral around the Unnamable.

First, we are aware of the significance in the character's eyes of the voices of others. From the way he speaks, it is as if they are overwhelming him and his own voice is lost in all the "babble" created by them. (See U, pp. 306-348)⁴ He has doubts about the strength of his

⁴This is merely a rough, very rough, approximation of the tightening spiral and a gradual process, so a delineation of this sort

own voice and seems uncertain about his own position, suggesting that he has been, as it were, blown up by their voices, like a balloon.

(U, p. 325) The result is that it does not seem that he is the author of his voice, for he suspects that he more likely resembles a ventriloquist's dummy: "Do they believe I believe it is I who am speaking?"

(U, p. 345)

As the spiral begins to tighten, we find the Unnamable searching for his position as distinct from others and attempting to clarify where he stands in relation to his words. (See U, pp. 349-380) He announces this goal, by asking, "Where am I? That's my first question, after an age of listening". (U, p. 349) The more he listens, the less he seems to feel that he can claim his words as his own: his ear is the first organ for his speech. "... I who am on my way, words bellying out my sails ..." (U, p. 352) He wants their voices to stop, they have got him surrounded, enfolding him, covering him, unceasingly. He seeks release long enough to locate himself, seemingly to no avail, needs their help in separating their voices from his own, pulling him away for just enough time so that he can locate himself. "Let them put into my mouth at last", he pleads, "the words that will save me, damn me, and no more talk about it ..." (U, p. 368) But this relief is not coming. There is no helping hand.

The spiral closes in on the character, as he senses their voices overcoming his own, even though he cannot actually feel it. "... I don't feel the jostle of words in my mouth ..." (U, p. 382) The words

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are given an almost tangible presence for him, so literalized has the feeling become that he is now thoroughly encompassed by the net of language. He cannot seem to get free of this net; he is caught:

... strange, you don't feel a mouth on you, you don't feel your mouth any more, no need of a mouth, the words are everywhere, inside me, outside me, ... I'm in words, made of words, others' words, ... I'm all these words, all these strangers, this dust of words, ... (U, p. 386)

And though he tries to reason that the voice he hears, which seems not to be his own, must belong to others, he cannot justify this position and he exclaims:

No, I didn't think anything and I didn't say anything to myself, I did what I could, a thing beyond my strength, and often for exhaustion I gave up doing it, and yet it went on being done, the voice being heard, the voice which could not be mine, since I had none left, and yet could only be mine, since I could not go silent, and since I was alone, in a place where no voice could reach me. (U, p. 396)

The Unnamable has the sensation of being caught in a whirlpool, being dragged down further and pulled about, with the momentum already set and he powerless to slow it down. "... you don't try any more, no need to try," he says, "it goes on by itself, it drags on by itself, from word to word, a labouring whirl, you are in it somewhere, everywhere, ..." (U, p. 402)

The more the net tightens, the more the Unnamable resembles Wittgenstein's man who tries to count out the irrational numbers: a clever man caught in an interesting net, and becoming in that sense, equally irrational. The Unnamable isn't trying to count irrational numbers, however, he's trying to call out others' voices and others' stories and, ultimately, by their negation, he will be left alone, with himself; with his own voice, and the silence that he may choose. At

this point, he is, as it were, caught in a swirl of words, about to drown. The more he attempts to listen to the voice(s), the more they seem to be outside him, speaking to or through him. For it doesn't seem possible that he could have given rise to these words, someone else, must be speaking. If the latter were the case, however, it should be apparent to him where the words are coming from; the knowledge should be empirically obvious. Wouldn't he feel a mouth on him, shooting words into him? He feels nothing, no such mouth. He cannot believe that the source of words is external, but he doubts their source lies in himself. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the words are there, the words are everywhere.

The voice is there. Though he doubts its source, he cannot doubt its effect. The words are everywhere, he feels surrounded. The voice is there; the voice in search of a mouth. "... a voice like this, who can check it, it tries everything, it's blind, it seeks me blindly in the dark, it seeks a mouth, to enter into, ..." (U, p. 410) The image is becoming macabre.

A pure voice. And he a pure ear. There is a point at which the Unnamable describes himself: a pure ear in the midst of sound. (U, p. 354) Furthermore, it seems as if the sounds constituted the only prerequisite to come into being. "These millions of different sounds, always the same, recurring without pause, are all one requires to sprout a head, a bud to begin with, finally huge, ..." (U, p. 354)

The picture is one of air inflating a balloon. Such is the portrayal of the character. Deflatable to a mere subject of conversation, all he needs is the sounds of voices to blow him up again, a bud

first, then a head and finally a body, equipped with limbs, appendages and all the accoutrements of the human form. We can trace this development to better grasp this, shall we say, sub-structure of the novel, and see how the concerns of The Unnamable are interwoven into the expression here. By doing this, we can see how the characterization reflects and complements the overall structure of the text. That is, the language games multiply and act together to form a net within which a clever man may just get trapped, by failing to keep clear his relationship with language and the use he is making of his words. It is complicated by the character turning inward to listen to his own speech, which is perhaps, in itself, a queer process and bound to lead to difficulties and confusion. That the voice seems alien and that the character feels spoken-through by others may be uncanny, but should not be that unexpected.

These issues are at the forefront of the curious role of personae in the novel. The character progression of Basil-Mahood-Worm can be seen as a metaphor of the Unnamable's relationship to language and the correlative concerns. The stories of these three personae form the core fables which the Unnamable employs (as compared, earlier, to Wittgenstein's turn to inventive expression as a means to proceed with his investigation). Through these fables we can also see how Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances is applicable to another aspect of the text. Like the structural elements and the language concerns in the novel, the characterizations themselves are interwoven.

"... another question, what am I doing in Mahood's story, and in Worm's, or rather what are they doing in mine, ..." (U, p. 377)

Beckett extends the notion of the subject's relation to his words and ends up with a picture of the subject as a personification of his concern with words. His sense of self is so tied to his sense of language, that situating the one involves situating the other. Similarly - especially from the perspective of the character - confusions with one bring confusions with the other.

Between ear and mouth, that is where his true self lies, amidst a swarm of words. Situated first inside a head, he expands with the voices and diminishes as they fade. Deflation, not inflation, is the situation of the novel's "character development". The subject progressively deflates to a thin layer between voices. He is formed by the voices he hears, or at least that is how he comes to perceive it:

If I speak of a head, referring to me, it's because I hear it being spoken of. But why keep on saying the same thing? They hope things will change one day, it's natural. That one day on my windpipe, or some other section of the conduit, a nice little abscess will form, with an idea inside, point of departure for a general infection. This would enable me to jubilate like a normal person, knowing why. And in no time I'd be a network of fistulae, bubbling with the blessed pus of reason. (U, p. 353)

We first find Basil spiralling about the rotunda, being pulled inward. His limbs are lost in conjunction with the voices drawing him. Once inside, however, he finds only the dead remains of the narrating family. He next appears, limbless, inside a jar, though the situation shortly progresses to the further stage (entrenchment) where he is on the verge of being swallowed up. "For a collar, fixed to the mouth of the jar, now encircles my neck, just below the chin." (U, p. 332) The next evolution, seemingly inevitable, is that he is encompassed.

"... this feeling of being entirely enclosed, and yet nothing touching

me, is new. The sawdust no longer presses against my stumps, I don't know where I end." (U, p. 345)

This marks the end of Mahood's world of the slaughterhouse and the street and the beginning of Worm's voice and a new attempt to situate himself. "And sometimes I say to myself I am in a head, it's terror makes me say it, and the longing to be in safety, surrounded on all sides by massive bone." (U, p. 350) The images are explosive: as the character conceives himself to be a "pure ear" or trapped among words between ear and mouth (U, p. 355); in a pit (U, p. 358); on vast, gentle slopes (U, p. 358); lost in smoke (U, p. 359); rooted in what sounds like entrails (U, p. 364); in a dungeon (U, p. 369); in a head (U, p. 372), in Mahood's story (U, p. 377). Or perhaps he is a "... drying sperm in the sheets of an innocent boy ... some people are lucky, born of a wet dream and dead before morning, ..." (U, pp. 379-380) Maybe he is the partition, a tympanum, dividing the world in two. (U, p. 393) But what he truly fears, the terror from which he has tried to escape by means of all these images and fables is that he is caught. Trapped by his words, he is captured within his own net. "... no need of a head ... I'm in words, made of words, others' words, ... I'm all these words, all these strangers, this dust of words, ..." (U, p. 386) A man out of dust, a dust of words. He wonders whether or not, "... I am words among words, or silence in the midst of silence ..." (U, p. 388)

And to think it all started with an act of doubting, in which he grew so obsessed with his language and his own speech that he could not see beyond it or get outside of it.

... when I think of the time I've wasted with these bran-dips, beginning with Murphy, who wasn't even the first, when I had me, on the premises, within easy reach, tottering under my own skin and bones, real ones, rotting with solitude and neglect, till I doubted my own existence, and even still, today, I have no faith in it, ... (U, pp. 390-391)

The Unnamable has been reduced to words. The doubting that arose in relation to the words from his mouth is mirrored by the characterization in the novel, as the character deflates to the level of words. In that respect, the very sense of character identity is in simultaneous flux, from the speaking Basil to the spoken of, but never speaking, Worm. Indeed, it is surely significant that this final persona, Worm, never speaks, but is only spoken of. Worm has no voice of his own.

The character progression has taken us from man back to dust. The image we find complements the novel's structure by providing us with a statement on language in metaphorical form and, in so doing, acts to support the other aspect of this text to make it a long, layered metaphor of the novel.

Wittgenstein's later investigations into language have enabled us to obtain a sense of the novel as a totality of form and content. It works as a unit to undertake an inquiry into the Unnamable's medium of expression, trying to find where he stands in relationship to his words, fearing, all the way, that one slip and he'll be swallowed whole. A clever man caught in a web of words: interesting, but terrifying; with words spiralling around him, pulling him down. "... my poor thoughts, bent beneath my words ..." (U, p. 305)

The character listens to his own speech, hoping his words can help situate himself and, thereby, provide him with a sense of defini-

tion and boundaries. However, his listening leads him into a strange process in which he loses perspicuity about his language, the role words play and the use to which words may be put. What his listening process uncovers is his feeling that others are speaking and, consequently, that what he hears is not his own voice but the voice of others. The more obsessed he becomes and the longer the process is continued, the more the Unnamable suffers increasing fears that his words are not his own, that his voice has been usurped. The more turns he tries to make within this framework, the more ensnared he becomes, until he falls completely under the sway of his words. By the final frame, his story still has yet to be told. Because of this, we can infer that what remains untold implicitly continues the fibers of the rope - a rope, as this novel seems to indicate, without end.

There are a number of key elements of Wittgenstein's later remarks on philosophy that have helped to shed light on Beckett's approach to language, as expressed in the overall structure of The Unnamable, as well as its interrelating concerns of the frames within frames and the characters overlapping other characters. Of significance in clarifying the labyrinthine effect of Beckett's experimentation with language and the character's attachment to his own words are Wittgenstein's notions of language games, family resemblance, the use of words, along with the way in which the individual chooses and values words, and the solipsistic process involved in listening to one's own words. These concerns apply to the unity which gets expressed in the ways that the aspects of the novel work together to reflect an obsession with the fear and limitations of words - an obsession which the later

Wittgenstein seems only too aware of and which he devotes much of his work to facing. And where Wittgenstein's aim was "to shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle" (PI, 309), the Unnamable's is strikingly similar in the desire to escape entrapment:

... quick now and try again, with the words that remain, try what, I don't know, I've forgotten, it doesn't matter, I never knew, to have them carry me into my story, the words that remain, my old story, which I've forgotten, far from here, through the noise, through the door, into the silence.... (U, p. 413)

Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man. When this relation of dominance gets inverted, man hits upon strange maneuvers. Language becomes the means of expression. As expression, language can decay into a mere medium for the printed word. That even in such employment of language we retain a concern for care in speaking is all to the good. But this alone will never help us to escape from the inversion of the true relation of dominance between language and man. For, strictly, it is language that speaks. Man first speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal. Among all the appears that we human beings, on our part, may help to be voiced, language is the highest and everywhere the first. Language beckons us, at first and then again at the end.

Martin Heidegger

CHAPTER VI

HEIDEGGER ON LANGUAGE

AND BEING

Three of Heidegger's works center on language, the essence of language, the nature of language, the being of language, the language of being, Being and language. Since Heidegger's view of language, in contrast to that of logical atomism and the later Wittgenstein, so directly and thoroughly entails an investigation into the nature of being and personal identity, it offers both a new perspective on language, and thus another influence on contemporary views of language, as well as providing a new set of tools for examining Beckett's novel. Since the subsequent chapter will consider the latter, this chapter will concern itself with a look at Heidegger's theory of language and the inherent concept of being that it entails.

Language is not only the explicit concern of Poetry, Language, Thought¹ and On the Way to Language,² but it also underlines the implicit concern of being in these central phrases: "poetically man dwells" and "the being of language: the language of being." Language is implicit in the monumental Being and Time, where Heidegger's concept

¹ Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. and with an Introduction by Albert Hofstadter, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 215. Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, abbreviated PLT.

² Martin Heidegger, On the Way to Language, trans. Peter D. Hertz, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, abbreviated OTWL.

of being directly entails a view of language.³ Words bring things into being. Language brings being to man. Language acts as the defining characteristic of man. Man is man because of language. Heidegger's now famous phrase, "Language is the house of Being" acts as a testimony to the connection drawn between language and being in his work, a connection which the discussion here will attempt to clarify.

The interrelationship between language and being seems so paramount to Heidegger that an examination of his theory of language necessitates a consideration of his theory of being. Similarly, a consideration of his notion of an authentic/inauthentic language entails a consideration of authentic/inauthentic ways of being. As a result, we will approach the matter in terms of language and being, modes of being (authenticity and inauthenticity) and, finally, being and language (authenticity and inauthenticity). It is with this exposition that we will attempt to come to an understanding of Heidegger's philosophical approach to language, which we will use as a base, later, for looking at The Unnamable.

