

BEYOND THE KINSHIP OF PESSIMISM:

BECKETT'S SCHOPENHAUER

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## REFERENCES TO SAMUEL BECKETT'S WORKS

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- ENDG.                        *Endgame* (2000) Faber and Faber, Ltd.
- A.W.W.                        *Act Without Words* (1) (Included with *Endgame*) *Endgame* (2000) Faber and Faber, Ltd.
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- T.U.                             *The Unnamable: The Beckett Trilogy.*, op.cit.
- FILM.                            *Film*: Complete scenario/illustrations/ production shots with an Essay on Directing *Film* by Allen Schneider (1969) London: Faber and Faber, Ltd.

All other abbreviated works are taken from *The Complete Dramatic Works* (2006) London: Faber and Faber, Ltd.

- W.W.                            *What Where.*
- E.J.                              *Eh Joe.*
- N.I.                              *Not I*
- H.D.                             *Happy Days*
- ROCK.                         *Rockaby*
- FOOTF.                        *Footfalls*



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- U.            *Ulysses* (2000) London: Penguin Books, Ltd.
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Publishing, Ltd.

## INTRODUCTION

### FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH: INCONSEQUENTIAL FRAGMENTS?

Sept 21st 1937.

Dear Tom...

When I was ill I found the only thing I could read was Schopenhauer. Everything else I tried only confirmed the feeling of sickness. It was very curious. Like suddenly a window opened on a fug. I alway knew he was one of the ones that mattered most to me, and it is a pleasure more real than any pleasure for a long time to begin to understand now why it is so. And it is a pleasure to find a philosopher that can be read like a poet, with an entire indifference to the apriori forms of verification.

Samuel Beckett (Foxrock, Co. Dublin.)

There is no doubt that the recent outpouring of personal letters, correspondence and documented conversations recording Samuel Beckett's open enthusiasm for the writing of Arthur Schopenhauer indicates the extent to which Beckett's relationship with Schopenhauer is carried beyond any merely intellectual assessment.<sup>1</sup> For it would seem from the perspective of Beckett's early correspondence that Schopenhauer's writing offered a unique space in which his own intuition towards the world could find rare accommodation. One could even presume from the elevated language Beckett uses in response to Schopenhauer, that his

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<sup>1</sup> This was at a time in which the philosopher was regarded as not only an irrelevance to modern thinking, but, somewhat incredibly for the 20<sup>th</sup> century mind, seen as clinging to the tattered vestiges of metaphysical thinking: see, for example, Nietzsche's judgement on Schopenhauer [...] 'although the dogmas of Christianity have long since been demolished, the whole medieval conception of the world and of the nature of man could in Schopenhauer's teachings celebrate a resurrection. Much science resounds in his teaching, but what dominates is not science but the old familiar 'metaphysical need'. Nietzsche, F., *Human, All Too Human*, trans Hollingdale, R.J. (1996), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 26.

‘bedridden’<sup>2</sup> encounter with the philosopher actually inaugurates a breakthrough in his reckoning towards himself as a future writer and artist.<sup>3</sup>

Surprisingly, not only does Beckett acknowledge what he sees as Schopenhauer’s intellectual strength as a writer, but on a much more personal level it is revealed in his private notes, that the philosopher even elicits open affection from Beckett:

Irrationalism comes to full development in Schopenhauer by removal of religious elements. With Urgrund and Urzufall became the will-to-live and TH[Thing-In-Itself]. Whereas this activity directed solely towards itself is with Fichte the autonomy of ethical self determination and with Schlegel (pfui!), the ironical play of fancy, with *dear Arthur* it is the absolute unreason of objectless will. Creating itself alone and perpetually it is never satisfied, the unhappy will; and since world is nothing but self revelation (objectivation) of the will, it must be a balls aching world.<sup>4</sup>

On the surface as a piece of writing it is fairly unremarkable; essentially it is no more than a transcribed passage from a history of philosophy text book, with the odd ribald locution thrown in for added colour. But because Beckett decides to replace the name ‘Schopenhauer’ with ‘dear Arthur’ one is instantly made aware of just how intimate Beckett’s own perception of Schopenhauer has become at this remarkably early stage in his development as a writer. Indeed such is the rarity of affection displayed towards any philosopher by Beckett, that Matthew Feldman in his examination of Beckett’s interwar notes, marks this highly unusual sentiment by italicizing ‘dear Arthur’.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Beckett was laid up in bed with gastric influenza, during the time of composing the letter in 1937, see, *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett*, ed., Ackerley, C.J. and Gontarski, S.E. (2006) London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 511.

<sup>3</sup> At this stage as a young author Beckett had published a few poems, contributed to a collective study of James Joyce’s *Work in Progress*, published a *Proust* monograph, along with a collection of short stories *More Pricks than Kicks*, which in part was an attempt to salvage the ‘wreckage’ of his first novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* which was deemed ‘too literary’ by the publishing world, but, - just as damaging from Beckett’s own perspective, - also too Joycean. It is worth noting that Beckett’s own Schopenhauerian revelation (“Like suddenly a window opened on a fug”) bears a striking resemblance to Richard Wagner’s equally emotive encounter with Schopenhauer, set out in a letter to Franz Liszt: “someone has come into my solitude like a gift, even if only a literary one, from heaven. He is Arthur Schopenhauer” :see Magee, B., *Wagner and Philosophy* (2000) London: Penguin Books Ltd, 149.

<sup>4</sup> Trinity College Dublin MS 109715/4. reproduced in Feldman, M., *Beckett’s Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett’s Interwar Notes* (2006) London: Continuum, 49-50.

<sup>5</sup> The note itself forms part of a much larger transcription Beckett made from a 1901 revised edition of Wilhelm Windelband’s *A History of Philosophy* (originally published in German under the title *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* in 1893, see Matthew Feldman ‘Philosophy’ Uhlmann, A., *Samuel Beckett in Context* (2013) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 305.

Schopenhauer became - leaving the weakness of his system aside - one of the greatest philosophical writers because - in contrast to Hegel - he put the world back in its rightful place, because he attempted to think perspicuously. One reads him therefore with the admiration with which one once read Plato. Whoever demands from philosophy no more than the highest conceivable perspicuity, the liveliest metaphorical representation of abstract concepts, must call him a tremendous thinker-poet.<sup>6</sup>

The above extract from Beckett's 'Windelband notes' exhibits none of the previous colourful amendments, but instantly we can see where the value of the Windelband quote lies for Beckett, in the way it leaves an abiding impression of Schopenhauer as a philosophical poet. Windelband's idea of poet-philosopher, is clearly a description which Beckett is eager to embrace in his own personal celebration of the philosopher, remarking that 'it is a pleasure to find a philosopher that can be read like a poet'.<sup>7</sup>

An earlier correspondence addressed to the same Thomas McGreevy<sup>8</sup> of the above letter extract, provides further evidence as to the principal motivation behind Beckett's reading of Schopenhauer. And again we can see philosophy is not foremost on his mind.<sup>9</sup>

I am reading Schopenhauer. Everyone laughs at that. Beaufret & Alfy<sup>10</sup> etc.

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<sup>6</sup> Feldman, M., *Beckett's Books*, op.cit., 139-140.

<sup>7</sup> *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940*, op.cit., 550.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas McGreevy, Irish poet, critic, and art historian, and one of Beckett's closest friends. Both Beckett and Thomas McGreevy held identical posts (Lecteur d'anglais) at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, at a time which saw the same institution open its doors to Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. See, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940* (eds.) Craig, G., Fehsenfeld, M.D., Gunn, D. and Overbeck, L.M. (2009) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 696-697.

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to draw parallels with the way Beckett later as a playwright dismissed the suggestion that his own work was in any way 'philosophical', declaring that he himself had 'no philosophical or intellectual motives', and, in addition: "I never read the philosophers; I don't understand what they write". And in relation to his own 'intellectual cordon sanitaire' in Paris he is recorded as saying 'Heidegger's and Sartre's language was too philosophical': see, O' Hara, J.D. *Samuel Beckett's Hidden Drives: Structural Uses of Depth Psychology* (1997) State of Florida: University Press of Florida, 300, Fletcher, J., *Samuel Beckett's Art* (1967) London: Chatto & Windus London, 121, and *Samuel Beckett, the Critical Heritage*, (eds.) Graver, L. and Federman, R. (1979) Routledge London, 219, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Beaufret was a student of Philosophy at the E.N.S in 1930 whose research interests lay in Fichte, Hegel, Marx and Heidegger. It comes as no surprise therefore that Beckett's enthusiasm for the very philosopher who derided both Fichte and Hegel, as well as rebuffing any philosophical legacy arising from Hegelian thinking ["For instead of firmly and steadily directing the senses and understanding to the world that lies before them in intuitive perception and thus to what is really and truly given, [...] they know nothing except the highest abstractions, such as being, essence, becoming, absolute, infinite, and so on. They start from these and build systems whose contents ultimately amount to mere words. Thus such words are really only soap-bubbles which can be played with for a while, but cannot touch the ground of reality without bursting.": Schopenhauer, *A Parerga and Paralipomena*, Vol 1., trans. Payne, E.F.J. (2000) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 164.]. Alfred Rémy Péron like Beckett and McGreevy was a Lecteur d'anglais. Both Beckett and Péron collaborated on a French translation of

But I am not reading philosophy, nor caring whether he is right or wrong or a good or worthless metaphysician. An intellectual justification of unhappiness - the greatest that has ever been attempted - is worth the examination of one who is interested in Leopardi & Proust...<sup>11</sup>

So it would seem not only does Beckett take up Schopenhauer with such fervour due to what previous commentators have rightly recognized as Beckett's shared pessimism<sup>12</sup>, but even more importantly, I believe, Schopenhauer presents to Beckett the possibility of envisaging an aesthetic model which grows directly out of the intractable nature of suffering.

It is in this context I want to propose that Beckett's engagement with Schopenhauer is not merely a philosophical experiment which he subsequently aborts, but one configuring in a continuous process of aesthetic adjustment. Indeed I would argue it is precisely because contemporary criticism is unable to countenance the unitary metaphysics of Schopenhauer<sup>13</sup>, with the perception of Beckett having been properly vetted as a Modernist, that there has been so little appetite amongst critics to move the Schopenhauerian identity beyond what is regularly portrayed as youthful experimentation. It is for this reason of philosophical credibility (ironically the very pressure which Beckett himself felt under while enrolled at the E.N.S) that we often find scholars 'refitting' the Schopenhauerian 'bodywork' of Beckett's writing with a much more amenable programme suited to the expectations of the 20th century.<sup>14</sup>

### Contesting the Schopenhauerian Crown?

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James Joyce's *Anna Livia Plurabelle* in 1930: see, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940*, op.cit., 688 and 703, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940*, op.cit., 32-33.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Byron, in his essay *English Literature* cites the way Beckett uses not only Schopenhauer, but also Robert Burton, Democritus and Sir Thomas Browne in "shaping" his "singular and often ironic pessimism": see, Uhlmann, A., *Samuel Beckett in Context*, op.cit 223. See also Mark Nixon's comments on Schubert and Schopenhauer: Ibid., 101.

<sup>13</sup> Theodor Adorno describes Schopenhauer as the 'malicious heir of the great speculators knew his way among the hollows and crags of individual absolutism like no other. His insight is coupled to the speculative thesis that the individual is only appearance, not the Thing-in-Itself.' Adorno, T.W., *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life (Radical Thinkers)* trans., Jephcott, E.F.N. (2005) Verso, 153.

<sup>14</sup> see, [...] he has made himself ridiculous in the eyes of the very learned young intellectuals with whom he had come into contact at the ENS., Anthony Cordingley 'École Normale Supérieure' Uhlmann, A., *Samuel Beckett in Context*, op.cit., 50.

Fritz Mauthner<sup>15</sup>, whose work Beckett initially read as part of a fact-finding mission<sup>16</sup> on behalf of James Joyce, is usually credited as the philosopher capable of leading Beckett away from what is generally considered as an implausible metaphysical position, towards the much more reconcilable territory of the 'speech act'<sup>17</sup>.

Mauthner, as a philosophical candidate for Beckett's work, is without doubt very alluring, especially from the viewpoint of modern literary criticism. For not only does Mauthner appear to move Beckett away from Schopenhauer, transforming the 'Willing' subject into a 'language using subject'<sup>18</sup>, but it would seem he also captures the same linguistic skepticism which Beckett evokes in his own writing<sup>19</sup>. Importantly, though, for those critics who regard any sustained investment in Schopenhauer as bringing Beckett's own philosophical judgement into direct conflict with the values of high Modernism, it is Mauthner who apparently can disarm any previous threat which Schopenhauer posed to this view of modernity:

The metaphysical Will is in crass opposition to that which one designated by the word, 'Will' before Schopenhauer - unmotivated, lacking knowledge, lacking cause, completely blind, really imbecile, something which fits together perfectly well with the being of the world, as

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<sup>15</sup> Fritz Mauthner 1849-1949, Czech empiricist, theatre critic, and novelist. Most noted for his three volumed philosophical critique on language: *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (1901-1902). It is most likely that Beckett's first reading of Mauthner occurred in the summer of 1938: see, Nixon, M., *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries 1936-1937* (2011) London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 70.

<sup>16</sup> The fact-finding mission which Beckett participated in was specifically intended to collect material for James Joyce's new literary project *Finnegans Wake*, see *Letters of Samuel Beckett* Vol 2, 1941-1956, ed. Craig, G., Fehsenfeld, M.D., Gunn, D., and Overbeck, L.M. (2011) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 465.

<sup>17</sup> The fact that Schopenhauer's philosophy is not primarily taken up by the issue of language does undoubtedly pose a huge problem for modern criticism, especially when the analysis and structure of language is so central to both 20th century philosophy and post-structural discourse.

<sup>18</sup> see, Rupert Wood's use of Mauthner as a means of transforming the underlying character of Schopenhauer's 'Willing' and 'knowing' subject: Wood, R.A., *Aesthetics and Ascesis: Schopenhauerian Structures in the later prose of Samuel Beckett* (1990) Cambridge: University of Cambridge. Ph.D., 5. Also, by bringing Mauthner into Beckett's philosophical compass, one immediately leaves open the door for Wittgenstein who is widely acknowledged as exploiting many of Mauthner's own strategies towards the representation of language.

<sup>19</sup> See, Jennie Skerl's textural analysis of *Watt* in the context of Mauthner's 'ladder': *Contemporary Literature*, Vol 15, No 4 (1974) Skerl, J. "Fritz Mauthner "Critique of Language" in Samuel Beckett's *Watt*", 482.

Schopenhauer's pessimism perceived it. This blind and imbecile Will however has now imposed a goal on life, an objective on life's course. Self-Knowledge through the poor human intellect. The blind strong Will on the back of the lame, seeing Intellect. Who drew up this social contract? - the blind or the lame? And whenever the seeing Intellect has finally at the end thrown off the blind Will, who will remain the victor? The all powerful Will lies in the mud, and the Intellect, finally completely free of the Will is no longer there, for outside the Will there is nothing.<sup>20</sup>

As we can see from the essay *Schopenhauer*, Mauthner takes great delight in lampooning Schopenhauer's depiction of the intellect's subservience to the 'Will'. For Mauthner, the 'Will' as it is portrayed by Schopenhauer is unconvincingly absurd, and one whose relationship with the human intellect resides in a state of squalor and impoverishment. Therefore if Beckett can be judged (in the context of developing as a writer) to be moving increasingly towards a 'Mauthnerian' position, it would also imply that his earlier commitment and enthusiasm for Schopenhauer would have been tempered considerably, even to the point at which it could be assumed he had actually outgrown Schopenhauer.<sup>21</sup> Taken in this context, whatever remains of Schopenhauer in Beckett's later work is apparently rendered as farce. In fact, it does not take much effort on the reader's part to see in Mauthner's parody of Schopenhauer, a direct parallel between *Endgame's* own lame footman Clov and his dictatorial blind master Hamm. Upon such evidence one could quite understandably take the view that Beckett, like Wittgenstein, has 'seen to the bottom of Schopenhauer's philosophy'.<sup>22</sup> But before there is any suggestion of turning what remains of of 'dear Arthur' into a whipping post for Mauthner, one should be made aware, that the entire metaphorical construction of the 'intellect' as a lame footman and the 'Will' as the blind master, is in fact Schopenhauer's, not Mauthner's. For regardless of the sarcasm behind such an image, as an image it remains

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<sup>20</sup> Mauthner, F., *Schopenhauer* (1911) Munich und Leipzig bei Georg Mueller, 111-112 [trans., Sage, V.]

<sup>21</sup> Ulrich Poehast, the scholar who has gone the farthest in unlocking the Schopenhauerian profile of Beckett's early writing, portrays Beckett's relationship with Schopenhauer as one which ultimately will be discarded, eliciting from Poehast a direct analogy with Nietzsche "There is an obvious parallelism between Beckett and Nietzsche in that both set out with Schopenhauer's philosophy of art and left it behind later in their lives." : Poehast, U., *The Metaphysical Vision: Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Art and Life and Samuel Beckett's Own way to make use of it* (2008) New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 5.

<sup>22</sup> See Rees, R, *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, (1984), Oxford University Press, 158.

above all Schopenhauerian.<sup>23</sup> The case is similar when we examine what is now generally acknowledged as an image inspired by Mauthner,<sup>24</sup> ie., the celebrated ‘Arsene’s ladder’ in *Watt*: “What was changed was existence off the ladder. Do not come down the ladder, I for, I have taken it away”<sup>25</sup>. It emerges that the Mauthnerian ‘rungs’ on this particular stepladder have a distinctly Schopenhauerian grain:

However, for the man who studies to gain *insight*, books and studies are merely rungs of the ladder on which he climbs to the summit of knowledge. As soon as a rung has raised him one step, he leaves it behind. On the other hand, the many who study in order to fill their memory do not use the rungs of the ladder for climbing, but take them off and load themselves with them to take away, rejoicing at the increasing weight of the burden. They remain below for ever, because they bear what should have borne them.  
(W.W.R.2, 80)

As we can see quite clearly, the idea that Beckett’s interest in Mauthner should in any way be interpreted as a retreat from Schopenhauer, is somewhat misleading. For having applied himself so assiduously to Schopenhauer; not only reading Schopenhauer in French while studying in Paris, but also going to the lengths of shipping the entire works back home to Ireland while traveling through Nazi-occupied Germany,<sup>26</sup> - not to mention that small matter of reading Schopenhauer in the original ligatured gothic type – it is evident that Beckett’s personal investment and commitment towards Schopenhauer was of sufficient

<sup>23</sup> [...]the *intellect*, in so far as that is the guide and leader, like the foot-man who walks in front of the stranger. In truth, however, the most striking figure for the relation of the two is that of the strong blind man carrying the sighted lame man on his shoulders”, Schopenhauer, A., *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol 2., trans. Payne, E.F.J. (1966) New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 209.

<sup>24</sup> For the idea that Mauthner’s **ladder** of language underlies **Arsene’s** sense of existence “off the ladder”, see *The Faber Companion to Beckett*, op.cit., 360. Before Mauthner was advanced as Beckett’s main source for the ‘Arsene ladder’ it was widely assumed Wittgenstein’s ‘ladder’ at the end of the *Tractatus* was the most likely candidate: “...when he has used them - as steps - to climb up beyond them. (he must so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it)” see, Wittgenstein, L., *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. Pears, D.F. and Guinness, B.F. (1961) London: Routledge, 151. Also for an account of both Mauthner’s ‘ladder’ and the respective shift in the logical positivist perception of *Watt* see, Skerl, J. *Fritz Mauthner* op.cit., 481-482.

<sup>25</sup> Beckett, S., *Watt* (1998) London: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd.

<sup>26</sup> The fact that Beckett had sent the collected works of Schopenhauer in a separate consignment, ahead of all other books he had sent home from Germany, gives us a clear impression as to the priority he was giving Schopenhauer during this early period in the 1930’s. The Schopenhauerian consignment [4 Nov, 1936], second large consignment of books [3 Dec, 1936], see Nixon, M. *Samuel Beckett’s German Diaries 1936-1937* (2011) London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 201.



character to withstand satirical attack.<sup>27</sup> But most importantly we must keep in sight the fact that Mauthner's criticism of Schopenhauer is directed at his metaphysical assessment of the 'Will'. It is Mauthner's inability to take seriously a philosophy which departs from individual human action, in which there is no recognition of individual 'wills', only an indivisible 'Will', that provokes so much sarcasm from Mauthner towards Schopenhauer.<sup>28</sup> Whereas for Beckett, as we can appreciate from his private correspondence, his own enthusiasm for Schopenhauer did not rest in relation to "whether he is a right or wrong or a good or worthless metaphysician".<sup>29</sup> For it is much more likely that the appeal of Mauthner to Beckett would lie in the discovery of a writer, whose own work, like himself, had been significantly affected by his reading of Schopenhauer.<sup>30</sup> Clearly from a perspective such as Beckett's, whose pursuit of Schopenhauer was cast principally in relation to an aesthetic judgement, not a philosophical one, he would detect quite easily just how much of Schopenhauer's rhetorical style and imagery actually penetrates Mauthner's own characterization of language.<sup>31</sup> A particularly striking example of this is set out in the finale of the first volume of *Kritik der Sprache*:

There exists no last Why behind which no new Why swings its scourge.  
He who is condemned to philosophical thinking plunges into the alley;

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<sup>27</sup> It was not until the publication of Arthur Hubscher's 1937 edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* that Schopenhauer was made available in modern German. The edition of *Die Welt* which Beckett sent home to Ireland along with Schopenhauer's other works, was printed in Fraktur blackletter type face. For Beckett, who taught himself German, invariably a great deal of patience would be called upon in reading the works. For a chronology of the emendation of Schopenhauer's *Die Welt* see, E.F.J. Payne introduction to W.W.R.1., [x-xi].

<sup>28</sup> "[...] his point of departure is the individual and actual feeling in people of a voluntary activity; and that it is already a metaphor - indeed the most banal metaphor of common - speech whenever now Schopenhauer designates as the Will, not the actual wills of people, or even more the individual character.", see, Mauthner, F., *Schopenhauer*, op.cit., 103. [trans. Sage, V.]

<sup>29</sup> Beckett, *Letters*, op.cit., 32-3.

<sup>30</sup> "Among the books I explored for Joyce there was *Beiträge einer Kritik der Sprache* by Fritz Mauthner which greatly impressed me. I have often wanted to re-read it. But it seems impossible to find." *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* Vol.2, op.cit., 465. In evidence of the way Mauthner does not bring about a capitulation of Schopenhauer for Beckett, Mark Nixon in *Beckett's German Diaries* takes note of the fact Beckett transcribed Mauthner's reference to the veil of Maya, a Vedic construct which Schopenhauer himself had previously exploited in own work. See Nixon, M., *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries 1936-1937* (2011) London: Continuum International Publishing, 219.

<sup>31</sup> In Ben Hutchinson's book *Modernism and Style* Schopenhauer is identified as embodying 'a kind of language scepticism' towards any writing which becomes disconnected from its 'organic, epistemologically justified connection between signifier and signified.' See, Hutchinson, B., *Modernism and Style* (2011) Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 58-59. Also see [...] I call this degenerate kind of allegory *Symbolism*. W.W.R.1., 239.

the first wounds only goad his strength; in pain and despair, he pants further past ever new Whys, until he finally collapses and the optical illusion of a longing for death presents him with the fantasy that the pain is stopping, that the last Why has been reached. The unending series used to lead further to the wherefore and to the wherefore of the wherefore into the future.<sup>32</sup>

The illusory ‘Why ?’ and the ‘Wherefore ?’ which Mauthner presents as having no substantial grounding other than sustaining needless suffering, in which death finally but misleadingly, presents itself as the ‘answer’, is instantly echoed not only in Schopenhauer’s rebuttal of the philosophical ‘Why ?’: “ Thus we no longer consider the where, the when, the why and the whither in things, but simply and solely the *what*, ”<sup>33</sup> but it is also evident to anyone familiar with *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, that Mauthner’s final evaluation of the philosophical reach of language is a recapitulation of Schopenhauer’s own declaration towards suffering and death:

Dying is certainly to be regarded as the real aim of life; at the moment of dying, everything is decided which through the whole course of life was only prepared and introduced. Death is the result, the résumé, of life, or the total sum expressing at one stroke all the instruction given by life in detail and piecemeal, namely that the whole striving, the phenomenon of which is life, was vain, fruitless, and self-contradictory effort, to have returned from which is a deliverance.  
(W.W.R.2, 637.)

And regarding the illusory nature of the final ‘Why’, we can see quite clearly that it is the much maligned Schopenhauer who provides the initial framing for Mauthner:

[...] whoever is oppressed by the burdens of life, whoever loves life and affirms it, but abhors its torments, and in particular can no longer endure the hard lot that has fallen to just him, cannot hope for deliverance from death, and cannot save himself through suicide. Only by a false illusion does the cool shade of Orcus allure him as a haven of rest. The earth rolls on from day into night; the individual dies; but the sun itself burns without intermission, an eternal noon.  
(W.W.R.1, 280-281.)

Even if Mauthner was unwilling to recognize Schopenhauer’s undoubted contribution to his

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<sup>32</sup> Mauthner, F. *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* Vol 1. (1923) Leipzig: Verlag Felix Meiner, 712-713. [trans. Sage, V.].

<sup>33</sup> Schopenhauer, A., W.W.R.1., 178.

own positioning of language, Beckett, having thoroughly immersed himself in Schopenhauer, would have instantly discerned whose hand was ultimately influencing Mauthner's.<sup>34</sup>

So, far from seeing in Beckett's approval of Mauthner a displacement of Schopenhauer, we can appreciate from Beckett's own aesthetic viewpoint that Mauthner in many ways represents an attempt to confer upon language a Schopenhauerian 'grammar'.<sup>35</sup>

### **If Not Language, What?**

If Schopenhauer's philosophy is not principally driven in relation to the structure of language, what is it ?

The answer to this lies somewhat conveniently in the title of Schopenhauer's main 'Work'

*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*: 'Wille' and 'Vorstellung'. But it would seem that this is where the convenience ends. For we may rightly scratch our heads and ask what is 'will' with a capital 'W' and how does 'Vorstellung' stand up as a concept?

Starting with the seemingly most difficult from an English-speaking perspective, how does one begin to address the meaning of 'Vorstellung' ? We could appeal, perhaps, to previous attempts at bringing 'Vorstellung' under the recognition of a single word. For instance we could try out words such as 'idea'<sup>36</sup> 'representation'<sup>37</sup> or even 'presentation'<sup>38</sup> all of

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<sup>34</sup> Another philosopher equally reluctant to recognize the invaluable contribution Schopenhauer made to his writing is Ludwig Wittgenstein: "I think I see quite clearly what Schopenhauer got out of his philosophy-but when I read Schopenhauer I seem to see to the bottom very easily. He is not deep in the sense that Kant and Berkeley are deep." see, Rees, R. *Recollections of Wittgenstein* (1984) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 158.

