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BLESSED TO GO ON TO STOP
COMMENTS ON BECKETT AND WITTGENSTEIN

*Die Kunst, gegen die Tatsachen zu existieren, sagt Oehler, ist
die Kunst, die die schwierigste est.*

Thomas Bernhard, *Gehen*

Methodological Preoccupations

What is the purpose and what is the sense of writing commentary literature, if it has any? Of writing texts about texts? My conviction is that its main sense is to introduce the (will-be) reader to the possible purifying joy (really “cathartic” joy) of the attentive and self-giving reading of literary-philosophical works. Or at least to give a hint at the possibility of that joy of reading. Its purpose is on no account to solve problems but to create and relativize problems. To anticipate the form of questions that which can sensibly be asked from the reading experience. To expose the so-called “primary” text’s intellectual strength.

It can expose that strength as long as it has its own “primary” intellectual strength of a similar nature (if not necessarily and not possibly of similar intensity) as that of the so-called “primary” text. The organised and structured (thus not, in any way, “chronological”) documentation of the reading experience thus should comprehend and not “apply”, but rather *get woven into*, and via this interwoven texture from word to word, step by step indirectly introduce the (will-be) reader to the language use of the so-called “primary” text. Its purpose is in no way to make the work of reading easier by preparing the ground and by explaining (away) the text’s (imagined) structure, but to show the real difficulty of the work of reading by speaking a language compatible with that of the “primary” text(s).

In order to create such commentary that prefers and performs the above tasks it is indispensable to get into a position of possible conversation with the commented texts, and thus it is essential to establish a mediatory layer of language use. In the case of the theme of this paper a touch of compressed enigmatic clarity (Wittgenstein) and that of the interweaving motion of voices (of the different inner integrated personalities; Beckett) will be *indispensable* in

order to get closer to the works, i.e. in order to let the real difficulties and problems of these works reveal themselves, showing themselves off. And also to avoid using quotes from the texts as demonstrative proofs, as dead material. I treat these writings rather as living and unfinished but fixed fragments of speech, and thus I attempt to initiate a dialogic/dialectic discourse which is itself unfinished and indefinite, being in the process of becoming. In order to do so it is necessary to have some common ground of language use, a no man's land of an in-between discourse which is neither one nor the other, neither the commented text nor the commentary, but which nonetheless partakes in both. Laconic clarity is necessarily adopted as a subjective philosophical value while the uncertainty of the speaking subject uttering logical propositions is a necessarily adopted poetic virtue. These are not such methodological devices that I consciously tried to assert in advance, i.e. their eminence is not the outcome of a pre-formulated plan. I was, so to speak, compelled to use these forms of speech, as any given and fixed taxonomies and interpretative strategies seemed inappropriate and would result in the falsification of the original thought of the essay. In case I would have tried to strip off these imitative (sometimes parodic, paraphrasing or analogical) layers of my work in order to create a neutral and objective use of language, I would have easily been caught up in a paralogic but isolated discourse imagining itself making valid and demonstrable propositions. And naturally this danger of imagined objectivity and authoritative interpretation is constantly present in writing commentary literature. This danger from time to time takes the form of a temptation (of speaking in a certain way in a certain position with scientific certainty) that should be resisted in order to fulfil the task of commentary literature which I sketched in the first two paragraphs. These two here over-simplified qualities (philosophical compression and poetic uncertainty) carry the danger of contradiction when I have to try to continuously and simultaneously pay high attention to both of them – thus the essay will serve as an experiment of how to reconcile and balance these aspects, too.

To make myself clear: I propose that the (however problematic and uncertain) essay is the appropriate form for commentary literature and that the demonstrative and refutative discourse borrowed from natural sciences falls short right at the outset because its voice is not integrable with poetic and philosophical saying. This proposition will not be demonstrated as it cannot be: doing so would run against the proposition itself. This essay itself as a whole and as an experiment is meant to serve as a supporting force for this proposition.

But all this does not mean at all that the sentences of this essay will leap out of, or in some way or the other evade logic; I do not think anyway that it is possible for language to do so. All this attempt of saying differently (or

alternatively to demonstration/refutation, assertion/negation) means that the argumentation of the essay will accentuate and use certain tools of logic, or, to put it differently and perhaps more precisely, the argumentation will obey certain set of logical and rhetorical rules such as analogy, paralogy, paraphrase, etc. To use the metaphoricism of sight: the essay tries to give a kaleidoscope-like picture of the problematic by showing different aspects simultaneously (here one after the other, due to the medium of writing) and without architectonic hierarchy, as opposed to the microscope or the telescope which is directed on a limited whole and is designed to give an exact, objective, observable picture.

As I have already mentioned, this paper is a structured documentation of the reading experience and not a linear treatise of the works of the two authors. I found this form the most appropriate to approach these writings, as it may hopefully be able to preserve more or less the infinite and inconclusive tension created by the reading of the texts, as opposed to a linear demonstrative argument which would try to close and cut off any outside space for interrogation, for possible continuation.

In a way, each of the numbered sections begins again and again to untie the weave of the whole problematic and each of them concludes by maximally exhausting its own intellectual possibilities. Each of the sections sets a new problem but they all serve only to set *the* problem. The arrangement of the sections is thus not arbitrary or contingent. The sequence is built on a logic that is the following: the central thought in each section is being pursued to its limits of comprehensible sense and the thought of the next section is the outcome of what is left of this game of "vivisection".

The dividing branches of the argument of this essay are centred around a single and simple thought: life is utterly and strictly inexpressible and it is a blessing that it is. To be more explicit: Beckett and Wittgenstein get hitherto the furthest in pursuing the project of modern philosophy and literature to its edge – the essentially self-relativizing and self-annihilating project which always already tries to point towards what is beyond its means: the strictly *inexpressible* nature of life. Life is a source and an end to which no conceptual apparatus can bring us closer; a way of doing philosophy and literature can manage at its best to more or less rightly *measure the distance* between the logical-conceptual-topological system (the system of the philosophical treatise and that of the literary text) and life. Such a way of doing philosophy and literature would be to try to become contemporary with life – which is a project that has no end, as life is what pre-structures time and space. Thus the negative and self-critical role will be decisive in philosophical and literary praxis, and their living discourse will be essentially and necessarily indirect.

All the following lines of argument strive to point to the thesis summarised in the above paragraph. It is the main point of the paper.)

Introduction

The works of Samuel Beckett and Ludwig Wittgenstein direct our attention prominently to the blessedness of life, to the joy of life. To live is to be blessed, that is: to be given a gift.

What is significantly similar in the works of these authors is that the blessedness and joy occur in writing and in thinking as total and strict inexpressibility. [It]¹ is not a pitch-note but silence. At least on the acoustic and intellectual level. The visual-physical aspect of the speech-silence, expressibility-inexpressibility pairs is tendentially described by kinaesthetic metaphors, especially by those concerning the different modes of humane locomotion. By applying these pairings (speech/go, silence/stop) and by highlighting the problem of inexpressibility the texts follow a philosophical-literary tradition; in this essay, for the sake of sharpening the problem, I shall turn for evidence to the founding texts of modern philosophy and literature: to the writings of Augustine, the inventor of modern subjectivity and strict agnosticism in relation to Wittgenstein (this relation is exposed mainly in section IV), to Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations* and to Dante's *Comedy* in relation to Beckett (exposed mainly in sections I and III).

The inexpressible, i.e. the reference point for the self-destruction and self-relativization of philosophy and literature is thus seen here as the ultimate projective of modern philosophy and literature: their discourse is structurally open – their ultimate reference point remains and must remain outside or beyond their system in order to keep the system working on, going on.

My working-hypothesis is that both oeuvres have their crystallizing points: for Beckett's it is *The Trilogy* and for Wittgenstein's the *Tractatus*. Both of these texts culminate in a state of paralysis or at a certain self-limitation: nothing else can be said; only silence remains. They are crystal-like and thus from the perspective of an artist-aesthetics or production-aesthetics they are closed and conclusive. But, evidently, from the reader's point of view they re-open again and again with every instance of the action of reading. I try to commemorate the experience of reading by asserting the latter aspect, thus the aesthetics of reception becomes accentuated.

¹ I use square brackets throughout this paper (with the exceptions of providing the originals of translations and indicating ellipsis: [...]) to indicate the absolute vagueness of the words (mostly pronouns) between them. Not in lack of better term, but in lack of any term. These are grammatical holes.

The articulation of my comments on Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* will require an indirect use of speech. *To speak about silence is contradictio in adiectio.*

We may maintain, as does Martin Heidegger about *Gehör, Gehören*² (listening, remaining/going silent), that silence is a modus of speech: that would stand in family relation to propositions like '<<to stop/stand>> is a variant of <<to go>>', and, to extend the analogy, 'death/being unborn is a modification of life' (which Heidegger himself would have possibly been the last to propose directly). Briefly, it would require giving prominence to one (emphatically the positive, assertive one) of these complementary aspects.

Those texts on which I make my comments would not fit into this logic. If they recognize the structural and existential precedence of [anything] at all, it would be that of silence and listening, that of calm, which serves as an absconded point of departure or structuring force of any discursive activity and which remains unseen, unheard and intangible within the discursive boundaries. [It] can be only grasped as absence; which is, of course, a contradiction in terms: if you can conceive barely the absence of something then you can have no idea of the thing itself. No negative theology would ever bring you closer to an affirmative definition of the concept of God, for instance.