From Being and Time to Heidegger's later works, there was a shift in focus from being to language. In Being and Time, we find extensive discussions of man's being, referred to as Dasein by Heidegger, and the way in which language constitutes his understanding, states-of-mind, and the very modes of being. Being is seen by Heidegger to be either authentic or inauthentic according to the way in which man has listened.

³ Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). Henceforth, all references will be to this edition, abbreviated BT.

to, or alternatively ignored, the appeal of language calling him back to himself, to his own possibilities.

In Poetry, Language, Thought and On the Way to Language,

Heidegger becomes more engrossed with language as an entity, something which calls to man, is above and beyond man, and which man can understand only when he is so permitted. Language is the dominating presence, man the subservient. Heidegger considers the discussion in Being and Time to be a bit clumsy, suggesting, upon reflection, that he may have ventured too far too soon. (OTWTL, p. 7) The later works seem to extend the discussion in Being and Time to a more radical and abstract level, placing more emphasis on the poetic experience and poetic language.

In Being and Time, much of the discussion about language focuses on inauthentic, "abused" language, what Heidegger calls the "idle talk" or the language of the "they". In contrast, the later works deal with the authentic, fertile language of poetry. Because of the length and nature of this chapter, it will be divided into three parts and hopefully thereby simplified: Part One draws mainly from the later Heidegger's reflections on language; Parts Two and Three offer a closer examination, based for the most part on Being and Time, in order to deal with the effects of language on man and the nature of being with respect to language.

Part One: Language and Being

Language plays a very important role for man by providing the key and the vehicle to truth. Heidegger considers it to be a function of language to bring man before truth. Traced etymologically, truth is seen in the manner of the ancient Greeks as an unveiling, a bringing of things into light. For Heidegger, "... language, understood rightly, is the original way in which beings are brought into the open clearing of truth ..." ⁴ Given this qualification, it is by way of language, then that man can obtain understanding and get at the truth, which is spoken ~~of~~ by Heidegger as something hidden away from man and which necessitates a concerted effort to reach.

Heidegger does not believe most men to be in possession of the truth, and sees this as a basic obstacle to obtaining the right sort of understanding of language. Language itself, Heidegger contends, is veiled, obscured, misunderstood and neither spoken nor spoken of in a correct and thorough manner. Language needs an unveiling, for language is often hidden in everyday speech, Heidegger asserts, and in the foundations of thought and in theories about its own nature.

This particularly holds when we are examining language. That is, in whatever we speak of, especially language, language itself is not brought out into the open, into light. "... at whatever time and in

⁴Albert Hofstadter, Introduction to Poetry, Language, Thought, p. xiii.

whatever way we speak a language, language itself never has the floor." (OTWTL, p. 59) The nature of language continually eludes us and though an investigation into language is necessary, previous investigations have always fallen short or run aground. To Heidegger, conventional approaches, however comprehensive, have never brought us to language as language. No amount of speaking about language will provide an understanding of its nature. For Heidegger, the identification by philosophers of language in terms of utterance, the expression of inner emotions, as human activity, or as representation has only resulted in obscuring the nature of language. This is in contrast to the later Wittgenstein's contention that philosophers were bewitched and had failed to understand the nature of language precisely by failing to see its connection with human activity. And whereas Wittgenstein sought to show the fly the way out of the the fly-bottle, Heidegger declares that, "What is decisive is not to get out of the circle ["The 'circle' in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning" (BT, p. 195)] but to come into it in the right way". (BT, p. 195) In Heidegger's view, philosophers have cast a veil over "the oldest natural cast of language". (PLT, p. 193) Unlike Wittgenstein's later investigations, Heidegger's approach lead to a search for the essence of language - a quest which, as we saw in the fourth chapter, Wittgenstein had considered misguided. For Heidegger, however, it is seen to be the only approach which could uncover the nature of language and being.

Heidegger wishes to avoid speaking about language, for this very approach is misguided. Namely, it "turns language almost inevitably into an object". (OTWTL, p. 50) It is in the act of turning language

into object that there is a denial of the essence of language, for the fact denies the fact that language itself speaks. "We speak of language," Heidegger claims, "but constantly seem to be speaking merely about language, while in fact we are already letting, from within, language speak to us, in language, of itself, saying its nature". (OTWTL, p. 85)

What is meant by this is that the speaking of language or the speaking about language will not bring us to language. Heidegger believes that in everyday speech language does not bring itself to language, but holds back. It is unveiled, not in any object of study, but by its own working. Thus, no study of language would bring us to an understanding of language, for that would be arrived at only by allowing language to speak for itself. Man touches upon the essence of language by undergoing what Heidegger would say was a true experience with language.

But when does language speak itself as language? Curiously enough, when we cannot find the right word for something that concerns us, carries us away, oppresses or encourages us. Then we leave unspoken what we have in mind and, without rightly giving it thought, undergo moments in which language itself has distantly and fleetingly touched us with its essential being. (OTWTL, p. 59)

Human speech rests in relation to the speaking of language. Man does not create language - man is man because of language. Language is dominant in man's relationship to language. Language is the master of man, that which determines man's very being and, according to Heidegger, is "the house of Being".

Denying that he is doing any sort of metaphysics and adamant in the desire to avoid metaphysics altogether on the issue of the nature of language, Heidegger nevertheless creates a metaphysical image. He

refers to language as if it were higher than and outside man. Language, he says, speaks only when man listens to its appeal. It is here, in this speaking, that language reveals its true nature and the being of language becomes the language of being. Language is the subject whose being is to be determined when we can understand the role of the subject that possesses language. The language of being says that language belongs to this persisting, abiding being and language is its most distinctive property. The guide word "to speak" acts to beckon Heidegger away from current notions of language and toward an experience with language. He emphasizes the experience of language as saying, where poetry and thinking are the pre-eminent modes. (see OTWTL, pp. 94-96)

His investigation demands that language be a "given" and that it make itself available to man. Heidegger speaks in terms of what he calls the grant of language, where man's authentic attitude of thinking is not any sort of questioning, but a listening.

If we put questions to language, questions about its nature, its being, then clearly language itself must already have been granted to us. Similarly, if we want to inquire into the being of language, then that which is called nature or being must also be already granted to us. (OTWTL, p. 71)

And furthermore

No matter how we put our questions to language about its nature, first of all it is needful that language vouchsafe itself to us. If it does, the nature of language becomes the grant of its essential being, that is, the being of language becomes the language of being. (OTWTL, p. 72)

By the latter claim in the above statement Heidegger means that language bestows being in its essence. There is a solid relationship

between word and thing, whereby the word bestows being on the thing, where 'thing' designates that which exists, about which we can say 'there is'. Heidegger notes a line from Stefan George: "Where word breaks off no thing may be". (OTWTL, p. 77) For Heidegger, this signifies that the word itself is the relation, it is the word which brings things into being. Heidegger expresses this by saying that the word holds everything forth into being and there upholds it. And if the word did not have such a bearing, then everything, the world, would sink into obscurity. In short, the word gives being.

Traced in an etymological way, the relationship between word and being can be seen in even stronger terms. That is, the concepts of being and saying intersect at the point the Greeks called logos.

... the relation between thing and word is among the earliest matters to which Western thinking gives voice and word, and does so in the form of the relation between being and saying. This relation assaults thinking in such an overpowering manner that it announces itself in a single word, The word is logos. It speaks simultaneously as the name for Being and for Saying. (OTWTL, p. 80)

The term 'logos' reinforces the relationship between being and saying, where a true understanding of the one unveils the essence of the other. In turn, this reinforces the idea of our starting point as that of language bringing man into the clearing of truth, before the unveiling of essential being.

As mentioned earlier, the unveiling of the essential being of language is like the peeling away of a multitude of veils, where the removal of one layer reveals another yet to go. The relationship between being and saying only took us so far: if we want to get a basic understanding of language, we must be willing to trace its constitutive

elements and find the interconnection making up what is essentially language.

"The essential being of language", writes Heidegger, "is Saying as Showing". (OTWTL, p. 123) Heidegger suggests that we follow von Humboldt in beginning with the speaking process and then forming an idea of the nature of language. From there it becomes necessary to ascertain all that belongs to the design of the being of language and then come to language as saying. (see OTWTL, p. 125) In order to clarify this, Heidegger continues the process of unveiling by taking a step back to reveal the moving force behind the showing. Heidegger calls this "Owning", explaining that the showing brings beings into their own and who thereby show themselves, "in what they are, and where they abide according to their kind". (OTWTL, p. 127) Unfortunately, any confusion over what "abiding according to their kind" may exactly signify or, indeed, exactly what "Owning" means, will get no clarification from Heidegger. He contends that, "We can do no more than name it [Owning], because it will not be discussed, for it is the region of all places, of all time-space horizons". (OTWTL, p. 127)

Heidegger claims that the moving force behind the disclosure made possible by the "Owning" is what he terms, "the Appropriation". This he sees as a kind of prime mover, that which cannot be derived from anything else and that which cannot be explained in terms of any other concept. The appropriating event, Heidegger explains, is what gives us such things as a "there is"; a "there is" of which even being itself stands in need, in order to come into its own as a presence. It is

because of appropriation that humans may be capable of being those who speak, we speak our own appropriate already spoken language. "When mortals are made appropriate for Saying, human nature is released into that needfulness out of which man is used for bringing soundless Saying to the sound of language." (OTWIL, p. 129) Appropriation allows saying to reach speech. Appropriation is the way-making for saying to come into language, since all true language is assigned, sent and destined to man by the way-making movement of saying. Ultimately, it would seem that we cannot really comprehend this general picture, because:

We are not capable of seeing the nature of language in the round because we, who can only say something by saying it after Saying, belong ourselves within Saying. The monologue character of the nature of language finds its structure in the disclosing design of Saying. (OTWIL, p. 134)

So that it is language alone which speaks authentically, and we can understand the nature of language, only to the extent that it is revealed to us.

In order to be who we are, we human beings remain committed to and within the being of language, and can never step out of it and look at it from somewhere else. Thus we always see the nature of language only to the extent to which language itself has us in view, has appropriated us to itself. (OTWIL, p. 134)

In the neighborhood of saying lies the essential nature of language, where poetry and thinking are both considered to be modes of saying.

Heidegger relates this to the old Norse term, 'saga', in which to say meant to show, to make appear, to set free, to light and to conceal what we call the world. Thinking need not be any more effective than poetry in bringing the essence of language to light. Exactly what

thinking can do depends on man's ability to listen. This applies as well as to speaking. Heidegger considers speaking to be the articulated vocalization of thought. And speech, like thinking, is a listening to the language which is spoken. Man does not merely speak a language, he speaks by way of language. What thinking and speaking can do depends on whether the being of language is heard speaking as the language of being.

Speaking qua saying something belongs to the design of the being of language, where the modes of saying bring to light what constitutes the world. In its ability to do this, Heidegger calls language "the relation of all relations", for it is by the very relation of word to thing that the world is brought to light, that things are given their being.

Poetry and the poetic experience play special roles in the speaking of language. Heidegger speaks of authenticity with regard to poetry, for he believes poetry has a purity like that of no other expression of language. This is explained by Hofstadter in this way:

Authentic language, which has not lost its magical potency by being used up and abused, is poetry; there is no significant difference between them. What is spoken purely is - a poem ...⁵

In his response to poetry, man "authentically listens" to the appeal of language. Heidegger contends that the purity of poetic speech achieves a level of language unattainable by everyday speech. Where Heidegger speaks of poetry in terms of magic and potency, he speaks of everyday speech in terms of impotency. For the most part, everyday

⁵Ibid.

speech is seen by Heidegger as inauthentic and more or less a dead language. The poet is regarded as attuned to language and the poet's relationship to language a more painstaking one than is otherwise found. In everyday speech, however, man does not truly listen to language, but speaks without really hearing what is being said, where thought is as stale as the words and phrases it trails behind. In logic, linguistics, and philosophy, man does not really hear language either; for he is too busy with his dissection and too captivated by a preconceived idea of what language is, and this results in his dealing in a narrow realm of propositions and truth values.

Language is neither expression nor activity. Language speaks. Language brings being to man, not man to language. For Heidegger, the best place to find the speaking of language is in the poem. "Accordingly, what we seek", Heidegger asserts, "lies in the poetry of the spoken word". (PLT, p. 197) It is poetry that can unveil language to us. Just as language provides the house, the keeper, of being present; poetry brings man onto the earth, bringing him into dwelling. Heidegger quotes Holderin in saying "poetically man dwells". (PLT, p. 213) Because of poetry, man belongs to the earth.

Heidegger speaks of poetry, just as he does of language, as if it were a kind of entity that man can come to, draw upon, respond to, but even then only when he is called up, when he "authentically listens". At no time can the relationship of man to language or man to poetry be taken for granted. Rather, it is something which language has made open to man. In discussing man's capacity for poetry, Heidegger writes,

The poetic is the basic capacity for human dwelling.
But man is capable of poetry at any time only to the

degree to which his being is appropriate to that which itself has a liking for man and therefore needs his presence. Poetry is authentic or inauthentic according to the degree of this appropriation. (PLT, p. 228)

Authentic language is poetry. Authentic poetry, it seems, is a kind of language -- language at its purest. Poetry brings man into its circle, draws him into the open clearing of truth, in which the essence of a thing is made clear, unveiling, by means of the word, the true nature of the thing which it has named.

We speak and speak about language. What we speak of, language, is always ahead of us. Our speaking merely follows language constantly.... Accordingly, when we speak of language we remain entangled in a speaking that is persistently inadequate. This tangle debars us from the matters that are to make themselves known to our thinking. But this tangle, ... drops away as soon as we take notice of the peculiar properties of the way of thought, that is, as soon as we look about us in the country where thinking abides. This country is everywhere open to the neighborhood of poetry. (OTWTL, p. 75)

This emphasis by Heidegger, which considers the poetic experience and the language of poetry as revealing the essence of language and the nature of being, takes us on a track distinct from our two earlier theories. In contrast to the logical atomists, Heidegger turns away from logic, with analysis as the base for getting at the essence of language and the world. Heidegger's path is also in contrast with Wittgenstein's plea for a description of everyday language as the route to the most fruitful investigation into language while, simultaneously, deploring the struggle to dig under the surface in an attempt to uncover hidden essences. Heidegger, like the atomists, thinks that talk of essences makes sense and the search is both possible and potentially fruitful; yet, unlike Russell and the early Wittgenstein, he rejects

traditional logical or philosophical analysis as the preferred methodology. Heidegger opts for an almost mystical emphasis on poetry, while underlining the interrelationship of language and being and, as we shall see, the modes of authenticity and inauthenticity.