<sup>35</sup> A fascinating discovery by Mark Nixon reveals that : "Against the backdrop of Beckett's interest in linguistic skepticism, it is remarkable that one of the first passages he marked in the introduction (with a marginal cross in grey pencil) is Schopenhauer's view on philosophy as a continuous abuse of universals or general or general concepts." (Frauenstädt in Schopenhauer 1923, II). On 9 July 1937, See Van Hulle, D and Nixon, M., *Samuel Beckett's Library* (2013) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 144. Also, concerning the possible misappropriation of Beckett's examination of 'nominalism' in the context of Mauthner, rather than Schopenhauer see Ibid., 144-145.

<sup>36</sup> The first English translation of *Die Welt*, by R.B. Haldane and John Kemp bears the title inscription *The World as Will and Idea*, see Schopenhauer, A. *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol 1., trans. Haldane, R.B. and Kemp, J. (1891) second edition, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trüber, & Co, Ltd.

<sup>37</sup> E.F.J. Payne's translation of *Die Welt* based upon the definitive 1937 German edition of *Die Welt* prepared by Dr Arthur Hübscher (President of the Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft who consulted directly the original manuscripts) allies itself with France and Italy, in translating *Vorstellung* into 'representation'. See Payne's 'Translators Introduction' in Schopenhauer, A. *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol 1., trans. Payne, E.F.J. (1969) New York: Dover Publications Inc, [ix].

which have been previously sought in relation to English translations of *Die Welt*. There is of course, in the event of being unable to decide on a single definition, the possibility of simply looking up ‘Vorstellung’ in a German dictionary:

**Vorstellung** die 1. (Begriff) idea: **er macht sich** (Dat.) **keine** ~ [davon], **welche Mühe das kostet** he has no idea how much effort that costs; **das entspricht ganz/ nicht meinen** ~ **en** that is exactly/not what I had in mind 2. o.Pl. (Fantasie) imagination; **das geht über alle** ~ **hinaus** it is unimaginable 3. (Aufführung) performance; (im Kino) showing; **eine schwache** ~ **geben** (fig) perform badly 4. (das Bekanntmachen) introduction 5. (Präsentation) presentation 6. (bei Bewerbung) interview.<sup>39</sup>

Already we can see the way in which ‘Vorstellung’ moves in not one, but two directions.

Firstly, that which becomes assigned to a process of mental representation, ‘idea’. And second, that which reveals the action of ‘placing in front of one’, that which is perceived:

‘showing’ or ‘presenting’. It is precisely this dual aspect of Vorstellung which has led

to so much contention amongst translators of Schopenhauer. For does one pursue

Schopenhauer through the concept of ‘idea’, knowing that the author only uses the German

*Idee*<sup>40</sup> with reference to the Platonic Idea with a capital ‘I’? Or does one try to avoid all such

confusion, and appeal directly to Immanuel Kant’s *repraesentatio*<sup>41</sup> as in the case of the

French and Italian versions of *Die Welt*, not to mention E.F.J. Payne’s own 1958 translation?

Yet it soon becomes apparent with further translations of *Die Welt*, that there is still

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<sup>38</sup> Richard E. Aquila, in his 2008 translation of *Die Welt*, opts for the seemingly less abstract construction of ‘presentation’ see, Schopenhauer, A. *The World as Will and Presentation*, Vol 1., trans. Aquila, R.E.(2008) New York: Pearson Education Inc.

<sup>39</sup> *Concise Oxford Duden German Dictionary, Third Edition* (2005) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>40</sup> “My readers know that I accept the word *Idea* (*Idee*) only in its original Platonic sense, and that I have thoroughly discussed it especially in the third book of my chief work [*Die Welt*]. The French and English on the other hand, attach to the words *idée* or *idea* a very ordinary yet perfectly definite and distinct meaning. When, however, anyone speaks to the Germans about Ideas (*Ideen*), especially when the word is pronounced *Uedähen* their heads begin to swim, all reflectiveness forsakes them, and they feel as if they were about to go up in a balloon.” Schopenhauer, A., *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, trans. E.F.J. Payne (1974) La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 167-168.

<sup>41</sup> “We are not so lacking in terms properly suited to each species of representation that we have need for one to encroach on the property of another. Here is their progression: The genus is **representation** in general (*repraesentatio*). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A **perception** that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a **sensation** (*sensatio*); an objective perception is a **cognition** (*cognitio*).” Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Guyer, P. and Wood, A.W. (2000) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 398-399. See also glossary for a working definition of ‘Vorsellung’ as ‘representation’, 765.

unaccounted movement taking place underneath the somewhat overextended veil of ‘representation’. Richard E. Aquila’s translation feels itself obliged to prepare the reader for what is yet again a revised position in response to ‘Vorstellung’, moving its identity towards the less theoretical ‘presentation’. Moreover, Aquila is prepared to discuss a further hindrance often unappreciated in response to ‘Vorstellung’, namely, that relating to its category as a ‘concept’. For as the introduction to the Aquila translation so eloquently captures, ‘Vorstellung’ is in actual fact not a ‘concept’ but rather what the German denotes as a ‘Begriff’:

[...] I am aware that the concept of “concept” does not correspond exactly to the German *Begriff*, and neither does “idea”). Thus even “the very best translation will at most be related to the original as the transposition of a piece of music into another key is to a given piece itself”; and as Schopenhauer adds, “those who understand music know what that means.”<sup>42</sup>

So, in order to present to the reader the semblance of a philosophical concept, it would appear that the ‘tonality’ which ‘Vorstellung’ carries has to be significantly weakened. It is within this tonal shift, largely imperceptible to the ears of the philosophical readership, that we witness the ‘Begriff’ taking on a ‘performative’ aspect. As our dictionary entry makes clear, ‘Vorstellung’ can be used both in relation to ‘showing’ and to ‘performance’. Therefore if the primary constituent of Vorstellung ‘vor|stellen’ literally meaning “placing before” can be accessed on a much more rudimentary level, ‘Vorstellung’ itself need not only allude to a vexed physiological process located deep in human consciousness, but simply to a “theatrical presentation”<sup>43</sup>. For if Beckett was reading Schopenhauer “with an entire indifference to the apriori forms of verification” one would assume, he would be quite happy to leave the philosophers squabbling amongst themselves as how to conceptualize ‘Vorstellung’.<sup>44</sup> Indeed

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<sup>42</sup> Schopenhauer, A., *The World as Will and Presentation*, Vol 1.op.cit. Preface to translation, Kossler, M.[viii].

<sup>43</sup> For an outline of the common usage of ‘Vorstellung’ in a theatrical context see, *The World as Will and Presentation.*, op.cit., [xiii-xiv].

much of the consternation which many translators experience with Schopenhauer's 'Vorstellung' derives largely from its unwillingness to stay in one place at any given moment: i.e. simultaneously 'representing', and being that which is 'represented'. Whereas from Beckett's own aesthetic view point, this would in fact provide a new context in which the stage, and the action represented upon the stage, could itself articulate 'Vorstellung' without ever needing to appeal to an intransigent vocabulary. Beckett, having now access to Schopenhauer in the original German, would inhabit a very different space to one he had previously been occupying in relation to his French translation.<sup>45</sup> For now, he would escape the characteristically flat descriptive profile of 'représentation' and instead encounter a philosophy not only raised in response to a representing subject, but the world in which the subject was being represented.<sup>46</sup> As Beckett would appreciate in the context of Schopenhauer's 'Begriff', the representative aspect of 'Vorstellung' and the participatory aspect, that which is staged in front of the representing subject, are articulated simultaneously.<sup>47</sup>

When Beckett enthuses in September 1937 "I always knew he was one of the ones that mattered most to me, and it is pleasure more real than any pleasure for a long time to begin to understand as to why it is so", such feeling cannot simply be pointing to the rediscovery of Schopenhauer's pessimism, or indeed his abiding view of the world being predicated on 'suffering'. Though clearly important to Beckett, the pessimism per se would have already

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<sup>44</sup> Schopenhauer at times uses 'Vorstellung' to convey what he himself describes as an "exceedingly complicated physiological process in the brain of an animal, the results of which is the consciousness of a *picture* there." see, W.W.R.1., [ix].

<sup>45</sup> 'These 'Werke' are the six volumes of the *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Julius Frauenstädt (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 2nd ed., 1923)' which as Mark Nixon points out are still among the books held in Beckett's surviving private library. See, Van Hulle, D., and Nixon, M., *Samuel Beckett's Library* (2013) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 144.

<sup>46</sup> Due to the fact that Beckett was reading from a French translation of *Die Welt* whilst studying in Paris, he did not encounter the usual problem of having to navigate the two 'Ideas' of Haldane and Kemp's translation. Firstly the 'idea' of 'Vorstellung' (which as a result of a publishing error never carried the intended lower case 'i'). And secondly the Platonic Idea. Instead Beckett had at hand the much more pragmatic stamp of 'représentation' which to the benefit of French readers established a clear division between 'Vorstellung' and Idea.

<sup>47</sup> "Our knowing consciousness, appearing as outer and inner sensibility (receptivity), as understanding and as faculty of reason (*Vernunft*), is divisible into subject and object, and contains nothing else. To be object for the subject and to be our representation or mental picture are the same thing. All our representations are objects of the subject, and all objects of the subject are our representations." Schopenhauer, A., *The Fourfold Root*, op.cit., 41-42.

been assimilated through his French copy of *Die Welt*. It would seem, as the letter is implying, Beckett's renewed excitement towards Schopenhauer is in fact more to do with style than with content.

Reading *Die Welt* in the original German clearly would not have changed Beckett's overall understanding of the general themes and ideas running through the work; what would have changed though would be the grammatical and expressive space in which they were located. It is this notion of Beckett, being able to retrieve 'Vorstellung' from within the newly considered framework of the original German that I personally believe has a crucial bearing on his decision to look to the theatre as a means of resolving many of the representational issues he felt unable to address in the genre of the novel:

**Mrs W.** Words fail us.

**Mrs D.** Now this is where a writer for the stage would have us speak no doubt.

(H.W. Act. 1., 160.)

If Beckett's changing appreciation of 'Vorstellung' does indeed bring about a renewed focus and urgency towards the theatre, then one would naturally expect to see such an important adjustment taking shape in Beckett's own writing.

### **Dr Johnson's Improbable Lodger.**

In fact we need only look as far as his abandoned theatrical piece *Human Wishes*<sup>48</sup>, which we now know through documented evidence was composed during the same period, in which we find Beckett knee-deep in the works of Schopenhauer. As James Knowlson identifies in his authorized biography *Damned to Fame*, Beckett "had been interested in Dr Johnson for many years."<sup>49</sup> But the idea of sitting down to write an actual play about him and Mrs Thrale<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Beckett's first intended full length play *Human Wishes*, the title of which is derived from Samuel Johnson's Juvenalian satire *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. The unfinished play which survives only as fragments centres upon Johnson's household in 1781 and 1784 in Bolt Court Fleetstreet, see, Knowlson, J., *Damned to Fame, The Life of Samuel Beckett* (1996) London: Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 269.

seems to have occurred to him only during the late summer of 1936, before he left for Germany, or even in Germany itself.”<sup>51</sup> To my mind, knowing that there is clear overlap between Beckett’s deep immersion in Schopenhauer<sup>52</sup> and his devised stage play *Human Wishes*, would suggest as a project the two are not unrelated. Intriguingly it transpires that in preparation for his trip to Germany, Beckett had set himself the task of translating Johnson’s ‘Lord Chesterfield letter’<sup>53</sup> into German (or as Knowlson adds, it could simply be he copied an existing German translation of the Chesterfield letter).<sup>54</sup> Whether Beckett was solely involved in a translation exercise testing the proficiency of his German, or actually looking to impart a German sensibility to his reading of Johnson, is unclear.<sup>55</sup> What remains undisputed though, is that Beckett’s own personal empathy and fascination towards Johnson rested mainly upon his ailing persona as a writer. As Knowlson remarks “The manuscript notes and his letters to his friends show Beckett grappling with two rather different themes: the love of Johnson for Mrs Thrale; but also the image of Johnson in decline, physically ill, and morbidly preoccupied with his own physical deterioration, death and dying.”<sup>56</sup> Namely the same themes which are at play in Schopenhauer’s own writing. A character like Johnson who, as Beckett describes constantly reflected upon death “dreading-to-go to bed, praying-for-the dead, past living, terrified of dying, terrified of deadness” provides in many ways the quintessential cover for Schopenhauer’s *animal metaphysicum*.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> As James Knowlson confirms in his biography, a letter from Beckett to Thomas McGreevy dated 5th June 1936, in which he discusses his progress on the “Johnson project”, was wrongly dated by Beckett and from internal evidence was clearly written on the 5th June 1937, see, *Ibid.*, 755.

<sup>50</sup> Mrs Hester Thrale, Dr Johnson’s constant companion, diarist, and author of *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson*, written alongside her own diary entries, forms the basis of Beckett’s own research into Johnson’s life: “There won’t be anything snappy or wisecracking about the Johnson play if it is ever written. It isn’t Boswell’s wit and wisdom machine that means anything to me, but the miseries he never talked of[...]” see, *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>51</sup> Knowlson, J., *Damned to Fame*, op.cit., 269.

<sup>52</sup> see Knowlson, J., *Damned to Fame*, 268 and 271.

<sup>53</sup> Lord Chesterfield Friday 7 February 1755: My Lord: I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the World[...] see, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson* Vol 1: 1731-1772, ed., Redford, B. (1992) Oxford: Clarendon Press Oxford, 94-97.

<sup>54</sup> A private notebook bought in Dublin in July 1936, shows Beckett reading Johnson in August of that year, preparing for his forthcoming trip to Germany[...] Knowlson, J., *Damned to Fame*, 755.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Of Johnson’s early foreboding about Piozzi (in July 1781) Beckett notes in German “Hier Anfang, wenn nicht mit dem Tode Thrales, April desselben Jahres.” See Cohn, R., *Just Play: Beckett’s Theater* (1980) Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 154.

<sup>56</sup> Knowlson, J., *Damned to Fame*, op.cit., 270.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 270.



Only after the inner being of nature (the will-to-live in its objectification) has ascended vigorously and cheerfully through the two spheres of unconscious beings, and then through the long broad series of animals, does it finally attain to reflection for the first time with the appearance of reason (*Vernunft*), that is, in man. It then marvels at its own works, and asks itself what it itself is. And its wonder is the more serious, as here for the first time it stands consciously face to face with *death*, and besides the finiteness of all existence, the vanity and fruitlessness of all efforts force themselves on it more or less. Therefore with this reflection and astonishment arises the *need for metaphysics* that is peculiar to man alone; accordingly, he is an *animal metaphysicum*.

(W.W.R.2., 160.)

It is this depiction of Johnson living each and every day in the face of death whilst issuing his prayerful meditations, which undoubtedly would have reinforced in Beckett's mind the Schopenhauerian characterization of human consciousness being born out of an awareness of death. But as we can also see from Schopenhauer's writing all mortal striving is ultimately revealed in terms of hollow 'vanity'. The word 'vanity' though not directly appearing in the title *Human Wishes*, is always implicit, as a result of Beckett's borrowing directly from the title of Johnson's poem *The Vanity of Human Wishes*.<sup>58</sup> It is this emblem of *Vanity* which I personally believe does not just issue from Johnson in Beckett's mind, but equally importantly, from Schopenhauer.<sup>59</sup> As we know, during the period of composing *Human Wishes* Beckett was not only reading *Die Welt*, but also the essays which Schopenhauer wrote in support of his main work. Often caustic and immensely witty, the appeal of such essays to Beckett would inevitably lie in the way in which Schopenhauer's philosophy unapologetically partakes of a style which consciously takes leave of abstract considerations. One particular essay that I believe has significant relevance to *Human Wishes* is the essay entitled 'Additional Remarks on the Doctrine of the Vanity of Existence'<sup>60</sup>. Along with its sister

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<sup>58</sup> "Vanity of" Johnson's poem See, Cohn, R., *Just Play*, op.cit., 159.

<sup>59</sup> In Helen Zimmern's biography *Arthur Schopenhauer* (the first comprehensive English biography published in 1876) she includes a letter of Schopenhauer's addressed to the bookseller and publisher Carl Friedrich Ernst Frommann which explicitly links the word 'vanity' to the phrase 'human wishes'. DEAR SIR, I must, perforce, furnish a commentary to the chapter "On the vanity of human intentions and wishes." Zimmern, H., *Arthur Schopenhauer: His Life and His Philosophy* (1876) London: Longmans, Green and Co, 52.

<sup>60</sup> Schopenhauer, A. *Parerga and Paralipomena* Vol 2, trans. Payne, E.F.J. (2000) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 283-290.

chapter ‘On the Vanity and Suffering of Life in Die Welt’, I strongly suspect the unspoken ‘vanity’ in the title of Beckett’s abandoned play is a direct signal to this same extended survey.<sup>61</sup> We need only read the *Die Welt* chapter in order to appreciate the extent to which Beckett would later in his artistic career push deeper into the integral fabric of Schopenhauer’s prose:<sup>62</sup>

Awakened to life out of the night of unconsciousness, the will finds itself as an individual in an endless and boundless world, among innumerable individuals, all striving, suffering and erring; and, as if though a troubled dream, it hurries back to the old unconsciousness. Yet till then its desires are unlimited, its claims inexhaustible, and every satisfied desire gives birth to a new one. No possible satisfaction in the world could suffice to still its craving, set a final goal to its demands, and fill the bottomless pit of its heart. In this connexion, let us now consider what as a rule comes to man in satisfactions of any kind; it is often nothing more than the bare maintenance of this very existence, extorted daily with unremitting effort and constant care in conflict with misery and want, and with death in prospect. Everything in life proclaims that earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated, or recognized as an illusion.  
(W.W.R.2, 573)

As the passage unfolds we can instantly gain a sense of how the world on show in Schopenhauer’s writing served as an imaginative refuge for Beckett, in whose identity he could seek a unique solace throughout his time as a novelist and playwright.<sup>63</sup> Though what is particularly striking from a purely aesthetic view point, is the way in which Schopenhauer captures the conscious identity not just reflecting on its suffering, but being itself an expression of that very suffering. Schopenhauer’s opening description appears to break down any distinction between consciousness and willful suffering, both seemingly occupying

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<sup>61</sup> The essay itself was designed specifically by Schopenhauer to be read alongside *On the Vanity and Suffering of Life* chapter in his chief work, hence it comprises part of the *Paralipomena* (matters omitted from the main work and added as a supplement) making up Schopenhauer’s *Parerga* (supplementary works) und *Paralipomena*, see introduction Ibid Vol 1.op.cit., xi.

<sup>62</sup> It is in this same chapter where we locate the most probable source of Pozzo’s famous remark: “They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more.” (W.G, 82.) “Lessing admired the understanding of his son. Because this son had absolutely declined to come into this world, he had to be dragged forcibly into life by means of forceps; but hardly was he in it, when he again hurried away from it” W.W.R.2., 579.

<sup>63</sup> “He’s reading Schopenhauer these days[...].” see, Charles Juliet in conversation with Bram van Velde: August 29, 1972, Juliet, C., *Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram van Velde* (2009) Champaign and London: Dalkey Archive Press, 92.

the same movement and space. In this sense what is being portrayed is the actual movement of conscious thought, taking its cue from 'suffering'. It is the way in which the conscious identity moves in relation to suffering, and the manner in which 'suffering' creates within itself a space which is constrained neither by body or mind, that I personally suspect Beckett himself judged as an incredible, 'poetic' feat. So, rather than think of Beckett's assessment of 'suffering' in Schopenhauer's philosophy, as merely supportive of an acutely pessimistic view towards the world, we should instead think of the way in which a particular model of suffering, that which is represented by the 'Will' opens up onto a potentially new aesthetic front. It is precisely in this idea of Beckett, taking from Schopenhauer his own radical cue ("Like suddenly a window opened on a fug") moving both the novel, and - in the context of our discussion of 'Vorstellung' - the play, towards a new expression capable of overriding the standard emotive register currently in the service of both prose fiction and the theatre.<sup>64</sup> Before we overstep the mark, and start referring directly to the stage direction of *Endgame* or *Not I*, we should return to 1937, to *Human Wishes* and to Schopenhauer's 'On Vanity and Suffering'.

Having spoken about what is implicit in the title of *Human Wishes*, can anything be said about what is explicit? It seems to me, that, if one were now to consider the question of what Schopenhauer actually meant by will with a capital W, then I suggest that 'Human Wishes' does in fact capture with supreme economy the essential requisite behind the 'Will's' acquisition of a conscious identity.<sup>65</sup> The 'Will' as Schopenhauer presents it is not a faculty which falls under the instruction of human intelligence, or indeed of any living

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<sup>64</sup> One need only to contrast the disembodied characterization of the 'subject' in *The Unnamable* ("...I could quite easily at any moment, literally any, run foul of a wall, a tree or similar obstacle, which of course it would be prohibited to circumvent, and thereby have an end put to my gyrations as effectively as by the cramp just mentioned. But obstacles, it appears can be removed in the fullness of time, but not by me, me they would stop dead for ever, If I lived among them. But even without such aids it seems to me that once beyond the equator you would start turning inwards again out of sheer necessity. I somehow have that feeling.") with that of the opening paragraph of *On the Vanity and Suffering of Life* in order to appreciate just how much Beckett was attempting to bring to the page the same kind of space and movement he was encountering in Schopenhauer: see, U., 319.

<sup>65</sup> For reasons of consistency once we leave the introduction to this thesis Schopenhauer's 'Will' will be presented as 'will' due to the constant referral in the preceding chapters to E.F.J. Payne's translation of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.

individual. It remains undivided and participates blindly in all of life as a whole. So, as we can see this is most certainly not the ‘will’ of individual human agency, the kind which Sartre or Beaufret would recognize. In fact the identity of Schopenhauer’s ‘Will’ is just as capable of resisting conceptual treatment as ‘Vostellung’. The ‘Will’ is both representative of all existence and at the same time beyond representation itself. It is the inner reality which we all have access to, and yet at the same time is inexplicable. As Schopenhauer sets out with his usual poetic facility:

For in everything in nature there is something to which no ground can ever be assigned, for which no explanation is possible, and no further cause is to sought. This something is the specific mode of the thing’s action, in other words, the very manner of its existence, its being or true essence. Of course, of each particular effect of the thing a cause can be demonstrated, from which it follows that it was bound to act at that particular time and place, but never a cause of its acting in general and precisely in the given way. If it has no other qualities, if it is a mote<sup>66</sup> in a sunbeam, it still exhibits that unfathomable something, at any rate as weight and impenetrability. But this, I say, is to the mote what man’s *will* is to a man; and, like the human will, it is in its inner nature not subject to explanation; indeed, it is in itself identical with this will.

(W.W.R.1, 124.)

Without for the moment venturing too far in the direction of the ‘Will’s’ Kantian inheritance, something which will receive full due attention in a later chapter, it is enough to say for now that Schopenhauer actually drew no distinction between Immanuel Kant’s *Ding an sich* (thing-in-itself) and his own *Wille*. Though in Schopenhauer’s view there was one substantial omission with regard to its philosophical profile: that which referred to its inner nature, its inner movement peculiar to itself; or as Schopenhauer himself puts it, the *what* of the phenomenon.<sup>67</sup> It is this *what* which Schopenhauer restores to Kant’s *Ding an sich* that

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<sup>66</sup> “Here he was not free, but a mote in the dark of absolute freedom[...] in the will-lessness, a mote in its absolute freedom.” Beckett, S. *Murphy* (2003) London: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd., 66. As we can see Beckett’s famous line from the sixth chapter in *Murphy* is specifically drawn from *Die Welt* in which the freedom to which Beckett is alluding to does not feature in Murphy’s own calculation towards himself as an individual, but rather that envisaged by Schopenhauer’s ‘Will’ which is the location and source of the only freedom, “absolute freedom”. W.W.R.1., 124.

<sup>67</sup> “What is the use of explanations that lead back ultimately to something just as unknown as the first problem was? In the end, do we understand more about the inner nature of these natural forces than about these forces [gravitation, cohesion, impenetrability] than about the inner nature of animals? Is not one just as hidden and unexplored as the other? Unfathomable, because it is groundless, because it is

ultimately brings us in view of the ‘Will’. But as Schopenhauer implies, as soon as we attempt to bring a concept to hand in order to frame the ‘Will’s’ reality, then we immediately renounce the only immediate knowledge we have of *what*.<sup>68</sup> So, even in the event of finding ourselves in *what*’s company, we would still have nothing to report. One can instantly see why the likes of Beaufret would scoff at the suggestion that Schopenhauer’s proposal amounted to anything like a serious philosophy, especially when the emerging priority of philosophy in the 20th century was itself trained upon individual subjective freedom. But despite what is admittedly a somewhat simplified schema of Schopenhauer’s ‘Will’ designed for the purpose of this introduction, it does in fact reveal something important about the essential character of *Die Welt*: that the ‘Will’ in relation to Schopenhauer’s work constitutes the very core and focus of his writing. And yet as he openly confesses at the beginning of his book it is not something he can ever bring into view of the reader. From a modern philosophical stance, the ‘Will’ would have undoubtedly courted little interest, but from an aesthetic standpoint we could say it is everything Beckett is looking for. For is this not the actual canvas on which he insists van Velde pick up his brush? <sup>69</sup>

B.--- The situation is that of him [van Velde] who is help-less, cannot act, in the event cannot paint, since he is obliged to paint. The act is of him who, helpless, unable to act, acts, in the event paints since he is obliged to paint.<sup>70</sup>

As we have established already, the freedom in the context of the ‘Will’ does not transfer across to the individual, while at the same time it constitutes the reality of all individuals. We

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the content, the *what* of the phenomenon, which can never be referred to the form of the phenomenon, to the *how*,”[...], W.W.R.1., 125.

<sup>68</sup> “If, on the other hand, we subsume the concept of *Will* under that of *force*, as has been done hitherto, we renounce the only immediate knowledge of the inner nature of the world that we have, since we let it disappear in a concept abstracted from the phenomenon, with which therefore we can never pass beyond the phenomenon.” W.W.R.1., 112.

<sup>69</sup> Bram (Abraham Gerardus) van Velde, Dutch artist living in Paris at the time of Beckett’s own residency in the 1930’s. The two became very close friends “He’s [Beckett] not like me. He uses words. Words are powerful. I haven’t even that.”, see *Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram van Velde*, op.cit., 94.