This recognition at the outset eliminates the possibility of *direct* constative statements and propositions about and of silence that would have sense. The *indirectness* consists exactly in this: we are capable to speak solely about the absence of the word proper (the Word), and in the end we are not able to speak even about that either, but we find ourselves still speaking.

As if we were compelled to speak about our inability to determine the nature of our loss.

I shall call par excellence literary and philosophical discourse that which has the inexpressible as its solely enduring obsession. The modes and variations of approaching the inexpressible, however, themselves resist fixation (of any pre-established taxonomy), though they are numerous, potentially infinite. (To cite Malone, the speaker of the second part of the *Trilogy*: "The forms are many in which the unchanging seeks relief from its formlessness."³ (181)) The two basic names for approaching or staring at and being amused at the inexpressible are philosophy and literature (a third could be named religion). It is useful to see how these two terms relate to one another in order to make clear how I apply them.

² Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* 36. §

³ Samuel Beckett. "Malone Dies". (Trans. from French by the author.) In *The Beckett Trilogy*. London: Picador, Pan Books, 1979 (1951). 163–264.

The first coherent and extensive corpus founding "Western" philosophy (and philosophy itself is a "Western" term) is the work of Plato. Plato's dialogues present philosophy as being always in the making: the elaboration of concepts and opinions is always embedded in a dramatic and fictitious situation. Philosophy is a work in progress. It is important to be conscious of the fact that there is not a single thought in the dialogues which is directly referred to by Plato. The indirect mode of communication is essential to the dialogues' philosophical meaning; that indirectness which in modern terms is attributed to literature. Even Socrates could not be equated with the author; an equation so often done by scholar readers. Plato did not write philosophical treatises.

In the dialogue *Phaedrus* Socrates says to Phaedrus that the name "philosopher" should be attributed to someone on the ground of what s/he is striving for, of what s/he tries to approximate: thus accentuating the *philia*-aspect and presenting philosophy as essentially unfinished, a living discourse, speech (as opposed to the dead and fixed writing; see *Phaedrus* 278d). But the dialogues themselves are in written form which produces a curious anomaly: the indirect form and the content of Plato's works suggest that the works themselves are written to have been overcome by the reader, and philosophy itself starts to exist so to speak where the fixed writing ends. The dialogues even in their very literary genre point to a possible continuation beyond themselves, a continuation that they do not contain.

The ground-making philosophy of the West, or more precisely the seeds of that philosophy were written in a dramatic-narrative literary form. Here the later-to-become modern schism and separation⁴ of philosophy and literature did not exist (in fact, the term "literature" did not exist). The fact that philosophy presents itself in what can now be called literary forms at its outset (think of Parmenides's elegies too) does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that philosophy and literature is one and the same, but that they meant to describe different aspects of the striving towards the inaccessible, the ever-renewing *Eros* of the ungraspable and inexpressible. Philosophy is the name of the activity itself (*philia* is action); literature is the name of the medium, of the form. While the former implies openness and infinity (the (imagined) approximation of the inexpressible formally can go on without end), the latter suggests closeness, finiteness, the necessity of an end (as there is materially a punctual end of every form of writing). That is how I use these terms. (I will use the term "art" here synonymously with "literature"; literature is written art.)

⁴ The isolation is artificial and theoretic. Augustine's *Confessions* is autobiographical literature, agnostic philosophy and anti-Manichean theology. Dante's *Comedy* contains a wholly-developed and sophisticated philosophical and ethical system. These are just two important examples. Of course there are several other trends or even periods when the isolation is more emphasized than the relatedness.

The term "modern" is being used to distinguish philosophy and literature after Christ from classical (basically Greek) philosophy. The projective of modern philosophy from Augustine through Descartes to Kant was to limit the field of possible knowledge. Basically it is an epistemological and a methodological quest. To define what is knowable one has to have a concept (however obscure, imagined or even comic) of the inconceivable, the unintelligible, the unspeakable. The obsession with ineffability (though it has some remote traces in Greek philosophy) is the result of the strong Jewish, Eastern impact accompanying the spread of Christianity in Europe. In the Torah to the ever-inquiring Moses, who wants to know who his God is, replies JHWH with divine humour: I am who I am. (The daimonic experience of Socrates is of analogous nature: the daimon, the inner signs with its silence, it marks exclusively negatively. But that is only analogous: while the daimon is specifically interior, JHWH resides both in the exterior and the interior, and, in a way, in neither of them.) The taboo and even the inconceivability of the name begin to obsess European philosophy after that impact, so that is the reason for using the category of modernity.

Arthur Schopenhauer defines going (*Gehen*) as a continuous effort to prevent falling.⁵ Analogously to this idea, it is possible to conceive speech as a continuous effort to prevent silence (falling into silence).

The metaphors signifying the procedure (this word itself is such a metaphor) of thinking and speaking in philosophical and literary texts are most often kinaesthetic expressions. Expressions signifying different modes of thought/speech and motion apparently cannot flee from each other.

The *topos* of the inexpressible and those uses of language which try to commemorate this inexpressibility frequently find themselves in getting articulated through kinaesthetic expressions. The compelling metaphoricism of these expressions (of which the simplest form in *The Unnamable* is "to go on") will turn out to be of central importance in the logic of the texts, thus I will try to treat this aspect with careful attention.

It seems that Schopenhauer's remark on going indicates an inclination to think of motion and speech from the light of calmness/motionlessness and silence, respectively. The perspective of Beckett's speaker(s) and narrator(s) is similar. It seems from this perspective that motion and speech presuppose or even are preconditioned by an undisturbed and ungraspable calmness and an unspeakable silence. *Its their ground to move*. That is, the privative, the negated, the absent concept (*nota bene*, however, that an unconceivable "concept") is the one grounding the discourse, creating the ground under my feet to go on.

⁵ Cf. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Teil IV. 57.

Our working-questions thus should be the following: is there a similar ground for thinking? And what if one has (always) already disturbed this silence?/ is (always) already in motion? And is one able at all to disturb it, or is one able not to disturb it? (Though these questions soon turn out to be nonsensical within the boundaries of the epistemological quest. (This problem is exposed in section III and VI.)

(This idea is closely related to the condition of *sub specie aeterni* contemplation. (The expression “*sub specie aeterni*” is usually being translated as “from the perspective of eternity”, but it is equally possible to understand it as “under the species of eternity”. The two renderings refer to two different worldviews.) (This aspect will be worked out in section VI, too.))

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I set out with a retrospective approach: in order to contextualize the texts in the oeuvres I firstly sketch how their crucial problem concerning the inexpressible possesses other works of the authors. It is a sketch because I only want to hint at the significance of this problem by citing two examples (there would be numerous others, and later I shall turn to some of them, too).

The following fragments can provide a hint of how the commitment to silence proclaimed by the end of the *Tractatus* (7) exerts its influence on the re-emerging and ongoing investigations of Wittgenstein. I chose these fragments partly because I try to appeal right at the outset to the mentioned analogy of motion/calmness (paralysis) and speech/silence.

We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!⁶ (*Phil. Inv.* I./107, 46e)

The *preconceived idea* of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination [Betrachtung – L.Z.] round. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated [Die Betrachtung muß gedreht werden – L.Z.], but about the fixed point of our real need.) (*Phil. Inv.* I./108, 46e)

⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophische Untersuchungen=Philosophical Investigations*. (Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe.) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967 (1953).

We see that what we call "sentence" and "language" ["Sprache" – L.Z.] has not the formal unity that I imagined, but is the family of structures more or less related to one another. (*Phil. Inv.* I./ 108, 46e) (all italics by the author)

The point of the real need remains fixed: the basic motive of the philosophical quest (investigations) remains to be the same as it was in the *Tractatus*. The inability to give account, to express the basic radical motive itself (i.e. the reason/compulsion to speak) leads to the inversion of (philosophical) language use, a shift to another language game which recognises the continuity of this shifting of language games itself, but this does not necessarily and also cannot result in totally different considerations. What is articulated in and through the *Investigations* is not and it cannot be an absolutely different worldview to that of the *Tractatus*. Except that "it" is always already in the plural: worldviews, language games, basic motives. The two language uses (that of the *Tractatus* and of the *Investigations*) have essential differences due to different terminologies and different syntax, but their internal structures remain "more or less related to one another".

It is a permanently emphasised thought in the Wittgensteinian corpus that what is essential is inexpressible. The difference though, or the shift of difference constantly in motion accompanying the direction of his notes and remarks is that while in the *Tractatus* this inexpressibility conclusively and rigidly states itself as something hidden, something remote or mystical, in his later reflections it starts to become essentially uncertain and the possibility arises that the inexpressibility is constantly present as evidence, as an unabolishable condition of life patterns and language games.