Part Two: Modes of Being, Authenticity and Inauthenticity

Everyone is the Other, and no one is himself. The "they", which supplies the answer to the question of the "who" of everyday Dasein, is the "nobody" to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in Being-among-one-another. (BT, pp. 164-166)

Heidegger sees most individual persons as lost, or as he says, dispersed into the "they", the crowd, the masses. It is not necessarily the case, it just proximally and for the most part is the case. Individuals are fallen, scattered, carried away by the "they". This is the everyday state of affairs in the life of a human being, or so Heidegger contends in Being and Time, which delves into the question of being, what it means to be. By such delving, we find the different modes in which one can be. The focus of this and the subsequent section, which concern authenticity and inauthenticity in being and, later, language, provides much of the groundwork for examining Beckett in the next chapter. There we consider the extent to which the notion of the theyself applies to the position of the character in The Unnamable.

Two of the most crucial modifications of being, in Heidegger's view, are the authentic and inauthentic ways in which one can be a Dasein. Heidegger uses the term 'authenticity' any number of times, although he never explicitly defines the term or tells us how this concept is to be employed. We might consider this to be no oversight on Heidegger's part, but consistent with the manner in which he approaches the nature of being or the two modes of being. From Heidegger's claim that being is "in each case mine", we can infer that it is the lived,

the active being and not the abstract or theoretical concept which should be of interest.

Certainly the authentic and inauthentic modes of being have no real meaning apart from Dasein. This is the reason why the terms appear in the discussions of Dasein's everydayness and those of the concerned stances of Dasein, such as Being-towards-Death, conscience and care. Any understanding of the authentic and inauthentic modes will only result from an integration of the ways in which the terms are discussed with regard to Dasein.

It is in accordance with the kernel, 'eigen', of the composite German word 'eigentlichkeit' that the translation, authenticity, is first considered in conjunction with 'mineness', a term used to convey a particular state which characterizes Dasein. This is the fact that Dasein is "in each case mine", or, simply, that Dasein refers to individual persons; you, me, him, rather than general notions like 'mankind'. The latter term, unlike 'Dasein', is an abstract concept applicable not to individuals but to the collective mass of human beings. 'Dasein', however, relates to each particular person, and the significance of the German word is that there is no English correlate that can so aptly convey the sense of being there, a human being thrown into the world, within which he must live and, thereby, develop himself as a person through his plans and projects and ways of being.

This is another reason the weight of 'eigentlichkeit' is upon the 'eigen', for this underlines the individual element of Dasein. 'Eigen' means own or owned and, thus 'eigentlichkeit' can be translated as "the state of being one's own". This is the direction Heidegger takes, as

he says in the following way:

... only in so far as it [Dasein] is essentially something which can be authentic - that is, something of its own - can it have lost itself and not yet won itself. As modes of Being, authenticity and inauthenticity (these expressions have been chosen terminologically in a strict sense) are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness. (BT, p. 68)

Heidegger specifies that 'authentic' is to indicate "something of its own" and, as we might expect, the notion of a possessor thereby enters in. That is, Heidegger considers the "its own" in the most possessive sense, by contrasting the authentic Dasein with the they-self, who, most literally it would seem, has been possessed by the 'they'; that is, the general others, the nobody and everybody of the general public who, as possessor, act to control and dominate the Dasein who, in turn, is no longer "its own". In this latter case, the Dasein can be said to have "lost itself".

Basic to the concepts of 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity' is that of 'mineness'. Heidegger contends that, "any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness". (BT, p. 78) Mineness provides the grounding, the framework of authenticity and inauthenticity. Furthermore, "mineness belongs to any existent Dasein, and belongs to it as the condition which makes authenticity and inauthenticity possible". (BT, p. 78) Mineness exists wherever Dasein exists. Specifically, mineness is something which is only found in a Dasein. Other entities do not possess this state or condition.

The link between authenticity and mineness is that mineness is the condition making authenticity and inauthenticity possible, and, in that sense, it is a priori. It is a condition which underlines any

authentic state. It is as if one has to be able to be owned, lost or won before one can ever speak about someone being "one's own" or having "lost itself". It is mineness which makes the conditions of authenticity and inauthenticity conceivable and actual. But mineness, itself, is neither a familiar nor a readily comprehensible concept. The actual construction of the word resembles words like 'shortness', 'fatness', 'meanness', 'kindness', and so on. In all these cases, it is a state of being (short, fat, mean, kind, etc.) which has been consummated. But what of 'mineness'? Following the formula, we would arrive at a notion of mineness as the state of being mine or, in other words, the state of being one's own self or one's own person. Yet this is, in effect, what authenticity seems to encompass. Since mineness is to be found in every Dasein, it is therefore found in every inauthentic Dasein and, thus, it would be absurd to speak of a Dasein who is his own person but has lost himself.

Let us try another approach. If it is, as the construction suggests, a state of being ... what the '...' would actually signify is dealt with by Heidegger, when he claims that, "Dasein is an entity which is in each case I myself; its Being is in each case mine.... this tells us ontically (though in rough and ready fashion) that in each case an 'I' - not Others - is this entity" (BT, p. 150)⁶

We might conclude that mineness can be said to be the state of being my own being. Heidegger's point seems to be that speaking of Dasein is speaking about oneself and that Dasein's being is my own

⁶'Ontical' is used by Heidegger to refer to entities and the facts about them, whereas 'ontological' is concerned with being.

being. And if we think of 'sein' as 'to be' rather than 'being', we would more comfortably say that to be a Dasein is to be me, myself.

With the introduction into consideration of the Other, and particularly the they-self, the question of authenticity, being "something of its own", becomes a question of identity. It is here with the they-self that inauthenticity gets its fullest explication. Much of Heidegger's investigation into being relates to the significance of the they in helping mold the inauthentic mode, with its most prevalent instance being the they-self. We will now turn to an examination of this concept; but, first, we should note that the inauthentic Dasein is not to be equated with the they-self. The they-self is inauthentic by virtue of being an instance of inauthenticity. This is mentioned, since confusion is created by Heidegger's frequent use of the terms 'inauthentic' and 'they-self' as if they were interchangeable. Indeed, it could be argued that the distinction between authentic and inauthentic gets transformed in the discussion of the they-self to one between authentic and they-self. To the extent that this takes place, the terms are made to be interchangeable.

Heidegger starts his discussion of the they-self with the warning: "It could be that the 'who' of everyday Dasein just is not the 'I myself'." (BT, p. 150) Everyday Dasein is the most prevalent way in which a Dasein is inauthentic and, as such, it is not "something of its own". It has no identity as an individual.

... Dasein, as everyday Being-with-one-another, stands in subjection to Others. It itself is not; its Being has been taken away by the Others. Dasein's everyday possibilities of Being are for the Others to dispose of as they please. (BT, p. 164)

In saying that the Being of everyday Dasein has been "taken away" and that it "is not", Heidegger is not trying to suggest that this Dasein is no longer a person or no longer a living human being. Rather, it "is not" in the sense of not being open to its own possibilities and choices. Everyday Dasein only perceives in actualities, not possibilities, and is not open to what is possible for it. Since Others are making those possibilities known to it by being in control of the Dasein, the channels which are open are, as it were, pre-set by these Others. The Others "dispose of" everyday Dasein's possibilities and, in so doing, eliminate them. As a consequence, it seems that once a Dasein has had its possibilities "taken away", in essence its very identity would be annihilated.

The term 'they-self' is used by Heidegger to provide a marked contrast with the oneself of an authentic Dasein and, in so doing, convey a sense of no-identity or mass-identity. Because of this, Heidegger can speak of the everyday Dasein as a nobody, for its "lostness in the they" indicates that it has no hold on its own self or, inclusively, its own possibilities. Look at the contrast: the authentic Dasein who is "something of its own" and who "has been taken hold of in its own way" is distinguished from the inauthentic everyday Dasein, the they-self, who has "lost itself" in the they and been "dispersed".

By virtue of having "lost itself" into the crowd and thus having the being of everyday Dasein "taken away" from it, everyday Dasein, the they-self, is a specific instance of inauthentic Dasein. This is borne out by Heidegger's way of referring to the they-self. He speaks of getting carried away by the Others, dispersed and scattered amidst

them. On the other hand, the authentic Dasein has "hold of itself".

As Heidegger explains,

The Self of everyday Dasein is the they-self, which we distinguish from the authentic Self - that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way. As they-self, the particular Dasein has been dispersed into the 'they', and must first find itself.... (BT, p. 167)

The 'they' is seen by Heidegger to be the anonymous member of the masses, the conforming and unquestioning self that is most present in the individual. It is the 'they', writes Heidegger, who "... supplies the answer to the question of the 'who' of everyday Dasein, is the 'no-body' to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in Being-among-one-another". (BT, pp. 164-166)

Furthermore, there is danger in the elusiveness of this persona. "The more openly the 'they' behaves, the harder it is to grasp, and the slier it is, but the less is it nothing at all." (BT, p. 166) The trouble is that the 'they' is the most real subject of everydayness. The they is not a genus to which individual Dasein belongs, but is itself an existentielle, or what Heidegger called a primordial phenomenon. That is, the they is an ontological category, a mode of being open to Dasein. It has ways and different possibilities of becoming concrete as characteristics of Dasein. Presumably, two such ways are the they-self and the authentic self. In the former mode, the they acts to prescribe Dasein's way of interpreting the world. The they-self takes over, unchecked, in this mode. In the mode of the authentic self, however, Dasein acts to strip away the prescriptions of the they and see its world on its own terms. The authentic self removes, metaphori-

cally, the blinders set by the they-self. The way in which the they act is discussed by Heidegger, who says,

Proximally Dasein is 'they', and for the most part it remains so. If Dasein discovers the world in its own way and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing-away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way. (BT, p. 167)

Heidegger thus establishes a significant relationship between the authentic Dasein and the they, wherein the one is but a modification of the other. The interconnection is that the they, as an existentiale and, hence, a state or mode of being, is primary. The self of an everyday Dasein is the they-self and, as such, is no real modification of the essential mode. The authentic Dasein is ontically but a modification of this they.

There seems to be some ambiguity about the term 'they' in Heidegger's discussion, for he uses it in widely diverging ways. Namely, it is the answer to the question 'who?'; a subject that can exhibit certain behavior and is difficult to grasp; something that can be sly, yet not accessible like a stone, and finally it is an existentiale of which authentic self is a modification. Quite a range.

Heidegger himself concedes,

That even traditional logic fails us when confronted with these phenomena, is not surprising if we bear in mind that it has its foundation in an ontology of the present-at-hand - an ontology, which, moreover, is still a rough one. So no matter in how many ways this logic may be improved and expanded, it cannot in principle be made any more flexible. (BT, pp. 166-167)

The issue seems to have grown in complexity. First, Heidegger's explication of authenticity was "something of its own" and, later, as

having "hold of itself", while the inauthentic Dasein is "lost" and "dispersed". In both cases, the grounding is provided by mineness, which gives both modes their possibility. Now he has expanded the picture by bringing the they into the explication of the concepts. In Heidegger's defense, however, this introduction does not invalidate or obscure the force of the previous deliberations, for the they, as an existentielle, is just an ontological fact of a subject. Authenticity, made possible by the mineness which characterizes Dasein, is obtained when a modification has been made upon this basic, essential state.

The question then is, who makes this modification? Certainly not the they, since it is already a primary state and the they-self is inauthentic, not authentic. It would seem that any modification into authenticity would be done by the Dasein itself. Our next question must then be, how is this possible? It is, as we shall consider shortly, a "call" of conscience which acts as the catalyst to roust the Dasein from the they-self mode into which it has fallen.

In the explication integrating the concepts of authentic self, they-self and they, there seems to be a difficulty with Heidegger's attempt to assert the "ownness", so to speak, of the authentic self and contrast it with the they-self, which has no sense of being its own. At the same time, he does not wish to imply that the authentic self is one separated from the world. For that matter, even Being-alone is a way of Being-with others. Heidegger wants to establish Dasein's relation to Others and to the world, and yet distinguish how it is to have hold of itself through its authenticity and be released

from the subjection to Others.⁷

One of the ways that he tries to clarify this is with respect to understanding. Understanding, Heidegger attests, can be "... either authentic, arising out of one's own Self as such, or inauthentic. The 'in-' of 'inauthentic' does not mean that Dasein cuts itself off from its Self and understands "only" the world ..." (BT, p. 186) Obviously, the inauthentic Dasein neither cuts itself off from the world nor only understands it. This can be shown by the "fact" that mineness provides the grounding of both authenticity and inauthenticity. Consequently, it is not that inauthentic Dasein has cut itself off from its Self, but that it has more likely lost contact with that Self. Others are now directing it.

The inauthentic self is not in control of its own possibilities, for it has lost itself to the Others and, as a result, can no longer say, "I myself". But this does not signify that the inauthentic self is in attunement with the world and has forsaken "self-knowledge" for "worldly-knowledge". Hardly. They are considered inseparable to Heidegger. Being is not an isolated entity, nor can it be isolated from the world. The fact of being dispersed into the world, as happens to the they-self, entails no increased acquaintance with the world. In fact, there is more likely to be a decreased awareness of it. What Heidegger calls Dasein's "opaqueness" is rooted as much in a lack of acquaintance with the world as in any egocentric self-deception. (see BT, p. 187)

⁷This is a concern which reaches the level of obsession in The Unnamable and, hence, will be examined in the next chapter.