<sup>70</sup> Beckett, S., *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (1999) Canada: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd., 119.

are all ultimately an act of freedom, but as individuals we have no say in such freedom. As Beckett remarks “The act is of him who, helpless, unable to act (that is as an individual) acts, in the event paints since he is obliged to paint.” Bram van Velde is obliged to paint because he is that act which brings about the painting in the first place, he is in terms of Beckett’s own description, the ‘act’ which remains outside the possibility of individual action. In other words, he is obliged to ‘act’ because he is that ‘act’ but as an individual he can claim no authorship over such action. As soon as we position the Duthuit dialogue within the context of Schopenhauer’s ‘Will’ there emerges a startling continuity. It is as if we are now party to Beckett’s own description of the ‘artist’ having to confront the full implications of Schopenhauer’s ‘Will’ in which the realm of willful action ceases to correspond to individual creative expression<sup>71</sup>. Asked “Why is he helpless to paint?” by the art critic and Gallery owner Georges Duthuit<sup>72</sup>, Beckett replies “ Because there is nothing to paint and nothing to paint with.”<sup>73</sup> Again as we can see in this answer there is no incongruity with Schopenhauer’s assertion towards the idea that the “*what* of the phenomenon” can never be referred to the “form of the phenomenon”. It therefore begs the question, if one were to bring such a view of the world into one’s art, where would the possibility of art arise? In the event of having ruled out willful action, i.e. the ‘act’, the only other possible area left to look must be (continuing in the language of the Duthuit dialogue) in the ‘act’ of the ‘non-act’. But as we will later discover further into the thesis ‘not’ to ‘act’ in the context of Schopenhauer’s philosophy is by no means an easy proposition. What I hope this examination of the Duthuit dialogue illustrates is just how deeply Schopenhauer’s writing has filtered through to Beckett’s own estimation of himself as a fully entrenched ‘artist’.<sup>74</sup> It shows during one of Beckett’s most active and productive periods<sup>75</sup> (in which he composed his first complete stage

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<sup>71</sup> “Among those whom we call great artists, I can think of none whose concern was not predominantly with his expressive possibilities, those of his vehicle, those of humanity. The assumption underlying all painting is that the domain of the maker is the domain of the feasible[...] Ibid, 120

<sup>72</sup> “A personal sympathy developed between the two men that encouraged Beckett to talk very openly about his feelings as well as ideas to Duthuit, who over the period from 1948 to 1952, seems to have taken on Tom McGreevy’s role as Beckett’s main confident.”, see *Damned to Fame*, op.cit., 371.

<sup>73</sup> Beckett, S., *Proust and Three Dialogues*, op.cit., 120.

<sup>74</sup> A letter to Duthuit shows that he recognized that this was very much his [Beckett’s] interpretation of what van Velde was doing and was perhaps closer to his own feelings than to those of Bram., see *Damned to Fame*, op.cit., 775.

play *Eleutheria*, whilst at the same time sketching what will later become *En attendant Godot*, along with the bedridden peregrinations of Molloy in his *Trilogy*) that Schopenhauer does not just join a vast compendium of philosophical references, but is present in the very marrow of Beckett's own aesthetic calculations.

Having covered what can be described as the unfathomable aspect of Schopenhauer's 'Will' it is just as important to identify its most immediate organic outward expression in the form of *Wille zum Leben* or 'will-to-life'.<sup>76</sup> Put simply, the unabated desire in all living things to perpetuate the existence of the species.<sup>77</sup> As Schopenhauer remarks, "The ultimate aim of all love-affairs, whether played in sock or in buskin, is actually more important than all other aims in man's life; and therefore is quite worthy of the profound seriousness with which everyone pursues it. What it decides by it is nothing less than the *composition of the next generation*. The *dramatis personae* who will appear when we have retired from the scene are determined, according to their existence and their disposition, by these very frivolous love-affairs."<sup>78</sup> In summing up the outward movement of the 'Will' Schopenhauer himself creates for himself a specific palette of descriptive terms amongst which the most liberally applied throughout *Die Welt* are: 'desire', 'act' 'hunger', 'thirst', 'drive', 'impulse' 'wants', 'pains', 'motives', 'force', 'passions' and 'wishes'.

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<sup>75</sup> see, *Ibid*, 365, 371-372.

<sup>76</sup> "[...] I should be misunderstood by anyone who thought that ultimately it was all the same whether we expressed this essence-in-itself of all phenomena by the word will or by any other word. This would be the case if this thing-in-itself were something whose existence we merely *inferred*, and thus knew only indirectly and merely in the abstract. Then certainly we could call it what we liked; the name would stand merely as a symbol of an unknown quantity. But the word *will*, which like a magic word, is to reveal to us the innermost essence[...]", see, W.W.R.1., 111.

<sup>77</sup> As Christopher Janaway emphasises: "The whole body is will in that it manifests the means of securing ends for the organism. The body, and each part and function within it, is an expression of the will to life', *Wille zum Leben*. Often this term is translated as 'will to live' (or will-to-live', as E.F.J. Payne has it). But the translation is misleading (a) because it implicitly excludes the drive to reproduce life, and hence towards sexual behavior[...] and (b) because it lets in the wrong assumption that Schopenhauer is talking about a conscious *desire* [...] see, Janaway, C., *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer* (1999) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 8-9.

<sup>78</sup> W.W.R.2., 534. As we can see clearly this passage captures vividly the manner in which Schopenhauer himself evokes the movement and language of the stage in order to frame the underlying motivation of the 'Will' in the human 'species'. We can also see that affairs of the heart such as those of Johnson for Mrs Thrale, need not in a Schopenhauerian sense be separated from matters relating to suffering and death.

All *willing* springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfillment brings this to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. Further, desiring lasts a long time, demands and requests go on to infinity; fulfillment is short and meted out sparingly. But even the final satisfaction itself is only apparent; the wish fulfilled at once makes way for a new one; the former is a known delusion, the latter a delusion not as yet known.

W.W.R.1., 196.

So, when it comes to the most demonstrative expression of Schopenhauer's 'Will', its identity, as we can observe, plays in the very same key as the Johnsonian title of Beckett's abandoned play; *Human Wishes*. It is Beckett's aesthetic judgement towards both the 'Will' and 'Vorstellung' which, I believe, is the primary motivation in his overall attempts to reconnect to the potentiality of the 'play': namely, that something as inexplicable as the 'Will' can, through a dramatic rendering of boredom and suffering, be given direct access to 'Vorstellung' via the theatre. The 'play'<sup>79</sup> itself can serve as an extended manifestation of the wilful 'desire' bent upon the 'artist's' need to 'represent'. But, like all desire (which ultimately equates with suffering), in a Schopenhauerian context it has to be weakened without ever having the prospect of its being destroyed outright.<sup>80</sup> In this sense we can view the portrayal of boredom and suffering as an attempt to turn the whole dramatic process against itself in order, momentarily, to reach a space in which art can be legitimately reinstated.<sup>81</sup> So, despite only one act of *Human Wishes* surviving intact, placed alongside the McGreevy extract, it has the potential to reveal the full depth of Beckett's reading of Schopenhauer as a rationale for an aesthetic which could lead him out from under Joyce's creative shadow<sup>82</sup>; an aesthetic, in which artistic 'impotence'<sup>83</sup> and 'ignorance'

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<sup>79</sup> Indeed one could equally consider the novel as an extended manifestation of willful desire to give vent to artistic representation, but unlike the 'play' it is unable to enact the essential aspect of 'Vorstellung' in terms of a 'placing in front of one, a 'show'.

<sup>80</sup> This bind will be explored fully in the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

<sup>81</sup> "It is fortunate enough when something to desire and to strive for still remains, so that the game may be kept up of the constant transition from desire to satisfaction, and from that to a fresh desire, the rapid course of which is called happiness, the slow course sorrow, and so that this game may not come to a standstill, showing itself as a fearful, life-destroying boredom, a lifeless longing without a definite object, a deadening languor." W.W.R.1., 164. Reading this passage one is clearly put in mind of a similar 'game' set in play in *Endgame*.

<sup>82</sup> "[...] Joyce was a superb manipulator of material - perhaps the greatest. He was making words do the absolute maximum of work. There isn't a syllable that's superfluous. The kind of work I do is one which I'm not master of my material.[...] I'm working with impotence, ignorance. I don't think impotence has



replaces the ambition of artistic omniscience. Crucially, from Beckett's own perspective, the work of art becomes a space (the space of stage or text) situated as far as possible from the emotive reach of willful 'action.'<sup>84</sup>

### **Tying Up Some Loose Ends.**

As a result of being able to identify the creative proximity between Beckett's intense absorption of Schopenhauer and his attempts to embark upon a full-length play relating to his research on Johnson, we can now, as readers, see the way in which the dialogue of the surviving fragment actually creates for itself a comparable aesthetic space to the one encountered in Schopenhauer's writing:

**Mrs W.** You are knotting, Madam, I perceive.

**Mrs D.** That is so Madam.

**Mrs W.** What?

**Mrs D.** I am knotting, my dear Madam, a mitten.

**Mrs W.** Ha!

**Mrs D.** The second of a pair.

*Silence.*

**Mrs W.** What book, young woman?

*Silence.*

**Mrs W.** (*loudly*). I say, WHAT BOOK?

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been exploited in the past.", Shenker, I., "Moody Man of Letters" Interview with Beckett, *New York Times* (6th May 1956), 3.

<sup>83</sup> The creative impotence of the individual in the broad Schopenhauerian scheme has its tragicomic embodiment in Beckett's own characterization of Johnson "What interests me above all is the condition of the Platonic gigolo [Dr Johnson] or house friend [to Mrs Thrale], with not a testicle, auricle or ventricle to stand on when the bluff is called. His impotence was mollified by Mrs Thrale so long as Thrale was there, then suddenly exasperated when the licensed mendula was in the connubial position for the first time for years, thanks to *rigor mortis*." see, *Damed to Fame*, op.cit., 269.

<sup>84</sup> When one considers the dramatic stasis of Blind Mrs Williams meditating, Miss Camichael reading and Mrs Desmoulins knitting. (even Johnson's cat Hodge is sleeping (if possible)) it would seem Beckett is deliberately positioning his stage characters in such a way as to create a space of minimized theatrical action, see Beckett, S., *Disjecta* (1983) London: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd., 155.

**Miss C.** Upon my soul, Madam, your perceptions are very fine,  
very fine indeed, uncommonly fine in all respects.

**Mrs W.** I may be old, I may be blind, halt and maim, I may be  
dying of a pituitous defluxion, but my hearing is unimpaired.

(H.W., 155-156.)

On the surface, one could quite easily assume that what Beckett has written stands for little more than a conversation marked by the utmost tedium; three women desperate to stave off boredom. For boredom itself is undeniably an important part of Beckett's own aesthetic. But as soon as we begin to question why Beckett should resort to the term 'knotting' as opposed to 'knitting' it becomes apparent, from a Schopenhauerian perspective, that what is actually being presented is little short of a dramatic reconstruction of the 'Will's' acquisition of human consciousness.<sup>85</sup> "I perceive" is in many ways the same conscious stirrings as those which are ushered in through the opening lines of *On the Vanity of suffering and Life* "Awakened to life out of the night of unconscious". Also as we can see, with extraordinary economy, Beckett has in play both the identity of Schopenhauer's 'Will' (What?) and 'Vorstellung' (I perceive). It is true to say though, that much of this argument would lose most if not all of its durability if it were not for the signature of the 'Knot' occurring throughout the first act of *Human Wishes*.<sup>86</sup> For, not only did Beckett ship back home a copy of *Die Welt* from his German tour, he shipped back the entire works of Schopenhauer including the very work which Schopenhauer insists in the preface to *Die Welt*, should be considered as the true introduction to his 'chief work'.<sup>87</sup> Knowing Beckett's intense engagement with Schopenhauer during the time of composing the play, it is almost unthinkable that he would ignore such advice.<sup>88</sup> And

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<sup>85</sup> This construction of the 'Will' acquiring a conscious identity will be given full recognition in the context of *Endgame* later in the thesis.

<sup>86</sup> N.B. we must not overlook the fact that from a purely naturalistic point of view knotting exists as an actual technique of stitching.

<sup>87</sup> See 'Declaring that "although this is not a part of the book [...] it is quite impossible to understand the present work properly, and the subject-matter of that essay is always presupposed here as if it were included in the book"[...]' *Preface to the First Edition* W.W.R.1., [xiv].

<sup>88</sup> "In the later parts of that notebook [Beckett's *Whoroscope* notebook] we find brief quotations from Schopenhauer's *Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grundes* [*On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*] which Beckett seems to have studied extensively indeed[...]", Pothast, U., *The Metaphysical Vision*, op.cit., 13.

it is for this reason that the image of the ‘knot’ becomes so paramount in the whole Schopenhauerian construction of *Human Wishes*. For it is precisely this same image which Schopenhauer himself exploits in order to articulate the inexplicable relationship between the ‘subject’ designated by the ‘I’ and the World in which the ‘I’ finds itself inextricably bound:

From what can be said, the subject of knowing can never be known or become object of representation. However, we have not merely an outer self knowledge (in sensuous intuitive perception), but also an inner, and yet in consequence of its nature all knowledge presupposes a known and a knower. Thus within us the known as such is not the knower but the willer, the subject of willing, the will[...] Now the identity of the subject of willing with that of knowing by virtue whereof (and indeed necessarily) the word “I” includes and indicates both, is the knot of the world (*Weltknoten*), and hence inexplicable. For to us only the relations between objects are intelligible; but of these, two can be one only insofar as they are parts of a whole. Here on the other hand, where we are speaking of the subject, the rules for the knowing of the object no longer apply, and an actual identity of the knower with what is known as willing and hence of the subject with the object, is *immediately given*. But whoever really grasps the inexplicable nature of this identity, will with me call it the miracle “par excellence”.

(O.T.F.R., 210-212.)

Once we grasp the significance of this passage, then I believe we can see just how much of *Human Wishes* stands as testimony to Beckett’s own first attempt to create in dramatic form, a depiction of the ‘Will’s’ attainment of consciousness. As we can see from the exchange between Mrs Williams and Mrs Desmoulins the ‘knotting’ is in fact aligned to the ‘I’ perceiving: “ You are knotting Madam, I perceive.”

As soon as we establish this Schopenhauerian foothold, we are now in a position to drawback the mundane phenomenal surface of blind, cloth-eared harridans to reveal its deeper Schopenhauerian significance, along with the extraordinary ambition it represents in relation to Beckett’s own attempts to move the play vertically below the perceivable surface of the outward performance. By placing *The Fourfold Root* passage directly alongside the opening exchange in *Human Wishes*, we can begin to fully appreciate just how much movement belies

the seemingly static outward appearance of the scene.<sup>89</sup> The ‘what’ in a Schopenhauerian context as we have already determined furnishes the descriptive core at the centre of the ‘will’ the *Ding an sich* or thing-in-itself. And as we can see the word ‘what’ is given a heightened inflection throughout the exchange between Mrs Williams and Mrs Desmoulins: What? WHAT BOOK?, so, below the textural surface of Mrs Desmoulins’ knitting, we have the emergence of the inexplicable ‘What-Knot’ that is to say Schopenhauer’s miracle “par excellence”, in which the outer and inner self emerge as one indivisible whole. As Mrs Desmoulins retorts, “I am knotting, my dear Madame, a mitten.”

As we can appreciate in a Schopenhauerian context the ‘knotting’ itself is broadcasting the ‘Will’s’ phenomenal appearance into the ‘World’ and it is this knot between ‘World’ and ‘subject’ which is at the centre of Schopenhauer’s miracle “par excellence”. Or we could say in an attempt to further emphasize the original German setting of the *Weltknoten* (knot of the world) it is broadcasting the ‘mitten’ (the middle, or centre<sup>90</sup>) of Schopenhauer’s “par excellence”. For in this one line, which was to be accompanied by the stage action of Mrs Desmoulins knitting, Beckett is able to deliver both the phenomenal surface bearing upon the world’s outer reality (literally that which is being heard and seen by the audience), as well as the ‘What’ pertaining to the inner reality of the ‘Will’ (transmitted through the action of the knitting itself) in one interwoven gesture. Therefore by allowing the action and words to move in two directions concurrently, Beckett is attempting – I suspect for the first time - to reconstruct his own theatrical version of Schopenhauer’s *Weltknoten*.

If we continue with the exchange, we can even construe that the “mitten” being “second of a pair” is marking Beckett’s own attempt to reflect both the inner aspect of the ‘Will’, depicted outside of all phenomenal reference; hence the first mitten’s absence, while the second mitten, that on which Mrs Desmoulins reports, constitutes the phenomenal aspect of the ‘Will’

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<sup>89</sup> “I can’t write I’m not low enough.” Juliet, C., *Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram van Velde*, op.cit., 93.

<sup>90</sup> “To Spinoza, on the contrary, Will and Intelligence alike, along with the entire material and spiritual universe, are but the manifestations of an infinite Substance, which, as infinite, must necessarily be manifested in an infinity of ways utterly beyond our comprehension. To Schopenhauer the universe has a centre, and that centre is a mere blind impulse.” Zimmern, H., *Arthur Schopenhauer, His Life and his Philosophy* (1876) London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 109.

framed by conscious perception. Indeed it is a question of how much further we can locate our reading of *Human Wishes* under the immediate surface of the text. For instance, the tension which arises within a text whose surface is both concealing as well as displaying the inner movement of a Schopenhauerian subtext, opens up the possibility that, through this twofold articulation, Beckett can actually position the ‘questions’ (or the What?) as being in themselves their own ‘answer’; by virtue of the fact that the ‘what’ is itself a notification of the *Ding an sich*.

Blindness here is another embedded signature of the ‘Will’. Thus the question which the blind Mrs Williams directs, ascending from soft to loud from interested to urgent, towards the partially deaf Miss Carmichael: “ what book, young woman? I say WHAT BOOK? “ is an example of a textural movement which is capable of both carrying the outward signature of the ‘Will’, (a desire trapped on the phenomenal surface and enmeshed, for Schopenhauer, between, as he puts it, “the where, the when, the why and the whither in things”),<sup>91</sup> while below the surface of this question you have the quite different, noumenal identity of the ‘What’. So, when Mrs Williams asks WHAT BOOK? she is not only asking the question but also giving the answer; the DING AN SICH BOOK. That is, both ‘Will’ in its noumenal sense (answer), and ‘Will’ (desire-wishes) in its phenomenal sense are represented in the different forms these questions take: i.e both Wille (Will) and Vorstellung (representation). Thus, despite the discarded and incomplete nature of *Human Wishes*, this fragment does in fact house the murmur of a completely different approach to spatial representation in the theatre, one which , via the aesthetic reconstruction of the ‘Will’, has the potential of reconstituting stage movement. Where now the theatrical presentation (‘Vorstellung) can have access to a previously unexploited ‘verticality’, enabling the performance to weaken its attachment to the emotive action, which can no longer correspond with ‘art’ or the creative process. Through such detachment he can now establish an entirely different space in which ‘art’ can take legitimate residency. Also, as the thesis will later

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<sup>91</sup> see, W.W.R.1., 178.

consider, the phenomenal expression of the 'Will' appearing, on the sensory level, as pluralistic and divided, which, when expressed as the *Ding an Sich* is undifferentiated, provides within an theatrical context the possibility of creating a performative space in which the individual characterization of the subject remains in a state of permeability; allowing one performance to coexist inside the other.

### **Beckett, Schopenhauer and Philosophy?**

It is important to remind ourselves that despite much having been previously written on Beckett's own philosophical motivation, when we come to look at *On Vanity and Suffering* (albeit in translation) it shows what Beckett was accessing was not an impenetrable piece of esoteric thinking, but something a great deal more immediate; namely an attempt to impart a voice to the underlying suffering which shapes all conscious identities. What we have in Schopenhauer is a world whose very nature is capable of summoning any one of Beckett's characters, reduced to the bare maintenance of existence, each desperate to call time on the misery and want which underlies their forced condition. But if we look at the piece as a whole, we can see that many of the authors and poets which Beckett had already been strongly attracted to, such as Goethe<sup>92</sup> and Leopardi<sup>93</sup>, need not be artificially added to Schopenhauer's philosophy as they already cohabit in the thinking of *Die Welt*.<sup>94</sup> This in itself

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<sup>92</sup> For instance Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who Beckett devotes most space to in his notebooks (see Nixon, M., *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries*, op.cit., 65.) is given consistent praise and recognition throughout Schopenhauer's writing. Also Schopenhauer can be seen to offer a direct link with Goethe, in that both had intimate knowledge of each other; the younger taking great pride in his apprenticeship to the elder: "As to myself I am Göethe's personal scholar and first publicly avowed proselyte in the theory of colours." And as to Goethe's opinion of his young student, in his attempt to dissuade a group of girls from teasing him at one of his mother's salon gatherings he remarked "leave that youth in peace; in due time he will grow over all our heads." Zimmern, H., *Arthur Schopenhauer His Life and His Philosophy* (1876) London: Longmans Green and Co, 61 and 59 respectively.

<sup>93</sup> The Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi, who Beckett strongly admired for his pessimistic address towards the world, is evoked by Schopenhauer at the end of *On Vanity and Suffering* in *Die Welt* "But no one has treated this subject (the misery of existence) so thoroughly and exhaustively as Leopardi in our own day. He is entirely imbued and penetrated with it; every where his theme is the mockery and wretchedness of this existence. He presents it on every page of his works, yet in such a multiplicity of forms and applications, with such a wealth of imagery, that he never wearies us, but on the contrary, has a diverting and stimulating effect." W.W.W.2., 588.

<sup>94</sup> "Beside the books mentioned, he liked[...] Goethe, Shakespeare (Polonius' speech to Laertes was his guiding star), Calderon, Byron, Burns and Schiller. Of novels he upheld as the best, Don Quixote, Tristram Shandy[...] Zimmern, H., *Arthur Schopenhauer his Life and Philosophy*, op.cit., 172. "Beckett's commerce with the novels of Sterne was both durable and foundational to his practice as a novelist." see, Mark Byron in Uhlmann, A., *Samuel Beckett in Context*, op.cit., 224.

must have struck Beckett in a deeply personal way, for what he was reading no longer stood simply in relation to a philosophical proposition but instead bore the imprint of his own instinctive judgement towards the world. Though, crucially from Beckett's point of view, it not only provided a picture of the world that he personally recognized on an intuitive level, it positioned 'art' as a direct response to suffering. In my view Beckett can see in Schopenhauer's writing, the possibility of deriving from 'suffering' an immutable foundation from which 'art' can raise itself, which unlike language is not susceptible to deformation. In fact as we will later appreciate from our close reading of Schopenhauer, suffering never at any point loses its immediacy, it is not something that is rendered abstract by either art or philosophy.

When it actually comes to broaching the subject of 'Schopenhauer's philosophy' with reference to Beckett's novels and plays, one is instantly reminded of the fact that as a body of work they overflow with a whole panoply of philosophical references and allusions.<sup>95</sup>

Therefore any claim made in relation to Schopenhauer's singular importance to the overall framing of Beckett's work will understandably be greeted with considerable disquiet. For how does one explain all those allusions to a seemingly endless list of philosophical luminaries, whose number could quite easily comprise on their own an entire philosophical pantheon.

Let's take for instance, chapter six of *Murphy*, which has already been cited in this introduction. The actual chapter itself displays the epigraph *Amor intellectualis quo Murphy se ipsum amat* (the intellectual love with which Murphy loves himself). As an epigraph it is clearly derived from Spinoza's "Deus se ipsum amore intellectuali infinito amat"<sup>96</sup> (God loves himself with an infinite intellectual love). It would seem self-evident therefore that whatever significant hold Schopenhauer had over *Human Wishes*, when it comes to the latter work he is

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<sup>95</sup> see, "[...]I shall try to consider here the philosophers who have influenced him [Beckett] in chronological order, from the Presocratics, to Leibniz and Hume." Fletcher, J. *Samuel Beckett's Art*, op.cit., 122. For an updated list of philosophical allusions consult *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett* along with Anthony Uhlmann's *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*.

<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, as C.J. Ackersley and S.E. Gontarski point out, Beckett "follows not Spinoza's original but Windelband's *amor intellectualis quo deus se ipsum amat*." see, *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett*, op.cit., 538.

by no means the only philosophical voice shaping the imagery and textural character of Beckett's writing. So where does this leave Schopenhauer?

Ironically as we will see, Beckett's own decision to open the philosophical floodgates, does not in truth undermine the strength of Schopenhauer. For, as any open and honest engagement of *Die Welt* will reveal, Schopenhauer never at any stage in his writing proclaims to be in possession of an original philosophy. In fact the very line which opens *Die Welt* "Die Welt ist meine Vorstellung"<sup>97</sup> is qualified with the remark "This truth is by no means new. It was to be found already in the sceptical reflections from which Descartes started. But Berkeley was the first to enunciate it positively, and he thus rendered an immortal service to philosophy[...]"<sup>98</sup> Barely has Schopenhauer put pen to paper before he is conceding that his 'philosophy' already pre-exists in Descartes and Bishop Berkeley. Having made this concession he then goes on to reveal that Kant, Plato and, most unusually for a Western philosopher, the Hindu philosophy of the Vedanta all have recognition in his own philosophy.<sup>99</sup> In this sense the whole idea of articulating a single philosophical position which Schopenhauer has a unique claim to is something even he himself would reject. But when it comes to borrowing from these pre-existing philosophies, Schopenhauer has to make one essential adjustment:

"After every important discovery detractors spring up to point out that the same thing was already spoken of in some old chronicles; these will find traces of my teaching in nearly all the philosophies of all ages. Not only in the Vedas, in Plato and Kant, the living matter of Bruno<sup>100</sup>, Glisson and Spinoza, the slumbering monads of Leibnitz, but throughout in all philosophies, the oldest and the newest. Yet always in the most varied dress, interwoven with absurdities that strike the eye, in the most grotesque shapes, in which one can only recognise them by careful scrutiny. It appears to me like finding in all animals the type of man, but so strangely mauled and unfinished, sometimes stunted, sometimes monstrous, now a

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<sup>97</sup> Beckett in his "Sottiser Notebook" under the date 23.3.81 reproduces the same opening line "Die Welt ist meine Vorstellung, directly under which he also copies "Die Welt ist mine Wille":

<sup>98</sup> W.W.R.1., 3.

<sup>99</sup> 'I confess, however, that I do not believe my teaching could ever have arisen before the Upanishads, Plato and Kant could throw their light combined into men's minds. But truly, as Diderot says, many columns have stood, and the sun shone on them all, yet only Memnon's sang.' Zimmern, H., *Arthur Schopenhauer his Life and Philosophy*, op.cit., 94.