But, to use the expressions of the *Tractatus* it remains valid that in relation to the "higher" (6.4, 6.432), to "the mystical" (6.44, 6.45, 6.522) all this philosophical babble ("rumbling and roaring"⁷) is indifferent (and, to be sure, "the mystical" and "what is higher" are themselves instruments of this babble). That is, be whatever it may the nature of the inexpressibility, one cannot give account of it through words. The ladder, the architectonic system of the philosophical treatise is designed to be thrown away (6.54). A convincing illustration of this can be the remark in the Preface of *Investigations*: "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own." (*Phil. Inv.*, Xe)

As a matter of fact, you cannot even get to begin without them. (I mean thoughts of your own.) But you cannot get to begin within them either. The

⁷ Cf. this with the motto of *Tractatus*: "...and whatever a man knows, whatever is not mere rumbling and roaring that he has heard, can be said in three words." (Kürnberger)

two-faced aporia of *solus ipse* accompanies all the problem-raising done by philosophy.⁸

Friction-proof icy ground is the ideal accommodation for philosophy, for thought. There you freeze, you cannot stir, stay motionless, calm. To be able to set out for walking you have already *been (re)moved* from there. You have already *(re)moved yourself* from there. You are unable to stay there. But in some sense you are unable to start walking either, you are paralyzed, because *the picture holds you captive*.⁹

In Beckett's *Trilogy* there appears to be a similar description picturing the situation of helplessness, of inertia, of being frozen and paralysed, and at the same time the condition of constant flux and motion, of uncertainty. This condition is also the outcome of inexpressibility, of a silence of which one can give no account in words. In the first text in Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*, which is a contemporary in his prose to the *Trilogy* and is closest to it in its tracks of thought and vocabulary, the anonymous speaker sets out in the following way (and this can be regarded as a continuation of the thread lost and found in *The Unnamable*):

Suddenly, no, at last, long last, I couldn't any more, I couldn't go on. Someone said, You can't stay here. I couldn't stay there and I couldn't go on. I'll describe the place, that's unimportant. The top, very flat, of a mountain, no, a hill, but so wild, so wild, enough. [...]¹⁰

⁸ Let me copy here two fragments, without further comment on them and on solipsism here (in section I they will be treated at more length): "The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of my world." (*TLP*, 5.62) "But within, motionless, I can live, and utter me, for no ears but my own." (*The Unnamable*, 298) A remark all the same: I do not imply at all that these propositions say the same thing.

⁹ "A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside of it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (*Phil. Inv.* 115, 48e, italics by the author)

Cf. this with the following passage by Johannes Climacus (Søren Kierkegaard): "But the bird in the cage, the fish on the beach, the invalid on his sickbed, and the prisoner in the narrowest prison cell are not as captive as the person who is captive in his conception of God, because, just as God is, the captivating conception is everywhere present and at every moment." Johannes Climacus (Søren Kierkegaard). *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. (Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong.) Princeton University Press. 484.

¹⁰ Samuel Beckett. *Texts for Nothing*. (Trans. from the original French by the author.) London: Calder and Boyars, 1974. p. 7.

The place where the speaker could not stay and from where [he] could not go on is a very flat top of a mountain, or of a hill. [He] found [himself] there suddenly (no) at last, long last. The attempt to describe the place is unimportant; it is clear that it is not possible to give a description, nevertheless it is attempted (it turns out later that it is a depth at the height of a mountain, underground, in the earth, a six feet under perspective: the dead speaker below, the living above). Of that [place] you could not get the picture, nevertheless, (or for this reason) *you are most tempted to picture its indescribability in words.*

Here it can already be seen how the connotations of speech (thought) and motion constantly informs and influences each other in Beckett's works, sometimes indistinguishably. The simplest form of such expressions is to "go on", which most frequently refer to both aspects. The speaker often reports either his inability to go on or his compelling drive to go on or most likely both. To go on speaking or to go on kinetically. These reports reopen again and again on a regression *ad infinitum*: the speaker comprehensibly speaking about his inability to speak while speaking, while being compelled to speak.

The *regressus* almost always takes the form of silence in *The Unnamable*. But what is remarkable that precisely this silence makes it possible for the voice to sound; silence is even more than a *conditio sine qua non* of speech: it precedes speech existentially; silence creates the possibility of speech.

The above introduction contains the seeds of the dividing branches of argumentation elaborated in the following sections: the aporia of being compelled and being unable to speak, to go on; the enhanced quality of silence, stillness and absence as being of utmost importance in the logic of the texts, etc. The empirical aspects of inexpressibility (the extreme experiences of fear, pain and joy) will be treated with exceptional focus in the first part of the conclusive VII section.

In summa: the following sections try to show the reason why the ineffable is the corner-stone of philosophical and literary modernity, and above all they try to point out that the texts of Beckett and Wittgenstein radicalizes the indefinable problem of inexpressibility precisely by treating it consequently as indefinable.

I. (the method to set out; constant purgatorio)

The projective of modernity constantly and basically informs various layers of Beckett's work. Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and Dante's *Comedy*¹¹ are two apparent pretexts of the *Trilogy* (besides the continuously underlying biblical references). It is possible to read the text in the light of these two works. From time to time I shall appeal to this aspect of reading. In the passage below there is a concentrated presence of their reminiscences.

One starts things moving without a thought of how to stop them. In order to speak. One starts speaking as if it were possible to stop at will. It is better so. The search for the means to put an end to things, an end to speech, is what enables the discourse to continue.
(*The Unnamable*, 274)¹²

It seems that one presupposes the end (the possibility of an end, i.e. the logical fact of the end (cf. *TLP* 2.0121)) right at the outset. One cannot do otherwise; things must have started moving which contains the condition that they were without motion, and thus it is possible that they will stop (that one will be able to stop them). *As long as there is discourse flowing it is conditioned by an unending uninterrupted seeking for a "method" to stop.*

The discourse always already on method. Whether it is conscious or unconscious that this is the case, one, or rather I (to follow the shift of pronouns in the text; see the continuation of the quoted passage below) find myself possessed by the sole task to find a way to put an end, and exclude any *accidentia* (more precisely: those features which at least *seem* to be unessential at the moment) that disturbs the concentration on this task.

¹¹ Apart from the structural similarities (the three parts, the stations of the quests, etc.; those of which I will not treat here) the *topos* of the unthinkable unspeakable, which is one of the main issues of this essay, and naturally of the *Trilogy* itself, is a frequently recurring theme in the *Comedy*.

To provide an incomplete catalogue of such passages let me just quote a few: Inferno XXXIV. 24: "all words would fall short of what it was"; Purgatorio XXIX. 40–42: "Now Helicon must pour its fountains for me, / Urania must help me with her choir / to put in verses things hard to conceive"; Paradiso I. 70–71: "Passing beyond the human cannot be / worded"; Paradiso X. 3: "the Power – first and inexpressible – [lo primo e ineffabile Valore]". (Trans. Allen Mandelbaum.) Available on Digital Dante: <http://dante.ilt.columbia.edu/new/comedy/>

¹² Samuel Beckett. "The Unnamable". (Trans. by the author.) In *The Beckett Trilogy*. London: Picador, Pan Books, 1979 (1952). 265–382.

No, I must not try to think, simply utter. Method or no method I shall have to banish them in the end, the beings, the things, shapes, sounds and lights with which my haste to speak has encumbered this place. In the frenzy of utterance the concern with truth. Hence the interest of a possible deliverance by means of encounter. But not so fast. First dirty, then make it clean. (*The Unnamable*, 274–5)

I have already emphasised that the speaker of the text says that the discourse's continuance is conditioned by a craving, a wonder concerning the means (the method) of finishing. It seems though that isolation, reduction here is not a method but a must ("I shall have to banish them in the end", says the speaker). Descartes's method seems to be at first sight more deliberate.

In case we take the consequences of Descartes's method the most seriously and strictly it is possible, namely, to negate the existence of everything about which the least doubt may occur (i.e. about which I cannot attain absolute certainty),¹³ it turns out, firstly, that *I can solely think/say I, and cannot do otherwise* (cf.: "I, say I. Unbelieving." (*The Unnamable*, 268)). The I-saying "subject" has nothing to do with psychologically fixable categories. The compelling force of the voice saying I relativizes the category of subjectivity. The quote below from the *Tractatus* apparently uses the word "subject" as a psychological category, and thus consequently clearly distinguishes it from the philosophical self, the thinking I, the *ego cogito*.

5.631 There is no such thing as the subject that 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. –

[...]

5.64 Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it.

¹³ René Descartes. *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*. (Trans. F. E. Sutcliffe.) Penguin Books, 1968. 53.

The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world – not a part of it.¹⁴

The outline of Wittgenstein's *The World as I Found It* could be the outline of Beckett's Trilogy and *mutatis mutandis* of the Cartesian corpus. The radical isolation exhibits the subject in the end as non-existent, or at least as conditionally existent, relative. This self becomes a point without an extension – which coincides with Descartes's definition of the soul (as opposed to the body which is extension).

The propositions "*cogito ergo sum*" and "I am a *res cogitans*" (both referring to the soul) are interdependent. Their connection is not linear or hierarchical; i.e. it is not the case that the latter follows from the former. Only a thinking thing is *able* and at the same time *has to* pronounce the *cogito* of *ego cogito*. And it is able to pronounce it precisely because it thinks. Thus the circularity of this interdependent correlation opens on an infinite regression (and thus, consequently, for Beckett the thinking thing becomes even *unable* to think, an unthinking thing which nevertheless still *has to* think. Which is a kind of philosophical burlesque, of course.). The above quotation from Wittgenstein names this infinite regression "the metaphysical subject", "the philosophical self" instead of naming it *res cogitans*.