Heidegger associates the everyday state of being with being "fallen". "Falling" is a kind of being which belongs to everydayness and is meant to indicate that Dasein is "... proximally and for the most part alongside the 'world' of its concern". (BT, p. 220) Dasein has thereby fallen away from itself as regards its authentic potentialities and has fallen into the world. Although Heidegger asserts that this is not a fall from a higher status, nevertheless, he speaks of the movement as a "downward plunge". This fall or plunge is, "out of itself into itself, into the groundlessness and nullity of inauthentic everydayness". (BT, p. 223)

It might be asked how Dasein can plunge into a state of groundlessness, when we have already been informed that inauthenticity, in addition to authenticity, is grounded (by virtue of the characterization of mineness which is present in every Dasein). Apparently the sense of "ground" is used differently here. Heidegger must mean that everydayness is groundless in that Dasein is absorbed into the world. It has lost its Self in Others and no ground can be obtained until Dasein has recovered its Self and has thereby become an authentic being. At that point, it would no longer be an everyday Self. The fact of nullity is simply that of the "is not" of everyday Dasein. There is no longer any Being-one's-Self, for here in the condition of the everyday Dasein is the fact that there is no self of which the Dasein has hold. Because of this, Heidegger speaks of inauthenticity as "Not-being-its-Self".

Another way in which Heidegger characterizes the nullity of everydayness is by referring to the everyday Self as being in the

"untruth"⁸ "Because Dasein is essentially falling, its state of Being is such that it is in 'untruth'." (BT, p. 264) As well, Heidegger says, "... Dasein, as factual, is in the 'untruth'". (BT, p. 301)

It is in this correlation, that Heidegger establishes a connection between authenticity/truth and inauthenticity/untruth. As noted in the first part, Heidegger resorts to an ancient Greek conception of truth as disclosure, of unveiling, of laying things bare and bringing the essence of a thing into the light. He then proceeds to interpret untruth as a covering-up, a making something hidden, a disguising of the truth. He cites Parmenides, who, under the guidance of the goddess of Truth, is offered paths of uncovering (truth) and of hiding (untruth), from which Heidegger concludes that this signifies to us that Dasein is already in both truth and untruth. (BT, p. 265)

If we attempt to integrate this with the consideration of everyday Dasein as being in a state of groundlessness and nullity, we might consider Heidegger to be arguing that everyday Dasein is not literally without ground, but that it has hidden its grounding from itself. Similarly with nullity, wherein the "is not" does not signify that Dasein is no longer in existence, but that it is no longer transparent to itself. Its opaqueness, like the untruth, has acted to veil the Self from itself. It is for this reason that Heidegger can speak of the falling of Dasein as being "out of itself into itself". It is not that it has cut itself off from its own self, but that everyday Dasein

⁸This is a concept that, as we will see in the discussion of the next chapter, has relevance to The Unnamable.

has lost itself, has hidden its Self away by an absorption into the they.

The analogy between truth and authenticity gets extended further. It only makes sense to speak of untruth against a background of truth, of hiding only when there is something that can be hidden, and, similarly, it is only possible to speak of inauthenticity against a framework of authenticity. Heidegger expresses this in terms of possibilities. He says, "... inauthenticity is based on the possibility of authenticity. Inauthenticity characterizes a kind of Being into which Dasein can divert itself and has for the most part always diverted itself ..." (BT, p. 303)

We can only speak of inauthenticity if we have the alternative, authenticity, open to us, just as we can only speak of dishonesty against a background of honesty, unhappiness against a background of happiness, untruth against a background of truth.

The instance in which the modes of authenticity and inauthenticity are most significant for Dasein is in the case of dealing with death. How the authentic Dasein sees its own death is crucial. "Death is Dasein's ownmost possibility. Being towards this possibility discloses to Dasein its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, in which its very Being is the issue". (BT, p. 307)

The authentic Dasein must project itself upon this ownmost potentiality-for-Being. The key word here is potentiality. For the they-self, death is an actuality, it is not a possibility with which we are faced. To the 'they' death is a fact, something with which we are all faced at one time or another, it is morbid to dwell on it, sure you will die sometime, but not right now, it is a vague certainty, ho hum.

The everyday manner towards death is an evasion of the confrontation with serious consideration for what it means for one's own life. It is stripped of its uttermost significance to Dasein. For the authentic Dasein, however, death is something to be anticipated. It is seen as an ever-present possibility, whose actualization will signify Dasein's end. The authentic Dasein chooses to accept this fact and, subsequently, this acts as a perspective against which decisions are made. When Dasein is able to make its own choices, decide for a potentiality-for-Being, and pull itself from the they, then "... Dasein makes possible, first and foremost, its authentic potentiality-for-Being". (BT, p. 313)

In Heidegger's view, there exists something which attests to this potentiality, namely the "voice of conscience" which acts to "call" Dasein back to itself and thus back to its own possibilities and authenticity. That which "calls" Dasein back from its lostness in the they and which has hitherto gone unrecognized and unnamed is the conscience. Conscience is a fact for only Dasein, it exists for no other entity.

Furthermore, Heidegger claims that,

The demand that an 'inductive empirical proof' should be given for the 'factuality' of conscience and for the legitimacy of its 'voice', rests upon an ontological perversion of the phenomenon ... Among such proofs and counterproofs, the Fact of conscience cannot present itself at all. (BT, pp. 313-314)

Heidegger explains how the conscience manifests itself by introducing another of his crucial concepts - care. Conscience, says Heidegger, manifests itself as the call of care, where the caller is Dasein calling, through care, to itself. Dasein is summoned out of its falling into the 'they' by the appeal made by this call. Its effectiveness may be linked to its rootedness. Namely, "The call of

conscience - that is, conscience itself - has its ontological possibility in the fact that Dasein, in the very basis of its Being, is care". (BT, p. 322)

As a consequence, we need not look away from Dasein to find the source of the conscience, for it lies in Dasein's own being. "... conscience, in its basis and its essence, is in each case mine ..." (BT, p. 323) Thus it is the conscience that acts upon Dasein to find itself and become an authentic being. In so doing, the inauthentic they-self gets modified to become an authentic Being-one's-Self. It is by virtue of the call of conscience that the modification is accomplished and Dasein has brought itself back from being lost in the they. The they-self is modified when the Dasein brings itself back from the they and then becomes authentic. This takes place when "... the Self of the they-self gets appealed to and brought to hear ..." and then the they collapses. (BT, p. 317) In this way, the Self is brought to itself by the call of conscience.

Heidegger emphasizes that this call is not a call to judgement or to "fussy introspection", but more of a summons. It is a summons to Dasein's ownmost possibilities, its "ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self". (BT, p. 318) This is manifested in a kind of uncanniness, something which is unfamiliar to the oblivious they-self. The call is then individualized, not issuing forth from any public conscience, which would merely be a voice of the they and only another way of blinding Dasein to its possibilities.

Let us now try to coordinate this picture with the earlier conception of the interrelationship of the authentic self, they-self and

the they. We must recall that the they-self is but an inauthentic self, albeit a particular kind. Previously it was claimed that the authentic self is a modification of the they, then later that inauthenticity is based on the possibility of authenticity, and is a kind of being from which Dasein usually diverted itself. Although the issues of authenticity and inauthenticity seem hopelessly intertwined, we may see the assimilation as it has slowly evolved throughout the progress of Heidegger's treatise. Namely, authenticity is a modification of the they, but is so by virtue of an action taken upon the they-self. That is, it is the they-self, more specifically, of which the authentic self is a modification and is so because of the dissolution, the collapse of the they when the Self of the they-self receives the call. This implies that if we strip away the they from the they-self, we will have left a Self which, so modified, becomes the "authentic Being-one's-Self".

The picture is one of truth hidden under the layers of untruth in such a way that it has been effectively disguised. Analogously, it seems that the authentic Self was lurking all along under the they-self which, when stripped of the they, is changed in a way that is now authentic.

Dasein is as much in truth as in untruth. And with mineness as the groundwork, Dasein has authenticity as open to it as inauthenticity. Furthermore, just as Dasein is factually for the most part in the untruth, so too is Dasein proximally for the most part inauthentic (in the guise of the they-self). The untruth disguises and hides the truth which is still no less present, but merely obscured. Similarly, inauthenticity, by the persuasiveness of the they, hides, disguises and

otherwise obscures authenticity from Dasein, even though all along the possibility of authenticity remains open to the Self. It only awaits the jarring ("uncanny") call of conscience to reveal that the potentiality for being has been there all this time.

Part Three: Being and Language, Authenticity and Inauthenticity

Language has been called "the house of Being". It is the keeper of being present, in that its coming to light remains entrusted to the appropriating show of Saying. Language is the house of Being because language, as Saying, is the mode of Appropriation. (OTWTL, p. 135)

Language is not a shelter or dwelling of being, as in something which hides being, disguising its properties. It is more a house, in the way of a foundation which brings being to light. Heidegger suggests that the confusion caused by this phrase rests on an ambiguity about 'Being'. The expression was not meant to signify a metaphysical representation of beings, but rather the presence of being, or, more precisely, the presence of 'Being' and being. Heidegger claims that what really mattered in Being and Time and his later works was the attempt to bring out the "Being of beings", i.e., the presence of present beings, the fact that something is, in Dasein, the kind of being which man is. And it is language which brings being to man. Language is the reason why man is man.

When Heidegger discusses man's existence, Dasein, Being-in-the-world, he speaks of language in terms of discourse or talk. (see Being and Time, section 34) Here it is that Heidegger contends that, "The existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse or talk". (BT, p. 203) Discourse is constitutive for Dasein's existence, since language provides the defining character of man. Language is the way in which discourse gets expressed, a totality of words, an entity within the world. Discourse is the articulation of man's intelligibility.

"Discoursing or talking", Heidegger explains, "is the way in which we articulate 'significantly' the intelligibility of Being-in-the-world".

(BT, p. 204)

Discourse, or talk, has a very important unveiling quality, which is the help it gives in disclosing Dasein in its relationship with others in the world and in permitting a disclosure of being to take place. Heidegger emphasizes that an existent Dasein is a Being-in-the-world and, as such, is always open and opened-up to the world. It is specifically through discourse that Being-with becomes explicitly shared. Heidegger does not consider Dasein separate from the world, nor does he consider talking an expression of something either internal or locked-away from the world to be brought out through speech. This would deny what Heidegger sees as the fact of Dasein's presence in the world, the fact that Dasein is by its very nature a part of the world, thrown into the world.

Dasein is a Being-in-the-world in its very existence. Talking, as expression, reveals this quality.

In talking, Dasein expresses itself, not because it has, in the first instance, been encapsulated as something 'internal' over against something outside, but because as Being-in-the-world it is already 'outside' when it understands. (BT, p. 205)

Heidegger contends that what is actually expressed in the discourse is this Being-outside and that this is the way in which Dasein has a state-of-mind, or mood. This state-of-mind is made known by discourse and indicated by the way one speaks - the intonation, tempo, modulation, etc. What happens in poetic discourse is that the communication of the possibilities of Dasein's state-of-mind can become an aim in itself

which, in turn, amounts to a disclosure of existence. In this manner of disclosing, poetry's unveiling qualities are further enhanced and again the significance of the poetic in the expression of language is underlined.⁹

Two important possibilities open to discursive speech are hearing and keeping silent. If Dasein fails to hear correctly, its own understanding is going to be impaired. Hearing, as constitutive for discourse, is basic to Dasein's openness to others, as well as for its own potential.

Listening to ... is Dasein's existential way of Being-open as Being-with for Others. Indeed, hearing constitutes the primary and authentic way in which Dasein is open for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being - as in hearing the voice of the friend whom every Dasein carries with it. Dasein hears, because it understands.
(BT, p. 206)

The other possibility for discourse is connected. That is, silence same existential foundation as hearing: both are based upon understanding. Only the person who already understands can listen and only he who already has something to say can keep silent. Neither talking at length nor keeping completely silent offers any guarantee that understanding is being advanced (as our own experience may confirm). In order to get an understanding of discourse, Heidegger suggests that we inquire into the basic forms in which it is possible to articulate anything understandable and resolve to ask what kind of being goes with language in

⁹This would probably be seen by the later Wittgenstein as being both an over-simplification, by virtue of all the different roles and properties of poetry, and misguided, by virtue of ignoring all the other aspects and uses to which language might be put and the varying language games that are found.

general. The emphasis is upon the ontological locus of the phenomenon of language as resting in Dasein's state of being and, thus, any analysis of language must take as a clue the fundamental kind of being belonging to discourse. Consequently, much of the significance is placed on the everydayness of Dasein. And the fact that this is generally an inauthentic state of being is crucial to our consideration, and will be applied to The Unnamable in the next chapter.

Since Dasein is, for the most part, absorbed in the they and controlled by it, we need to turn our examination to an analysis of the way of understanding and interpreting which belongs to the they. What this means, is that we must look at the everyday kind of being of discourse, sight, and interpretation as the ways in which the they is disclosed in its inauthenticity. To do this, we will focus upon the "idle talk" of the they, with the accompanying curiosity and ambiguity and the way in which they come together in the fallenness of Dasein, taking it to the depths which responds only to the call of conscience to bring Dasein back to authenticity. How this gets laid out by Heidegger is our next concern.

"Idle talk" constitutes the kind of being of everyday Dasein's understanding and interpreting. For the most part, discourse is expressed by being spoken out, as language and discourse which expresses itself in communication. In Heidegger's assessment, there lies in language an average intelligibility and what is spoken of gets understood only approximately and superficially. Communication obscures the relationship between Dasein and the subject of the discourse. Because of the breakdown that communication has undergone, discoursing

... does not communicate in such a way as to let this entity [talked about] be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of gossiping and passing the word along ... Idle talk is constituted by just such gossiping and passing the word along ... [and] even spreads to what we write, where it takes the form of 'scribbling'. (BT, p. 212)

Idle talk is groundless, there is no sense of any bearing or truth to what is being conveyed by it.¹⁰ It encourages being passed on to others, being made public. Furthermore, with idle talk taking place on such a public level, there is no genuine understanding at its root. Although everything gets more and more obscured, it is, at the same time, accessible and familiar to everyone. Idle talk allows Dasein to understand everything without taking it to heart, "without previously making the thing one's own". (BT, p. 213) Any attempt at genuine understanding is discouraged. Idle talk develops, because of its accessibility, an indiscriminate, undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, wherein there are no requirements nor any expectation that Dasein will give much thought to what is being said.