<sup>100</sup> It may be worth noting that many of the philosophers which Beckett's writing mentions directly, or as we have already seen alludes to through parody are the same philosophers which Schopenhauer seeks an allegiance with at the beginning of *Die Welt*: "Thus it can be said that Thales and the Ionians, Democritus, Epicurus, Giordano Bruno[...] The Pythagoreans and the Chinese philosophy of the *I Ching*" W.W.R.1., 26-27.



rude attempt and now a caricature. The presumption that dares this comparison is merely a corollary of the presumption that exists in setting up a new philosophic system at all; for doing so is an assertion that all previous attempts are failures, and that one's own is a success; whoever does not think so, and yet thrusts a new system upon the world, is necessarily a charlatan. It has been with philosophy till now as it is in an auction-room, where everyone who speaks last annuls all that has been said before.”<sup>101</sup>

As we can see, the adjustment is perspectival. For Schopenhauer the whole conception of new philosophical thinking is entirely misjudged, for what exists will always exist; it is just a question of how we view it.<sup>102</sup> It would seem in the instance of Schopenhauer, as in so many of Beckett's own characters, the lens through which the eye receives the world, has been deliberately warped, rendering all pre-existing philosophical positions as grotesque, and with it sacrificing all rational appearance. In fact if we go back to Mauthner's approach of caricaturing the 'Will' and the 'intellect', it would seem after all his approach is entirely in keeping with Schopenhauer's. So, as we can now see parody and farce all contribute towards the essential makeup of Schopenhauer's own address towards philosophy, something which Beckett clearly would have taken great delight in. Also, if we just consider for one moment the deformed profile, which Schopenhauer imposes upon the pre-existing philosophical terrain: "[...]always in the most varied dress, interwoven with absurdities that strike the eye, in the most grotesque shapes, in which one can only recognise them by careful scrutiny". it is as if we are momentarily placed in front of one of Beckett's 'compressed subjects for the stage' in whose outer appearance is often an incomplete trajectory towards the human form. Having now hopefully gained the confidence of the reader to see in Beckett's engagement with Schopenhauer not only the pessimism which sets the whole tone and character of Beckett's outlook on the world, but a foundation on which to erect an entirely different approach towards performative space, whose movement outside the emotive framing of character corresponds to a process of legitimizing artistic expression and with it, as we will

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<sup>101</sup> Zimmern, H., *Arthur Schopenhauer his Life and Philosophy*, op.cit., 93-94.

<sup>102</sup> Beckett's own reluctance to validate existentialism or logical positivism, may have some bearing on this assessment towards the charlatanism surrounding 'new' philosophy.

see later throughout the thesis a diminution of suffering itself.

### **Partners till Death?**

As one can gather from the way in which Schopenhauer is raised in connection with Beckett's reassessment of the stage, this thesis is an attempt to reveal in a very real sense that Beckett's drama is a reinvestment in Schopenhauer, rather than a retraction from what has previously been seen as an abandoned position represented in *Proust*. The manner in which this thesis is set up is deliberately designed to counter the idea that the further we locate our enquiry away from the source which exhibits the most explicit Schopenhauerian references the weaker and more diffuse the Schopenhauerian trail becomes. So, rather than derive our Schopenhauerian model exclusively from an analysis of *Proust*, my proposed option is to devise a Beckettian-Schopenhauerian reader, whose role is to move without the usual constraints imposed by chronology, in a way in which it is possible to collapse the space pertaining to both late and early works, while at the same time directly applying this space to a close and open reading of Schopenhauer's writing. During this process there will be a series of attempts to look at Beckett's reception of Schopenhauer outside the usual profile of pessimism, moving the Schopenhauerian model further in the direction of performative space. This aesthetic shift away from a purely philosophical assessment of Schopenhauer will be made possible by examining the way in which Schopenhauer's own restitution of Immanuel Kant's *Vorstellung* is brought forward in relation to a theatrical position rather than what is normally taken to be a conceptually abstract one. By reconfiguring Schopenhauer's chief work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, in terms of a dramatic, rather than a conceptual programme, I plan to demonstrate to the reader that Schopenhauer's own approach to philosophy provided Beckett with an aesthetic model, whose license persisted in each and every 'What' issued from the stage.

## **Thesis Structure.**

In the **first chapter** I plan to re-examine what undoubtedly emerges as the key starting point of any enquiry into Beckett's relationship with Schopenhauer: the Proust monograph.

Building upon Ulrich Pothast's own thoroughly comprehensive survey of *Proust*, I plan to show that the aesthetic position which Beckett rehearses throughout the monograph not only connects with Schopenhauer's theory of art, suffering and boredom, but that there is within the overall botanic framing of *A la recherche du temps perdu* a fundamental re-evaluation of literary and artistic style, whose movement and identity feed directly into Schopenhauer's own assessment of the 'Will' as 'inner nature', expressed both in relation to *Wille zum Leben* (Will to life) and the *What* of the 'phenomenon'. Also during the course of examining the Proust monograph I intend to position Beckett's reading of *A la recherche* not merely as camouflage for a series of Schopenhauerian propositions, but rather I want to reveal the extent to which Beckett could appreciate through his engagement of Schopenhauer, that the Proust he had taken away from Ireland, a writer who marked a significant step in his own artistic development, had already been in open communication with Schopenhauer. In this sense we will reveal Beckett's use of Schopenhauer, as a means to impart further definition and depth to an aesthetic position, which from Beckett's own perspective, he already had indirect access to through Proust. Also in this chapter there will be an attempt to register a move on Beckett's part to reconstitute the Proustian dialogue between 'style' and 'form' in terms of 'Will' and 'Vorstellung' whilst at the same time contrasting such a move with Schopenhauer's own analysis of literature in his essay *On Authorship and Style*. Alongside *Proust*, there will also be an attempt to identify the manner in which Beckett's early assessment of Schopenhauer (derived from his French translation procured in Paris) comes to

manifest itself in his first novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. The **second chapter** will examine the way in which Beckett sets up within the performance of his first completed stage play *Eleuthéria* two very contrasting spaces: one articulating the familiar staging associated with the theatre of the ‘drawing-room’, the second falling outside the emotive design essential for harnessing dramatic plot. In an attempt to gain a broader understanding of this ‘plot resistant’ space, the dramatic framing of *Eleuthéria* will be drawn directly into parallel with the interrogatory structure of Beckett’s last enacted stage play *What Where* and the televised play *Eh Joe*. The **third chapter** will be entirely devoted to a close reading of Schopenhauer’s unitary metaphysics, which will serve to provide a full account of the philosophical and aesthetic terrain of Schopenhauer’s writing. In the latter half of this chapter there will be a comprehensive examination of ‘Vorstellung’, drawing particular attention to the forced and unsatisfactory character of previous attempts to register ‘Vorstellung’ as a ‘concept’. In the **fourth chapter** there will be an attempt to understand the performative space of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* in the context of Schopenhauer’s theatrical staging of ‘Vorstellung’, coupled to the aesthetic repositioning of the ‘Will’s’ polymorphic and indivisible profile. Also in this chapter we will consider the possibility that the *Weltknoten* established in the context of *Human Wishes* is re-presented in terms of an intractable bind at the heart of subsequent character formation in *Godot* and *Endgame*. Particular attention will be given to the varied costume changes which Schopenhauer makes available to both the ‘Intellect’ and the ‘Will’ while at the same time identifying within such a wardrobe not merely a range of colourful props, but in the instance of *Endgame* a platform on which to construct an entire performance. The representative dilemma bound up in Schopenhauer’s *Weltknoten* of ‘object’ and ‘subject’ will also be the focus of an extended appraisal of Beckett’s only film *Film*. In the **fifth and final chapter** we will retain the central model established in relation to *Endgame* in order to observe successive attempts (*Happy Days*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*) to close the representative breach between ‘Intellect’ and ‘Will’, and as a result conceive a performance whose access to ‘causal’ attachment is increasingly narrowed, leading to a play whose movement of expression is registered ‘vertically’, and thus is

temporarily removed from the emotive structure participating in 'suffering'. In the final chapter we will consider the possibility of Beckett in his latter compressed performances such as *Not I* and *Rockaby* not only attempting to close the representative gap between 'Intellect' and 'Will', but also the dissension arising between art and philosophy, along with that which we observe in respects to Beckett's own creative outpourings held in relation to his novels and plays.

## CHAPTER 1

### ‘A DEGENERATE KIND OF ALLEGORY’: BECKETT’S PROUST

What matter if they say to us: you are wasting your abilities on that. What we are doing is reascending to life, smashing with all our strength the ice of reason and habit which forms immediately over reality and means we never see it, rediscovering the open sea.

*Marcel Proust.*

It is widely accepted amongst Beckett scholars that Marcel Proust’s writing undoubtedly made a deep impression upon the young Beckett, an impression which can be traced back to his early years studying modern languages at Trinity College, Dublin. In fact, as James Knowlson sets out in his biography *Damned to Fame*, Beckett’s college tutor ‘Rudmose-Brown was unusual for his time in that he actually taught and clearly relished teaching modern authors like Proust[...]<sup>1</sup> This enthusiasm which Beckett’s tutor possessed for modern French literature clearly played a significant role in cultivating Beckett’s early appreciation of contemporary French poetry and prose; so it is without any major surprise that we find Beckett’s first solo attempt to impose himself upon the world of publishing, having already at this stage proposed a French Doctoral thesis on the novels of Proust and Joyce, should itself be ushered in under the name of Proust.<sup>2</sup> *Proust*, Beckett’s own critical appraisal of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, published by Dolphin Books at Chatto and Windus in 1931, departs sharply from the customary approach to literary criticism, for the insight it brings to the examination of Proust’s work overflows with humor and verbal agility, in a way which criticism rarely affords. We have only to turn to the first page of the opening address to realize what a work of originality it truly is:

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<sup>1</sup> Knowlson, J., *Damned To Fame* (1996) London: Bloomsbury Publishing plc., 50.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940.*, ed. Fehsenfeld, M.D., and Overbeck, L.M., Associated ed. Gunn, G.C.D. (2009) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 5.

There is no allusion in this book to the legendary life and death of Marcel Proust, nor to the garrulous old dowager of the Letters, nor to the poet, nor to the author of the Essays, nor to the Eau de Selzian correlative of Carlyle's 'beautiful bottle of soda water'. I have preferred to retain the titles in French. The translations of the text are my own. The references are to the abominable edition of the *Nouvelle Revue Francaise*, in sixteen volumes.  
(P., 9.)

But if one were to take the view that Beckett's mission was to extol the Proust which his former tutor had tried to instill in him, the Proust whose legacy marked a renewed investment into French symbolism, typified by Brown's Parisian 'vanguard' whose ranks swelled with the likes of André Gide, Léon-Paul Fargue and Valéry Larbaud,<sup>3</sup> then clearly I would suggest we push a great deal further into the original text.<sup>4</sup> For as Knowlson rightly points out in his biography, it was Schopenhauer who made the most significant impact on Beckett's approach to Proust during the intense research period leading up to the execution of *Proust*, rather than any contemporary French novelist or poet or indeed any opus by Bergson.<sup>5</sup> It is true to say that a casual examination of Beckett's *Proust* will reveal to the reader a number of explicit appeals to Schopenhauer. For instance:

Breathing is habit. Life is habit.  
Or rather life is a succession of habits,  
since the individual is a succession of  
individuals; the world being a projection  
of the individual's consciousness (an  
objectivation of the individual's will,  
Schopenhauer would say), the pact must be  
continually renewed, the letter of safe-  
conduct brought up to date. The creation  
of the world did not take place once and for  
all time, but takes place every day.

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<sup>3</sup> Knowlson, J., *Damned*, op.cit., 50.

<sup>4</sup> The Baudelarian unity is a unity 'post rem', a unity abstracted from plurality. His 'correspondence' is determined by a concept, therefore strictly limited and exhausted by its own definition. Proust does not deal in concepts, he pursues the idea, the concrete. P., 79. See also, 'Beckett's strongest objection against any art [...]' Pothast, U., *The Metaphysical Vision*, op.cit., 99.

<sup>5</sup> See, Knowlson, J., *Damned*, op.cit., 118.

(P., 19.)

And near the close of *Proust*, we have Beckett's second petition to Schopenhauer:

And we are reminded of Schopenhauer's definition of the artistic procedure as 'the contemplation of the world independently of the principle of reason'.  
(p 87.)

Culminating finally on page 91, with the third and fourth elucidation:

A book could be written on the significance of music in the work of Proust, in particular of the music of Vinteuil: the Sonata and the Septuor. The influence of Schopenhauer on this aspect of the Proustian demonstration is unquestionable. Schopenhauer rejects the Leibnizian view of music as 'occult arithmetic,' and in his aesthetics separates it from the other arts,  
(p 91)

But what will be much less obvious to those readers who only possess a nodding acquaintance with Schopenhauer's philosophy, is the fact that this slender book of literary criticism by Beckett, is, in reality, just as much a display of Schopenhauerian inspection as it is Proustian.<sup>6</sup> Beckett, at the beginning of his examination of *A la recherche du temps perdu* sets out what he sees as the *inner* chronology of Proust's work, namely: 'the double-headed monster of damnation and salvation - Time'. This dualistic construction of time, would, like Proust's own, do little to injure those claims that at the forefront of such thinking was in fact some kind of Bergsonian address, in which the temporal division described by Beckett distinguishes linear time from that of the inner life of the human subject, an inner life which is capable of withstanding all objective measurement, or what Bergson called *durée*.<sup>7</sup> That is, if it were not for the fact that the signature of 'time' in *A la recherche* actually raises in Beckett's mind

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<sup>6</sup> '[...] Samuel Beckett read Schopenhauer very shortly before and probably also in the very process of writing his *Proust*. His terminology in philosophical matters is quite technical at some points and often differs from what we actually find in Proust's work.' Pothast, U., *The Metaphysical Vision*, op.cit., 95.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that the early 20th C. French historian of Ideas, A. Baillot identifies in his theses on Schopenhauer (*Influence de Schopenhauer en France* (1860-1900): Paris (1927) J. Vria, Librairie Philosophique, Sorbonne., 123-125) the way in which Henri Bergson's psychology of mind is greatly indebted to Schopenhauer's own metaphysics: 'D'abord elle est due à l'admiration sincère que M. Bergson éprouve pour Schopenhauer : le seul métaphysicien allemand qui ait été psychologue[...], 123. [trans Sage, V.].



the image of the 'spear of Telephus': a weapon of classical antiquity, which had in its gift the ability to alleviate the very suffering and pain that it alone was responsible for:

THE Proustian equation is never simple. The unknown, choosing its weapons from a hoard of values, is also the unknowable. And the quality of its action falls under two signatures. In Proust each spear may be a spear of Telephus. This dualism in multiplicity will be examined more closely in relation to Proust's 'perspectivism.' For the purposes of this synthesis it is convenient to adopt the *inner* chronology of the Proustian demonstration, and to examine in the first place that double-headed monster of damnation and salvation - Time.  
(p 11)

Beckett's chosen imagery of spears wounding a subject, whose wounds are healed through the very channels administering the pain, speaks not with a Bergsonian accent, but rather one which is much more in keeping with Schopenhauer. It is an image that accentuates Schopenhauer's own unique perspective on human suffering, one in which suffering has the capacity to transmute itself into the antidote capable of breaking an individual's attachment towards willing as something positive or beneficial. This is the dual function of Telephus's spear. When that emergence of the antidote happens, desire (and therefore suffering) is no longer seen to have any profitable function within the teleological construction of life. as Schopenhauer puts it:

Therefore in most cases the will must be broken by the greatest personal suffering before its self-denial appears. We then see the man suddenly retire into himself, after he is brought to the verge of despair through all the stages of increasing affliction with the most violent resistance. We see him know himself and the world, change his whole nature, rise above himself and above all suffering, as if purified and sanctified by it, inviolable peace, bliss, and sublimity, willingly renounce everything he formerly desired with the greatest vehemence, and gladly welcome death. It is the gleam of silver that suddenly appears from the purifying flame of suffering, the gleam of the denial of the will-to-live [life], of salvation.  
(W.W.R.1., 392-393.)

As we can see, Beckett's 'Telephusian' binary, offering both the possibility of 'damnation'

and of 'salvation', fits neatly into a Schopenhauerian register; but having said this, one may rightfully ask: how does all this reflection on suffering square up with Proust's own model of time?

The truth is of course, that the 'will' which Schopenhauer regarded as interchangeable with music, is itself free from spatial representation.<sup>8</sup> So in this respect the 'will' is essentially a manifestation of pure temporality, which escapes all empirical pressure; for as Lydia Goehr remarks in her essay *Schopenhauer and the Musicians*, 'Music is pure temporal process, the dynamics of which directly correspond to the flow of the Will's emotional life.'<sup>9</sup> It therefore becomes increasingly evident that Beckett's own examination of time in *Proust*, is in part an examination of the Schopenhauerian 'will' by proxy. Once we immerse ourselves in *Die Welt*, it will become much easier to identify the Schopenhauerian syntax which underwrites a great deal of this Proustian inquest:

As a writer he is not altogether at liberty to detach effect from cause. It will be necessary, for example, to interrupt (disfigure) the luminous projection of subject desire with the comic relief of features. It will be impossible to prepare the hundreds of masks that rightly belong to objects of even his most disinterested scrutiny.  
(pp11-12.)

Immediately we can see the way in which Beckett compresses a significant tally of Schopenhauerian principles within a relatively short paragraph. Beckett at the beginning of his essay appears to have already begun to think about the misgivings of literature generally, when it comes to its inability to completely break the chain of cause and effect and as we see, it is in the context of 'desire' that he chooses to give 'effect' and 'cause' further 'illumination'. From this, I believe, we should consider the real possibility that Beckett is thinking about the weakness of literature in terms of its inherent tendency to promote 'willful' desire, and with respect to the novel, we should measure its achievement in relation to disrupting this

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<sup>8</sup> '[...] music is by no means like the other arts, namely a.' copy of the Ideas, but a *copy of the the will itself*.' W.W.R.1., 257.

<sup>9</sup> *Schopenhauer, philosophy and the arts*, ed., Jacquette, D. (1996) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 206.

‘willful’ mechanism. For as Beckett says ‘it will be necessary, for example, to interrupt (disfigure) the luminous projections of subject desire with comic relief of features.’ Which is to suggest that if one is to have any genuine value as a writer, then really one should be composing work in such a way as to bring about a derailment of ‘desire’, i.e. the causal chain, regardless of whether it is sustainable or not. In fact it is clear from the opening paragraph that despite Beckett’s ideal vision of literature dismantling ‘cause’ from ‘effect’ in its entirety, he is under no illusion as to the possibility of this assignment to a novelist. Therefore even at this early stage of his writing we can already see evidence of Beckett’s underlying premise, that as a writer or artist we are destined to fail before we have already picked up the pen or brush; but that failure in itself does not present itself as reason to abandon art, but only that art must be produced in complete recognition of its failure. So, when Beckett alludes to the failings of Proust as a writer, which is to say literature in general, it would seem that this whole notion of failure has been framed in recognition of Schopenhauer’s aesthetic principles. For I would suggest that what Beckett has in mind when he is thinking about the deeper purpose of art, remains entirely consistent with the Schopenhauerian ideal of art revealing itself in disinterested terms:

When, however, an external cause or inward disposition suddenly raises us out of the endless stream of willing, and snatches knowledge from the thralldom of the will, the attention is now no longer directed to the motives of willing, but comprehends things free from their relation to the will. Thus it considers things without interest, without subjectivity, purely objectively; it is entirely given up to them in so far as they are merely representations, and not motives. Then all at once the peace, always sought but always escaping us on that first path of willing comes to us of its own accord, and all is well with us. It is the painless state prized by Epicurus as the highest good and as the state of the gods; for that moment we are delivered from the miserable pressure of the will. We celebrate the Sabbath of the penal servitude of willing; the wheel of Ixion stands still.  
(W.W.R.1., 196)

In fact as we can see from this opening excerpt from *Proust*, the term ‘disinterested scrutiny’ enters Beckett’s discourse when he considers the impossible feat of laying out within the pages of the novel, the numerous representative masks which stand in for the object. So, essentially, what I believe Beckett is identifying here, is that the novel, even one which is as

accomplished as *A la recherche*, will fall short of the full representative vocabulary of the 'will'. And not only this, but Beckett sees a further weakness residing in Proust's writing, although to be truthful it is a weakness which all novels are susceptible to: that of objective representation:

He accepts regretfully the sacred ruler and compass of literary geometry. But he will refuse to extend his submission to spatial scales, he will refuse to measure the length and weight of man in terms of his body instead of in terms of years.  
(P., 12.)

But unlike most writers, Beckett identifies in Proust's novel a genuine resistance to the customary practice of centering the *dramatis personae* in bodily terms, instead preferring, it would seem, to push his characterization beyond the regimen of spatial enclosures and onto the much broader expanse of time. This need to liberate one's characters from a commitment towards space is clearly something which Beckett is determined to advance in relation to his own early writing in *Dream*:

The real presence was a pest because it did not give the imagination a break. Without going as far as Stendhal, who said- or repeated after somebody- that the best music (what did he know about music anyway?) was the music that becomes inaudible after a few bars, we do declare and maintain stiffly (at least for the purposes of this paragraph) that the object that becomes invisible before your eyes is, so to speak, the brightest and best.  
(D.F.M.W., 12.)

For as we know, once you eliminate all trace of the object, you also take with it any cognized space which the object was purporting to occupy; so ultimately there is nothing for the novel's 'sacred ruler and compass' to chart. Also, in my opinion, it would be appropriate to see in *Dream*'s 'dark and rather disagreeable letter' the means by which Beckett, as an author, seeks to quarantine those aspects of the novel which would otherwise raise the 'toxicity' of his literary project beyond any manageable level of disinterested aesthetic containment:

“Il est si beau, ton ami, si  
franchement casse-poitrinaire, que je suis prêt à  
l’aimer. Est-il maigre et potelé là et là où il faut ?  
Vulgaire ? Lippu ? Ah ! vulgaire lippue chaude chair !  
Gratte-moi” vociféra-t-il, en nage pour toi, “ardente  
cantharide, gratte je te l’ordonne !” Je gratte, je  
caresse, je me dis : ce jugement est par trop indigne  
de cet esprit, vu que P. ne s’arrache à nul moment de  
l’axe glaireux de son réel.” [ Your friend is so handsome,  
so chest-breaking [ argot:commonly, ‘rot-gutter’; used also  
as a euphemism for “the active partner in homosexual fellatio”.<sup>10</sup>],  
that I am ready to love him. Is he skinny and plump where  
it’s needed? Vulgar? Thick lipped? Oh vulgar, thick-lipped  
and warm flesh! “Scratch me”, he yelled, dripping with  
sweat, “ardent cantharide, scratch I command it!” I Scratch,  
I stroke, I say to myself: this judgement is not (too)  
worthy of this mind, given that P. never extracts himself  
from his phlegm-like axis.” [trans., Laborie, L.]]  
(D.F.M.W., 20.)

For it seems in this one letter that Beckett decides to pour without any apparent restraint, a highly toxic description of human desire, each line literally dripping with the contents of D’ Annunzio’s bleeding and bursting pomegranates.<sup>11</sup> For there can be no doubt that lines in the above as: “Il est si beau ton ami ...”, are designed to fall under the D’ Annunzio category, evoking what Beckett previously describes in *The Letters* as ‘a dirty juicy squelchy mind’.<sup>12</sup> This degree of investment in the body displayed in the *Dream* letter, stands to defeat outright any attempt to bring to fruition the aesthetic ideals circulating in *Proust*. So the fact that Beckett confines such outpourings to the imagined contents of a letter, which is further bound up in a second language, seems in my view to conjure up a thwarted effort to create some enforced distance between the author of *Dream* and the intrusive calculus of bodily desire. What remains artistically central both to *Proust* and *Dream* is something which is entirely Schopenhauerian in outlook, an aesthetic appreciation capable of extricating itself from willful attachment:

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<sup>10</sup> See, “caisse-poitrine” is not only the French phrase for “rot-gut”, as in cheap booze[...] Nicholas Lezard *The Guardian* (10 May 2014.) 20. Also see, ‘casse poitrine’: the active partner in [...] Beckett, S., *Echo’s Bones*, ed. Nixon, M. (2014) London: Faber and Faber, 56.

<sup>11</sup> See, *Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940*, op.cit., 41.

<sup>12</sup> See, *Ibid.*, 41.

Proust is that pure subject. He is almost exempt from the impurity of will. He deplores his lack of will until he understands that will, being utilitarian, a servant of intelligence and habit, is not a condition of the artistic experience. When the subject is exempt from will the object is exempt from causality (Time and space taken together). And this human vegetation is purified in the transcendental apperception that can capture the Model, the Idea, the Thing-in-itself.

(p., 90)

In an address such as this there can be no question as to its Schopenhauerian conviction, for within this passage we can see Beckett using precisely the same privileged terminology as Schopenhauer. Here we have the complete uninterrupted cast of ‘will’, ‘subject’, ‘object’, ‘causality’, ‘Idea’ and ‘Thing in itself’ all taking up their positions to praise the artistry of Proust. As we can see, Beckett elevates Proust’s position to pure subject, the highest accolade bestowed upon any artist within Schopenhauer’s aesthetic scheme; recognizing that the artist (or, as Schopenhauer prefers to call it the *genius*) has been able to glimpse the world outside the restrictive collar of ‘cause’ and ‘effect’:<sup>13</sup>

Further, we do not let abstract thought, the concepts of reason, take possession of our consciousness, but, instead of all this, devote the whole power of our mind to perception, sink ourselves completely therein and let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether it be a landscape, a tree, a rock, a crag, a building, or anything else. We *lose* ourselves entirely in this object, to use a pregnant expression; in other words we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject[...]

(W.W.R.1., 178.)

There can be no mistaking the fact that what Beckett is driving towards on page 90 of *Proust* is in effect an endorsement of Schopenhauerian aesthetic *apprehension*; in both cases we have a firm rejection of the intellect being the principle condition of aesthetic appreciation, and instead, as we can see, both Schopenhauer and Beckett allow their thinking to be dominated by a singular notion of perception:

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<sup>13</sup> P.P.2., 76. [“A genius is a man in whose head the *world as representation* has attained a degree of more clearness and stands out with the stamp of greater distinctness; and as the most important and profound insight is furnished not by careful observation of details, but only by an intensity of apprehension of the whole, so mankind can look forward to the greatest instruction from him.” ]

If, therefore, the object has to such an extent passed out of all relation to something outside it, and the subject has passed out of all relation to the will, what is thus known is no longer the individual thing as such, but the *Idea*, the eternal form, the immediate objectivity of the will at this grade. Thus at the same time, the person who is involved in this perception is no longer an individual, for in such perception the individual has lost him-self; he is *pure* will-less, painless, timeless *subject of knowledge*.  
(W.W.R.1., 179.)