It is too often neglected in sententious propositions on and judgements of "Cartesianism" (and the cause for that is in the "Cartesian" texts themselves, to be sure) that for Descartes the *cogito* itself is *preconditioned*, so in the eminent sense (existentially) it is *not fundamental*. (I tend to think that the "modernity" of Descartes's philosophy resides mainly in this instance which brings him close back to Augustine, and which distances him from the quasi-Gnosticism and Aristotelianism of scholasticism.) Descartes names this preconditioning existence God (or he finds [His] name, for [this existence] is already named thus).

The radical question of *The Unnamable* concerns the very (*im*)possibility of naming and in the meantime the determinant condition of the speaker of being *already woven into* the process of naming and of being already named. (To use a figure of speech: the unnamable is being written from the absent source provided by the space between the string of signs JHWH. If that is space. Or void.)

To get back to Beckett's passage where I left it: "In the frenzy of utterance the concern with truth" (*The Unnamable*, 275), the voice continues. Descartes names the ultimate goal of his quest – not very surprisingly – the truth, too. It is

¹⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. (Trans. D. F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness.) London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2001 (1921).

also valid here (in the relation between the Cartesian and the "Beckettian" project) as in the case of Wittgenstein that "the axis of reference of" the "examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of" the "real need" (Wittgenstein, *PI*, 108, 46e, see above). Philosophy creating literature, literature doing philosophy. And outside the security of literary and philosophical history it becomes less and less determinable which is which. (It can be added that narration here by no means serve as clear-cut boundary between philosophy and literature; the *Discourse* uses narrative strategies at least as thoroughly as Beckett's text, with the difference that Descartes leaves the question of narration unproblematized.)

But I keep up with the continuation of the already-cited passage of *The Unnamable*: "Hence the interest of a possible deliverance by means of encounter. But not so fast. First dirty, then make it clean." This ongoing process of saying and unsaying is being conceived as a process of purification too (besides that it is a seeking for a method to make an end; to look at (un)saying as a cleansing process provides another, Dantean or quasi-Dantean aspect).

But not so fast. First take into consideration the semantics of "to deliver": it will be useful because it may provide us with a recurring logic of the text's formation. In the two expressions "to deliver a speech" and "to deliver a child" we may see the two extremes of the word's semantic scale. To utter either of them would require a special situation; the variety of these situations could be described by a scale that has the two extreme values of activity and passivity. In the cited sentence there is a dynamic shift of meaning of "deliverance". It is *essentially uncertain* whether that deliverance is to be acted out *by* the speaker "I" "in the frenzy of utterance" "by means of encounter" or *on* the "I" "by means of encounter" (thus the meaning of the word "means" is shifting, too).

The sentence gets into an essentially intermediate position (if it is a position; really it moves) as the discourse has already turned from I-narration into the impersonal in the preceding sentence. By reinterpreting this sentence in the light of the following formation of the text and the variations on this theme we may witness the semantic movement of "deliverance" (and "means") from the first ("active") to the second ("passive" or "receptive") meaning, without ever arriving there however. *The encounter may deliver one from the dirtiness of babble to the cleanness of silence through the Purgatorio (frenzy) of compulsive speech*. At least there seems to be a possibility to happen so. But the prevailing condition remains to be *the intermediary* of Purgatorio constantly accompanied by the recurring temptations (of "them", by "them"; see comments on "them" later) and the blessed moments of silence.

But yet it is the prevailing condition of Purgatorio that holds any conceivable vitality, any sign of life. In his essay "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce" the young Beckett already lays the foundation of such a view of life concerning the will-to-be *Finnegan's Wake* (*Work in Progress* then). The difference between

Dante's and Joyce's Purgatorio is the difference between the conical and the spherical, respectively. Joyce secularizes and thus revitalizes Dante's Purgatorio.

Sin is an impediment to movement up the cone, and a condition of movement round the sphere. In what sense, then, is Mr. Joyce's work purgatorial? In the absolute absence of the Absolute. 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.¹⁵

The dynamism is Purgatorio, but the extreme values that make it work are not inherent in that dynamism; what provides the world with sense and value cannot be found in the world.

Inferno and Paradiso from time to time give signs of the possibility of their presence, but what possesses the speaker/actor is the condition of the intermediate term. In the continuous encounter with himself, in the continuous encounter with another, in the continuous encounter with [himself] as another, in-between, *on the threshold* of the encounter with the absolutely and solely exterior.¹⁶

II.

(facts – *die Tatsachen*)

1. The world is all that is the case.
 - 1.1. The world is the totality of facts, not of things.
 - 1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by their being *all* the facts.
 - 1.12 For the totality of facts determines what is the case, and also whatever is not the case.

¹⁵ Samuel Beckett. "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce". In *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*. London: Faber & Faber, 1972 (1929).

¹⁶ Before the above quoted sentences the speaker says: "The only encounter I ever witnessed, a long time ago now, has never yet been re-enacted. It was perhaps the end of something." (274)

- 1.13 The facts in logical space are the world.
- 1.2 The world divides into facts.
- 1.21 Each item can be the case or not the case while everything else remains the same.
- 2 What is the case – a fact – is the existence of states of affairs.

The first proposition can be substituted by this one: The world is the fact(s). Facts are not things. *Tatsachen* (facts) differ from *Sachen* (things, objects) in *Tat* (act(ion)).¹⁷ facts provide the basis for action and speech. They are the determinants of my condition as a speaker making propositions, as an actor acting. Existential determinants. I can speak only about them, on them. And, which is the same and at the same time not the same I can speak about the fact that I cannot speak about [whatever] else. Or more precisely that I cannot speak [otherwise].

And yet simply the existence of facts (and nothing else) refers to their beyond (6.44). In relation to this beyond how I speak and how I act in the world of facts (method or no method) is absolutely indifferent (6.432). And this itself is a factual proposition.

But not so fast. From facts, on facts, in facts, with facts, through facts I am only capable to set out. (And this signifies that I cannot get out of myself. Whenever I proceed I find me (5.6, 5.63, 5.632)) *Facts constitute friction which makes it possible to walk*. As long as we walk the conditions are not ideal for thinking. As long as we proceed in thinking, as long as we utter, the conditions cannot be ideal for thought. What makes it possible for thought, for speech to go on (rough ground, friction, facts) is the very condition that prevents it from being perfect, complete. For it is clear that a perfect, complete thought would be a finished and finite thought, would no longer be a thought; the word proper (the Word) will not let itself be articulated.

(Whence then the obligation to speak? What makes it necessary to disturb silence? The direction of these questions is wrong. It is not I as subject who started to move things. I find myself as subject among things already in motion. The wrong direction of these questions is the outcome of a fallacy to have metaphysical remorse (to use Søren Kierkegaard's concept); it is a fallacy to have metaphysical remorse as I am not the creator of the world. To be a subject means to be able to speak, to act, and to be unable not to speak, not to act, even if this subject happens to be, as they say, physically blind, deaf, dumb and paralytic. The pragmatic-contextual referents of the pronoun „I“ and that of the word „subject“ are not the same.¹⁸)

¹⁷ The Latin language also has a similar etymology with the words of *facio* and *factum*.

¹⁸ Cf. (my thoughts constitute a parallel variation on the theme of the following line of

In the light of this condition it is seen clearly that I cannot help speaking about my inability to speak. In this sense “all propositions are of equal value” (6.4); they do not and cannot provide themselves with value (sense), and it is impossible to judge ultimately what value (sense) they possess, or what value/sense possessed them. But still as long as discourse goes on propositions on facts, propositions about facts, propositions creating (or rearranging) facts remain to be the sole point of reference.

III. (worm – between facts and life)

Unfortunately we must stick to the facts, for what else is there, to stick to, to cling to, when all founders, but the facts, when there are any, still floating, within reach of the heart, happy expression that, of the heart crying out, The facts are there, the facts are there, and then more calmly, when the danger is past, the continuation, namely, in the case before us, Here there is no wood, nor any stone, or if there is, the facts are there, it's as if there wasn't, the facts are there, no vegetables, no minerals, only Worm, kingdom unknown, Worm is there, as it were, as it were. (*The Unnamable*, 334)

Things do not matter, only facts, when it is necessary to stick to, to cling to whatever. The existence or non-existence of things (or, to be incompletely enumerative: wood, stone, vegetables, minerals), their proximity or absence does not have the slightest influence on the existence of facts (they are there, intact). “The facts are there” – cries out the heart. Is it a cry of pain or of joy?

Even after the work of the most devastating doubt there is still Worm (the *ego cogito* in incognito), [who] seems to be the irreducible remnant of “vice-existers” (289; of “them”): dumb, deaf, blind, without cognition, without motion. Kingdom unknown. But for whom unknown? Who is to know [him]? Is it possible to conceive [him] even as unknown? “But not too fast,…” (334), the passage goes on. It is clear that the work of doubt is preconditioned by the desire to know. *To label [Worm] “unknown” does only have sense within the limits of the language game of an epistemological quest.* There may be other language games

thoughts): “The word <<I>> does not mean the same as <<L. W.>> even if I am L. W., nor does it mean the same as the expression <<the person who is now speaking>>. But that doesn't mean: that <<L. W.>> and <<I>> mean different things. All it means is that these words are different instruments in our language.” Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Preliminary Studies for the “Philosophical Investigations” generally known as The Blue and Brown Books*, 2. ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980 (1969). 67.

which would name [Worm] otherwise, or in which the name Worm means something else.