Idle talk is like the untruth: it closes things off, obscures and veils entities within the world. Instead of disclosing or bringing things into light, idle talk acts as a perversion of language, closing off any real understanding.

One of the repercussions of idle talk is the manner in which Dasein is affected. "The everyday way idle talk has interpreted things determines the average understanding, claims Heidegger. Furthermore,

¹⁰ Idle talk, as the general level of discourse, is a useful concept in understanding some of the character's concerns in The Unnamable, so we shall be seeing its application in the next chapter.

it is this understanding which provides the framework against which and within which all genuine understanding, interpreting, communicating and appropriating takes place. Consequently, Dasein is dominated by the they as it gets its expression in the average understanding. It becomes a quagmire in which Dasein has gotten caught and from which there is little possibility of extrication. Heidegger discusses the powerful influence this has on Dasein:

The dominance of the public way in which things have been interpreted has already been decisive even for the possibilities of having a mood - that is, for the basic way in which Dasein lets the world "matter" to it. The "they" prescribes one's state-of-mind and determines what and how one 'sees'. (BT, p. 213)

The extent of the influence of the they is matched by the anonymous ways in which it gets voiced. Heidegger discusses how the insidious power of the they takes hold in the following passage:

In utilizing public means of transport and in making use of information services such as the newspaper, every Other is like the next. This Being-with-one-another dissolves one's own Dasein completely into the kind of Being of 'the Others', in such a way, indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more. In this inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the "they" is unfolded. We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as they shrink back; we find 'shocking' what they find shocking. The "they", which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribe the kind of Being of everydayness. (BT, p. 164)

Dasein falls into idle talk when its understanding has been uprooted. That is, idle talk cuts Dasein off from any genuine relationship of being toward the world, others and itself. Heidegger sees this as "floating unattached", a condition which is Dasein's everyday state and its most persistent reality. It is not a form of "not-Being", but the

most stubborn and common way in which Dasein is. Yet it is a way of being which is completely inauthentic.

Along with idle talk, Heidegger notes that curiosity and ambiguity are basic to everyday Dasein. Curiosity is a way of seeing and a general approach to the world. It is based on a desire to look around, seeking novelty only long enough to leap onward to another novelty.

There is no desire for a true understanding of the world, no search for truth - only for distraction. Jumping from one thing to another means that Dasein is constantly uprooting itself. Curiosity and idle talk go hand in hand, with the one dragging the other along with it. Together they guarantee Dasein a "lively" time and together they characterize the inauthentic, everyday way of being. The other trait which accompanies idle talk and curiosity as inherent to everyday Dasein is ambiguity. This pertains not only to the world but to Dasein's way of being with others, as well as with itself.

Idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity are all interconnected, working together to keep everyday being at a fast pace, racing from one thing to the next without any real understanding of what is happening. Nothing is lasting in the public eye, since they create a continual series of conceptual fads. "Idle talk and curiosity take care in their ambiguity", Heidegger says, "to ensure that what is genuinely and newly created is out of date as soon as it emerges before the public". (BT, p. 218)

There is a significant outcome to the relationship between these three characteristics, for together they reveal the "falling" of Dasein, a falling which belongs to the everydayness of being. In the absorption

into the they, Dasein has "... fallen away from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the 'world'", (BT, p. 220) It is through the interpretation of falling that inauthenticity can be defined. Heidegger contends that inauthenticity amounts to a distinctive kind of Being-in-the-world, "... the Dasein-with of Others in the 'they'". (BT, p. 220)

In the act of falling, Dasein falls into the world. Although Heidegger is not precise, falling seems to be interpreted more figuratively than literally (in the physical sense). Nevertheless, it is seen literally in the ontological sense; with regard to the being of Dasein. Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, falls away from itself, its own Being, and into the world. Heidegger explains this in the following way:

Idle talk discloses to Dasein a Being towards its world, towards Others, and towards itself - a Being in which these are understood, but in a mode of groundless floating. Curiosity discloses everything and anything, yet in such a way that Being-in is everywhere and nowhere. Ambiguity hides nothing from Dasein's understanding, but only in order that Being-in-the-world should be suppressed in this uprooted "everywhere and nowhere". (BT, p. 221)

Floating and falling, Dasein gets tempted by the they and attracted to its tranquillizing mode of being. It seems so easy, so undemanding. So seductive is the tranquillity of inauthenticity that any genuine understanding seems unnecessary, superfluous. "Through the self-certainty and decideness of the 'they', it gets spread abroad increasingly that there is no need of authentic understanding or the state-of-mind that goes with it." (BT, p. 222) However, we are not to think that the tranquillizing effects of inauthenticity bring Dasein any peace or to any resting place. On the contrary, "The tempting tran-

quillization aggravates the falling". (BT, p. 222) In fact, it has an alienating effect.

This alienation closes off from Dasein its authenticity and possibility, even if only the possibility of genuine foundering. It does not, however, surrender Dasein to an entity which Dasein itself is not, but forces it into its inauthenticity - into a possible kind of Being of itself. The alienation of falling - at once tempting and tranquillizing - leads by its own movement, to Dasein's getting entangled in itself. (BT, pp. 222-223)

In a downward plunge, falling, alienated, tempted, tranquillized, entangled, and "sucked into the turbulence of the 'they's' inauthenticity", Dasein's everyday state of being is clearly not without drawbacks.

Dasein's everyday kind of being is said by Heidegger to be characterized by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. "These show us the movement of falling, with temptation, tranquillizing, alienation, and entanglement as its essential characteristics." (BT, p. 224) The picture is one of entrapment, like an Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole, uncertain as to exactly how she got herself into the situation and not at all clear what the outcome will be or whether, in fact, there is any escape.

The parallel to Alice is not without metaphorical similarities, for Dasein is seen by Heidegger as "thrown" into the world in such a way that its Being-in-the-world is always fallen. (BT, p. 225) It is then absorbed into the they, which then makes manifest Dasein's turning away, its fleeing from itself and from its own possibilities for authenticity. "It turns away from itself", Heidegger explains, "in accordance with its ownmost inertia of falling". (BT, p. 229) This turning away is grounded in anxiety. And, although anxiety once subsided gets spoken of in the everyday sense as if it were really nothing,

this is an evasion of the fact that anxiety has a very real function, which is that "anxiety discloses Dasein as Being-possible". (BT, p. 232) Anxiety reveals in Dasein its being free for the freedom of choice, of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. Anxiety brings Dasein to face the fact that authenticity is a possible way of being.

In the state of anxiety, according to Heidegger's analysis, we find Dasein feeling "uncanny", "not-being-at-home" (a concept taking us back to Heidegger's "poetically man dwells" and "language is the house of Being"). By carrying Dasein to an extreme, anxiety has a pivotal role, particularly through a capacity to receive the call of conscience. As Heidegger suggests,

When in falling we flee into the "at-home" of publicness, we flee in the face of the "not-at-home"; that is, we flee in the face of the uncanniness which lies in Dasein - in Dasein as thrown Being-in-the-world, which has been delivered over to itself in its Being. (BT, p. 234)

Anxiety plays an important role in Dasein's awareness of the authentic and inauthentic modes of being. Specifically, anxiety individualizes Dasein and thereby can disclose its possibilities. What then happens is that Dasein is brought back from the falling, making it evident that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its own being.

Since Dasein has been lost in the they, ensnared in inauthenticity, it must first find itself before it can get on the road to authenticity. But in order for this to happen, Dasein must first be shown to itself in its possible authenticity. What is needed, Heidegger says, is an attestation of Dasein's potential for being its Self. This function is provided by the "voice of conscience" or the "call", as Heidegger says.

If language, in the guise of idle talk, sets the stage for the inauthenticity of the everyday self of Dasein, so too does language, in the guise of the call of conscience, set Dasein straight about the authentic mode as a possible way of existing. "Calling is a mode of discourse", Heidegger claims. Calling acts as an appeal, summoning Dasein to its guilt (a subject which Heidegger discusses extensively, meanwhile contending that the whole approach to authenticity and inauthenticity is morally neutral.)

Having been lost in the they, too busy listening to idle talk, Dasein failed to hear its own Self. This "listening-away" to the they-self has to get broken off before Dasein can pay attention to its own conscience, its own Self. The call is to the self of the they-self and its effectiveness is achieved "because only the Self of the they-self gets appealed to and brought to hear, the 'they' collapses". (BT, p. 317) Heidegger attempts to deal with the question of what actually constitutes the call, to discern the exact message it conveys, by the following:

What does the conscience call to him to whom it appeals? Taken strictly, nothing. The call asserts nothing, gives no information about world-events, has nothing to tell. Least of all does it try to set going a 'soliloquy' in the Self to which it has appealed.... It calls Dasein forth (and 'forward') into its ownmost possibilities, ...

The call dispenses with any kind of utterance.. It does not put itself into words at all ... conscience discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent. (BT, p. 318)

If the call fails to make its point, should it seem merely delusion, there has then taken place an oversight, a mis-call which has been perverted by the they-self and cannot be authentically understood.

If the summons is a proper call - successful in reaching the Self of Dasein - it has effectively drawn the Self back from its lostness in the they. The actual caller is Dasein itself; that is, Dasein in its uncanniness, who, nevertheless seems like a stranger to the everyday being. "The caller is unfamiliar to the everyday they-self; it is something like an alien voice." (BT, p. 321) Indeed, the voice of the individual Self is alien to the they-self, who hears only the voice of the herd, the they, the Others.

The call comes from Dasein's own conscience, calling to Dasein's own Self, a Self which has been lurking all along amidst the they-self. It calls Dasein back to its own possibilities, its "reticence of his existent potentiality-for Being", and all this is achieved without saying a word.

Ultimately, therefore, it is silence, that mode of discourse which is a non-discourse, which speaks the most to Dasein. For it is by means of the "call", the hearkening with no verbal content that awakens Dasein to its inauthenticity and pulls it back from the they to itself and, in so doing, places it before its authentic mode of being.

There are two basic criticisms that we should consider, before reviewing the major points of this chapter that will weigh upon our examination of Beckett in the next. First, there is "an attitude which, to the extent that there was a similar search for essence, also occurred in the early Wittgenstein and Russell. Both in Heidegger's earlier work, which focussed on being, or Dasein, with respect to language and also in his later works, which focussed on language, particularly poetic language, with respect to man's being, there is the

privileged position of Heidegger's omniscience. Although he claims that any thinker has access to truth, it frequently seems as if Heidegger is the only person who has access to basic information and essential truths which form the foundation of his philosophical theory.

Another matter of concern is that Heidegger's language, his terminology is not as neutral as he would have us believe. Heidegger makes several points about the "fact" that authenticity and inauthenticity are not to be stratified, where authenticity is higher or more ethically desirable than inauthenticity. This is difficult to go along with, as Heidegger proceeds to discuss authenticity in glowing terms, while inauthenticity is cast in the greyest light possible. Look at his language: terms associated with authenticity are "its own", "found itself", "taken hold of in its own way", "ownmost potentiality for-Being", "arising out of one's own Self as such" and so on. But the terms of discussing inauthenticity are "they-self", "dispersed", "absorbed", "scattered", "lost", "groundlessness", "nullity", "plunge", "turbulence", "fallenness", "untruth", "evasion", "ensnared", "tranquillized", "alienated", and "disowned".

By the time the call of conscience (alias the call of care!) enters the scene to help bring the Self back from the rather despicable character of inauthenticity to the considerably purer authenticity, it becomes difficult to see the discussion in non-judgmental terms. Once the conscience is introduced into our consideration, the discussion appears in a moralistic light. This is, of course, not meant to invalidate any significance in the issues which Heidegger so painstakingly deals with. It is only intended to question the premise that the

discussion is morally-neutral.

Whether we agree with Heidegger's approach to language or with his philosophical method, it is difficult not to admire the undertaking. Its sheer intensity, the breadth of the inquiry, and the monumental effort make considerable demands on the reader and call for our own powers of philosophizing in order to assimilate the discussion. The terms, the use of language and concepts, and the mode of discussion are often unique, unusual or presented in a manner which asks us to suspend our presuppositions. His works draw us into participation, forcing us to consider issues and concepts which we have typically either taken for granted or interpreted differently. And though all of Heidegger's works are difficult or even obscure at times, it cannot be questioned that the influence of his thought has been considerable and his approach to being and, inclusively, language, has already contributed to twentieth-century philosophy.

There are several significant concepts within the context of Heidegger's discussions on language and being that are particularly relevant to Beckett's novel. Of particular importance in gaining further understanding of the task and elements of the inquiry in The Unnamable are Heidegger's concepts of the they and the they-self, with the link to inauthenticity, as well as authenticity and the collapse of the they from the they-self. Furthermore, we find interlocking concerns, such as the attempt to locate the source of one's own voice inside oneself, separate from Others, and the way in which the call of conscience and the importance of silence act together in making Dasein aware of its own inauthenticity. These are clearly significant

in Heidegger's thought and, as we shall soon see, they provide us with handles for grasping important elements of The Unnamable.

Everyone is the Other, and no one is himself. The they, which supplies the answer to the question of the "who" of everyday Dasein, is the "nobody" to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in Being-among-one-another.

Martin Heidegger

... there is no name for me, no pronoun for me, all the trouble comes from that ...

Samuel Beckett

CHAPTER VI

THE UNNAMABLE AS THEY-SELF: A HEIDEGGERIAN INTERPRETATION

Heidegger considers most persons to be lost or, as he says, dispersed in the "they". It is not necessarily the case, it just proximately and for the most part is the case. Individuals are fallen, scattered into the crowd, carried away by the they. This is the everyday state of affairs in the life of a human being, or so Heidegger contends in Being and Time, which delves into the question of being, what it means to be.

This is also the state of affairs of one individual in Beckett's novel, The Unnamable; which delves into the question of being, what it means to be. But where Heidegger speaks of all human beings, Beckett looks at one unnamed individual, an instance of the group of persons Heidegger addresses himself to. The concerns, however, are much the same; i.e., individuals, modes of being, being and language, words and silence. Heidegger speaks of the they-self as an everyday condition of being. Beckett presents us with one example, an individual searching for his own identity, dominated by the voices of others. But he has enough awareness, enough anxiety to realize that only he can find himself, define himself, situate himself and find peace, the true silence, at last.