Once again it becomes obvious as to the strength of influence which Schopenhauer asserts over Beckett's writing; for we need only compare the aesthetic evaluation in *Die Welt*, with that in *Proust*, in order to see just how close Beckett's own estimation of Proust edges towards a Schopenhauerian judgement. For instance, if we look at the way in which he delivers his final appraisal of 'Proust', it is in the end his capacity to dissociate the object from his own self-projected desire which ultimately for Beckett secures his artistic legitimacy:

So that there is no collapse of the will in Proust, as there is for example in Spencer and Keats and Giorgione. He sits up all night in Paris, with a branch of apple-blossom laid beside his lamp, staring at the foam of white corollae until the dawn comes to redden them But this is not the terrible panic-stricken stasis of Keats, crouched in a mossy thicket, annulled, like a bee, in sweetness, 'drowsed with the fume of poppies' and watching 'the last oozings, hours by hours'; nor yet the remote, still, almost breathless passion of a Giorgione youth, the spirit shattered in corruption, damp and rotting, so finely suggested by d'Annunzio in his description of the Concerto[...]The Proustian stasis is contemplative, a pure act of understanding, will-less, the 'amabilis insania' and the 'holder Wahnsinn.'  
(pp., 90-91)

It is above all the image of 'Proust' in *A la recherche*, looking at the flowering apple blossom next to his bed, which embodies for Beckett the furthest achievement which art can be directed towards, namely the bringing about of a state of contemplation, in which all individual attachment falls from view leaving behind an insoluble 'Idea' of the world: no longer subject to the 'will'. The issue as to whether Beckett's own idea of the 'will' is in fact

one which he has consciously appropriated from Schopenhauer has its answer, I believe, confidently etched in the preceding paragraph leading up to Proust's designation as 'pure subject': Beckett writes:

There is no question of right and wrong.  
Homosexuality is never called a vice:  
it is as devoid of moral implications as  
the mode of fecundation of the *Primula  
veris* or the *Lythrum salicoria*. And,  
like members of the vegetable world, they  
seem to solicit a pure subject, so that they  
may pass from a state of blind will to a state  
of representation. Proust is that pure subject.  
( P., 89-90.)

So, here we have it: not only is Beckett characterizing the 'will' as 'blind' as Schopenhauer does, but he also follows suit in replicating the dual formulation of 'will' as interchangeable with its English counterpart of *Vorstellung*. ('so that they may pass from a state of blind will to a state of representation'). Another telling sign as to Beckett's own commitment towards such thinking, is the fact that unlike most of Beckett's later philosophical allusions, there seems to be no effort on his part to resort to irony; something very rare indeed. In order to give a good example of just how deep the Schopenhauerian exposition runs through Beckett's critical appraisal of Proust, I would suggest we open out our enquiry much further in order to address the entire section dealing with the subject of flora in *A la recherche*. As this section reveals, Beckett is keen to emphasize that the imagery of *A la recherche* is dominated by botanical images, rather than those attached to fauna; he goes on to say:

He is conscious of humanity as flora, never as fauna. (There are no black cats and faithful hounds in Proust.) He deplores 'the time one wastes in upholstering one's life with a human and parasitic vegetation.' The wife and son of the Sidaner amateur appear to him on the shore at Balbec as two flowering ranunculi. Albertine's laugh has the colour and smell of geranium. Gilberte and Odette are lilacs, white and violet. He speaks of a scene in *Pelléas et Mélisande* that exasperates his rose-fever and makes him sneeze. This preoccupation accompanies very naturally his complete indifference to moral



values and human justices. Flower and plant have no conscious will. They are shameless, exposing their genitals. And so in a sense are Proust's men and women, whose will is blind and hard, but never self-conscious, never abolished in the pure perception of a pure subject. They are victims of their volition, active with a grotesque predetermined activity, within the narrow limits of an impure world. But shameless.  
(P., 89.)

What is clear from this extended passage is the fact that Beckett has no interest whatsoever in exploring the heady scent of *Le Parnasse contemporain*, for the way in which these floral specimens are being presented makes no allowance for the usual symbolic sentiment, wrapped in the reverie of death. The flora which Beckett is choosing to address in *Proust* places a bar on all etherial points of entry. Though having already previously indicated that a decoction of *fin de siècle* would in all likelihood reveal trace elements of Schopenhauerian thinking, we can see that Beckett's assimilation of Schopenhauer is more tangible than one might have expected.

There are in fact great clumps of Schopenhauerian philosophy whose character has not been diluted to homeopathic levels. For if we consider the lines: 'Flower and plant have no conscious will. They are shameless, exposing their genitals. And so in a sense are Proust's men and women, whose will is blind and hard, but never self-conscious, never abolished in the pure perception of a pure subject', there is no possibility, having now become acquainted with Schopenhauer's own prose, that one would mistakenly attribute these lines to the influence of Bergson, Kant, or even the descendants of the 'Heidelberg experiment'. The 'will' in Beckett's writing is not only devoid of a conscious identity, but it is also operating throughout the whole of nature; and therefore one should immediately reject stamping Beckett's own preoccupation with the 'will' in 'Sartrean' terms. For as we can see just like Schopenhauer, Beckett's own evaluation of the 'will' is far from the exclusive preserve of humans. When it comes to enforcing in the reader's mind the non-conscious dimension of the 'will' it seems that from Schopenhauer's own perspective there is no better example than the *Wille zum Leben* in plants. For it certainly is the case that Schopenhauer observes in plants a much purer illustration of the 'will to life' than anything seen in animals or humans,

specifically because plants exert the 'will' without recourse to any conscious attribute:

The simplest impartial self-examination, along with the conclusions of anatomy, leads to the result that the intellect, like its objectification the brain, and the sense apparatus attached thereto, are nothing but a greatly enhanced susceptibility to impressions from without. But the intellect does not constitute our original and true inner nature; and so in us it is not that which is in the plant the germinating force, or in the stone gravity together with chemical forces; only the *will* proves to be this.

(pp., 47.)

As Schopenhauer submits in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, consciousness in the form of the intellect or its immediate objectification, the brain, does not constitute our true inner nature, unlike that which lies at the heart of the germinating plant or the falling stone, for as he insists 'only the *will* proves to be this.' But as we will see, Schopenhauer is keen to push even further the integrity of the plant, setting it firmly against that of the humans:

On the contrary, the intellect is in us that which in the plant may promote or hinder its mere susceptibility to external influences or to physical and chemical impressions, and whatever may affect its growth and success. In us, however, that susceptibility is so greatly enhanced that, on the strength of it, the entire objective world, the world as representation, manifests itself and so to this extent originates as object. To make this clear, let us picture to ourselves the world without any animated beings. It is then without perception of any kind and so objectively does not really exist at all; however, let this be assumed. Now let us imagine a number of plants that have sprung up from the ground close to one another. They are now affected by influences of many kinds, such as air, wind, the ousting of the one plant by another, moisture, cold light, warmth, electrical tension and so on. Now let us enhance ever more in our thoughts the susceptibility of these plants to such influences; it then finally becomes sensation accompanied by the ability to refer this to its cause; and so in the end it becomes perception. But the world stands out at once, manifesting itself in space, time, and causality; yet it remains a mere result of external influences on the susceptibility of plants.

(P.P.2., 47.)

Plants for Schopenhauer do not just provide a convenient way to frame the will, but do in fact reveal themselves as complete working models of our own essential disposition; as we can see, Schopenhauer uses plants to picture the inner anatomy of our willful character, essentially

marking out humans as botanical in nature with the added addition of intelligent perception. This image of human intercourse being reducible to geo- and phototropic movement in plants, as well as the arresting manner in which Schopenhauer collapses both the human and plant identity into one homogeneous structure, tells me that Beckett's own decision to highlight the role of plants in *A la recherche* is responding not only to Proust as a writer, but also to Schopenhauer. For the way I see the botanical passage in *Proust*, is that, Beckett is not simply responding to the floral imprint left behind in the work of Proust, but that he is also consciously acknowledging the plants as a prominent signature which punctuates Schopenhauer's work. I believe Beckett's decision, to follow his comment about 'flowers having no conscious will' with the sentence 'They are shameless, exposing their genitals.' is entirely motivated by the Schopenhauerian idea that the locus of the will is in the genitals of the human species, and not in the brain. I would even go so far as to say that for Beckett, Proust's *A la recherche* in one respect is being read in terms of a vast 'Schopenhauerian garden'. Plants, flowers and their offspring fruit at times appear to dominate Beckett's own framing of *Proust*, and all are to some extent it seems, imbued with their own distinctive Schopenhauerian aroma.<sup>14</sup> Even when Beckett is directly quoting Proust, it seems he is also in his own way consciously paraphrasing Schopenhauer:

‘Man,’ writes Proust, ‘is not a building that can receive additions to its superficies, but a tree whose stem and leafage are expressions of inward sap.’

(P., 66)

Clearly for a writer who has been consulting the works of Schopenhauer during the period leading up to *Proust* (ie before the 5th of August 1930) Schopenhauer says defunctus is a beautiful word-as long as one does not suicide. He might be right.) the image of the 'sap' in this excerpt would have resounded strongly with the Schopenhauerian picture, Beckett would

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<sup>14</sup> For Nicholas Zurbrugg the heady aroma of Schopenhauer clearly comes at the expense of Proust: "Having read rather too much Schopenhauer, and rather too little of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Beckett reaches the astonishing conclusion that all of Proust's characters resemble such foolish, formless, unconscious matter. Conceiving of Proust's men and women as hopelessly and helplessly amoral vegetation, and claiming that 'assimilates the human to the vegetal', See Zurbrugg, N., *Beckett and Proust* (1988) Gerrards Cross, Bucks: Colin Smythe, 166.

have at this point been piecing together.<sup>15</sup> We only have to reflect on the way in which Schopenhauer positions the human body in terms of the ‘will’ being perceived objectively (viewing the body as the outward expression of an interior ‘will’) in order to realize just how much Proust’s own words act to consolidate the Schopenhauerian vision.

In fact it appears that Beckett’s own reading of Schopenhauer, has allowed him to take up a position in relation to Proust which would have never seen the light of day in ‘Rudmose Brown’s French literature classes. It appears to me that throughout *Proust*, Beckett is leading with the thought that *A la recherche* is in someway just as much an artful response to Schopenhauer, as let’s say, *Tristan und Isolde*.<sup>16</sup> Only in this instance Beckett’s assessment of the work is almost wholly approving. It would seem that because Proust’s art points towards a form of contemplative stasis, in which the ‘will’ is subdued, Beckett adjudges that we are altogether dealing with a much higher grade of Schopenhauerian art, than that delivered by the unrestrained passion of Wagner’s opera.<sup>17</sup>

Another good example of the way in which Beckett appears to be using Proust to underline a vital structure of Schopenhauerian thinking, while at the same time alluding to the philosophical source, which he suspects is driving the Proustian agenda forward, is seen in Beckett’s own examination of ‘habit’ and ‘boredom’:

The respite is brief. ‘Of all human plants,’ writes Proust, ‘Habit requires the least fostering, and is the first to appear on the seeming desolation of the most barren rock.’ Brief, and dangerously painful. The fundamental duty of Habit, about which it describes the futile and stupefying arabesques of its supererogations, consists in a perpetual adjustment and readjust-

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<sup>15</sup> *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940*, op.cit., 36.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Thomas Mann used to say that this interfusion of Wagner and Schopenhauer was the supreme example in the whole of Western culture of a symbiotic relationship between a truly great creative artist and a truly great thinker. I agree with that. But this does not mean that one has even to be familiar with Schopenhauer’s ideas, let alone accept them, to experience *Tristan* as a work of art. On the contrary, it must surely be the case that most of the people who have responded deeply to this work have little idea, if any at all, of Schopenhauer’s philosophy. These ideas have been ingested and absorbed into the work itself, which then relates to the audience entirely on its own terms.’ Magee, B., *Wagner and Philosophy* (2000) London: Penguin Books., 224. These words could equally apply to Beckett’s own work.

<sup>17</sup> “Who is Wagner?” said Belacqua. “Yes” said Liebert testily “who is he anyhow?” “He is a roaring Meg” said Belacqua “against melancholy.” D.F.M.W., 38.

ment of our organic sensibility to the conditions of its worlds. Suffering represents the omission of that duty, whether through negligence or inefficiency, and boredom its adequate performance. The pendulum oscillates between these two terms: Suffering- that opens a window on the real and is the main condition of the artistic experience, and Boredom- with its host of top-hatted and hygienic ministers...

(P., 28.)

In this passage we can observe quite clearly the way in which Beckett addresses the subject of 'habit' in the kind of biological shorthand which is common to much of Schopenhauer's writing, but more importantly there is an attempt on Beckett's part to draw the identity of 'habit' within the broader reaches of 'boredom'. And as we have already shown above, 'boredom' is a key note within the philosophical repertoire of Schopenhauer, but not only this, we also witness Beckett assembling Schopenhauer's very own customized pendulum swinging back and forth between pain and boredom:<sup>18</sup>

Hence its [animal or human] life swings like a pendulum to and fro between pain and boredom, and these two are in fact its ultimate constituents.

(W.W.R.1., 312.)

Also there are further, less conspicuous details that reinforce this Schopenhauerian perspective, such as the fact that Beckett is clearly in agreement that suffering, is real, something positive and therefore offers a concrete foundation on which to erect art. And just like Schopenhauer he sides with the view that boredom is an insubstantial proposition, it has no substance to it; for just like pleasure it resides in the context of pain's absence. One of the most explicit Schopenhauerian passages in *Proust*, signals, I believe, what I have already gone some way to espouse in my previous chapter on *Dream*; that Beckett's decision to move the novel's language towards a musical register, was itself a Schopenhauerian impulse:

A book could be written on the significance of music in the work of Proust, in particular of the music of Vinteuil : the Sonata and the

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<sup>18</sup> See, Pothast, U., *The Metaphysical Vision*, op.cit., 135.

Septuor. The influence of Schopenhauer on this aspect of the Proustian demonstration is unquestionable. Schopenhauer rejects the Leibnizian view of music as 'occult arithmetic,' and in his aesthetics separates it from the other arts, which can only produce the Idea with its concomitant phenomena, whereas music is the Idea itself, unaware of the world of phenomena, existing ideally outside the universe, apprehended not in Space but in Time only, and consequently untouched by the teleological hypothesis. This essential quality of music is distorted by the listener who, being an impure subject, insists on giving a figure to that which is ideal and invisible, on incarnating the Idea in what he conceives to be an appropriate paradigm. Thus, by definition, opera is a hideous corruption of this most immaterial of all the arts : the words of a libretto are to the musical phrase that they particularize what the Vendôme Column, for example, is to the ideal perpendicular. From this point of view opera is less complete than vaudeville, which at least inaugurates the comedy of an exhaustive enumeration.

(P., 91-92.)

This passage I believe tells us a great deal about the motivation behind Beckett's *Dream*; firstly it is unmistakably Schopenhauerian in its content, despite what appears to be some confusion surrounding the identity of music with the 'Idea' itself, rather than the 'will' itself. But putting this slight anomaly aside, it seems Beckett fully wants to side with Schopenhauer in the thought that music, unlike the other arts, exists outside phenomenal consideration, as well as concurring with the idea that music (and therefore the will) is not apprehended in space, but is purely temporal, sidelining any teleological postulate. So, it is crucial in my view to appreciate the role of music in *Dream*, alongside Beckett's own attempts to impart a musical hybridity to the novel's language, as primarily a strategy geared up towards promoting this indispensable strand of Schopenhauerian thinking. For I suspect Beckett in *Dream*, wants to think of music, not arising in the form of a logical schematic ( that is to say not the 'occult arithmetic' of Leibniz) but instead in the Schopenhauerian sense, in which music is cast as an exact likeness of our own inner reality; a view which is also taken up by James Knowlson and John Pilling. In their collaborative publication *Frescoes of the Skull* they also bring to bear a Schopenhauerian reading of music when examining Beckett's

first completed theatrical offering, *Eleuthéria*:

In the course of his visit to his parents' home to see his dead father, Victor had explained himself to the servant, Jacques, in a way 'that was something like music'. (Here one may safely presume that it was the Schopenhauerian Idea incarnate, rather than the Leibnizian 'occult arithmetic' that Beckett had in mind, to adopt a distinction made by Beckett in *Proust*.)<sup>19</sup>

And, what is more, it appears that Belacqua's fervent dismissal of Wagner in *Dream*, does in some way bear out Beckett's own calculation that opera can never be used to uphold Schopenhauerian principles; for as Beckett asserts in *Proust*, opera undermines the anti-mimetic profile of music by hitching it to an impure divisive memetic subject.<sup>20</sup> I suspect, as I have mentioned in this thesis before, that Beckett singled out Wagner in *Dream* because he had the temerity in Beckett's eyes, to position his opera as an 'answer' to Schopenhauer's philosophy, when in fact, Wagner's music does little in the way of impeding the 'will'. Before we leave this passage altogether I think it is also worth mentioning, that Beckett's own reference to vaudeville could in all likelihood still be reverberating with a distinct Schopenhauerian inflection. I say this because in Schopenhauer's examination of music in *Die Welt*, he himself is eager to accentuate the genre of vaudeville:

Music, on the other hand, gives the innermost kernel preceding all form, or the heart of things. This relation could very well be expressed in the language of the scholastics by saying that the concepts are the *universalia post rem*, but music gives the *universalia ante rem*, and reality the *universalia in re*. Even other examples, just as arbitrarily chosen, of the universal expressed in a poem could correspond in the same degree to the general significance of the melody assigned to this poem; and so the same composition is suitable to many verses; hence also the *vaudeville*.  
(W.W.R.1., 263.)

It could very well be that the initial impetus for Beckett's later exploitation of the vaudeville

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<sup>19</sup> Knowlson, J. and Pilling, J., *Frescoes of the Skull* (1979) London: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd., 31.

<sup>20</sup> 'Money came from the blue eyes of home, and he spent it on concerts, cinemas, cocktails, theatres[...] But not on opera, never under any circumstances on opera, unless he was dragged, nor, after a bit, on brothels. Liebert forced him to see the. . . the Valkyrie à demi tarif. Une merveille ! Only to be turned away. Belacqua laffed and laffed.' D.F.M.W., 37.

tradition was indeed, consolidated by his reading of Schopenhauer.<sup>21</sup> Though the subject of vaudeville in *Die Welt* is raised only once, Schopenhauer clearly wanted his reader to take note of the genre, seeing it as no less worthy of discussion than opera or indeed pantomime, which is itself mentioned in connection to opera. He emphasizes that ‘the universal language of music’ never becomes truly bound to the events unfolding on stage, but only stands to them ‘in the relation of an example, chosen at random, to a universal concept.’<sup>22</sup> And if one were still in need of further evidence of the way in which Schopenhauer dominates Beckett’s own critical assessment of Proust, we have only to consider the manner in which Beckett brings to a close his essay:

The narrator-unlike Swan who identifies the ‘little phrase’ of the Sonata with Odette, spatialises what is extraspatial, establishes it as the national anthem of his love-sees in the red phrase of the Septuor, trumpeting its victory in the last movement like Mantegna archangel clothed in scarlet, the ideal and immaterial statement of the essence of a unique beauty, a unique world, the invariable world and beauty of Vinteuil, expressed timidly as a prayer, in the Sonata, imploringly, as an inspiration, in the Septuor, the ‘invisible reality that damns the life of the body on earth as a penum and reveals the meaning of the word : ‘defunctus’.

(P., 93.)

As we can see, Beckett is determined to see the narrator’s [Proust’s] victory over Swann in terms of his own ability to grasp the true significance of music, for unlike Swann, Proust can appreciate that reality, like music, is extraspatial; he fully recognizes that Swann’s attempts to deform the music of Vinteuil in order that it should denote the particularized subject of Odette is a clear and open confession of his failings as an artist. Beckett depicts the ‘artist’ here in terms which are not at all removed from Schopenhauer’s own conception of ‘genius’;

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<sup>21</sup> ‘For Schopenhauer, [the possibility] of a relation between a composition [music] and a perceptive expression [words] [...] is due [...] to the fact that the two are simply quite different expressions of the same inner nature of the world’ (*WWR*, I, 263). It is precisely in this connection, or rather in preparation of this judgement, that Schopenhauer speaks, for once and once only, of ‘vaudeville, a form which is implicitly situated by him at the opposite end of the spectrum to the position occupied by opera. Beckett had obviously remembered that Schopenhauer had alluded to vaudeville [...]’ see, Pilling, J. ‘Proust and Schopenhauer’ Bryden, M., *Samuel Beckett and Music* (1998): New York: Oxford University Press, 176.

<sup>22</sup> See, *W.W.R.*1., 263.



in both cases the status of the artist rests upon an ability to see beyond the world of phenomenal division into a reality which is itself an expression of the 'absolute' space and undivided character of music. In order to consolidate this Schopenhauerian picture, we have only to read Beckett's own closing line to *Proust*: 'the invisible reality that damns the life of the body on earth as a pensum and reveals the meaning of the word : 'defunctus'.' For as we have already seen from Beckett's correspondence with McGreevy in 1930, 'defunctus' is a phrase which Beckett enthusiastically borrows from Schopenhauer:

Life is a task to be worked off; in this sense *defunctus* is a fine expression.  
(P.P.2., 300.)

It is not just *defunctus* that Beckett borrows in this instance; the whole idea relating to life as 'a task to be worked off' is itself being carried over; for as we can see, Beckett enlists the services of the German word *Pensum* (work load/ quota); thus ensuring the integrity of the original Schopenhauerian setting.<sup>23</sup> Having established what is most certainly a piece of writing whose shape has been significantly determined by Beckett's own personal reading of Schopenhauer, I feel it is certainly worth exploring the possibility that such an influence extends to areas of *Proust*, passages which on first appearance seem to concede nothing to Schopenhauer's writing. Take for instance Beckett's own defensive stance over Proust's writing style:

For Proust, as for the painter, style is more a question of vision than of technique. Proust does not share the superstition that form is nothing and content everything, nor that the ideal literary masterpiece could only be communicated in a series of absolute and monosyllabic propositions. For Proust the quality of language is more important than any system of ethics or aesthetics. Indeed he makes no attempt to dissociate form from content. The one is a concretion of the other, the revelation of a world.

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<sup>23</sup> See, Pothast, U., *The Metaphysical Vision*, op.cit., 90-91.

At first glance, Beckett's remarks seems to be endorsing Proust's own privileging of literary style over his novel's capacity to retain and exhibit a conscious document of events; that the innate truth of the novel is born out of style, rather than content:

'You see, I believe that it is really only to involuntary memories that the artist should go for the raw material of his work. First, precisely because they are involuntary and take shape of their own accord, drawn by the resemblance of some identical moment, they alone bear the hallmark of authenticity. Then, they bring things back to us in exact proportions of memory and oblivion. And finally, since they give us to enjoy the same sensation in quite other circumstances, they release it from it all contingency, they give us its extratemporal essence, which is the very content of good style, that general and necessary truth that the beauty of a style alone can reveal.'<sup>24</sup>

As we can see, Beckett's own account of style versus content in *Proust* fits comfortably with the author's own estimation of style; in fact it is in this very summary of *Du côté de chez Swann* by Proust, that there appears to be an unswerving alliance between the opening paragraph of Beckett's comments on style, and Proust's closing remarks on *Swann*:

'Style is not at all a prettification as certain people think, it is not even a matter of technique, it is- like colour with painters- a quality of vision, the revelation of the private universe that each one of us can see and which others cannot see. The pleasure an artist affords us is to introduce us to one universe the more.'<sup>25</sup>

Just as Proust uses the dais of the artist's palette to dispense his counterclaim, that style is not a matter of technique, we have Beckett also discussing style in an equally painterly manner, in which technique is also traded for vision. So when it comes to interpreting such a passage, it would appear that we need not look any further than Proust himself. But what I would say, having already looked at the possibility that Beckett was seeing in Proust an emerging symbiosis with Schopenhauer, is that we could try to bring a Schopenhauerian dimension to this picture. In fact Beckett's own focus on Proust avoiding the distinction between form and matter, alongside his insistence that the quality of language was more important than any

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<sup>24</sup> Proust, M., *Against Sainte-Beuve And Other Essays*, trans. Sturrock, J. (1988) London: Penguin Books Ltd., 235-236.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

system of ethics, could be regarded in one sense as an aesthetic reconfiguration of the 'will'. There is a parallel here between the way in which Beckett represents the language of Proust, that is, as something which permits of no demarcation between what it represents and that which it is textually, and Schopenhauer's depiction of 'will', which is also blind to the distinction between what it represents and what it is.

Also, as we can appreciate with Schopenhauer's model of the 'will', there is simply no legroom for ethics outside the limited scope of minimizing suffering. As Christopher Janaway states, 'In Schopenhauer's view, the ethical sphere parallels the aesthetic in that prescriptive rules, and conceptual thought in general, are not the essential thing'.<sup>26</sup>

But there is indeed, I believe, a further consideration to be made in our attempt to draw Beckett's examination of literary form and content into the orbit of Schopenhauer; it all comes down to the fact that Beckett closes his book of criticism, with the phrase 'defunctus'. For with this Schopenhauerian 'signing off' from *Proust* there can be no mistaking the fact that Beckett had been consulting Schopenhauer's collective body of essays used in support of 'the main work': *Parerga und Paralipomena*. And it is also the case that among the many essays making up *Parerga und Paralipomena*, there is one with the underwhelming title: *On Authorship and Style*; its opening sentence reads:

First there are two kinds of authors, those who write for the sake of the subject and those who write for the sake of writing.  
(P.P.2., 501.)

With this opening sentence, Schopenhauer goes on to explain to the reader what in essence comprises a worthy book, but in order to answer this he asserts one should first come to appreciate where the value of the book is located; and for Schopenhauer it is simple, either it is the *subject-matter* or it is the *form*. It is precisely the same debate that Beckett raises in relation to Proust, for with Schopenhauer, like Beckett and Proust, it is *form* which supports the true artistic character of the book, conveying 'intelligence, judgement, wit and vivacity'

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<sup>26</sup> Janaway, C., *Schopenhauer* (1996) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 73.

whereas *subject-matter* is merely empirical stuffing:<sup>27</sup>

If, therefore, a book is famous, we should carefully note whether it is so on account of the subject-matter or of the form. In virtue of the *subject-matter*, quite ordinary and shallow men may produce very important works, since to them alone was such matter accessible; for example description of distant countries, rare natural phenomena, experiments, historical events which they witnessed or in connection with which they spent much time and went to a great deal of trouble in searching and specially studying the sources. On the other hand, where it is a question of the *form*, since the subject-matter is accessible or even very well known to every-one; and thus where only the essence of the thought concerning the matter can give value to the work, then only the eminent mind is capable of producing something worth reading.

(P.P.2., 506.)

As we can see from the essay, Schopenhauer links a book's *subject-matter* with everything that epitomizes worldly phenomena, its measurable objectivity, its geography, its history; that is to say, everything that Schopenhauer identifies with the illusory nature of the world. So it is therefore clear that the subject-matter of a book from Schopenhauer's perspective is equally insubstantial. Whereas *form* for Schopenhauer encompasses what appears to be the opposite of a book's *subject-matter*, namely the essence of the author's thoughts; something which is capable of communicating the essential character of the author.