To utter “Worm” is itself a possible connection between different language games. Worm is the name of those souls who crawl through the gates of Purgatorio; the imperfect souls who are not yet ready to endure the *encounter* with their Lord’s judgement – they have to repent for the sin of Pride:

O Christians, arrogant, exhausted, wretched,
whose intellects are sick and cannot see,
who place your confidence in backward steps,

do you not know that we are worms and born
to form the angelic butterfly that soars,
without defenses, to confront His judgement?

Why does your mind presume to flight when you
are still like the imperfect grub, the worm
before it has attained its final form? (Purgatorio X. 121-129)

What is required here seems quite impossible (for logic at least, being its basic concern with probability and possibility): a “passing beyond the human” (Paradiso I. 70) to form the “angelic butterfly” which is the final form. That is what is required to [survive] the encounter with the here solely exterior. It is a condition of levitation. But only an intellect sick with arrogance would dare to flight before the end is here (the desire *to know the end before the end*); this intellect places its confidence into backward steps and gets further and further away from the possibility to attain the final form. Further and further down the spiral – the stairs towards Paradiso and Inferno circulate round the mount of Purgatorio.

The never-ending temptation *to make an end before the end arrives* is closely related to the temptation to go silent before one is silenced, that is, before one is disengaged from one’s obligation to speak, and to the infinite “stoic” temptation of suicide.¹⁹ This is the temptation of using Worm as a speaker (who

¹⁹ The speaker of *The Unnamable* speaks of suicide as the sole step, the only move which [he] alone (can) manage. It is the only step that “they” (the vice-existers) will not be able to take instead of [him]: “They can’t do everything. They have put you on the right road, led you by the hand to the very brink of precipice, now it’s up to you, with an unassisted last step, to show them your gratitude. [...] The last step! I who could never manage the first. But perhaps they would consider themselves sufficiently rewarded if I simply waited for the wind to blow me over. That by all means, it’s in my repertory. The trouble is there is no wind equal to it. The cliff would have to cave in under me. [...]” (*The Unnamable*, 306)

essentially cannot speak), as a vice-exister (who essentially cannot exist, and cannot non-exist).

Worm, according to its use in the language game of Dante, crawls on at the gates of Purgatorio.²⁰ In case [he] dares to think that [he] is able to fly in order “to confront His judgement”, then he is in a regressive spiral. *The essential situation of Worm is to stay lying on the threshold of Purgatorio, on the threshold of the encounter.*

The impossibility consists in speaking “the” Language, the mistake is to believe that one speaks a (comprehensive) language in which it is possible to utter the proper name – suggest both of these uses of Worm in the discourses of Dante and of Beckett. The sole absolute alternative would be to abstain from naming, to go silent.

And it is impossible to go silent, and yet it is impossible not to go silent, but in-between two impossibilities there seem to move *a shift of volition called life* – intangible by the possibilities of factual logic; “the facts are there”, “Worm

There is no contingency equal to suicide: it requires an absolute resolution. It may be irresistibly attractive as the sole possible motion as opposed to the prevailing condition of inertia. It would be action par excellence – the one which begets an end at last. Still it is suspected of being an expression of gratitude towards “them”, towards the tempting possible actors and speakers. That too is to be resisted. And, in any way it remains caught up in the realm of inertia in the end; the cliff won’t cave in.

²⁰ Molloy, the first speaker of the first part of the *Trilogy*, at the concluding phase of his hopeless journey in the forest (which was in prospect to find his mother and home) first abandon “erect motion, that of man” (*Molloy*, 82), then crawls on his belly (“I suddenly cried, striking my brow, Christ, there’s crawling, I never thought of that” (82)), “like a reptile”(83), and finally crawls on his back, plunging his “crutches blindly behind” him (83; blind – think of the inter-relations between sight and cognition) into the thickets. His path of motion describes “if not a circle, at least a great polygon, perfection is not of this world” (83; the spiral). Finally he finds himself in the light that which he could have foreseen but only from far. It is outside the forest (the forest where Dante had lost the true path, and from which Descartes wanted to get out by following a straight line in the *Discourse*), in a ditch (“I don’t know why” (83) comments Molloy). The question concerning the destination of his mother and his home now seems to him as “ludicrously idle” (83) (the whole “quest” was set out to find her!), “though of undeniable interest on the plane of pure knowledge” (83–4). But his “interest” seems to consist in staying in this situation (the last sentence uttered by Molloy is: “Molloy could stay, where he happened to be.” (84)), in-between the double-prospect of height (light) and depth (ditch).

Cf. the abstract of this story with the following description: “Even when you aren’t thinking in circles, you may still sometimes stride straight through the thicket of questions out into the open, and at other times wander along tortuous or zigzagging paths which don’t lead out into the open at all.” Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Vermischte Bemerkungen = Culture and Value*. (Ed. G. H. von Wright. Trans. Peter Winch.) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980 (1977). 80e.

is there” as there is “a there” made possible by the animating voice of life, by the interval. The shift is infinitely quieting and hardly perceptible – the descending pitch and the dispersing noise of the sentence concludes into a soft rhyming murmur (in order to reconcile the acoustical and the spiritual): “Worm is there, as it were, as it were.”

IV. (life)

- 6.52 We feel that even when all *possible* scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer.
- 6.521 The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem.²¹
(Is not this the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have been unable to say what constituted that sense?)

Life resists problematization. After all the riddles (6.4312, 6.5) are solved by science the [problem] of life remains unquestioned, intact. Life can never be a theme of research; no solutions and no problems can be discovered.

Nevertheless, [it] seems to be the hidden, absconded reference point of value and sense (which, in the end, makes it possible for any problem to emerge).²² For the world does not provide itself with sense (6.41).

The proposition “The world and life are one” (5.621) does not mean that they are equated, but that the world and life are two aspects and not two separate [entities]. The world is essentially picture-like. The world of facts is what is

²¹ There is a much later (1937) variation on this thought: “The way to solve the problem you see in life is to live in a way that will make what is problematic disappear.

The fact that life is problematic shows that the shape of your life does not fit into life’s mould. So you must change the way you live and, once your life does fit into the mould, what is problematic will disappear.” It is clear that these formulations says more than the TLP version. They are imperative, while the former is descriptive. *Culture and Value*, 27e.

²² There is a remark of Wittgenstein dated around 1931 which partly supports this idea: “Perhaps what is inexpressible (what I find mysterious and am not able to express) is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning.” *Culture and Value*, 16e.

there to be problematized. "The facts all contribute only to setting the problem, not to its solution." (6.4321) The [problem] of life seems to be heterogeneous to the problems of the world. Any problematized fact contributes to set the [problem]. But the solutions to these problems do not give us any picture of the [problem];²³ the constitution of life is what essentially cannot be discovered, revealed.

Though we use the concept of life in a number of ways in philosophical (and literary) discourse, it can never bring us any closer to life. But it may help us to measure the distance. One such concept is Augustine's concept of God as life par excellence (cf. for instance Confessions VII. 10. 5-9²⁴ and several passages of the Soliloquies), and another such concept occurs in later remarks of Wittgenstein.

568. 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.

569. And one pattern in the weave is interwoven with many others.²⁵

The pattern/pretence of weave pretends life in the discourse. The very pattern of weave is but one pattern in the weave. (Woven textuality is itself a pattern.) Concepts relativize each other in the weave and relativize the weave. They are essentially interdependent, interwoven in the ongoing weaving of philosophical speech. That is, in the *life of speech* that they pretend. In the *speech of life* they pretend to speak but that they obviously cannot bring closer.

There is a radically agnostic tendency in Wittgenstein's way of doing philosophy that brings it very close to Augustine. In fact, the most often quoted and perhaps most well known sentence of Wittgenstein which closes the *Tractatus* (7) is a compressed paraphrase of an Augustinian thought from the book

²³ Cf. this with the closing words of the Preface: "I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the second thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved." (*TLP*, p. 4.)

²⁴ "Aut ulla vena trahitur aliunde, qua esse et vivere currat in nos, praeterquam tu facis nos, domine, cui esse et vivere non aliud atque aliud est, quia summa esse atque summa vivere id ipsum est?"

²⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Zettel*. 2nd ed. (Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe.) Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981 (1967). Pp. 98-9.

On the Christian Doctrine. The afterlife of these thoughts of a rather similar nature vividly shows how the rhetoric quality of *dispositio (taxis)* fundamentally influences the weight of a thought: the closing position of the Wittgensteinian thought provides it with a seemingly much deeper emphasis than that of the Augustinian one. Nevertheless they both show the consequential agnostic attitude towards the capacities of knowledge and speech. It is useful to quote the whole section of Augustine because it contextualizes the thought of going silent right in the problematic of inexpressibility (I italicize the paraphrased sentence, to be sure).