Heidegger contrasts the authentic self with what he considers the most usual instance of inauthenticity, the they-self. The they-self has surrendered control over his own life to the they, the general Others who, as possessor, dominate the they-self and determine what are to be his possibilities. When this happens the person has "lost himself". Others set the direction for him now. And the result is an inauthentic way of being. As long as others are allowed to dominate and make decisions, a person cannot even be aware of what the options actually are. He cannot know himself as long as others are calling the shots and setting the goals for how he is to live. Heidegger speaks of the they-self as "dispersed" into the they, the herd, the masses. Instead of being its own self, it is a they-self - its very identity is consumed by others. A person can have no sense of his own uniqueness or his own identity as an individual until he has ascertained where they end and he begins. To do that, he must separate the they from his Self and assert his own values, his own thoughts, his own identity.

Heidegger makes a strong link with language in the question of being. Language provides the framework, the house of man's being and defines his very existence as a human being. In everyday discourse, man is usually dealing with what Heidegger calls "idle talk", language at its most persistent, everyday usage. It is an employment of language which is abused and abused. It is inauthentic speech, where what is actually being said is rarely ever heard, much less listened to. It just gets passed along, like the passing of a tray of chocolates at a social gathering. The tray is accepted; a chocolate removed, popped into the open mouth, and the tray passed on. The whole thing transpires with few words and even less thought. This is the case with the

"idle talk" of everyday speech: we speak and are spoken to with little awareness of what is actually being said. The effect is both alienating and tranquillizing, for the person is detached from the words he hears and speaks and there are no demands made on his understanding or reason. At the same time, it is so easy, there is no strain or necessary mental output. What is heard acts as guide and what is said transmits the words and thoughts of others. Their voices seem to take over, all we have to do is transmit.

"I begin by the ear, that's the way to talk", (U, p. 352) says the Unnamable, who feels the power of the voices and his own seeming willingness to transmit. "If he wants me to say something, for my good naturally, he has only to tell me what it is and I'll let out a roar straight away." (U, p. 313) A picture of complicity is he. "A parrot, that's what they're up against, a parrot." (U, p. 335) At one point he even refers to himself as a "pure ear" and notes his own lack of participation in the process of speaking. (U, p. 354) How little he knows of what is going on. He senses the extent of their domination. "My master ... so used to giving orders and to being obeyed", notes the Unnamable. (U, p. 312)

The Unnamable realizes that he has lost control over his words and feels that their meaning has escaped him. "If only I knew what I have been saying", he says. (U, p. 335) Like the they-self, he has fallen and has gotten himself entangled in a net of inauthenticity and dishonest speech. Others are speaking for him now. "... these voices are not mine, nor these thoughts", he suggests, "but the voices and thoughts of the devils who beset me" (U, p. 347) They are in control

now. His words and his speech are to the "self-accompaniment of a tongue that is not mine". (U, p. 306) It seems that he is performing their litany. Or perhaps it is just their voices blowing through him, like wind through a tunnel. "They've blown me up with their voices, like a balloon, and even as I collapse it's them I hear." (U, p. 325)

Their voices define him, determine his thoughts and perceptions, with the result that the link between their voices and his own is firmly established. "When they go silent, so do I. A second later, I'm a second behind them, I remember a second, for the space of a second, that is to say long enough to blurt it out as received ..." (U, p. 368)

And his power to reason? Yes, they have set limits on that too, by means of the words they choose for him.

... all the words they taught me, without making their meaning clear to me, that's how I learnt to reason, I use them all, all the words they showed me, there were columns of them. (U, p. 407)

The Unnamable does not see the possibilities open to him, he feels that the channels have been determined already. They have set the tone, they have set the confines on his ability to conceptualize. A glut of lies. "... they have tried to deceive me", he claims, implying that there is little he can do to fight, or even to defend himself. The only tools open to him are words, their words, the ones he has been taught. In his moments of awareness, he sees that he has dispersed himself and let their voices overpower his own. And he realizes that no one will come to his rescue. He can count only on himself: "... where then is the hand, the helping hand, or merely charitable, or the hired hand, it's a long time coming ..." (U, p. 382)

We must try and see what it is that the Unnamable is dealing with, how the voices drown out his own voice and create a turbulence of swarming words which threaten to overpower him completely. He is in a major struggle to assert his own identity, where his task is to separate his own Self off from the they-self which has him entrapped.

Heidegger emphasizes how Others have such a prescriptive effect. A person's entire state-of-mind can be pre-set, as Heidegger describes in discussing the power of the they:

The dominance of the public way in which things have been interpreted has already been decisive even for the possibilities of having a mood - that is, for the basic way in which Dasein lets the world "matter" to it. The "they" prescribes one's state-of-mind, and determines what and how one "sees". (BT, p. 213)

This certainly applies to the Unnamable, who has taken what others have said and incorporated it into himself. Once inside, their words are repeated over and over until they have been assimilated, as the following passage illustrates:

... tell me what I feel and I'll tell you who I am, they'll tell me who I am ... they'll have said who I am, and I'll have heard, without an ear I'll have heard, and I'll have said it, without a mouth I'll have said it, I'll have said it inside me, then in the same breath outside me ... (U, pp. 382-383).

The capacity to prescribe thoughts and feelings is inherent in the way they work. "... he has told me what he is like, what I am like, they have all told me that, it must be one of their principal functions." (U, p. 315). All he has to do is listen.

In underlining the authoritative character of what they say, Heidegger indicates that the more that is said, the more factual things appear. What they say becomes "reality". The Unnamable is painfully

aware of this.

They have told me, explained to me, described to me, what it all is, what it looks like, what it's all for, one after the other, thousands of times, in thousands of connexions, until I must have begun to look as if I understood. Who would ever think, to hear me, that I've never seen anything, never heard anything, but their voices? ... What I speak of, what I speak with, all comes from them. (U, p. 324)

The fact of his indebtedness and the extent to which they govern his words and thoughts deeply troubles the Unnamable, and it is something to which he makes frequent reference. It seems so vile. "Low types they must have been, their pockets full of poison and antidote." (U, p. 298) He feels the way their voices have acted upon him and he is aware that he has succumbed to their inauthenticity, their "poison".

The Unnamable is disturbed by the way in which the voices have expressed themselves to him, the lack of any intimacy or humanity. The speakers are all nameless, anonymous. Furthermore, no one actually encounters the Unnamable anywhere in the novel. He is alone. He never meets anyone face to face and, consequently, it puzzles him how they have managed to communicate so effectively.

... through what channels did I communicate with these gentlemen? Did they intrude on me here? No, no one has ever intruded on me here. Elsewhere, then. But I have never been elsewhere. But it can only have been from them I learnt what I know about men and the ways they have of putting up with it.... What puzzles me is the thought of being indebted for this information to persons with whom I can never have been in contact. Can it be innate knowledge? Like that of good and evil. This seems improbable to me. (U, p. 297)

It is in reference to this anonymity of Others, as Heidegger tells us, that the real dictatorship of the they is unfolded. Others seem less and less individualistic and Heidegger accordingly observes

that "... Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more." (BT, p. 164) It is precisely because of this anonymous, amoebic quality of Others that what they say can obtain such a position of authority. What they say might as well be coming from one mouth, so effectively are they merged.

How this operates is brought out most clearly in the discussion of the character Worm who is, ironically, himself speechless; only spoken of. The manner in which they actually speak to Worm is described in the following passage:

They are numerous, all round, holding hands perhaps, an endless chain, taking turns to talk. They wheel, in jerks, so that the voice always comes from the same quarter. But often they all speak at once, they all say simultaneously the same thing exactly, but so perfectly together that one would take it for a single voice, a single mouth, if one did not know that God alone can fill the rose of the winds, without moving from his place. (U, p. 356)

It is as though they are one, so amalgamated are the voices, so perfectly intertwined. A perfect chorus.

The image of the chorus, particularly in the Greek sense of narrators and commentators, is certainly appropriate within the context of the novel. For the Unnamable, the voices frequently play a stronger role than that of a chorus. He sees them setting the direction and the tone with their voices or with what they say. The voices are everywhere:

"Unfortunately it's a question of words, of voices; one must not forget that ..." (U, p. 384)

"I think Murphy spoke now and then, the others too perhaps, I don't remember, but it was clumsily done, you could see the ventriloquist." (U, p. 348)

"... hearing nothing, I say nothing." (U, p. 351)

"... I who am on my way, words bellying out my sails...."
(U, p. 352)

"But it is solely a question of voices, no other image is appropriate." (U, p. 347)

"No, they have nothing to fear, I am walled round with their vociferations ..."
(U, p. 325)

"It must not be forgotten, sometimes I forget, that all is a question of voices." (U, p. 345)

The chorus is constant. The voices are persistent. And the Unnamable is constantly aware of their presence. He feels his own identity is at stake, that if they persist long enough, he may one day fully comprehend and incorporate their words inside of him. At this point of surrender, he would be a they-self, anonymous even to himself.

They are all certainly anonymous, for they are as dispersed and lost as the particular they-self who has fallen under their sway.

"What can you expect", says the Unnamable, "they don't know who they are either, nor where they are, nor what they're doing, nor why everything is going so badly, so abominably badly ..." (U, p. 372)

Everything is so botched and he is completely entangled, in up to his ears, so to speak. The danger is that it will only get worse until he can stop and take a long, cool look at the situation. What is required is that he take hold of himself and pull himself back from the they. But in this briar-patch of entanglement, their voices have become intertwined with or have overrun his own. The act of separating his own Self from the mass that is theirs is extremely difficult, for the influence has had its effect, the incorporation has already begun. As the character observes, "He knows they are words, he is not sure they are not his, that's how it begins, with such a start no one

ever looked back, one day he'll make them his ..." (U, p. 354)

He is completely confused about his identity, suspecting that he has relinquished all control to Others, afraid that what he says no longer issues from him. The Unnamable feels dominated by their voices and at their mercy: "I shall transmit the words as received, by the ear ..." (U, p. 349) He does not know the source any more, whether it is in Others or in himself. Expressing confusion, he says:

... I've always been in a dungeon, I hear everything, every word they say, it's the only sound, as if I were speaking, to myself out loud, in the end you don't know any more, a voice that never stops, where it's coming from. (U, p. 369)

He doesn't even know what he is looking for - the voice seems to have taken over, giving no sense of direction or guidance. "Ah this blind voice, and these moments of held breath when all listen wildly, and the voice that begins to fumble again, without knowing what it's looking for ..." (U, p. 372) Tripping over his own words, their words, the entanglement is nearly complete.

But how can you think and speak at the same time, how can you think about what you have said, may say, are saying, and at the same time go on with the last-mentioned, you think about any old thing, you say any old thing, more or less, more or less, in a daze of baseless unanswerable self-reproach ... (U, p. 374)

The result is the turbulence, the downward plunge that Heidegger so dramatically outlines in Being and Time and here, in The Unnamable, we see the painful results. "Ah a nice mess we're in, the whole pack of us, is it possible we're all in the same boat, no we're in a nice mess, each one in his own peculiar way. I myself have been scandalously bungled ..." (U, p. 372)

By now the Unnamable is completely alienated from himself. He is in such a state of inauthenticity that, like with Heidegger's "untruth", everything gets closed-off and covered over, hidden and avoided. And everyone has fallen in it together.

... after me it will be the end, they'll give up, saying, It's all a bubble, we've been told a lot of lies, he's been told a lot of lies, who he, the master, by whom, no one knows, the everlasting third party, he's the one to blame, for this state of affairs, the master's not to blame, neither are they, neither am I, least of all I, we were foolish to accuse one another, the master me, them, himself, they me, the master, themselves, I them, the master, myself, we are all innocent, enough. Innocent of what, no one knows, ... of this long sin against the silence that enfolds us ... this innocence we have fallen to, it covers everything, all faults, all questions, it puts an end to questions. (U, p. 375)

Heidegger would surely say, once things have reached this low point, that only the "uncanny" call of conscience could provide the necessary jolt to send the Self of the Unnamable on the road to recovery. He must be brought back from his so-called innocence, his chosen blindness, his lostness in the they, for his own identity as a human being is on the line.

As we noted earlier, a discussion of the they-self is also a discussion of identity. The everyday mode of being is an inauthentic condition, wherein the person stands in subjection to Others. Heidegger contends of a person in the everyday mode that "its Being has been taken away by the Others". (BT, p. 164) The result is that Others can establish and dispose of possibilities whenever they please. By forsaking control, a person forsakes his identity to Others. He runs into confusion. Having relinquished control over his own life, choices and possibilities, it is difficult to assess the boundaries separating him

from all the Others. The elements constituting his own personal identity are blurred and his personal attributes begin to blend with the nobody/everybody of the they. The Self is only brought home once again, re-claimed as the individual's own, when the person is successful in collapsing the they from the they-self, as Heidegger would assert and, thereby, separating the identity of his own Self from theirs. It is a particularly difficult task once things have gotten to the "bungled" state we find in The Unnamable.

Here we find the Unnamable at wit's end, so to speak, fighting for an identity against a backlash of confusion, with no breakthrough in sight. "Yes, more than once I almost took myself for the Other, all but suffered after his fashion ..." (U, p. 316) On the other hand, "Perhaps all they have told me has reference to a single existence, the confusion of identity being merely apparent and due to my inaptitude to assume any ..." (U, p. 330) This is demonstrated in the trouble he has in trying to speak of himself in the first person. At one point he brushes it aside by declaring, "I shall not say I again, ever again, it's too farcical". (U, p. 355) Again, later, he says, "I say I, knowing it's not I ..." (U, p. 404) There are so many doubts. His identity is thoroughly confused and the language he must use to express himself, the only language that he has, seems inadequate. He's not sure any more who is actually doing the talking, who is speaking on this question of identity. As he expresses "... in the end you don't know any more, a voice that never stops, where it's coming from". (U, p. 369) Furthermore, "They say they, speaking of them, to make me think it is I who am speaking. Or I say they, speaking of God knows

what, to make me think it is not I who am speaking ... " (U, p. 370)

Who is speaking, anyway, just who is it creating this confusion.