Knowing that Beckett had read *Parerga und Paralipomena* from the indelible mark it has left on *Proust*, it would be quite astonishing to think, when it came to composing this passage on 'form' and 'content', that his thoughts remained solely on Proust. For I suspect that an essay written by Schopenhauer, which is explicitly on this subject, would most certainly have featured in his thinking. Therefore, the way in which Beckett has gone about constructing *Proust*, leads me to think that in Beckett's mind Proust himself was in some way becoming an artistic warrant for Schopenhauer. The extent to which Beckett had been directly affected by this seemingly innocuous essay, I believe cannot be overestimated, for I would suggest, that we for just one moment turn our attention to a series of earlier paragraphs from the same essay:

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<sup>27</sup> See, P.P.2., 507.

The characteristic feature is to be found in the *object*; and so the book can be important whoever its author may be. On the other hand, with regards to the What of a book, the characteristic feature is to be found in the author, the *subject*. The matter dealt with can be those that are accessible and known to everyone; but the form of interpretation, the What of the thinking, here imparts value to the book and is to be found in the subject (the author). And so if from this point of view a book is excellent and incomparable, so too is its author. It follows from this that the merit of an author who is worth reading is the greater, the less this is due to the subject-matter and hence the better known and more hackneyed this is. Thus, for instance, the three great Greek tragedians have all worked at the same subject-matter.

(P.P.2., 506.)

In this tightly-knit passage we have the appearance of what I believe can be described as the sub-cellular apparatus, which will later give rise to Beckett's own distinct approach to literature, and indeed to his art as a whole. Let us for a moment, follow Schopenhauer's instructions, namely that the book we intend to produce should be withdrawn from the usual pressure to fill it with an assorted range of descriptive subject-matter; and instead, our efforts should be refocused towards revealing the imaginative undercurrent driving the authorial process.

This it would seem is what Schopenhauer is trying to get at; for when reading *Parerga und Paralipomena* we should always be put in mind of the fact, that these essays are not just a ragtag collection of intellectual musings, but are intended by the author to support and supplement his main opus; *Die Welt*. Schopenhauer always intended *Parerga und Paralipomena*, to be read in full knowledge of *Die Welt*, in the expectation that his reader would be in a position not only to comprehend what he was saying about a particular subject, be it political, social or artistic; but that each and every subject dealt in *Parerga und Paralipomena*, should itself be further addressed in relation to what coincides with *Wille*, and what coincides with *Vorstellung*. So, once we become attuned to this programme, we can, I believe, in full confidence identify *subject-matter* with 'Vorstellung' and *style*, with 'Wille'. Already we can see the first murmurings of what could be described as a 'Beckettian' overture to the novel, in which the novel is completely taken over by a duty to strip out, or deride anything that is vaguely attached to objective, material investment, including, one presumes, that most vigorous nod to causality, the book's own plot. As we have already

established, Schopenhauer's philosophical aesthetic approach is never about contemplating 'the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things, but simply and solely the *what*.' And as we can see from *On Authorship and Style*, it is also the *what* of the book which should be the primary concern for any author; for unlike the 'when', the 'why' and the 'whither', the *what* as Schopenhauer says, 'ceases to follow under the guidance of the form's sufficient reason'. Instead of trying to look outside ourselves for the subject of the book, we should instead go no further than ourselves, for the *what* is to found in the very subject: the author. So the very idea of a book training its focus on the *what*, is itself a consolidated effort not to allow, in Schopenhauer's words, 'abstract thought, the concept of reason' [to] 'take possession of our consciousness, but, instead, devote the whole power of our mind to perception'.<sup>28</sup> By drawing attention to this essay, we can see precisely how Schopenhauer chooses to characterize literature, and where he sees its true value lying; something which I suspect can tell us a great deal about Beckett's own revised approach to the novel, particularly with his ongoing struggle to strip back, all that he deemed as superfluous to the novel. But it is also the very character of the language in the essay which I believe has just as important a bearing on Beckett's literature. For instance, it cannot have escaped our attention that 'what' as a linguistic stress is given privileged stature within Beckett's own oeuvre; and in some cases such as *What Where* and *Watt* actually comprise the title of the work itself. In fact it is quite possible in my view that Beckett's own decision to call his novel *Watt*, was largely keyed as a response to Schopenhauer's own characterization of the 'novel', that its value should reside in the *what*; for we would be hard pushed to think of a more fitting title for a novel which was intent on flaunting its Schopenhauerian credentials.<sup>29</sup> The Schopenhauerian grain which emerged from underneath the Mauntherin patination covering the rungs of Arsene's ladder, can be applied just as equally to the Kantian

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<sup>28</sup> W.W.R.1., 178.

<sup>29</sup> 'The present philosophy, at any rate, by no means attempts to say *whence* or *for what purpose* the world exists, but merely *what* the world is. But here [in *Die Welt*] the *Why* is subordinated to the *What*, for it already belongs to the world, as it springs merely from the form of its phenomenon[...]', W.W.R.1., 82.

construction of *Watt*.<sup>30</sup> Only in this instance it is Schopenhauer who forms the patination over Kant. For as we will remember in the introduction to this thesis Schopenhauer himself makes no distinction between a Kantian philosophy and a Schopenhauerian one, for him there is only a ‘Kantian-Schopenhauerian’ philosophy; leading Brian Magee to remark ‘the clearest way to explain Schopenhauer is to begin with Kant.’<sup>31</sup> And so I believe, rather than revealing the Kantian dimension of *Watt*, in terms which relate purely to Kant, as for instance we see with J.P Murphy (*Watt* is a Kantian novel<sup>32</sup>) we should instead appreciate Kant in this much broader Schopenhauerian context; in which Kant’s presence actually reveals the full extent to which *Watt* is truly Schopenhauerian. But as I hope we are now beginning to appreciate, in order to be fully ‘Schopenhauerian’, there can be no direct ownership over any philosophical position. For Schopenhauer it is not about adding anything new, but rather participating in what is already there.<sup>33</sup> So, with Schopenhauer, it is not so much about swapping Kant’s philosophy for his own, but rather allowing Kant to emerge, fully aware that one will eventually have to acknowledge a point at which even Kant’s philosophy will fall silent, and that any attempt to move the philosophy further forward in a quest for answers will result in deformity, not clarity. It is at the point in which Kant falls silent that we can say Schopenhauer emerges from underneath him. As Brian Magee insightfully suggests in his account of Schopenhauer’s philosophy (or we could say more appropriately Schopenhauer’s approach towards philosophy) ‘a central characteristic of Schopenhauer’s writing is that he is not only himself aware of the status and limitations of whatever arguments are available, and also of the one he happens to be using, but he keeps the reader well reminded of them too. In general he is a scrupulous and interesting arguer, and he argues everything, not taking anything on trust and not expecting us to do so either.[...] The central point here, put badly, is that no argument can add to our information[...] valid arguments and

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<sup>30</sup> Oppo, A., *Philosophical Aesthetics and Samuel Beckett* (1994) Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 13-14.

<sup>31</sup> Magee, B., *Wagner and Philosophy* (2000) London: Penguin Books Ltd., 152.

<sup>32</sup> Oppo, A., op.cit., 13.

<sup>33</sup> ‘They [clear arguments] are prodigiously useful, because they enable us to catch and hold all the implications of whatever we start out from, but they do not *add* empirically to what we start out from.’ See, Magee, B., *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (1983) New York: Oxford University Press, 38.

proofs are the empty vessels of reason.’ So in order to genuinely appreciate what is Schopenhauerian in Beckett’s writing we have to look beyond what is masquerading as a formal theoretical construction, whose philosophical tag lines are at time displayed just as shamelessly as the reproductive organs of Proust’s flowers, and instead, take note of the conditions and circumstances in which we find them. For instance the fact that we have ‘Kant’ as it were, in the presence of so much music in *Watt*, should alone tell us that this is no straight-forward ‘Kantian novel’. For just as Schopenhauer had taken the unusual step of including a printed musical score in his philosophical treatise (something which to Magee’s best knowledge had never previously been done before by any of the other philosophical ‘greats’<sup>34</sup>), Beckett takes upon himself a similarly inspired move with *Watt*; allowing the text of his novel to coexist with the notes and staves of musical notation. So, to return briefly to Schopenhauer’s essay *On Authorship and Style*, we can now relate this title to what I see as an even stronger consolidation towards Schopenhauer. As one might expect from Schopenhauer, his opinion of the ‘book’ does not just rest with its contents, it encompasses its whole identity, including the title:

What the address is to a letter, the *title* should be to a book; and so its primary object should be to bring the book to the notice of those members of the public who may be interested in its contents. The title should, therefore, be descriptive; and as it is essentially brief, it should be concise, laconic, pregnant, and if possible, a monogram of the contents. Accordingly, those titles are bad which are lengthy, meaningless, ambiguous, obscure, or even false and misleading, which last may involve their book in the same fate that overtakes a wrongly addressed letter.

(P.P.2., 505.)

Again if we compare Schopenhauer’s instruction with the manner in which Beckett approaches his own book titles, there appears to be a clear unity between the two positions. For instance Schopenhauer’s idea that a title should be concise, laconic, pregnant, and if possible a monogram of the contents, fits Beckett’s titles to the letter. Also Schopenhauer’s own emphasis on the necessity of making the title brief, could not be better realized than in

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<sup>34</sup> Magee, B., *Wagner and Philosophy*, op.cit., 206.



the works of Beckett, we just have to think of such titles as: *Murphy*, *Watt*, *First Love*, *Mercier and Camier*, *Molloy*, *Mallone Dies*, *The Unnamable*, *Imagination Dead Imagine*, to see how unaltered this pattern remains throughout his writing career, not just in novels, but in his dramatic work also, for instance *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, *Rockaby* and *Not I*. If we were to imagine a book having a postal address which takes you directly to its central location, then Beckett delivers on this brief every time. Even when we take into account Beckett's first novel with what seems, compared to the later titles, the relatively long *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, it does in fact sum up the book's meaning in a very exact way. So, returning to the title of *Watt*, there is in my own opinion no better example of a book meeting these Schopenhauerian criteria, for let's just think about this for one moment. A book called *Watt* is itself a monogram of the entire book, it not only names the main character, it actually points to both the *Ding an sich* and the very approach which will always be doomed to misrepresent it.<sup>35</sup> For 'What' is the thing-in-itself, but at the same time it is the very question which will remove you from its reality. It is both you, and not you in the same breath; you are it, while not it in any corporeal sense. So in every ounce of the term we have both the 'Not I' as well as the *Weltknoten*- the knot of the world.<sup>36</sup> For *Watt* is an incarnation of both subjectivity, possessing no corporeal reality, and the flip side, pointing in the opposite direction, straight towards an acting material body. Therefore one could view the title as a performance of Schopenhauer's 'miracle *par excellence*' albeit in form of a pun. Also, when it comes to Beckett's own characterization of Watt's relationship with Mr Knott, I believe it is Schopenhauer's *Weltknoten* that provides the overarching commentary on such a relationship; for just think of his evasive landlord's name: Knott!:

Watt had no direct dealings with Mr Knott, at this period. Not that Watt was ever to have any direct dealings with Mr Knott, for he was not.  
(*Watt.*, 64.)

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<sup>35</sup> In a similar way it is possible to detect in the title of the third story of *More Pricks than Kicks* 'Ding-Dong' the interchangeable identity of the 'Will' in terms of both *Ding an sich* (Ding) and music (Dong).

<sup>36</sup> '[...] the world is an absolute 'Not I', and its relation to it an originally hostile one.' Helen Zimmern quoting Schopenhauer, see Zimmern, H., *Arthur Schopenhauer*, op.cit., 234.

So even on the level of the novel's title I believe there can be a case made in support of the notion that Schopenhauer's thinking is in some way being openly acknowledged by Beckett. Having looked at the way in which Beckett uses his examination of Proust in order to make a Schopenhauerian declaration towards art, I would like to further move this consideration towards the idea that Beckett, in *Proust*, actually lays out a Schopenhauerian-inspired programme, in which all art must have a direct path to the suffering subject:

The Proustian world is expressed metaphor-ically by the artisan because it is apprehended metaphorically by the artist: the indirect and comparative expression of indirect and comparative perception. The rhetorical equivalent of the Proustian real is the chain-figure of the metaphor. It is a tiring style, but it does not tire the mind. The clarity of the phrase is cumulative and explosive. One's fatigue is a fatigue of the heart, a blood fatigue. One is exhausted and angry after an hour, submerged, dominated by the crest and break of metaphor after metaphor: but never stupefied.  
(P., 88.)

For I would like to propose that in this passage from *Proust*, Beckett is deliberately saddling universal suffering, in the form of the 'artisan', with that which stands in relation to the artist, which in the Schopenhauerian and Proustian sense falls directly upon the idea of aesthetic 'apprehension'. Therefore in relation to this construction the 'body' expresses suffering in its most direct form, and the artist who is bound to the artisan, is able to apprehend it in a way capable of breaking its indomitable chain of cause and effect. In one sense Beckett is revisiting the 'artisan poet', readily evoking the likes of Leopold Bloom or even Hans Sachs; but clearly from Beckett's point of view the very thought of connecting this 'artisan poet' to the production of symphonic art, is the last thing on his mind. For the art Beckett is clearly pursuing is not at all symphonic, in fact its purpose is to reverse the symphonic trend which is so conspicuous both in Wagner's and Joyce's work. Instead, as we can see in *Proust*, Beckett wants his art to correspond to the entire depletion of desire, leaving behind only the pure subject. Another interesting way in which we can contrast Beckett's own ideas relating to

the synthesis of 'artisan' and 'artist' in *Proust* is by bringing to bear another celebrated example, in which the artistic ideal is raised in connection to the complete circumvention of the 'author's' innate passions: T.S. Eliot's essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. In this essay Eliot describes the artist's mind as being analogous to a catalyst, facilitating a chemical reaction without itself being changed in the process:

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gasses previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected: has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.<sup>37</sup>

As we can see from Eliot's description of the 'poet' there is an attempt to locate the most accomplished 'poetry' in response to a contraction and even complete separation of suffering in the subject creating the work. As Beckett writes in *Proust* 'The rhetorical equivalent of the Proustian real is the chain-figure of the metaphor. It is a tiring style, but does not tire the mind.' (ref ?) Both Beckett and Eliot, it seems, want to envisage a mode of artistic production which remains immune to mental expenditure. But whereas Eliot constructs an artistic identity which 'digests' and 'transmutes' the passions, allowing the subject to divorce him- or herself from the world of the 'artisan', there is, I believe, with Beckett no such attempt to address suffering by way of an alchemical route in which the artist is in a position to break down or change the fundamental character of suffering. Instead, as we have already established in *Proust*, Beckett's own approach to suffering rests upon the idea of 'perception' and therefore there can be no 'manipulation' of suffering, or to be more precise, the reality which embodies suffering. For Beckett, in my view, never actually entertains the idea of removing suffering in relation to the artistic identity; in fact in many ways I see him doing the

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<sup>37</sup> Eliot, T.S., *Selected Essays* (MCMLXIII) London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 18.

very opposite to Eliot. For it appears to me that what Beckett is actually describing in *Proust* is the ‘artist’ (the ‘artist’ epitomized by Marcel staring at the apple blossom) conjoining with the ‘artisan’; that is to say Beckett is describing a vision of art in which the ‘artist’ is brought directly within the location of suffering. But crucially with Beckett’s aesthetic scheme, suffering or the reality pertaining to suffering is brought under the ‘perception’ of the ‘artist’ who is capable of seeing beyond the illusion of causal necessity. Therefore, for me, Beckett’s, artistic vision has more to do with evoking Schopenhauer’s description of suffering as a part of nature which resides beyond the framing of the *principium individuationis*, than with Eliot’s idea of breaking down the fundamental structure of suffering, which latter idea I suspect Beckett would have viewed as not only impossible, but even naive:

At the same time, we reflect that each of these masterpieces, itself of short duration, has already been produced afresh an infinite number of times, and that nevertheless each specimen of its kind, every insect, every flower, every leaf, still appears just as carefully perfected as was the first of its species. We therefore observe that nature by no means wearies or begins to bungle, but that with equally patient master-hand she perfects the last as the first. If we bear all this in mind, we become aware first that all human art or skill is completely different, not merely in degree but in kind, from the creation of nature, and also that the operating, original force, the *natura naturans* is *immediately present whole and undivided* in each of its innumerable works, in the smallest as in the largest, in the last as in the first. From this it follows that the *natura naturans*, as such and in itself, knows nothing of space and time. Further, we bear in mind that the production of those hyperboles of all the works of skill nevertheless costs nature absolutely nothing[...]  
(W.W.R.2., 322)

As we can see, Beckett’s own description in *Proust*, of ‘a tiring style, but it does not tire the mind’ also plays directly into Schopenhauer’s own description of nature never wearying or bungling; for like Schopenhauer, Beckett only regards the individual organism becoming unstuck (‘One’s fatigue is a fatigue of the heart, a blood fatigue’) rather than nature as a whole. What is more, if we read further on in relation to this particular passage, the whole issue relating to the ‘natural’ conception of writing is further reinforced by our knowledge that Beckett moves straight from the subject of literary style and into botanical framing. For when it comes to addressing Proust’s detractors, Beckett seems to be implying that their

frustration with *A la recherche*, is born out of an inability to bring to the work the required 'artistic' frame of mind. For Beckett, they lack the ability to remove from their own reading of Proust a desire to construct the work in terms of personal objectives, and so inevitably view the book's disinvestment in willful motivation, especially as it is summed up in the character of Marcel, as symptomatic of the novel's weakness, rather than its undoubted strength. Also I would further suggest that the usual criticism levelled at *A la recherche*'s exasperating length, unjustifiably promoting 'an involved style, full of periphrasis'<sup>38</sup>, is itself an emphatic signal to Beckett, that such critical thinking remains bound to an aesthetic appreciation which is remorselessly in the grip of the *principium individuationis*. It is now with this same unappreciated artistic vision, the vision Beckett saw being woefully misreported by the detractors of Proust, that I would like to turn to Beckett's first completed play, *Eleuthéria*.

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<sup>38</sup> P., 88.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Will and its Theatrical Interrogation

‘Beckett asked me what I was currently teaching at the university. As it happened, that day I had been conducting a seminar on the theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre. So I talked about Sartre’s philosophy, arguing from my own perspective, we were too firmly *en situation* ( too limited by our situation) for the existentialist’s emphasis on human freedom to have a lot of meaning. Beckett agreed enthusiastically with this objection, saying that he found the actual limitations on man’s freedom of action (his genes, his upbringing, his social circumstances) far more compelling than the theoretical freedom on which Sartre had laid so much stress.’

*James Knowlson.*

When it comes to the subject of freedom in Beckett, what better place to begin than his first completed play, whose title is taken directly from the ancient Greek word for freedom; *Eleuthéria*. Originally written in French in 1947,<sup>1</sup> and published only in 1995;<sup>2</sup> Beckett’s early attempts to exploit the potential of the theatre had by all accounts arisen from his need to relieve himself from, as he puts it, ‘the awful depression the prose led me into.’<sup>3</sup> So having named his play ‘Freedom’, could it be that the title was intended to evoke his own attempts to escape the depression he was encountering with his prose? For in this context we can appreciate the idea of freedom not with reference to ‘existential projection’ but

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<sup>1</sup> In 1945 the first and second volume of Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Le Chemin de la Liberté* (*Roads to Freedom*) trilogy was published by Gaston Gallimard, the same publisher of *Nausea* (1938), but also importantly the same publisher behind *Les Temps Modernes* (established by Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir) the literary journal who Beckett himself regularly contributed to, including extracts from his own *Trilogy*. See, respectively Priest, S., *Jean Paul Sartre: Basic Writings* (2001) London: Routledge, 334. and Shane Weller ‘Post-World War Two Paris’, Uhlmann, A., *Samuel Beckett in Context*, op.cit., 161-163.

<sup>2</sup> As Katharine Worth states “Following the success of *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett withdrew *Eleutheria*, refusing requests to publish it or produce it. After his death, to great controversy, it was published in 1995 in the original French (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit) and in an English translation, *Eleuthéria*, by Michael Brodsky (New York: Foxrock Inc.).” Worth, K., *Samuel Beckett’s Theatre: Life Journeys* (1999) New York: Oxford University Press, 180.

<sup>3</sup> Bair, D., *Samuel Beckett : A Biography* (1990) New York: Summit Books Inc., 361.

rather simply as the omission of suffering. *Eleuthéria* responds explicitly to the obstacles which Beckett raises in relation to the limits imposed on human freedom, that is to say genes, upbringing, and social circumstances. For unlike Beckett's later plays, *Eleuthéria* is in part disconcertingly held within the normative spatial framing of a drawing-room play; as Knowlson remarked about the first Act: 'Beckett tends to rely more on parodying the mechanics of bourgeois comedy than on parodying the characters themselves, whom he sketches in with only the thinnest of caricatural lines.'<sup>4</sup> The characters which were intended to grace the stage had deliberately been given a low resolution, for the lack of formal definition he sought in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* would have appeared to him, in my view, equally appropriate for the stage. In fact, it seems to me clear that Beckett wrote *Eleuthéria* with the express purpose of making it as 'sketchy' or as 'light' as possible. So in the first act, as we have established, Beckett openly complies with the conventional arrangement of bourgeoisie naturalistic theatre.<sup>5</sup> There is for instance, the familiar 'drawing' or as Beckett describes 'morning' room in which the scene is set to receive the usual filial hierarchy (M., Mme., Mademoiselle, and even the good Doctor, who is related to the family) and so it is in this sense that we have all the explicit elements which Knowlson's conversation with Beckett picks up on: genes, upbringing and social circumstances. These constraining factors on human freedom are very much in play in *Eleuthéria*, a burden which is further extenuated by the family Christian name: Krap. For it seems that Beckett has deliberately chosen the name in order to represent family legacies in general as a form of fecal production; amounting literally to nothing more than what the name implies on its basest level. Having identified the way in which this bourgeoisie picture has already faltered, there is of course one conspicuous omission from this scale of filial ascent, namely the son, whose whole role is vital if this 'Krap' legacy is to have any future. Though having said M. Krap's son is absent, his absence relates only to one part of the stage: the part which is assigned to social respectability and naturalistic representation; the 'morning-room'. The son Victor, though not

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<sup>4</sup> Knowlson, J. and Pilling, J., *Frescoes of the Skull* ( 1979) London: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd., 27.

<sup>5</sup> 'The opening scene, in which three middle - age women recount their afflictions, recalls the *Human Wishes* fragment[...]' See Cohn, R., *Just Play*, op.cit., 167.

physically partitioned from the morning-room, takes up residency on the other side of the stage, where there appears to be no such adherence to period detail, an area consisting of simply a bare floor and wall on which a nondescript folding bedstead is located. So it would clearly appear that Beckett is using the stage to articulate both mimetic and anti-mimetic values.<sup>6</sup> In *Eleuthéria*, one could say, mimesis arrives in the form of bourgeois theatrical observance, and anti-mimesis in the form of everything that stands to undermine all those naturalistic practices which come immediately attached to bourgeois theatrical standards.<sup>7</sup> Such theatrical practices anticipate a character's development in relation to an accepted social and historical background, and, in turn, the motivation of that character will unfold with explicit reference to such a background. As we can see in *Eleuthéria*, Victor has, unlike the rest of his 'family', become completely detached from such a programme:

**VICTOR** What?  
(Michel turns on the light)

**GLAZIER** I am asking you what merit you  
have rotting in this hole

**VICTOR** I do not know.

**GLAZIER** I do not know, I do not know. Ah!  
go hide in a corner.

**VICTOR** I would like to.

**GLAZIER** (To Michel) Give me the tape  
measure.

**MICHEL** But you are the one who has it,  
Monsieur.

**GLAZIER** (Thunderingly) No, I am not the  
one who has it! (To Victor) Where  
do you draw the courage and  
strength to evict old ladies, with  
the pokes of an umbrella?

**VICTOR** I look out for my welfare, when I  
can.

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<sup>6</sup> As Katharine Worth points out 'Beckett's note in the text spells out the importance to him of the awkwardness and oddity of the divided set. He intends it to be seen as a serious exploration of 'real space'[...]' see, Worth, K., *Samuel Beckett's Theatre*, op.cit, 32.

<sup>7</sup> As Shane Weller adroitly remarks '*Eleuthéria* is at once a history and a rejection of the theatre of representation', Weller, S., *A Taste for the Negative: Beckett and Nihilism* (2005) London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 118.



**GLAZIER** Your welfare! What welfare?

**VICTOR** My freedom.

**GLAZIER** Your freedom! It is beautiful your  
freedom. Freedom to do what?

**VICTOR** To do nothing.  
(E., Act 11., 88-89.)

Again we appreciate that from Beckett's point of view, this 'detachment' represents another form of freedom, one which is deserving of the notion of a 'victory', hence the thinking behind his stage character's name 'Victor'. But crucially it is also a victory which can only be fully understood in relation to Beckett's own Schopenhauerian thinking. For instance, what is it about the 'morning-room' which is so at odds with the space that Victor has managed to secure for himself? If we start by addressing the most obvious difference, the space in which Victor resides is stripped of all material investment. There are no personal possessions, no furniture apart from a solitary folding bedstead, whereas by contrast the morning room, possesses an ornate table, four period chairs, an armchair, a floor lamp and a sconce. Knowing about Beckett's own close reading of Schopenhauer, and the degree to which such reading had evidently entered into both his thinking as well as his writing, then clearly the 'morning-room' is being positioned as a catchment area which extols the value of the phenomenal. As its name suggests, it is a room emblematic of 'light' and 'day' and therefore, in a Schopenhauerian sense, it supports that most unreliable apparatus, the human senses. On the other hand, we can see that Victor does everything in his power to ensure that the room he occupies remains in state of perpetual gloom, and as a living space it has nothing to offer the senses.<sup>8</sup> It is the 'morning-room' which holds to the phenomenal character of the world, its identity being a reflection of the spatial and temporal division that has spawned generation after generation, and whose movement remains bound to an incessant programme of cause and effect, and, by extension, suffering. The world of Victor's family is positively at sea with 'where's', 'when's' and 'why's', a series of interrogatory items which implicitly represent the

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<sup>8</sup> According to realism, the world is supposed to exist[...] see, W.W.R.2, 9-10.

very subject which Victor refuses to be drawn on. For in a Schopenhauerian context, where these very semantic items come under symbolic scrutiny, we can understand precisely why Victor is so unwilling to provide the Glazier with answers as to why he has chosen to isolate himself from his family and withdraw completely from all social responsibility. Victor is even prepared to do this, when this insistent questioning is backed up with threats of torture, not only from other characters on stage, but also at the hands of the audience, who are themselves portrayed by Beckett, as just as exasperated by Victor's refusal to justify his actions as any of his fellow-characters. For if Victor genuinely wants to embody the Schopenhauerian ideal, then his refusal to speak up does not just rest in relation to his efforts to spurn society, but more fundamentally, it is a complete refusal to participate in what he sees as the underlying structure of the 'will's' causal identity, even on the level of language itself.<sup>9</sup> For what is crucial to both Beckett and Victor, is not that he holds back from divulging a specific question in relation to his personal identity, but that he holds back from the questioning, because the questioning itself carries with it the identity of the 'will'. And so, as I see it, Victor's refusal to engage with his 'interrogators' is part and parcel of his own effort to withdraw from the 'will'.<sup>10</sup> All the deflected 'whats', 'wheres', 'whys' and 'whens' are to my mind a measure of Victor's own show of resistance towards his own 'will'. At this point in our examination of *Eleuthéria* I feel it is important that we should look more closely at the scene in which the audience appeals directly to Victor, urging him to reveal why he exists the way he does:

**VICTOR**

It's a life-

**AUDIENCE MEMBER**

Sorry. One moment. You're speaking now of your very own life? Not of ours nor that of the bees?