6. Have I spoken of God, or uttered his Praise, in any worthy way? Nay, I feel that I have done nothing more than desire to speak; and if I have said anything, it is not what I desired to say. How do I know this, except from the fact, that God is unspeakable [*deus ineffabilis est*]? But what I have said, if it had been unspeakable, could not have been spoken. And so God is not even to be called “unspeakable”, because to say even this is to speak of Him. Thus there arises a curious contradiction of words, because if the unspeakable is what cannot be spoken of, it is not unspeakable if it can be called unspeakable. *And this opposition of words is rather to be avoided by silence than to be explained away by speech. [Quae pugna verborum silentio canenda potius quam voce pacanda est.]* And yet God, although nothing worthy of His greatness can be said of Him, has condescended to accept the worship of men’s mouths, and has desired us through the medium of our own words to rejoice in His praise. For on this principle it is that He is called Deus (God). For the sound of those two syllables in itself conveys no true knowledge of His nature; but yet all who know the Latin tongue are led, when that sound reaches their ears, to think of a nature supreme in excellence and eternal in existence.²⁶

There is a split in the reference of the word “ineffable” which Augustine tries to expose. For strictly speaking this word tries (or pretends) to point at something which is beyond its own medium. There is no logical model which can give account for this split reference. [It] silences logic and speech.

It is not by chance that the closing sentence of the *Tractatus* is a tautology. “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.” What we cannot speak about we *can do nothing else but* to pass [it] over in silence. But there is an imperative which completes the tautology that is the *Ungrund* of logic. Yet

²⁶ Augustine. *On the Christian Doctrine*. (Trans. James J. O’Donnell.) Available at: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/augustine.html>

the sentence itself does not contain the *Ungrund* itself in any way but can only describe its relation or non-relation to it.

In Augustine's passage the idea of God is clearly divided from the existing God. The effect of the two syllables "deus" is that you imagine the idea of a perfect being but in this case the idea and its [object] may have nothing in common.

When we say that life is utterly inexpressible we run into the same contradiction in terms. We should pass over this contradiction in silent acknowledgement (and not in ignorance). In a way, the contradiction and the tautology as means of (non-)expression mark the limits of our possible knowledge. More precisely they describe how the limits look like from the inside. To demand more from speech and knowledge would be illusory excess. And the possibilities of speech and knowledge remain always excessively overflowing: this contradiction of life's inexpressibility lying at the depth of the expressible is what grants it the infinite possibility of joy and praise of life. And of suffering and pain of life.

V.

(to tell life: story/life; from time to time)

For the speaker of *The Unnamable* the inclination to storytelling is the strongest temptation preventing [him] from going silent, preventing [him] from living. To tell a story is always pretence, a mock imitation of life. The pronoun "they" is meant to designate the various possible speakers (vice-existers) of the [speaker]; to allow any of them to speak would conclude in another storytelling which begins, goes on for some time and then ends. They are "tempters" (*The Unnamable*, 296). They are the variations of the temptation of making an end. From time to time there are enumerations of "them": the names of the speakers (narrators) and actors ("heroes") of previous Beckett works are usually mentioned together with names invented in situ or with some remark, which suggests that there could be a countless add-on to these.

In *The Unnamable* emerges the name of Mahood (first he is named Basil) who seems to be the storyteller of storytellers: a generalized variation of the previous ones (the suffix "-hood" points in this direction) and the most individualistic ("Ma-": the reversed "am" of "I am") among them at once. "He" may be described as the inner personification of the faculty of imagination, or of invention. He is isolated: he is a hairless head locked up in a jar in a chop-house near the shambles. He "heaped stories on" the [speaker's] head (283). The speaker "always liked not knowing"; Mahood "didn't know either, but it worried him." Their voices mingled with each other. The speaker is uncertain whether Mahood's voice is present at the

time when he (the speaker) speaks. He hopes that “it will disappear one day”, “completely”. From time to time the speaker has to realize that the voice speaking is not [his] own voice, however hard [he] tries to hear and speak in [his] own voice, that is to go silent at last. [It] would be a life at last.²⁷

The vice-exister Malone in the previous part of the *Trilogy* tried hard to report his own death. Malone is a mutilated variant of “I’m alone”. That is, [he] is the isolated [subject] without I. The [ego] in its nakedness and closeness. Near the end of [his] soliloquy [he] says: “I am being given, if I may venture the expression, birth to into death, such is my impression. The feet are clear already, of the great cunt of existence. [...] My story ended I’ll be living yet. Promising lag. I shall say I no more.” (*Malone Dies*, 260) Through a (re)birth [he] has been purged *from* the dirt “of the great cunt of existence” (in case you read the sentence without paying attention to the seemingly redundant colon). Or, to venture the expression of the impression, the feet are clear enough *for* “the great cunt of existence”.²⁸ The meaning is shifting without arriving at any fixable point. A double-negation: neither existence nor inexistence (in existence). “My story ended I’ll be living yet.” Malone survives [his] story. Malone survives [his] soliloquy. Or the end of the story of Malone makes it possible to live. “That is the end of me. I shall say I no more.” That is the end of Malone saying I. Or that is the end of I saying Malone, of I saying Malone as I. Instead of this the [unnamable] says I. (“I, say I. Unbelieving.” (*The Unnamable*, 267)) The voice in [me] says I. Would that mean that there are no stories left at last?

The anonymous speaker sets out with the following questions in the IV. text for nothing: “Where would I go, if I could go, who would I be, if I could be, what would I say, if I had a voice, who says this, saying it’s me?” (*Texts for Nothing*, 22) The I who is “the same old stranger as ever” (*ibidem*) is expected to speak. It is possible that [it] is even the I who says the following:

There’s my life, why not, it is one, if you like, if you must, I don’t say no this evening. There has to be one, it seems, once there is speech, no need of a story, a story is not compulsory, just a life, that’s

²⁷ “I am doing my best, and failing again, yet again. I don’t mind failing, it’s a pleasure, but I want to go silent. Not just as now, the better to listen, but peacefully, victorious, without ulterior object. Then it would be a life worth having, a life at last.” (*The Unnamable*, 284) Cf. “peacefully, victorious” with the pseudonym of the author of *Either/Or*: Victor Eremita (i.e. the victorious hermit, victorious in hermitage).

²⁸ Grammatically there is a third possible interpretation but I do not see yet the point in understanding the passage as “the feet of <<the great cunt of existence>> are <<clear already>>”. However, that is a legitimate alternative. And maybe it is not accidental that the word “cunt” provides a rather blasphemous association: it has the same string of sounds as that of the name “Kant”. Open for suggestions.

the mistake I made, one of the mistakes, to have wanted a story for myself, whereas life alone is enough. (*Texts for Nothing*, 24)

Life alone is enough. The most compressed combination of (not solely artistic) minimalism and maximalism. 1. It is enough to (“merely”) live, to stay alive, as it were, there is no need of anything (least of all a story): it would be a luxury to have anything else. 2. *Life alone is enough* and nothing else will do instead of [it], anything else (most of all a story) is vain and useless. (3) To *live alone* is enough; to live with someone else, to live somewhere else, to live later or before will not do, it would be futile.

These alternatives do not disclose each other at all. On the contrary, they deepen the consequences of one another. These alternatives do not occur one after the other, but at the same time which is not time: *from time to time*. The text ends as follows:

Yes, there are moments, like this moment, when I seem almost restored to the feasible. Then it goes, all goes, and I’m far again, with a far story again, I wait for me afar for my story to begin, to end, and again this voice cannot be mine. That’s where I’d go, if I could go, that’s who I’d be, if I could be. (*Texts for Nothing*, 24–5)

The speaker of the last two rhythmically rhyming or repetitive²⁹ sentences has a voice that cannot be [his] voice. The fragment “this voice cannot be mine” is enhanced as it does not contain any rhyming or repetitive feature which would connect it to the other parts. It is enhanced by virtue of an absence, bereavement. It could be considered an aside – a shifting of the mould of the speaking subject which requires a shift in the receiving subject. Semantically-logically speaking this fragment is a negation. To negate the negation in logic means to affirm ($\sim\sim p = p$).

But these are, so to speak, heterogeneous negations (the absence of the rhyming quality of the expression and the logical negation); negations on different planes (the acoustic and the intellectual). Between the planes there lives “this moment” which is already gone and have not come yet. *From time to time* [it] “seem almost” present – in the condition of bereftness and absence. [It], i.e. this concentrated temporal mock-category of eternity and timelessness, of a never-

²⁹ I italicize the rhyming syllables, the repetitions: “Then it *goes*, all *goes*, and I’m *far again*, with a *far* story *again*, I wait for me *afar* for my story to *begin*, to *end*, and *again* this voice cannot be mine.” The interrelations: goes – goes; far – a far – (for) – afar – (for); again – again – (be)gin – (a)gain; end – and.

happened past and never-to-come future is what creates a mock-presence, a quasi-eternity that makes it possible to go on.³⁰

VI.

(eternity; to know life: knowledge/life)

6.4311 [...] If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.

Our life has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limits.

6.4312 Not only there is no guarantee of the temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say of its eternal survival after death; but, in any case, this assumption completely fails to accomplish the purpose for which it has always been intended. [...] The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies *outside* space and time.

6.45 To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole – a limited whole.

Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical.