Someone speaks, someone hears, no need to go any further, it is not he, it's I, or another, or others, what does it matter, the case is clear, it is not he, he who I know I am ... (U, pp. 401-402)

... I never spoke, I seem to speak, that's because he says I as if he were I, I nearly believed him ... perhaps it's not he, perhaps a multitude, one after another, what confusion ... (U, p. 403)

Who is speaking, anyway, just where can distinctions be drawn between him and all the rest. "... I've looked everywhere, there must be someone, the voice must belong to someone ..." (U, p. 408)

It is surely interconnected with language, their language, for it seems so impossible to make sense out of this confusion when what he speaks of, what he speaks with "all comes from them". The more he talks, the more they talk, the more confused it becomes. And whereas his quest started with the statement, "I, say I. Unbelieving." (U, p. 291) It disintegrates to "... someone says I, unbelieving". (U, p. 402) It finally hits the low point, "... you speak of yourself, someone speaks of himself, that's it, in the singular, a single one, the man on duty, he, I, no matter, the man on duty speaks of himself ..." (U, p. 404) And, at an even lower point, "... someone said nothing ..." (U, p. 404)

The man on duty speaks of himself. What the two subjects actually are, who the two subjects actually are, is no more evident than it ever was. The only route open to him - i.e., the only route Heidegger would tell us is open to him - and, indeed, the route which the Unnamable chooses to take, is to begin the extrication: to sepa-

rate his identity from theirs, to try to set some limits.

In order for this to happen, for the Unnamable to establish his own identity, he must remain fully aware of the ways in which others have dominated him and have determined how and what he should say. That their voices have dominated his is certain. Finding himself means that he must now assert himself, speak for himself, for only then will the testimony be his own. He articulates this realization:

But his voice continued to testify for me, as though woven into mine, preventing me from saying who I was, what I was, so as to have done with saying, done with listening. And still today, as he would say, though he plagues me no more his voice is there, in mine, but less, less. And being no longer renewed it will disappear one day, I hope, from mine, completely. But in order for that to happen, I must speak, speak.
(U, p. 309)

By expressing himself through speech, the Unnamable hopes to ensure the primacy of his Self over the they-self, the authentic above and beyond the inauthentic and, in so doing, the voice of the Others will be removed. However, a constant threat is that the voice of Others has not been extinguished. He knows that the voice can return again at any time that he slides back into inauthenticity, which would happen whenever he lets Others dictate how he is to be. The "dictatorship of the they" is on the watch, day and night, ready to take over at the slightest indication. This he must not lose sight of, for he reminds himself that, "And at the same time, I do not deceive myself, he may come back again, or go away again and then come back again".
(U, p. 309)

The Unnamable believes that what he has to do in order to keep them from coming back is to say who he is and, also, who he is not.

They too must be defined. "There's no getting rid of them without naming them and their contraptions, that's the thing to keep in mind." (U, p. 326) He thinks that perhaps they will cease to plague him once they realize that there is no use that they can make of him, whether from his own incomprehension or from another of his traits. Once abandoned, he will be restored to himself.

Before any self-assertion can be accomplished, the Unnamable wants to clear the slate as to who he can more or less safely say he is not. He tries to name them and so define his limits:

... I am neither, I needn't say, Murphy, nor Watt, nor Mercier, nor - no I can't bring myself to name them, nor any of the others whose very names I forget, who told me I was they, who I must have tried to be, under duress, or through fear, to avoid acknowledging me ... (U, p. 326)

The fear of acknowledgement strong, he starts by a proclamation of the quest. "Where am I? That's my first question, after an age of listening." (U, p. 349) He feels that the way to prevent his being their mouthpiece is to be the speaker, the one at the controls. "Now it's I the orator", he exclaims, "the beleaguers have departed, I am master on board ..." (U, p. 392) By following this route, he hopes to establish his own identity.

He feels that he can eliminate them if he can just situate the voice inside himself, place the source of his words and thoughts as coming from inside, rather than outside, him. He feels this is a necessary step to take.

Assume notably henceforward that the thing said and the thing heard have a common source ... Situate this source in me, without specifying where exactly, no finicking, anything is preferable to the consciousness of third parties and, more generally speaking, of an outer world. (U, p. 390)

Of course, it is not that he will simply be able to assert his own identity by the act of situating the voice inside of him. There are other considerations, as he notes:

Equate me, without pity or scruple, with him who exists, somehow, no matter how, no finicking, with him whose story this story had the brief ambition to be. Better, ascribe to me a body. Better still, arrogate to me a mind. (U, p. 390)

However, this quest is not easy for the Unnamable, who is often overcome with doubts and uncertainties. Many of the statements he makes he soon retracts from lack of faith in their validity.

It is incredibly difficult for him to determine where they end and where he begins, whether they are the only ones speaking or whether he is the only one there, that maybe they never existed, or, if they did, they left long ago. These doubts, uncertainties, statements, and retractions are throughout the novel. They seem to be inherent in the task he has set for himself.

The process moves by fits and starts. Assertion. Retraction. This is how it goes. Just when he asserts that they are the ones in power, he says, "... there was never anyone, anyone but me, anything but me, talking to me of me, impossible to stop, impossible to go on ... " (U, pp. 394-395) But, no, that is not the case, it's not him at all, "it's not I speaking, it's not I hearing, let us not go into that, let us go on as if I were the only one in the world, whereas I'm the only one absent from it ..." (U, p. 401) But he may be wrong; maybe he is there, in their midst. Maybe he can actually find a place, put someone in it and define himself.

... I'll make a place, it won't be mine, it doesn't matter, I don't feel any place for me, perhaps that

will come, I'll make it mine, I'll put myself in it,
 I'll put someone in it, I'll find someone in it, I'll
 put myself in him, I'll say he's I, perhaps he'll
 keep me ... (U, p. 400)

If only it would work. He wants a life for himself, so he makes an appeal to come home to himself at last, find his home there, inside himself. He considers himself to be like a horse ready to race home to its stable, except that in his case the horse and the stable are one. "... I smell the stable", he claims, "I always smelt the stable, it's I smell of the stable, there's no stable but me, for me". (U, p. 401) He has had enough of being away. He wants a home, and him in it. "... ah misery, will I never stop wanting a life for myself?" (U, p. 393)

In Heidegger's assessment, the process of finding oneself, of collapsing the they from the they-self and coming to a sense of one's own self-identity takes place in a manner which bears with it a certain amount of suffering and anxiety. In fact, for Heidegger this anxiety is inherent to the structure of asserting one's Self again and attaining an authentic state of being. It is as though anxiety went hand in hand with the awareness of something having gone wrong, the sense that things have fallen into a state of lies and falsehoods.

Frequent reference is made by the Unnamable to inauthenticity by speaking about the lies he has been told and which he must now face. He speaks of the feelings of anxiety which overtake him, aware that he has listened-away much of his time and too many of his possibilities. "And from my sleeping mouth the lies would pour, about me. No, not sleeping, listening, in tears." (U, p. 310) He has victimized himself.

There are a number of references to weeping throughout the novel. From their very quantity, we can infer their significance to his present quest. Indeed, it is the first thing that the Unnamable notes about himself, that he can be said to know about himself. "I know my eyes are open", he asserts, "because of the tears that pour from them unceasingly". (U, p. 304) Although he contends that he is "exceptionally given to the tear", he weeps more over certain things than others. (U, p. 373) "... the yesses make it weep, the noes too, the perhapses particularly ..." (U, p. 373) There are no clear boundaries to perhaps, it denotes such ambiguity. As well, we know from Heidegger what that means; how ambiguity brings inauthenticity, how the lack of commitment closes things off.

The state of anxiety also has an ambiguous effect, because it is not about any one thing. Nor can a person delineate the reasons anxiety has overshadowed his consciousness. It is not fear of this or that: it is a condition, a malaise without specific causes or definite symptoms. The Unnamable realizes this, saying, "So I have no cause for anxiety. And yet I am anxious". (U, p. 302) His anxiety has brought an awareness of the way he has lived, how he has fled from himself into the open arms of Others.

Speak, yes, but to me, I have never spoken enough to me, never listened enough to me, never replied enough to me, never had pity enough on me, I have spoken for my master, listened for the words of my master never spoken, Well done, my child, well done, my son, you may stop, you may go, you are free, you are acquitted, you are pardoned, never spoken. My master. There is a vein I must not lose sight of. (U, p. 310)

And though he feigns innocence under the pretense of ignorance - "Perhaps one day I'll know, say, what I'm guilty of." (U, p. 368) - at

heart he realizes that the onus has been on him all along. By saying, "my crime is my punishment", he makes the only necessary judgement. (see U, p. 368) It seems that his one hope for atonement would be "simply to discover, without further assistance from without, the alleviations of flight from self, that's all ..." (U, p. 367)

At this point, it would give a broader picture and more clarification if we took note of best example of flights from self found in the novel. This is in the stories of the character(s) who evolve from spiralling-about a rotunda with family members inside to being situated inside a jar outside the slaughterhouse to being completely enclosed. Here is a striking series of they-selves who allow others to completely define their existence. Whether a series of different persons or one in a metamorphosis, the characters exemplify Heidegger's most common instance of inauthentic being, the they-self. The basic traits of the they-self get literalized (personified) as the central concerns are carried to their logical extreme, that of the most physical light possible.

First, we find the character circling the rotunda with Mahood - not quite the narrator, since the story is purportedly in the first person - a co-narrator, so to speak. He reports on the progress and relates what transpires with the character's own physical and mental conditions. He remarks,

... there we are face to face, Mahood and I ... I never saw him, I don't see him, he has told me what he is like, what I am like ... It isn't enough that I should know what I'm doing, I must also know what I'm looking like. This time I am short of a leg ... Having brought me to death's door, senile gangrene, they whip off a leg and yip off I go again ... (U, p. 315)

The character tells this as if he did not know and perhaps could not know the information first hand. He learns it from Mahood, or others. Malone, for example, is said to contribute, as he suggests, "... what were my own feelings at this period? What was I thinking of? With what? Was I having difficulty with my morale? The answer to all that is this, I quote Malone ..." (U, p. 320) Mahood makes further additions to the general knowledge of the character: "Mahood must have remarked that I remained sceptical, for he casually let fall that I was lacking not only a leg, but an arm also." (U, p. 321) Notice the manner in which information is relayed. The character is literally disappearing before his own eyes, yet this fact is obtained from outside of himself.

It is as if he exists by virtue of the perceptions of others. He is because others perceive him. He knows what he is like because others tell him. They report to him the knowledge which he may then quote from. He senses that they cushion his state of mind, holding him back from any extremes of pleasure or pain. "What they all wanted", he comments, "each according to his particular notion of what is endurable, was that I should exist and at the same time be only moderately, or perhaps I should say finitely pained". (U, p. 322) They set the limits.

The character in the next stage is even more restricted; the inevitable result, perhaps, of the limbs falling by the wayside. The character's physical presence is here that of a trunk, "Stuck like a sheaf of flowers in a deep jar, its neck flush with my mouth, on the side of a quiet street near the shambles, ..." (U, p. 327) Now speech-

less, the only voices are guaranteed to be those of Others. Only they can speak for him now.

Whereas the initial position permitted his head to pop in and out of the jar, decreasing mobility is established by a further step in the metamorphosis. A collar now braces his neck, so that he can move his head no longer, only his eyes. His self-perception is defined by others. This fact disturbs him: "I felt the cang, the flies, the saw-dust under my stumps, the tarpaulin on my skull, when they were mentioned to me. But can that be called a life which vanishes when the subject is changed?" (U, p. 353)

The jar can be said to represent the Other; a metaphor of all their voices. In the first case, that of the rotunda-jar, the Others are inside, cheering him on toward them. Later he loses himself, limbs and all, in order to join them. Others completely surround him with their voices. This image is supported by the manner in which Beckett refers to voices throughout the novel. Voices are in a "dungeon" (U, p. 369), "vault" (U, p. 409), "abyss" (U, p. 409), "prison" (U, p. 410), "parlour" (U, p. 410). All are walled-in, all are containers, all variations on a jar.

It is no surprise that, with the next evolution, the character is encapsulated inside the jar, swallowed up, as it were, by their voices.

He describes the transformation, in the following way:

It is cold, this morning it snowed: And yet I don't feel the cold on my head.... I hear nothing. I placed them before their responsibilities, perhaps they have let me go. For this feeling of being entirely enclosed, and yet nothing touching me, is new.... I don't know where I end. (U, p. 345)

The character, called Worm, can now only be spoken of and his fate is

to be a topic of someone else's conversation. They have usurped his very being. "Feeling nothing, knowing nothing, he exists nevertheless, but not for himself, for others, others conceive him and say, Worm is, since we conceive him ..." (U, p. 346)

We get a vision of the character as a "pure ear". (U, p. 354)
 He is because he hears. Or, as the Unnamable suggests, "A head has grown out of his ear ..." (U, p. 356) He is formed by their voices, in one ear and out the head, like a balloon which expands at the swell of a voice and flattens as it falters.

By this time, the character has no real identity left, having gradually forsaken it as they took over, giving their reports on him, telling his story. The consequence is that they cannot see him as an individual. In fact, it seems as if they have trouble seeing him at all. He is going, going, gone before their eyes:

Going from: "He is nothing but a shapeless heap, without a face capable of reflecting the niceties of a torment ..." (U, pp. 356-357)

To: "That tiny blur, in the depths of the pit, is he.... They say they see him, the blur is what they see, they say the blur is he, perhaps it is." (U, p. 358)

To: "... they see nothing, they see grey, like still smoke, unbroken, where he might be ..." (U, p. 359)

And gone: "... Worm, he's an idea they have, a word they use ..." (U, p. 366)

From heap to blur to puff of smoke to an idea they had, Worm's fate has followed the path of the rabbit pulled out of the magician's hat and swallowed up in a glove. He has no individuality, no personhood for the Others. He is not even perceived as a human being. The name

'Worm' suggests his stature in their eyes. He is simply something which hears them and, hearing them, is. "Worm hears, though hear is not the word ..." (U, p. 358) For that matter, "He hears, that's all about it ..." (U, p. 359)

If we view the function of the character-evolution as being to demonstrate the progressive decay, the inherent self-destructive mechanism operating in the they-self, we may similarly view the function of the stories in the novel. That is, the stories play an important role in creating and sustaining turbulence, particularly in the confusion of identities which transpires. It is extremely difficult to ascertain who is telling the story, who is the subject of the story, where one story ends and another begins.