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<sup>9</sup> 'The nature of man consists in the fact that his will strives, is satisfied, strives anew, and so on and on[...]', W.W.R.1., 260.

<sup>10</sup> Outside its Schopenhauerian identity, as an image the 'interrogation' supports a wider series of images connected with the interrogations synonymous with the Gestapo, but also importantly to the arrests and debriefings undergone by the 'Gloria' resistance network whom Beckett was a part of during the Second World War. "It was on the basis of his involvement in Gloria SMH that Beckett was interviewed at the War Office in April 1945 [i.e. two years before writing *Eleuthéria*.] The details of his "interrogation" remained classified until 2003[...]" see, Laura Salisbury "Resistances: Samuel Beckett's language of power in war and peace" *The Times Literary Supplement* (6 September 2013), 14-15.

**VICTOR** Of mine.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER** Capital.

**VICTOR** It's a life eaten up by its freedom.

**GLAZIER** What if we killed him? How would that do for curtains?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER** Let's be patient a little longer. (To Victor) Go on.

**VICTOR** It won't take a minute. I've always wanted to be free. I don't know why. Nor do I know what it means, to be free. You could tear out all my fingernails and I still couldn't tell you. But far away from the words I know what it is. I've always desired it. I still desire it. I desire only that. First I was the prisoner of others. So I left them. Then I was the prisoner of self. That was worse. So I left myself. (Wanders)  
(A silence)

**AUDIENCE MEMBER** But this is enthralling. How does one leave oneself?

**VICTOR** What?  
(E., Act 111., 162-163)

As we can see, having exhausted the patience of the glazier the audience is still determined to extract an answer from Victor as to why he refuses to participate in an active sense towards the play, though when it comes to an eventual reply, it only prompts further questions from the audience. But if we take the trouble to look at Victor's response, we can trace a path through his explanation which chimes directly with Schopenhauer's own portrayal of *genius* moving beyond the realm of plurality and change:

Now as this demands a complete forgetting of our own person and of its relations and connexions, the *gift of genius* is nothing but the most complete *objectivity*, i.e., the objective tendency of the mind, as opposed to the subjective directed to our own person, i.e., to the will. Accordingly, genius is the capacity to remain in a state of pure perception, to lose oneself in perception, to remove from the service of the will the knowledge which originally existed only for this service. In other words, genius is the ability to leave entirely out of sight our own interest, our willing, and our aims, and consequently to discard entirely our own personality for a time, in order to remain *pure knowing subject*, the clear eye of the world; and this not merely for

moments, but with the necessary continuity and conscious thought to enable us to repeat by deliberate art what has been apprehended, and “what in wavering apparition gleams fix in its place with thoughts that stand for ever!”<sup>11</sup>

(W.W.R.1., 185-186.)

As we can see in both the Beckett and Schopenhauer extracts above, the ‘victory’ which is held out to the human subject centres on an idea of being able to leave behind his or her individual recognition, and extricate themselves from all colloquies relating to time, place, cause and effect. Also, as we can gauge from Victor’s response, Beckett moves his idealized freedom outside a linguistic response ( ‘But far away from words I know what it is.’) and therefore, like Schopenhauer, he does not make the mistake of assuming that the reality pertaining to the indivisible structure of the world prompts one to say anything on the subject. This ‘victory’ only be realized through what Schopenhauer describes as ‘pure perception’ rather than what we understand by common perception, which is immediately susceptible to abstract manipulation, thus making itself, as it were, instantly amenable to the ‘glazier’s tape measure’ i.e. the formal geometry of the phenomenal world.<sup>12</sup>

As always with the subject of ‘desire’ in a Schopenhauerian context, it seems to be the point at which everything unravels, for it is desire which delivers the subject over to a programme of ‘willful’ suffering, desire is the ‘will’ brought into an objectified focus. So somewhat paradoxically we can see that Beckett frames Victor’s idealized vision of breaking through the *principium individuationis* in terms of a desire; which in itself appears to undermine his whole aesthetic scheme.

### **Interrogating the Will under Stage Lighting.**

Victor’s attempt to reject the formal geometry of the phenomenal world insists that his vision alone of a world without that geometry is the only desire he possesses; it thus purports to be an unspeakably isolated act of defiance, which does not constitute a chain of desire, because,

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<sup>11</sup> Schopenhauer quoting from Goethe’s *Faust*, Bayard Taylor’s translation.

<sup>12</sup> ‘He accepts regretfully the sacred ruler and compass of literary geometry. But he will refuse to extend his submission to spatial scales[...]’, *P.*, 12.

however many times it is repeated, it stands alone. In other words it is not a desire in any common sense. Once again, though, I feel this is yet another instance in which Beckett is pointing to a clever obfuscation, on the part of a character, which still nonetheless fails to wrestle itself free from the knotty reality of the 'will'. The abandonment of this play by the author might lead us to associate its failure with the bourgeois aesthetics which are deconstructed by it, and to place it in a special category of experiment or early failure, a dead-end, not to be repeated. After all, consider the apparent mismatch between vehicle and theme: Beckett's makes a decision in this play to use the bourgeois stage for the purpose of interrogating a character, to such an improbable extent that a torturer is introduced to the character (ie the 'Chinaman' Tchoutchi, who is seemingly willing to remove Victor's fingernails with pincers). If we were only thinking about the mismatch (the 'failure') of the representational form and the theme, we might be tempted to think, that this practice was abandoned by Beckett in his subsequent attempts to address the problem of stage-representation. But in truth the structure of the interrogation remains an integral aspect to all of Beckett's later theatrical work.<sup>13</sup> For instance let us take *Eh Joe*,<sup>14</sup> a work which Knowlson rightly in my opinion, identifies as occupying the same space as Victor, stressing that the 'man [Victor] sitting alone on a bed in his room echoes the situation of the television play *Eh Joe*.'<sup>15</sup> The similarity I believe does not end there, for in the television play we have an equally ruthless interrogation taking place, it is just that in the instance of *Eh Joe* the interrogator is not known to the audience in the same way as Victor's interrogators.<sup>16</sup> Despite there not being a visible figure standing over Joe with pincers, Joe's interrogator is also capable of meting out suffering on a scale every bit the match of Mr Tchoutchi:

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<sup>13</sup> "The element of inquisitorial cruelty in the creative process itself is a recurring theme." see, Worth, K., *Samuel Beckett's Theatre*, op.cit., 55.

<sup>14</sup> *Eh Joe*, written in April-May 1965, see Tønning, E., *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama: Works for Stage and Screen 1962-1985* (2007) Bern: Peter Lang AG, 104.

<sup>15</sup> Knowlson, J., and Pilling, J. *Frescoes* op.cit., 25.

<sup>16</sup> "[...] this association of Voice with an external perspective (which if taken literally, would mean something like a ghost, watching him and sometimes addressing him) does not quite seem to fit the conception that emerges from the text of Joe as "throttling the dead in his head" Tønning, E., *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama*, op.cit., 105.

You know that penny farthing hell you call your mind....  
That's where you think this is coming from, don't you?...

That's where you heard your father...Isn't that what  
you told me?...Started in on you one June night and  
went on for years....On and off....Behind the eyes....  
That's how you were able to throttle him in the end....  
Mental thuggee you called it....One of your happiest  
fancies....Mental thuggee....Otherwise he'd be plaguing  
you yet...Then your mother when her hour came....  
'Look up, Joe, look up, we're watching you'....Weaker  
and weaker till you laid her too....Others....All the  
others....Such love he got....God knows why...  
Pitying love....None to touch it....And look at him  
now...Throttling the dead in his head.

(E. J., Camera move 2., 363)

As we can see, Joe's interrogator resides not in any corner of his room, but instead subsumes the whole of his interiority; it is a voice which cannot be suppressed through any effort on his part, though it is telling that the voice at the beginning of this section of the play immediately throws doubt on the idea, that what Joe, and indeed the audience are hearing, is to be in anyway construed as Joe's interior conscience. For I believe Beckett's intention was not to plague Joe with his own internal conscience, but rather to provide a portrait of the human subject (Joe of course denoting 'average Joe') beset by his or her own 'will', in the Schopenhaurian sense which we have identified above as externally represented in *Eleutheria*. Here, however, in 'Eh Joe', that 'will' makes itself felt by both actor and audience, despite every effort on the subject's part to ensure that the space it occupies, internally as well as externally, has no footing from which it can launch its assault.<sup>17</sup> This template I believe remains unaltered throughout Beckett's subsequent work; its perspective invariably changes, but the structure and substance of the interrogation remains constant in respect to not only Victor and Joe, but also Winnie, Vladimir, Estragon, Clov, the 'mouth' in *Not I*, in fact the entire length of Beckett's corridor of constituent suffering and boredom. Having suggested that a template such as this exists in Beckett's theatrical work, citing his first completed play *Eleuthéria* as laying out the cardinal model, I feel that we should look to Beckett's last

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<sup>17</sup> For a standard psychological account of Joe being plagued by an interior voice in his head see, Pountney, R., *Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama 1956-1976* (1998) Guernsey Press Co. Ltd., also See, Gontarski, S.E., *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts* (1985) Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press: Bloomington., 144.

contribution to the stage, *What Where*, first premiered in New York in 1983.<sup>18</sup> What is immediately obvious to the audience is that Beckett has literally chosen to build the entire performance around the idea of an interrogation:

**BAM:** Well?

**BOM:** [*head bowed throughout.*] Nothing.

**BAM:** He didn't say anything?

**BOM:** No.

**BAM:** You gave him the works?

**BOM:** Yes

**BAM:** And he didn't say anything?

**BOM:** No.

**BAM:** He wept ?

**BOM:** Yes.

**BAM:** Screamed ?

**BOM:** Yes.

**BAM:** Begged for mercy?

**BOM:** Yes.

**BAM:** But didn't say anything?

**BOM:** No.

**V:** Not good.  
(W.W., 472.)

Despite the stark, reductive aspect of Beckett's staging of the interrogation, we can see instantly the similarities which it shares with Victor's interrogation. For regardless of the

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<sup>18</sup> In 1986 [?] Beckett reformulated *What Where* in order to broadcast his play on the German SDR television station entitled *Was Wo*. Beckett "went to elaborate lengths to dehumanise the performers by representing only their lighted faces against a black background, with the rest of their bodies unseen. The performers' heads were conformed to the same shape by the addition of prosthetic masking, their ears were made invisible and their voices were electronically slowed down.", Bignell, J., *Beckett on Screen: The Television Plays* (1988) Manchester: Manchester University Press, 74. [Erik Tonning places Beckett's television adaptation earlier in 1985, see *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama*, 259.]

pressure applied, it seems in both instances the interrogators fail to retrieve to their satisfaction the correct answers they are looking for. What I would like to propose, is that the interrogation we see being enacted in *What where*, is in its very nature identical to Victor's. In fact I would go so far as to say, that what we witness in *Eleuthéria*, is actually Beckett's first attempt to allegorize what is being given expression through his staging of *What Where*: that is a human subject endeavouring to break free of their own 'will'. If we look to the way the interrogation develops in *What Where*, especially in relation to the language, then I believe we can begin to reveal its Schopenhauerian undercurrent:<sup>19</sup>

**BAM:** You gave him the works?

**BIM:** Yes.

**BAM:** And he didn't say where?

**BIM:** No.

**BAM:** He wept?

**BIM:** Yes.

**BAM:** Screamed.

**BIM:** Yes

**BAM:** Begged for mercy?

**BIM:** Yes.

**BAM:** But didn't say where?

**BIM:** No.

**BAM:** Then why stop?

**BIM:** He passed out.

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<sup>19</sup> Interestingly from Erik Tønning's perspective *What Where* is part of a Leibnizian examination continuing from *A Piece in Monologue*, *Rockaby* and *Ohio Impromptu*, see Tønning, E., *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama*, op.cit., 250. But as we have already revealed in the introduction, the presence of Leibniz should not in anyway undermine the Schopenhauerian stake in *What Where*, as Schopenhauer is fundamentally about perspective: "Consequently we can parody in the following way the above-mentioned saying of Leibniz, in the sense of our higher view of music, for it is quite correct from a lower point of view: *Musica est exercitium metaphysices occulum nescientis se philosophari animi*" (Music is an unconscious exercise in metaphysics in which the mind does not know it is philosophizing) W.W.R.1., 264. As we can see Schopenhauer does not dispute Leibniz apart from Leibniz's philosophical orientation being 'high' rather than 'low'. "[...] the optimism of Leibniz conflicts with the obvious misery of existence[...]" W.W.R.2., 184.



**BAM:** And you didn't revive him?

**BIM:** I tried.

**BAM:** Well?

**BIM:** I couldn't.

**BAM:** It's a lie. [*Pause.*] He said where to you. [*Pause.*] Confess he said where to you. [*Pause.*] You will be given the works until you confess.

**V:** Good.  
(W.W., 474-475)

On first appearances the interrogation seems to promote the idea that the information these anonymous figures are trying to extract from their suspect, relates to a hidden location, where something valuable can be traced; the classic 'X -marks the spot' scenario. It would appear that there is something which the interrogators are desperate to lay their hands on, and what this thing is remains firmly hidden from the audience, that is to say, if you follow the interrogation in terms of a programme of disclosure. As David Pattie stresses in his critical guide to Samuel Beckett: 'In *What Where*, Beckett stages a cycle of torture and confession that is nearing its end, not because the truth is about to be revealed, but because the number of participants has shrunk to almost nothing. The information that is required (the 'what where' of the plays title) will never be revealed; instead, the process will, with the chief interrogator, Bam, standing alone on stage.'<sup>20</sup> But I would argue that this pressure on Beckett's work to reveal itself in terms of something which it cannot reveal, is present because that work represents the human subject as somehow deficient, and always will be deficient of such information. In fact, the notion of such 'information' is merely another representation of the formal geometry we spoke of earlier.<sup>21</sup> For what I actually feel is going on here has nothing to do with disclosure, or indeed the lack of it, but is Beckett's representation of an individual subject turning away from their own 'will'. Knowing, as we do, the way Schopenhauer has represented an individual's 'will' in terms of its capacity to open itself up to a range of questioning, the purpose is not any meaningful disclosure, but rather simply to strengthen the

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<sup>20</sup> Pattie, D., *The Complete Guide to Samuel Beckett* (2000) Oxford: Routledge., 92-93.

<sup>21</sup> ['...'] the *what* of the phenomenon, which can never be referred to the form of the phenomenon' W.W.R.1., 125.

underlying causal structure of the 'will'. So at the risk of repeating the passage, I feel we need to consult the paragraph from *Die Welt* which states: 'Raised up by the power of the mind, we relinquish the ordinary way of considering things, and cease to follow under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason merely their relations to one another, whose final goal is always the relation to our own will. Thus we no longer consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things, but simply and solely the *what*.'<sup>22</sup> It is not that the interrogation is set up to reveal or disclose anything in the the context of hidden information. It is simply a matter of getting the interrogated subject to articulate the 'where' in general; the purpose being to open the identity of the subject up in a way which forces them to replay the mode of thinking thus validating the interrogation in terms of a process of disclosure. Once placed in a Schopenhauerian context, we can see that the reluctance of the interrogated subject to entertain the idea of the 'where' is all part of his or her own attempts to free themselves of causal necessity, or as Schopenhauer puts it, 'the forms of the principle of sufficient reason'.<sup>23</sup> Inevitably when we view the work in this context, there arises another tension within Beckett's play, namely the individual characterization of the interrogators, for what at first appears as an external threat to the subject, now becomes internalized, it becomes an interrogation within the subject itself. But as I have suggested before, this is no simple psychological internalization merely limited to the domain of the 'skull'.<sup>24</sup> For what I see in *What Where* is Beckett re-enacting something much more extraordinary, for if we return to the last part of the quoted passage, it becomes apparent that one of the interrogators', Bim, also becomes the target of Bam's interrogation. For Bam, having heard that the suspect has passed out under Bim's enforced questioning, and that Bim was unable to revive 'him' (thus ruling

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<sup>22</sup> W.W.R.1., 178.

<sup>23</sup> As James Acheson declares, Bam's preoccupation with 'what' and 'where' is consistent with having spent a lifetime asking himself questions. Significantly, though, he seems little interested in 'why', 'when', 'how' and 'who' [...] Acheson, J., *Samuel Beckett's Artistic Theory and Practice: Criticism, Drama and Early Fiction* (1997) Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd, 206.

<sup>24</sup> Interestingly when it comes to the interrogatory structure of Beckett's plays Eric Tønning identifies that 'Beckett's own 'Analysis' of his first draft [ie of *Not I*] refers to an 'interrupter', a term which seems to lie half-way between textual effect and external figure. This suggests that 'Auditor' in that play may not have originated as a physical figure, but rather a structural principle of interrogation.' Tønning, E., *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama*, op.cit., 111.

out the entire prospect of divulging the ‘where’), this knowledge brings about a state of indignation, prompting him to dismiss what Bim is reporting. Bam then as we can see, turns the same interrogation process onto Bim, who is told that ‘he’ will also be given the ‘the works’ if he does not confess.<sup>25</sup> So once more for Bam the possibility of the ‘where’ finds a new footing, it now finds a possible outlet in part of ‘his’ own interrogation team. And again as we can appreciate from the text, V which Beckett designates as ‘the voice of Bam’ (represented separately from the figure of Bam) replies with the word ‘Good’ once the suggestion has been made that Bim should be given ‘the works’, thus implying that somehow things are back on track. From our Schopenhauerian perspective, V’s response would indicate that the ‘will’ has once again located for itself a new opening in which it can channel suffering; it is once again ‘open for business’.<sup>26</sup> In fact, from the beginning of the play, Beckett represents not one, but two interrogations, for as well as the interrogation Bam has just carried out on the suspect, there is of course Bim’s report to Bam, which itself takes on the character and appearance of a further interrogation. So what Beckett is able to recreate brilliantly on the stage, and within the text of the work, is an interrogation within an interrogation; in fact within a multitude of interrogations. Therefore despite representing individual characters on stage, their integrity as divisible denominations is brought under increasing pressure as the performance is played out. Like Schopenhauer’s own representation of the human subject, it appears that Beckett’s subjects also arise as permutations of conflict, within a broader indivisible structure. And like Schopenhauer’s ‘will’ it seems that Beckett is also implying with *What Where* that the location of the suffering is irrelevant, with regards to the performance, be it the ‘suspect’, be it Bim, be it Bom or indeed Bam; what matters is that there remains an outlet for it. So you could say, that without the prospect of suffering (or its

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<sup>25</sup> Katharine Worth refers to “the Jokiness of the dated gangster-style idiom” of *What Where* (‘give him the works’). But it could be the case that under the immediate surface of such language Beckett is referring to ‘works’ as in the ‘complete works’. Therefore Beckett could be flagging his own creative output, or indeed in the context of sustained suffering he could even be referencing Schopenhauer’s complete ‘Werkes’, in which we find Beckett connecting his last staged performance to the same space as the ‘What book’ of *Human Wishes*. For reference to the “gangster-style idiom in *What Where* see, Worth, K., *Samuel Beckett’s Theatre*, op.cit., 55.

<sup>26</sup> ‘From without, the will can be affected only by motives; but these can never change the will itself, for they have power over it only on the presupposition that it is precisely such as it is. All that the motives can do, therefore, is to alter the direction of the will’s effort, in other words to make it possible for it to seek by a path different from the one it previously followed...’ W.W.R.1., 294.

representation) there is no performance to speak of, which is precisely the direction in which Beckett's play takes us:

V: Good.  
I am alone.  
In the present as were I still.  
It is winter.  
Without Journey.  
Time passes  
That is all.  
Makes sense who may.  
I switch off.  
[*light off* p.  
*Pause*  
*Light off* v.]  
(W.W., 476.)

As Beckett's play approaches its final stages, the only active role in the performance is V, Bam's voice who makes the pronouncement 'I am alone'; for at this stage all of the other characters have exited from the 'playing area'. But what I believe to have enormous significance in relation to *What Where* is the fact that V seems to be contradicting 'his' original position. For why should V respond with the word 'Good' now that there is no prospect of retrieving the 'where' from any subject? The answer I suspect rests with Beckett's own understanding of the way in which the 'will' in an individual subject will officiate over suffering in terms of the life-affirming body; so, instinctively, the 'will' will always reply 'Good' to the prospect of renewed suffering. But as Schopenhauer stresses in *Die Welt*, there can arise a situation in which the 'will', in a particular 'knowing' subject, can be made to contradict its own natural instinct, through what Schopenhauer describes as the 'denial of the will to life'. As Janaway reminds us, 'In 'denial of the will to life' one turns against the particular manifestation of will to life found in oneself, which means turning against the body, and against one's own individuality. Thus one ceases, as much as possible, to strive for one's own egoistic ends, ceases to avoid suffering or to seek pleasure, ceases to desire propagation of the species, or any sexual gratification- in short, one looks down on that willing part of nature which one is, and withdraws from one's identification with it.'<sup>27</sup> This last development,

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<sup>27</sup> Janaway, C. *Schopenhauer*, op.cit., 92.

which Janaway marks in relation to the subject's denial of the will to life, where there is a complete withdrawal from our own personal identification with individual willing, has special significance in relation to Beckett's play. For the way in which he arranges his performance, has to my mind been deliberately designed to take the audience right up close to the possibility of such a withdrawal. As we can see Beckett exploits the naked mechanism of the interrogation, without preserving any markers of its interior justification, as in the case of 'Eh Joe'. So from the audience's perspective, the apparent causal strands which hold up the performance, appear weaker and weaker with each exchange of information between Bam and his interrogators. For all the interrogation can bring to light is an aimless process, which can either be made to go on indefinitely, or, something I suspect Beckett wants his audience to embrace as the preferred option, be simply allowed to run out of momentum, through the withdrawal of the source of its investment, namely, the action on stage. Though I personally believe, that this withdrawal is intended to take place not just at the end of the performance, but presumably, as Beckett no doubt intended the play to be viewed more than once, during the active course of the play's performance. Therefore I suggest that the repeated viewing of the play becomes the means by which the causal detachment becomes more and more pronounced, until it is hoped, I believe from Beckett's point of view, that the stage movement ceases to take on in the audience's mind any 'positive' construction; thus the performance itself brings about its own stasis. So the representative withdrawal of the interrogation on the stage, becomes, through a process of repeated viewing, an internalized re-staging of what is potentially taking place within the 'mind' of the audience; or what at least Beckett hopes to be taking place. In this sense, through the staging of *What Where*, Beckett is able to locate his performance not just directly in front of his audience, but also within the audience itself. As I see it, both the performance on stage, and what the audience is potentially experiencing are themselves being aligned to one another, and so as a result the theatrical space does not just become an external consideration, it becomes an internal one as well. Ultimately though, I believe that it was anticipated on Beckett's part, that, through successive performances of *What Where*, the dichotomy of the internal and external setting would for the audience begin to diminish; for Beckett's own careful alignment of the interior and exterior space of his play

is, in my view, an attempt to articulate one indivisible performance between audience and stage. So we could say that the performance Beckett creates is in fact being played out within its own dramatically generated version of 'absolute space'.<sup>28</sup> In effect the theatrical experience becomes detached from the 'where', leaving behind the indissoluble 'what'; and as a result the stage no longer needs to declare any fidelity towards the phenomenal partnership between time and space. Instead Beckett and the audience are left with a performance which becomes the expression of pure temporality without the intrusion of space; for as Bam's Voice declares: 'It is winter. Without journey. Time passes.' So here we have at the close of *What Where*, not only the abandonment of summer, the highest avowal towards life, but also the disclosure of a reality which remains free from phenomenal disturbance, comprised solely of time. For the whole idea of time without 'journey' is to my mind a direct invocation of Schopenhauer's own exposition of the 'will's being purely temporal as opposed to spatio-temporal.<sup>29</sup> And therefore the picture we are left with is essentially the 'will' being availed of its 'knots' rather, than being destroyed outright.

I have gone into some detail regarding Beckett's own extraordinary achievement, in respect to the way in which he has been able to bring to the stage a play, which locates its performance not just directly in front of its audience, but also, simultaneously, inside it. Now, I would now like to return to my original suggestion that *What Where* is in truth a replay of the interrogation in *Eleuthéria*, albeit on a much more refined level. For I would argue that the intended purpose behind the interrogation in *Eleuthéria* remains essentially no different from the interrogation in *What Where*; that each marks an attempt by Beckett, to represent theatrically the will turning against its own self-interest. Clearly, in the instance of *Eleuthéria*, Beckett is a young playwright who is still working largely within an inherited

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<sup>28</sup> 'It is to the will in this capacity that freedom, and to be sure even absolute freedom, that is independent of the law of causality (as a mere form of appearances), properly belongs[...]' Schopenhauer, A., *On the Freedom of the Will*, trans. Konstantin Kolenda (1985) Oxford: Blackwell, 97.

<sup>29</sup> In Erik Tonning's own assessment of *What Where* he identifies the elliptical structure of Schubert's *Winterreise* cycle carrying the movement of the play. But interestingly when Tonning describes the final movement of Schubert's *Lieder* the language becomes discernibly Schopenhauerian: 'The final encounter with the old man hints at the possibility of a certain detachment from suffering through art; perhaps the protagonist will, by transforming his experience into song, be able to imitate the hurdy-gurdy man in his apparent attitude towards bitter cold and neglect as negligible and even illusory phenomena compared with the frail tune he is playing.' Tonning, E., *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama*, op.cit., 254.

bourgeois theatrical tradition; so not surprisingly critics have been tempted to receive Beckett's own efforts to dismantle these earlier restrictive practices as in some way building upon a similar dramatic experimentation as one sees with Pirandello, Cocteau and Vitrac.<sup>30</sup> For instance we only have to think about the way in which Beckett takes apart the 'fourth wall':

**AUDIENCE MEMBER** (Standing up in a stage-box) Stop!  
(He straddles stiffly the side of the stage-box and comes down cautiously onto the stage. He advances toward the bed) I am sorry for this intrusion.