(It is easy to see in these passages the immense influence of the thought of Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer – but these formulations are *radically agnostic* as opposed to theirs. For instance 6.4312 denies the imperative power of intellectual postulates.) Outside space and time you live when you receive the worldview *sub specie aeterni*. From [here] the limited totality of the factual world becomes clear. [It] is life in an eminent sense – a potentially infinite life as opposed to the limitedness of the world. Conceiving life in this sense cannot guarantee any comforting end in advance. Contemplated from this point of view

³⁰ Cf. my considerations with some of the “few general remarks” (267) at the outset of *The Unmappable*: “Perhaps that is how it began. You think you are simply resting, the better to act when the times comes, or for no reason, and you soon find yourself powerless ever to do anything again. No matter how it happened. It, say it, not knowing what. [...] What am I to do, what shall I do, what should I do, in my situation, how proceed? By aporia pure and simple? Or by affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered, or sooner or later? Generally speaking. There must be other shifts. [...]” (ibidem)

the world has an end but not life. We cannot foresee our end – that is a matter of absolute uncertainty. *Life cannot foresee its end as/thus it has none.* [It] sees the end of the world of space and time (the world of Kant's transcendental aesthetics). [It] is essentially eschatological and archaeological at the same time which is not time; from time to time.

Life is not a picture and cannot be put into words (6.522). Briefly: [it] is not spatiotemporal and thus essentially non-empirical. [It] resists articulation. [It] is mystical. To articulate any proposition on [it] falls short of giving a picture of [it]. [It] cannot be, so to speak, factualized. The plane of knowing (natural sciences), the epistemological quest is entirely irrelevant to this [problem]. From [here] the ultimate indifference of the world of facts becomes clear. And it seems that [it] requires or commands silence (7).

“Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death.” (6.4311) “So too at death the world does not alter, but comes to an end.” (6.431) Death designates the end of the world and not that of life. Death and *sub specie aeterni* is what is essentially non-empirical. Death is, so to speak, an infinite end. The inconceivable concept of death always remains outside or beyond any systematic vision, even if the system is built on a speculative imaginative concept of death (or of God, or of life, etc.).

It is clear that there are no valid claims against nihilism, atheism and scepticism because themselves have no valid claims in those [fields] where they imagine themselves to trespass. This is not a [field] for any valuable (sensible) claims. Scepticism tries to propose negations on the inexpressible.

6.51 Scepticism is *not* irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked.

For doubt can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something can be said.

In case you try to solve everything by means of the epistemological quest, scepticism must seem to be irrefutable, for its formal logic can be just as perfect as that of Thomas Aquinas and the five or six ways to demonstrate the existence of God. A solid, fixed ground is presupposed (even if not articulated) in both of them. And this solid fixed ground is system-inherent: it can be contained in a vision.

But on perfect ground motion and thought is essentially impossible – there is no friction. The all-containing, captivating vision lacks the source of outer resistance, of friction – or rather it imagines to have contained this resistance into itself. They – scepticism and the God-demonstrations – both speak directly

about what is unspeakable; and they remain completely intact by one another and become somewhat prison-like in themselves.

Descartes compares “the moral writings of the ancient pagans to the most proud and magnificent palaces built on nothing but sand and mud.” (31) He “considered that nothing solid could have been built on such shifting foundations.” (32) Shifting foundations mean here the foundations of any philosophy before Christianity. Descartes reports that he himself “had always had an extreme desire to learn to distinguish true from false in order to see clearly into” his “own actions and to walk with safety in this life.” (33) He strives to root out all the prejudices and errors from his mind during his travels. “Not that, in so doing, I imitated the sceptics who doubt only for doubting’s sake, and affect to be always undecided; for, on the contrary, my whole plan had for its aim assurance and rejection of shifting ground and sand in order to find rock or clay.” (50)

A solid ground is what is needed to walk with safety in this life. Thus Descartes’s project is to *demonstrate* the existence of God to acquire such a ground – God, whose existence is the precondition of any demonstration, of any utterance, according to his (Descartes’s) own account. However successful he considers himself in this project, the closing remark of the Sixth Meditation can be telling about whether that solid ground is always at hand *in concreto*. “But because the necessities of action often oblige us to make a decision before we have had the leisure to examine things so carefully, it must be admitted that the life of man is very often subject to error in particular cases; and we must, in conclusion, recognize *the infirmity and weakness of our nature*.” (169, italics mine.)

All the same: it should not be forgotten that even if the concept of God for Descartes becomes the part of the all-containing vision, the concept itself is strictly indefinite. It follows from this that the theological-dogmatic-metaphysical debates about the imagined features of the inconceivable and inexpressible and the origins of the world (the “cosmological ideas”) are being already seen as completely futile long before Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. It seems that the attempted demonstration of the existence *par excellence* decidedly does not intend or imagine itself capable of telling anything concerning the nature of this existence. The XXVI. Section in the 1st book of the *Principia* about the infinite and the indefinite will not allow a more definite or confident way of “demonstration”. This section is about “[t]hat it is not needful to essay to comprehend the infinite, but merely to hold all that in which we can find no limits as indefinite, such as the extension of the world, the divisibility of the parts of matter, the number of the stars, etc.”

We will thus never embarrass ourselves by disputes about the infinite, seeing it would be absurd for us who are finite to undertake to determine anything regarding it, and thus as it were limit it by

endeavouring to comprehend it. We will accordingly give ourselves no concern to reply to those who demand whether the half of an infinite line is also infinite, and whether an infinite number is even or odd, and the like, because it is only such as imagine their minds to be infinite who seem bound to entertain questions of this sort.³¹

The weakness and infirmity of our nature will show the enterprises to define the essentially infinite not only as excessive but also as futile or even damaging. To preserve this in mind during our thinking and speculations is not a question of “Cartesianism” or “anti-Cartesianism”. And often it is too easily forgotten that the “apostle” of Reason accentuates the necessary limitations of this otherwise important faculty and does not at all treat it as an indubitable authority.³²

At any rate, the consciousness of the infirmity and weakness of the human nature (rather than the successful demonstration of the existence preconditioning demonstrations) is the aspect which a quasi-Cartesian or quasi-anti-Cartesian thinker, Blaise Pascal preserves and emphasises. His interpretation of Descartes is very close to that of Beckett. Pascal *preserves* the constant threat of nihilism or scepticism (he calls it Pyrrhonism) on logical discourse. For him it is not dependent on the mind’s judgement whether thought proceeds on solid ground or sand.

But it is impossible that God should ever be the end, if He is not the beginning. We lift our eyes high, but lean upon the sand; and the earth will dissolve, and we shall fall whilst looking at the heavens. (488)³³

In writing down my thought, it sometimes escapes me; but this makes me remember my weakness, that I constantly forget. This is as instructive to me as my forgotten thought; for I strive only to know my nothingness. (372)

³¹ René Descartes. *The Principles of Philosophy*, excerpts. (Trans. John Veitch). Available at: <http://www.classicallibrary.org/descartes/principles/>

³² There are tendencies to view Beckett’s texts either as Cartesian or more often as anti-Cartesian projects. I see both of these trends as very narrowly reductive. It is not useful to ignore the constantly interweaving motion of pros and cons, of quasi-pros and quasi-cons which is a structuring force of most of his texts. And it is even less useful to ignore that these texts carefully avoid to demonstrate or to refute anything whatsoever.

³³ Blaise Pascal. *Pensées*. (Trans. W. F. Trotter.) Available on: <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/pascal/pensees>

To lean on sand is a determinant condition and not a matter of choice. *Our sole existential certainty, death, is essential uncertainty.* (cf. Augustine, *Soliloquies*, II. 13) The epistemological quest is not primordial. The weakness and infirmity of forgetfulness, of not-knowing is *qualitatively* instructive.

It is a philosophy which at the outset discards demonstrated and proved existence. (Its aim is rather to become contemporary with existence, with life, while and by constantly reminding itself about the absurdity of this project: it is impossible to become contemporary with what pre-structures time and space.) To encounter with the indifference of the factual world and the I-saying subject to what is "higher" by leaning exactly on them.

Thomas Bernhard's formulation in *Gehen* "*gegen die Tatsachen zu existieren*"³⁴ is a compressed expression of this condition. It can cover the following meanings: 1) to exist against facts; 2) to exist in direction to facts; 3) to exist in relation to facts. But there still remains an illuminating feature of the word "*gegen*": its rhyming with the title *Gehen*. To exist from facts, to exist towards facts, to exist against facts and to go on indeed seems to be the most complicated art – it is not art anymore but life.

VII.

(to experience life: pain and joy; the blessedness of absence)

Strictly speaking, in our determinate purgatorial position, or rather stream of life we could not have the slightest idea about experiencing Inferno and Paradise. We have their concepts nevertheless. And we must have their hints.

The two extreme values of experience, pain and joy are concepts without objective measurable evidence. The expressions of pain and joy can always be pretended or imitated, and it is impossible to have unambiguous criteria determining their genuineness. At any rate we always try to make a decision concerning their genuineness.

The main difficulty arises from our imagining the experience (the pain, for instance) as a thing, for which of course we have a name and whose concept is therefore quite easy to grasp.

³⁴ Thomas Bernhard. *Gehen*. Suhrkamp Frankfurt Verlag, 1977 (1971), p. 12

So we always want to say: We know what "pain" means (namely *this*), and so the difficulty only consists in simply not being able to determine this in someone else in certainty. What we don't see is that the *concept* 'pain' is only beginning to be investigated. The same is true of pretence.³⁵

So our making a decision does not rest on a fixed concept of pain. It is the indeterminacy inscribed in the possibility of making decisions in such cases that marks the beginning of the concept's investigation. The indeterminacy is conditionally essential here; it will never be abolished. Even if we try to imagine that it would be possible to define in each case the genuineness of pain by a detector, the criteria of pretence and pain would change but the indeterminacy would stay.