It seems as though the stories have a distracting effect, taking the Unnamable, at least temporarily, from the quest that he set himself, that of answering, Where now, Who now. "To tell the truth - no, first the story." (U, p. 326) The stories are often seen as inauthentic, lies he has been told or that he himself is telling. He refers to them as a means of torture: "this hell of stories", he says, reflecting on their impact. (U, p. 380) He fantasizes that he, in turn, could use stories for revenge: "... I'll let down my trousers and shit stories on them ..." (U, p. 380) He sees their escapist quality, although he notes their limitations: "... no point in telling yourself stories, to pass the time, stories don't pass the time, nothing passes the time ..." (U, p. 385) The stories are meaningless, mere filler.

And I see myself slipping, though not at the last extremity, towards the resorts of fable. Would it

not be better if I were simply to keep on saying babababa, for example, while waiting to ascertain the true function of this venerable organ? (U, p. 308)

The stories, however, do have a function, be it only a negative one. "... is it the return to the world of fable, no, just a reminder to make me regret what I have lost ..." (U, p. 407) They function as a means of escape, an avoidance of more important issues. "... I invented love, music, the smell of flowering currant to escape from me." (U, p. 305) And again, "It is I invented him, him and so many others, ... in order to speak, since I had to speak, without speaking of me." (U, p. 395) Again, "... I invented my memories". (U, p. 396) But he is the one doing it to himself:

... all these stories about travellers, these stories about paralytics, all are mine, ... never stopped telling stories, to myself, hardly hearing them, hearing something else, listening for something else, wondering now and then where I got them from ... (U, p. 412)

However the stories proliferate at the end of the novel, frantic in the attempt to escape, the Unnamable realizes that the stories act as a smokescreen of words in front of the silence, for he says:

... quick now and try again, with the words that remain, ... to have them carry me into my story, the words that remain, my old story, which I've forgotten, far from here, through the noise, through the door, into the silence, ... (U, p. 413)

The hour finally strikes when the summoning call of conscience can wait no more. When the Unnamable needs to face his "long sin against the silence that enfolds us". (U, p. 375) He must look at the depths to which he has fallen and the extent to which things have gone beserk. He comes to see that he cannot run away any more.

... I'll make myself a head, I'll make myself a memory, I have only to listen, the voice will tell me every-

thing, ... it's like a confession, a last confession, ... no it's something else, it's an indictment, a dying voice accusing, accusing me, ... it speaks of my sins, it speaks of my head, it says it's mine, it says that I repent, that I want to be punished, better than I am, ... I have only to listen, it will show me my hiding-place ... (U, p. 411)

When Heidegger speaks of the collapse of they from the they-self, he emphasizes the call of conscience as dealing the greatest blow toward awareness. Here it is not what the conscience says that is important, but what is not said. That is, the conscience speaks by virtue of silence. It summons the individual to his own situation, his guilt of living inauthentically. And it does this in a way which entails no words at all.

It is the silence which speaks and it is to this silence that the individual must listen and, in so doing, he listens to his Self. For it is through the silence that he is brought face to face with himself and can then determine what possibilities are open to him in his life. This call of conscience, as expressed in the mode of keeping silent, is not any form of communication, per se. It is a summons of the individual into his own reticence before his possibilities of being. It unveils the decisions which he can make.

As the Unnamable's search for identity becomes more chaotic and the stories and words reach an explosive level, there is, ironically perhaps, an increasing concern for silence. The more the Unnamable devotes himself to his quest, the more significant silence seems to be. There is a direct correlation between the concern with identity and that of silence. We might even infer the existence of an abiding relationship whereby to find the one is to find the other. The Unnamable

will find himself when he listens to the silence, for it can say what no words ever can. He senses that one of the outcomes of the silence, the true silence, will be peace at last. He comes to this position slowly but surely as the novel develops, until it becomes the central concern.

Early in the novel, the Unnamable speaks about going silent, first as the result of having said something that is not false. (U, p. 321) This is amended later to indicate that going silent "will be because the words have been said". (U, p. 369) Then, again, he sees that silence is like a reward after a lesson and he speaks of the right to be done with speech once he has said "the thing that had to be said". (U, p. 393) Silence is seen as their gift: they decide when he has said what is appropriate. (U, p. 325) The Unnamable cannot help but equate silence with peace (U, p. 394) and the end of madness (U, p. 324). His inauthenticity was an act against silence, one long sin which ended up covering everything. It was as if all their and his words were lies, disguising the truth which only the silence could reveal.

Silence is seen as something beyond each of them, an almost tangible presence. It is curiously similar to the silence which Heidegger speaks of in his discussion on conscience, where it is presented as something which comes from but is beyond each individual.

The Unnamable speaks of silence as enfolding, encompassing. (U, p. 375) Later, he says, "The silence, speak of the silence before going into it ...". (U, p. 407) It is also seen as a state, a condition, a place in which he dwelled: "... in the end I'll recognize it,

the story of the silence that he never left, that I should never have left, that I may never find again ..." (U, p. 413) Toward the end of the novel the Unnamable feels the strength of silence, as we see in metaphor:

... all this time on the brink of silence, I knew it, on a rock, lashed to a rock, in the midst of silence, its great swell rears toward me, I'm streaming with it, it's an image, those are words, it's a body, it's not I, I knew it wouldn't be I, I'm not outside, I'm inside, I'm in something, I'm shut up, the silence is outside, ... nothing but this voice and the silence all round ... (U, p. 410)

Like the character stuck in the voice-jar, nothing but this voice and the silence all round. So inseparable yet so distinct - they are worlds apart yet only a word away. Each world represents a way of being to the Unnamable; the one dishonest and inauthentic, the other peaceful and authentic. He worries, though, that he may fall into a kind of silence which is not the real silence, one which is merely a lull in the conversation (monologue). This frightens him. The Unnamable seeks a silence that need not be broken.

The Unnamable worries that his fate will be a silence of muted sounds. When he first speaks of silence, going silent, he suggests that it is a state in which he no longer speaks, just listens and yet cannot hear enough to mimic or parrot the sounds:

My voice. The voice. I hardly hear it any more. I'm going silent. Hearing this voice no more, that's what I call going silent. That is to say I'll hear it still, if I listen hard. I'll listen hard. Listening hard, that's what I call going silent, I'll hear it still, broken, faint, unintelligible, if I listen hard. Hearing it still, without hearing what it says, that's what I call going silent.... Hearing too little to be able to speak, that's my silence ... (U, p. 393)

But there are too many demands being made upon him in this kind of

silence, such as having to listen so that he can hear enough to speak. The true silence makes no such demands. Furthermore, the true silence is not simply a missed beat in the tempo of sounds. It is not a crevasse with words piling up on either side or a pause between breaths.

The Unnamable wants more than a momentary silence. "... I've looked everywhere, there must be someone, the voice must belong to someone ... I want it to go silent, it wants to go silent, it can't, it does for a second, then it starts again, that's not the real silence ..." (U, p. 408) The real silence is bound neither by words nor by time, for it is a silence that won't have to be broken. Here he will be left alone, with no one to taunt him and no voices to plague him. "Unless this time it's the true silence, the one I'll never have to break any more, when I won't have to listen any more, when I can dribble in my corner, my head gone, my tongue dead, ..." (U, p. 393)

From the beginning the Unnamable poses questions about the link between silence and his search, between finding himself and putting an end to his (or their) speaking. If his identity lies outside words, it would seem that any attempt to put it into words would fail, he would lose hold of it. Perhaps his Self lies in that true silence. Therefore, to try to capture it by any verbal maneuver would be to lose sight of it completely. He asks,

In a word, shall I be able to speak of me and of this place without putting an end to us, shall I ever be able to go silent, is there any connexion between these two questions? (U, p. 303)

The question is, can he find himself in words, by means of words or in silence, a fortiori, beyond the reach of words. This is the problem that haunts him. And it underlines the confusions. "... it has not

been our good fortune", he notes, "to establish with any degree of accuracy what I am, where I am, whether I am words among words, or silence in the midst of silence ..." (U, p. 388)

The more he says (or they say), the more he suspects that, "I'll speak of me when I speak no more". (U, p. 392) His peace will come when silence reigns. Nothing he can say will put an end to madness. Yet right to the end of the novel the Unnamable's peace remains outside his grasp. He is close to his goal, he's "on the brink of silence" (U, p. 410); just short of his goal, "I'm not suffering enough yet, it's not yet my turn" (U, p. 412); he should never have left the silence which he may never find again. (U, p. 413) Maybe words can take him to the goal-line, "to the threshold of my story". (U, p. 414) Maybe words can find him, say what he is and carry him through the noise, through the door, into silence.

... you must say words as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me, strange pain, strange sin, you must go on, perhaps it's done already, perhaps they have said me already, perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don't know, I'll never know ... (U, p. 414)

And no one else, none of the Others can tell him. They cannot reach him in the silence, their voices cannot enter that door. Silence is a one-man show: this the Unnamable finally realizes.

... it's a public show, you buy your seat and you wait, perhaps it's free, a free show, you take your seat and you wait for it to begin, or perhaps it's compulsory, a compulsory show, you wait for the compulsory show to begin, it takes time ... that's the show, waiting for the show, to the sound of a murmur, you try and be reasonable, perhaps it's not a voice at all, perhaps it's the air, ascending, descending ... and the spectators, where are they, you didn't notice, in the anguish of waiting,

never noticed you were waiting alone, that's the show,
waiting alone, in the restless air, for it to begin, for
something to begin, for there to be something else but
you ... (U, pp. 381-382)

I take no sides. I am interested in the shape of ideas. There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine: 'Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned.' That sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters.

Samuel Beckett

CONCLUSION

All the writer has open to him, suggests Beckett, is the exploration of his own medium, unrelenting as this may be. The trilogy epitomizes that exploration. In these three works we find the gradual evolution of a character writing in a room, presumably telling his own story; to one dying in a room, telling himself stories to pass the time and, concurrently, writing his own story; to one, now a nameless persona, in a timeless place, possibly a room, maybe a jar, probably his own skull, trying to tell his own story, but overcome with the nagging sense that he cannot do so, that the right words are beyond him, something has been left out, or too many lies have overshadowed the enterprise.

The first, Molloy, runs afoul and avoids culmination because of psychological deterioration. The second, Malone Dies, is left dangling, owing to physical deterioration. The trilogy's final statement, and the focus of this thesis, is one of near-total disintegration.

The Unnamable begins with a sort of Cartesian doubt over the character's sense of self that grows in an exponential manner to encompass the fictional environment. That is, everything is placed into epoché and, as a result, conventional fictional elements cannot be accorded their customary significance.

Molloy tries to tell his own story: he ends up telling both his story, as well as the story of Moran's search for Molloy. Malone tries to avoid telling his own story by telling three, about a man and a woman, an animal and a thing: he ends up telling stories which, seem-

ingly, reflect his own situation and converge upon his story. The Unnamable seems unable to tell his story. Capable of neither silence nor peace, driven by a compulsive quest to find the story that will be his own, he ends up in a Borgesian hall of mirrors reflecting his own impotence: telling a story about his inability to tell, his story about the difficulty in telling his story about the impossibility of finding the right words to say the final statement on himself so that, having told his story with no words left out, he would be permitted silence and peace. He does not succeed.

The novel is a structural extension of the Unnamable's own affliction, namely, that of having been born of caged beasts born of caged beasts, cleverly caught in the net of his own language, much like Wittgenstein's man counting out irrational numbers. The text represents Beckett's struggle with language at its limits, skirting a silence which he seems obsessed with and yet cannot allow himself.

Language at the extreme. So much so, in fact, that the central character - barely even that - cannot be named. He tries to find a name for himself, since the author failed to do so, but all the names simply do not adhere. The result is a nominalistic mudpie which can best be assessed in light of logical atomism. I know of no better way to consider the Unnamable's namelessness. How the logical atomists dealt with the role of subjectivity and placed the subject at the periphery of language, helps us to grasp this major area of the text.

Ever since Beckett called into question the concepts of 'form' and 'content' in "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce" and asserted their indivisibility, his fiction has defied their separation. This was pursued, along with the issue of the language of the text and the character's

relationship to language, by means of a Wittgensteinian assessment. The character can be seen as a personification of his own words, where the telling of his stories constitutes an attempt to describe the scaffolding of his situation. With Wittgensteinian tools, we can understand the Basil-Mahood-Worm character progression as a metaphor of the Unnamable's relationship to language. The form and content of the text work together to reflect an obsession with the fear and limitation of words.

The very fact that Others seem to be speaking through him leads the Unnamable to a state of fear and fascination about the role Others play in his life and, especially, in his language. How can he get to himself if "they" are in control? How can he get control if the only route open to him is the use of a language which "they" have taught him? Since this is of crucial importance to the character and is expressed as a theme overlapping all others in the text, we turn to Heidegger as a way to handle these issues. Heidegger's discussions on language and being, with the correlative concerns of 'they-self', authenticity and inauthenticity, offer a way to approach Beckett's novel.

Where do we go from here? What is left out? What areas of The Unnamable have escaped examination? Probably many. No doubt the final word on the novel is provided by the character's own assessment: given a hundred stories he'd need a hundred-and-one, given a hundred-and-one he'd need another, or others, to tell his story at last. So too for the reader: I don't think any amount of analysis can capture the beauty and monumental significance of The Unnamable. And, ultimately, any effort to capture the novel leaves us outside, as with the case of Worm in his jar, peeping in, seeing only words among words, a dust of

words. The magic and joy of the work lies outside the classifications:

... all I've said, said I've done, said I've been, it's
they who said it, I've said nothing, I haven't stirred,
they don't understand, I can't stir, they think I don't
want to, that their conditions don't suit me, that they'll
hit on others, in the end, to my liking, then I'll stir,
I'll be in the bag, that's how I see it, I see nothing,
they don't understand, I can't go to them, they'll have to
come and get me, if they want me, .A. (U, p. 378)

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