Could a legislator abolish the concept of pain?

The basic concepts are interwoven so closely with what is most fundamental in our way of living that they are therefore unassailable. (*Last Writings*, 43e–44e)

The most fundamental and indefinite concepts are unassailable not at all because of their objective certainty (these concepts condition the possibility of objective certainty) but as their *conceivable indeterminacy* is indispensable for our way of living to be maintained; it makes it possible to go on.

Fear, pain and joy are "primitive" and unspeakable relations. Their concepts are necessarily indefinite and indeterminate. The behaviour or the expression of pain, of fear and of joy (facial features, groaning, screaming, smiling, crying, etc.) are signs and parts of their concepts, but even a (still unimaginable) total list of these parts could not determine schematically our concept. One is tempted to say that the remaining unspeakable private experience (of pain, for instance) is what is essential to it. What is essential remains silent.

536. I may know that he is in pain, but I never know the exact degree of his pain. So here is something that he knows and that his expression of pain does not tell me. Something purely private. He knows exactly how severe his pain is? (Isn't that much as if one were to say he always knows exactly where he is? Namely *here*.) Is the concept of the degree given with the pain? (*Zettel*)

³⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*. Vol. 2. (Trans. C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A.E. Aue.) Oxford: Blackwell, 1992. 43e.

What can be named essential here is not a question of measurable knowledge. That is, what remains private and untold is not knowable even for the person experiencing the pain. (In case it would be knowable it would be tellable too.) But what he can tell and express to us is all linked with his pain (or joy, or fear, etc.). Our response to these signs will not basically rest on a thought out decision we make concerning the genuineness of the signs. In a way, our reaction will reflect (again in a private way, of course) the “primitiveness” and inexpressibility of its source.

541. But what is the word “primitive” meant to say here? Presumably that this sort of behaviour is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought.
[...]
543. My relation to the appearances here is part of my concept. (*Zettel*)

This essentially indefinite indeterminate concept is not the outcome of a well-built speculation (in fact it is the lay of the possibility of any architectonic speculation), but what foremostly determines my way of acting and speaking. These concepts are constantly in motion and what is presumably constant in them cannot be fixed by thought, cannot be put into words.

* *

The delight I take in my thoughts is delight in my own strange life.
Is this joy of living? (*Culture and Value*, 22e)

But we don't have the feeling that someone who sees no problem in life is blind to something important, even to the most important thing of all? Don't I feel like saying that a man like that is just living aimlessly – blindly, like a mole, and that if only he could see, he would see the problem?

Or shouldn't I say rather: a man who lives rightly won't experience the problem as sorrow, so for him it will not be a problem, but a joy rather; in other words for him it will be a bright halo round his life, not a dubious background. (*CV*, 27e)

The [problem] of life is not an unseen background which should be discovered in order to comprehend [it]. You can only, so to speak, unthink the unthinkable and unspeak the unspeakable. That is, the epistemological quest has no access to [it]; the ineffability is the strictest possible. [It] is the ground on

which thought-unthought and say-unsay could move. But not necessarily a background. [It] is constantly present in its absence.

May this un/thought be the joy of living (*Lebensfreude*)? This question is curiously senseless as it is not possible to answer it – either affirmation or negation would fall short of approximating the [problem].

To explain the unutterable joy – what does that mean? Does it mean to explain that it is this and that? In that case, the predicate “unutterable” becomes just a rhetorical predicate, a strong expression, and the like. The explaining jack-of-all-trades has everything in readiness before the beginning of the performance, and now it begins. He dupes the listener; he calls the joy unutterable, and then a new surprise, a truly surprising surprise – he utters it. Suppose that the unutterable joy is based upon the contradiction that an existing human being is composed of the infinite and the finite, is situated in time, so that the joy of the eternal in him becomes unutterable because he is existing; it becomes a supreme drawing of breath that cannot take shape, because the existing person is existing. In that case, the explanation would be that it is unutterable; it cannot be anything else – no nonsense. If, however, a profound person first condemns someone or other who denies that there is an unutterable joy and then says: No, I assume that there is an unutterable joy, but I go further and utter it, then he is only making a fool of himself, and the only difference between him and the other whom he condemns is that the other is more honest and direct and says what the profound person is also saying, since they both are saying essentially the same thing.³⁶

To preserve the unutterable unutterable is to prevent [it] to be uttered either affirmatively or negatively, to leave it out from the game of demonstration and refutation. Demonstration and refutation says *essentially* the same thing. Not that [it] can become object of any of these. But it is the most *tempting* for logic to go further and to imagine surpassing into the [prelogic], to imagine enveloping the [prelogic] into itself.

Despite the clear limitations of logic one has to remind oneself again and again that the affirmation and the negation, the demonstration and the refutation of a fact concerns the same fact. Negation can not add anything to the fact.

³⁶ Johannes Climacus (Søren Kierkegaard), *Concluding Postscript*, 221.

4.621 But it is important that the signs 'p' and '~p' can say the same thing. For it shows that nothing in reality corresponds to the sign '~'.

The occurrence of negation in a proposition is not enough to characterize its sense ($\sim p = p$).

The propositions 'p' and '~p' have opposite sense, but there corresponds to them one and the same reality.

Affirmation and negation, and consequently demonstration and refutation can not *say* anything in a philosophical sense; i.e. they are analytic judgements in the Kantian sense which are not able to extend our knowledge but at best to clarify and arrange the propositions already at hand.

Malone loses his stick with which hitherto he has been able to draw the things near to himself (that is analogous to the process of losing the linguistic tools with which to utter constative statements). He tends to conceive it as a catastrophe. But while meditating on the nature of this loss, he comprehends what the stick meant to him, and understands the essential "Stick, shorn of all its accidents" (*Malone Dies*, 233). So he discerns in the catastrophe a "blessing in disguise". "To know you can do better the next time, unrecognizably better, and that there is no next time, and it is a blessing there is not, there is a thought to be going on with." (*ibidem.*) The (un)thought of the possibility of an unrecognizable capability is a blessing to go on. It is a blessing that there is no next time. Or it is a blessing there is not – a blessing present in virtue of its absence. The "blessedness of absence" (204). A silent blessedness granting a thought to be going on with.

A "thought to be going on with." To know. But what is essential about silence is that "in the silence you don't know" (*The Unnamable*, 382). To know is incommensurable with the condition of silence. Silence is not knowable.

My voice. The voice. I hardly know 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. (*The Unnamable*, 362)

The definitions weaken each other and thus strengthen the resolution to go silent. From the growing void of the attempted circumscribing of "going silent" yields the resolution to hear. An infinitely interested direction towards the voice, the other, you.

The most intensive inwardness turns out to be preconditioned by an unrecognizable exteriority. [It] is a small rotunda named Yonder, or which is somewhere yonder, beyond something (291; the rotunda reappears in *Imagination Dead Imagine*) from where and to where I proceed, where I am from time to time. *You, Yonder, beyond would be the blessed place called home.* The memory of that home, which is not a memory, the hope of that home, which is not a hope (i.e. these are not cognitive categories) is what makes to go on, to think and to speak possible.

...but how can you think and speak at the same time, without a special gift, your thoughts wander, your words too, far apart, no, that's an exaggeration, apart, between them would be the place to be, where you suffer, rejoice, at being bereft of speech, bereft of thought, and feel nothing, hear nothing, know nothing, say nothing, are nothing, that would be a blessed place to be, where you are. (344)

The absolute exterior you would be the blessed place. My infinite process towards you is blessed; its indeterminacy is what is the form of the blessedness. I can never get assurance whether I proceed closer or further. [It] is outside the game of certainty and uncertainty; [it] makes that game playable.

This indicates an ontology which is not ontology: *to ov* is to be blessed to go on. The closing word of *The Unnamable* is "on". This word ends with a nasal close-plosive consonant "n" (as well as the Greek word for "being" or "is" (*Sein*): *ov*, and as well as the Sanskrit sacred "meaningless" word OM). Thus the phonic ending suggests closeness, a self-devouring discourse. And the you becomes I again ("you must go on, I can't go on"). But the meaning of the closing remarks: "it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on" work against the closeness; these remarks suggest an inconclusiveness, a process unfinished, openness. The semantic plays itself against the phonic, and vice versa. It is given for us to go on, and not to know, and it is a blessing that it is so.

[To understand] life, to live means not merely to resign myself to the fact that I can never understand life but to take this fact as a blessing, a gift. The sentences of Wittgenstein strive *against* the fact that it is impossible to understand the other, you. Against the facts, "*gegen die Tatsachen zu existieren*" is indeed the most difficult and tiresome art as it is clearly beyond art. "The difficulty in philosophy is to say no more than we know." (Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, 45) Philosophizing becomes the [art] of resisting the temptation of my numerous possible speakers and actors; it is an infinite means to catch up with life which is possessed by all of us and which possesses all of us.

[Here] art falls short and remains silent, is silenced – and art cannot give form to the silence itself but can only clarify its relation to the silence. Silence yields potentially infinite poetic and philosophical exuberance. [It] limits and thus creates and structures art's scope and playground again and again. And thus [it] requires to pronounce from time to time: here now I stop.

Or there is no other choice. Silencing my voice I stopped at any rate, but there is nothing that can assure me that it was the right moment. And stopping itself does not solve anything at all, in order to leave it open for me to go on.