**GLAZIER** You've been elected ?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER** No, not precisely. But I've been at the bar, in the lobby, and I have been chatting with relatives, friends. I even came across a critic, at the first intermission.

**GLAZIER** Was he on his way in or on his way out?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER** He was on his way out.

**GLAZIER** In a word you've been seeing which way the wind lies.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER** There you go!  
(E., 136)

As this section of the play reveals, Beckett's decision to cast one of his characters as a member of the audience, who directly appeals to the actors on stage, has all the appearance of a Pirandellian theatrical conceit; as we can see, the effect of this outside intervention alters the whole perspective of the play, for the stage no longer denotes the limits of the performance, instead it extends right into the auditorium of theatre, even pushing its way into the bar and lobby of the theatre, where it can envisage its own critical drubbing. But apart from the

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<sup>30</sup> See, Bradby, D., "A joke which still goes on" - *Le Kid, Eleuthéria, Waiting for Godot* (*Journal of Beckett Studies*) 62~Vol 13, No 1. Fall ( 2003): 63.

theatrical reflexivity, which is not only suggestive of Pirandello, but of course inhabits the stage craft of Shakespeare and Aristophanes, there remains I believe something else at work. For I would like to propose that Beckett's own reshaping of this well-established theatrical tradition is in many respects a first attempt at staging a performance which is capable of alluding to an indivisible structure, the kind of which I have already suggested exists in *What Where*:

**AUDIENCE MEMBER** [...] But basically I had just to listen to myself. For I am not one audience member, but a thousand, all slightly different from each other. I've always been like that, like an old blotter, of extremely variable porosity.

**GLAZIER** You can't be one to get bored silly.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER** (With high seriousness) Actually, yes, it can happen.  
(E., 136)

As is indicated by the 'audience member' their presence is not an individual characterization, but is representative of a much larger collective body, far outstripping the seating capacity of the theatre; and so it is in this context that I want to lodge the idea that Beckett is depositing within this extended theatrical dimension a much broader reflection centering on the indivisible nature of the 'will'.<sup>31</sup> For not only do we have the audience being orchestrated by Beckett into one indivisible whole, but the voice of such a collective entity drops all semblance of joviality as soon as the subject of boredom is raised. This for me confirms that what Beckett is presenting reaches much further than a theatrical deconstructive exercise, but is in fact signaling the grievous weight attached to boredom in Schopenhauer's

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<sup>31</sup> Also we can see in Katharine Worth's suggestion that Victor's act of breaking the window at the start of Act 2, could in itself be demonstrating an 'effort to look beyond rooms of any kind, into unknown space.' It could therefore also support the idea that the phenomenal construction of reality, held in relation to division and demarcation holds no truth in relation to the 'will', see Worth, K., *Samuel Beckett's theatre*, op.cit., 33.



thinking.<sup>32</sup> And so I would go far as to say that the indivisible characterization we see in *Eleuthéria* is itself playing to the identity of the 'will'. If we just look to the way both the audience and the stage characters collectively gang up upon Victor, and contrast it with the kind of victimization we see being levelled at Clov by Hamm, or that between Joe and the 'voice' or even the mime artist and the 'shrill whistle' in an *Act without words I*, I would suggest that what we are looking at essentially boils down to the same thing; the 'will' turning against its own self interest. It is an act which for Schopenhauer, and I believe, also for Beckett, represented the greatest single achievement open to any individual, as well as the only act which is truly capable of personifying freedom.

### **Suicide: Bringing down the Curtain?**

As I see it the collective physical haranguing of Victor by the rest of the cast and 'audience', is a first attempt by Beckett to bring to the stage a representation of an individual subject, pitched against their own 'will', desperately attempting to fight their corner without recourse to any values or tactics which facilitate or strengthen the 'will' including that most backhanded commendation towards the 'will', the active termination of life itself.

<b>DR. PLOUK</b>	Here it is. I would prohibit reproduction. I would perfect the condom and other appliances and generalize their use. I would create state-run corps of abortion-
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<sup>32</sup> 'Let us transport ourselves to a very lonely region of boundless horizons, under a perfectly cloudless sky, trees and plants in the perfectly motionless air[...] Such surroundings are as it were a summons to seriousness, to contemplation, with complete emancipation from all willing and its cravings; but it is just this that gives to such a scene of mere solitude and profound peace a touch of the sublime. For since it affords no objects, either favourable or unfavourable, to the will that is always in need of strife and attainment, there is left only the state of pure contemplation, and whoever is incapable of this is abandoned with shameful ignominy to the emptiness of unoccupied will, to the torture and misery of boredom. To this extent it affords us a measure of our own intellectual worth, and for this generally the degree of our ability to endure solitude, or our love of it, is a good criterion. 'W.W.R. 1., 203-204. As we can see Victor's own self imposed solitude in a Schopenhauerian context is a display of intellectual self-worth, whose inner reality touches upon the sublime. And for those incapable of entering such sublimity there remain only mental agitation and boredom, such as we see with the supporting cast and audience of Beckett's play.

ists. I would impose the death sentence on every woman guilty of having given birth. I would drown the newborn. I would campaign in favor of homosexuality and myself set the example. And to get things going, I would encourage by every means the recourse to euthanasia, without, however, making it an obligation.<sup>33</sup> Here you have the broad outlines

**MME. KRAP** I was born too soon.

**M. KRAP** Much too soon.  
(E., 43.)

Rather than seeing the doctor's horrific prescription as a life-denying tonic, it is in truth from a Schopenhauerian perspective its very opposite.<sup>34</sup> For just like the way Beckett I believe views Richard Wagner as an ill-informed Schopenhauerian (the symphonic excess and sensual abandonment of Wagner's music-drama being in many ways the ultimate breeding ground for the 'will' to blossom<sup>35</sup>) I equally suspect that the intention behind the creation of Dr Piouk is to give his own comic representation to an equally misconceived appreciation of the Schopenhauerian message.<sup>36</sup> Even in the bewildered response of Mme. and M. Krap to the doctor, Beckett manages to parody the Schopenhauerian sentiment; that not to be born is infinitely preferable to being born; what is more I would also say that the way Beckett

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<sup>33</sup> In many ways the impassioned speech of Dr Piouk can also be considered as an inverted parody of the Catholic conservatism which was championed by the Irish state during the period in which Beckett grew up in Ireland. 'While still a student at Trinity College, Dublin, Beckett published a satirical dialogue titled 'Che Sciagura' deriding the recent ban on the sale and advertising of contraceptives by reiterating the eunuch's cry from Voltaire's *Candide*, 'What a misfortune to be without balls'. Bixby, P., 'Ireland: 1906-1945.' Uhlmann, A., *Samuel Beckett in Context*, op.cit., 71.

<sup>34</sup> 'For denial has its essential nature in the fact that the pleasure of life, not its sorrows are shunned. The suicide wills life, and is dissatisfied merely with the conditions on which it has come to him. Therefore he gives up by no means the will-to-[life], but merely life, since he destroys the individual phenomenon.' W.W.R.1., 398.

<sup>35</sup> In an attempt to describe to McGreevy what the very qualities are which meet his approval in a small number of poems (unnamed in the letter) Beckett himself composes in 1932, he says. "I cannot explain very well to myself what they have that distinguishes them from the others, but it is something arborescent or of the sky, not Wagner, not clouds on wheels written above an abscess and not of a cavity, a statement and not a description of heat in the spirit to compensate for pus in the spirit." *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929-1940*, Vol 1., op.cit, 134.

<sup>36</sup> "It is in this spirit [curtailing the will-to-[life]] that Dr. Piouk in *Eleutheria* offers the practice of homosexual sex as an answer to the problem of humanity." See Stewart, P., *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work* (2011) New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 101.

exploits the comical notion of postponing birth, especially alongside the doctor's programme of human eradication, serves to further highlight the philosophical mismatch between not wanting to have been born in the first place, and that which involves throwing in the towel once we already have made our ill-fated appearance. So it would seem that Dr Piouk, is by and large, a philosophical counter-point to Victor's much more appreciative understanding of what it actually entails to make real inroads in turning away from life, rather than the shadow-boxing advocated by the 'good' doctor. Again the fact that Victor eventually recognizes the philosophical porosity attached to the doctor's prescription of a suicide pill, moves further to consolidate the idea that Victor's position towards life is in some way a reflection of Beckett's own Schopenhauerian sympathies:<sup>37</sup>

**DR. PIOUS**

So what? I have no objection to the curtain's being rung down on something senseless, besides, that's what most often happens. In any case, I see that for you that's not the point. I will therefore not insist. I want quite simply to reply. You want to impose on this -

how shall I put it- this semblance of a life a manner of justification, so that both the one leading it and those it grieves may, in your oh so pretty phrase, be put up with. That's more or less it? Good.[...]

**GLAZIER**

Yes but you reason like a swine.

**DR. PIOUS**

It is so you may follow me better. Let's see. I offer him (he pats his vest) my little candy bar. He refuses. All right. Why? No matter. He wants to live. That's enough. It is a meaning. A little vague, if you like, but sufficient. People tell each other- I am poaching on preserves- The poor young

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<sup>37</sup> "Given that Beckett follows Schopenhauer in his reaction against the procreative nightmare of sexual intercourse, it would therefore be reasonable to assume that he might follow Schopenhauer in his assertion that one effective, if momentary, way of overcoming the will is through the aesthetic attitude and aesthetic creation." Stewart, P., *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's work*, op.cit ., 150.

man! So near giving away! Saw the  
light at the last minute! At the  
very edge of the abyss! One of  
ours once more! They won't ask  
for anything more, believe me. Or  
then again, he accepts Meaning?  
he has had enough. Why? Of no  
importance whatsoever. He wants  
to die, that's enough.

(E., 118-119.)

As we can see, Victor's condition has been diagnosed by the doctor in terms of the classic 'suicide', life has simply reached the point in which it no longer offers any positive return; there is even mention of light at the end of the tunnel, where one may glimpse on the edge of the 'abyss' that life is indeed not as bad as one originally thought, all of which enforces a view, which, from the Schopenhauerian point, dangerously misconstrues life as being able to withhold, that which it never held in the first place. If we just look to the beginning of the quoted section, the doctor says something very interesting in relation to Beckett's overall approach to the theatre, when he declares 'So what? I have no objection to the curtain's being rung down on something senseless, besides, that's what most often happens.' For despite what the doctor says, this certainly is not what we see from Beckett's later approach to the theatre, for there is every attempt during the course of his later theatrical delivery to ensure that there remains not the slightest possibility of any curtain coming down upon the events on stage, preferring instead to opt for the more ambiguous 'Fade out'. Again it would seem that the finality of the curtain is something which Beckett is determined to cast-off in relation to his own theatrical vision. It could very well be, as Knowlson proposes in *Frescoes of the Skull*, that the reason surrounding Beckett's own reluctance to publish *Eleuthéria* was in part due to the fact that 'the later works have overtaken it and made it appear uncharacteristically clumsy and over-explicit'. But I personally believe that Knowlson's additional suggestion regarding his thought that Beckett would have also 'felt uneasy about the way in which the central issues, such as whether or not life is worth living and the validity or otherwise of suicide or euthanasia, emerge as deeply felt personal questions' is largely

misplaced.<sup>38</sup> For I am of the opinion that the issues which Knowlson cites in relation to *Eleuthéria* such as, suicide and euthanasia, and whether life is worth living at all, are not in anyway taken up as serious legitimate options, but are, as I have already suggested, part of Beckett's own Schopenhauerian critiquing of the inadequacies of an art form (in this case theatrical drama) which is constantly in the service of phenomenal refurbishment and renewal.<sup>39</sup> In fact if we return to my initial proposition that a play such as *What Were* can be considered as a much more refined attempt at portraying what is essentially being played out in *Eleuthéria*, then the struggle which one's 'will' is embroiled in, is itself set up in relation to its own phenomenal resolution:

<b>GLAZIER</b>	Explain yourself, no I am not saying that, I did not put it right. Define yourself, there. It is time that you defined yourself a little. You are around like a sort of- what is the way to say it? -like a sort of ooze. Like a sanies, there. Take on a little contour, for the love of God.
<b>VICTOR</b>	Why.
<b>GLAZIER</b>	So that all this may look like it holds water. You have been impossible up until now. Nobody will be able to believe in it. Why, my friend, you are quite simply nothing, poor fellow.
<b>VICTOR</b>	It is perhaps time that somebody was quite simply nothing. (E., 81-82.)

So the fact that at the close of the performance of *What Where*, you have no material presence, only the 'voice' of Bam reciting a series of lines which ends with the words 'I switch off', leads me to propose that this is in some way acknowledging what little victory one can speak of in terms of letting go of all phenomenal representation. For as we know in

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<sup>38</sup> Knowlson, J., and Pilling, J. *Frescoes* op.cit., 24.

<sup>39</sup> 'Victor's world begins to collapse as soon as seeing oneself dead is known for what it is: one more moment within the theatre of representation.' Weller, S., *A Taste for the Negative*, op.cit, 121.

the context of *Die Welt* phenomenal abandonment goes some way to bringing about what Schopenhauer himself describes as a *quieting* of the 'will' (rather than any ill-conceived effort directed at its complete eradication) which I believe is precisely the meaning behind the 'voice's' incantation of the words 'In the present as were I still.'<sup>40</sup> The language of the 'voice', has reached the point where it no longer needs phenomenal reassurance; so what was once an indication of an individual standing alone, where he, or she, remains perfectly still, refusing to relinquish their spot (essentially Beckett's own image of Dante's Belacqua in *Dream* 'clinging to his rock') in my view switches tenor. Having let go of this phenomenal investment, I suggest that Beckett saw the potential for the language to acquire a very different meaning; for the word 'present' will subsequently struggle, in the absence of all phenomenal pressure to retain any indication as to position, or location. Instead it becomes pure presence, that which is always present, leaving the word 'still' to abandon its spatio-temporal attachment, and likewise emerge purely in terms of 'stillness'. So from this newly awakened perspective, I believe we can begin to appreciate the 'voice' in *What Where* on a completely different level; one which eventually indicates to its audience a 'stillness' in the presence of the 'will' or to put it another way a 'stillness' in the presence of 'presence' itself. So if we take the idea of phenomenal abandonment, and see it as part of Beckett's own address towards the 'will' and its representation in the theatre, then I believe we can attribute a similar 'victory' over phenomenal representation. Admittedly, in the case of *Eleuthéria*, this is not anywhere near displaying the kind of refinement which we see being exercised over *What Were*, with its soluble language, as well as its complex illumination of character, but nonetheless there remains in my view an attempt by Beckett in the early piece to initiate his own limited 'victory' over phenomenal representation. For Beckett's decision to engineer a scene in *Eleuthéria*, in which half of the stage collapses into the orchestra pit, is to my mind a crude, but also visually effective, means of indicating a loss of faith in the phenomenal

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<sup>40</sup> 'Paintings of this kind [Raphael and Correggio] are really not to be numbered among the historical, for often they do not depict any event or action, but are mere groups of saints with the Saviour himself, often still as a child with his mother, angels and so on. In their countenances, especially in their eyes, we see the expression, the reflection, of the most perfect knowledge[...]. This knowledge in them, reacting on the will, does not, like that other knowledge, furnish *motives* for the will, but on the contrary has become a *quieter* of all willing.' W.W.R.1., 232-233.

characterization of drama, since it literally denotes the removal of the supportive ground on which the whole material projection of the play rests.

Having established I believe, a strong continuity between Beckett's earliest theatrical work, and what I consider to be amongst his most refined and technically accomplished approaches towards the stage, I want finally to consider how this early theatrical offering connects to Beckett's first novel, *Dream*. It has been suggested by David Pattie that '*Eleuthéria* is *Dream* imagined for the stage (a first rehearsal of themes and preoccupations, more successfully incarnated in later work)' but, as Knowlson is right to remind us, it is wrong to think of *Eleuthéria* as 'lacking in the qualities that characterize *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*.'<sup>41</sup> The French is fluent and idiomatic throughout, and shows a keen sensitivity to tone and register. Whole stretches of the dialogue move along rapidly and smoothly, in short, crisp *répliques*, interspersed with a judicious use of silence. The text is enlivened by word-play and wit, and, above all perhaps, by surprise and conflict.'<sup>42</sup> So clearly one should be cautious not to exaggerate the extent to which Beckett's *Eleuthéria* is a clean departure from *Godot* and *Endgame*, for let us not forget there are only two years separating *Eleuthéria* from *En Attendant Godot*; so I would suggest we can dismiss all those images we have of *Eleuthéria* as being in some way prentice work. But the idea that *Eleuthéria* has strong thematic ties with *Dream*, is from the perspective of this thesis a crucial point to establish, especially when we have already brought into focus the Schopenhauerian impetus behind Beckett's *Proust* and the manner in which this literary exposition would itself participate in the formulation of *Dream*. Having previously explored the Schopenhauerian dimension of music, which plays out in such an explicit fashion in *Dream*, then, can we establish any similar emphasis on music in *Eleuthéria*?:

**GLAZIER**

Music (He walks back and forth  
in front of the door) How many  
crimes! How many crimes! (He  
halts) Music! I see it from here.  
Life, death, freedom, the whole  
kit and caboodle, and the disillusioned  
little laughs to show they

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<sup>41</sup> Pattie, D. op.cit., 74.

<sup>42</sup> Knowlson, J. and Pilling, J. *Frescoes*, op.cit., 26.

are not taken in by the big words  
and the bottomless silence and  
the paralytic gestures to signal  
that that's not it, they say that but  
that's not it, it's a different matter,  
an altogether different matter,  
what can you do, language isn't  
made to express those things. So  
let's keep quiet, decency, a little  
decency goodnight, let's get to  
bed, we who senselessly dared to  
speak of something other than

staple rationing. Ah, I hear it,  
your music. You were all plas-  
tered, naturally.

(E., 134.)

There can be no mistaking that this interpretation of music by the Glazier, has indeed been born out of Beckett's own unique and personal engagement with Schopenhauer's writing. For we can see instantly from the way the Glazier regards music in terms of being a metaphysical duplicate of the world: 'Music I see it from here. Life, death, freedom, the whole kit and caboodle' that Beckett is in fact using his character as a means of exposing to his audience the central aesthetic principle of *Die Welt*: that 'music is as *immediate* an objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself'.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, it is important to note, that the Glazier launches into his speech on music after his own considerations are leveled at life, which he views in terms of a repeated series of crimes 'How many crimes! How many crimes! this again is a further Schopenhauerian consensus on life; as it evidently reinforces the Calderonian notion that *Pues el delito mayor de hombre es haber nacido*. ("For man's greatest offence Is that he has been born,")'.<sup>44</sup> The speech which Beckett plants in the mouth of the Glazier, crucially underpins the foundations of his own dilemma as writer, for it is here, in the context of Schopenhauer's theory of *will*, that he is locating the inability of language to meaningfully connect to a reality which moves outside phenomenal framing. Beckett's character explicitly raises the point that a medium, which exploits something as arbitrary and as limited as language, will always ultimately be confronted with its own failure to articulate

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<sup>43</sup> 'Therefore music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a *copy of the will itself* [...]' W.W.R.1., 257.

<sup>44</sup> W.W.R.1., 254.



anything of 'real' significance. For, as the Glazier professes, he hears 'the disillusioned little laughs to show they are not taken in by the big words and the bottomless silence and the paralytic gestures to signal that that's not it, they say that but that's not it, it's a different matter, an altogether different matter, what can you do, language isn't made to express those things.' Language for Beckett is not just too blunt an instrument to locate the underlying contours of reality or even its outer edges, it simply has nothing to say on the subject; for it is all there in the Glazier's words: 'So let's keep quiet, decency, a little decency, goodnight, let's get to bed, we who senselessly dared to speak of something other than staple rationing.'

Beckett is also locating language as possessing a significantly limited vocabulary, as compared to music; 'Ah, I hear it, your music' certainly leaves me in no doubt as to the Schopenhauerian origins of the Glazier's speech. But more importantly, having identified the way in which Beckett moves Schopenhauer's philosophy into the same proximity as his own considerations towards language, then when it comes to Beckett's characterization of 'silence', and his aesthetic fabrication of the 'void' we can see, that his intention was never to appeal to any loose 'existential' sense of freedom, in which there is literally nothing there; leading our own sense of individual autonomy to build to an unbearable pressure. For the idea that somehow Beckett just like Sartre, aimed to represent, as Esslin puts it, the 'human condition as a recognition that at the heart of our being there is nothingness, liberty, and the need of constantly creating ourselves in a succession of choices' makes little sense in the face of the Glazier's speech in *Eleuthéria*; especially once we understand the Schopenhauerian policy which lies behind the words.<sup>45</sup> I would suggest that the 'void' we confront as an audience in relation to Beckett's work is not empty at all, it is rather that the reality which is 'present' (and forever present) falls outside all phenomenal considerations, and so only appears empty. This is a far cry from the existential chasm, which we ourselves must in someway take individual responsibility over; for there is literally nothing to 'play' with here; we are, as it were, already spoken for. As Beckett writes in *Eleuthéria* 'we are not taken in by the big words and the bottomless silence' which is to imply that all such textual space is in

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<sup>45</sup> Esslin, M., *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961) New York: Doubleday., 61.

some way an illusion. There is often the temptation amongst critics to regard Beckett's engagement with Schopenhauer as an early dalliance; an idea which David Pattie identifies as having its roots in the first decade of Beckett criticism. For it was during this period that there arose a general philosophical model in response to Beckett's work, one which Pattie describes as a synthesis of Cartesianism, Occasionalism, Existentialism and Schopenhauerian 'pessimism' which he says 'created a composite image for the Beckettian universe: in which the isolated self split from the world and from his own physical existence, attempted to come to terms with the absence of any meaning, in a cold, inhospitable, grotesque, absurd and damaging world.'<sup>46</sup> But as a result of having looked at Schopenhauer's writing in some detail, we can see immediately how this model of an isolated split between the self, the world, and our physical existence bears no relation to Schopenhauer's own philosophy; for the picture we receive from *Die Welt* is showing us the complete reverse; as Schopenhauer himself proposes, the self and the world are one and the same undivided reality. It seems not only does this brand of early criticism point to an apparent inability to raise the philosophical dimension of Beckett's work beyond inaccurate generalizations, but also we see in the current, revised attitude towards this early criticism, an equally ill-judged display of what Schopenhauer's philosophy actually entails. For instance despite Pattie's own awareness as to the way in which this early philosophical composite sits together somewhat unconvincingly, there is still a less than satisfactory account of Schopenhauer's philosophy. For when it comes to Beckett's own philosophical influences he is quite happy to group together the names of Descartes, Sartre, Camus, Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer, and to say with full certainty that the 'similarities between these philosophical traditions are clear: each one begins with the idea that the self and the world are split; each one places great emphasis on the mind's ability to form the world; and each one places the development of the self at the heart of the human condition.'<sup>47</sup> In fact the awkward philosophical synthesis which Pattie picks up on in relation to the earlier construction of the 'Beckettian universe' is ironically being repeated here, through the mistaken assessment that Schopenhauer's philosophy upholds not only the idea

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<sup>46</sup> Pattie, D., op.cit., 112.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 109.

that the world and the self are split, but also that the mind is ultimately responsible for the world. Despite having correctly identified the importance of music to Schopenhauer's philosophy there is still an obvious misreading in reference to the mind:

Early critics also came to note the pervasive influence of Arthur Schopenhauer on Beckett's writing. Schopenhauer (mentioned by name in *Proust* and in the early poem 'Dortmunder') opposed the world as it appeared to the individual ('the representation') to the world as it actually was (the expression of the 'will' - the world as blind force, existing beyond the control of the mind). In other words, the external world (including the body) existed outside the mind's control; any order that seemed to exist in the external world only existed in the mind of the individual perceiving subject.<sup>48</sup>

As we can see, Pattie's account of Schopenhauer's philosophy is constantly edging towards the view that Schopenhauer wanted somehow to represent human consciousness as being closed off from the will, which as I have shown in the introduction to this thesis, is never actually entertained in *Die Welt*. Having seen the way Beckett uses music in order to expose the limitations attached to theatrical representation, and the manner in which he portrays music as an undivided reality encompassing the whole of existence; it becomes apparent that the Schopenhauerian influence of music is equally as strong in *Eleuthéria* as it is in *Dream*.<sup>49</sup> So, returning to the initial proposition that *Eleuthéria* is in effect *Dream*, assuming a theatrical vocabulary, then it is important to see whether the play's dramatic, and crucially Schopenhauerian take on suicide; is replicated in *Dream*. Before we can begin answering this question we first of course have to make a strong case in support of the argument that the theme of suicide in *Eleuthéria* is primarily used by Beckett to initiate a specific Schopenhauerian dialogue, rather than what has been previously framed in a much more personal and biographical context.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> As we can see from this passage there is no attempt at identifying the division between the subject's mind and the world as ultimately illusory, participating in the *principium Individuationis*., Ibid., 108.

<sup>49</sup> 'If all our characters were like that - liu-liu -minded -we could write a little book that would be purely melodic, think how nice that would be, linear, a lovely Pythagorean chain-chant solo of cause and effect, a one-figured telephony that would be a pleasure to hear.' *Dream*, 10.

<sup>50</sup> See, Knowlson, J. and Pilling, J., *Frescoes*, op.cit., 24.

If we ask the question: which of the themes in *Eleuthéria* is the most dramatically charged?  
then I would imagine the unanimous response would be the theme of suicide:

**VICTOR** (Reading) Aspirin *du Rhône*. You must think I'm a complete idiot!

**DR. PIOUK** (Rushing over) What? (he hastily takes back the tablets, looks at it) He's right! What a birdbrain! (He hits his head) This one's for me. (He swallows it) The old, the cowardly, the bastards, the scum of the earth, the washouts, for them the aspirins. But for *you*- (He digs around in his pocket)- for you the young, the pure, the lads of the future- (takes out the tablet, the good one)- we have something different- (He displays the tablet)- something altogether different! By your leave. (He takes Victor's hand, places the tablet in it) Delightful moment! Such a warm hand, so alive (Solicitously) You have a temperature?

**VICTOR** (Looking at the tablet) It's swallowed?

**DR. PIOUK** It's not a suppository, Monsieur.  
(E., 182.)

At this crucial point in the play's development Beckett concedes to his audience a degree of conventional dramatic tension, but as is clear from the doctor's 'suppository' remark there is no intention to uphold the solemnity of the drama for any sustained length of time. Yet nonetheless it is the classic structure of the Will he? Won't he? scenario common to many a playhouse, which Victor's potential suicide bid actually hangs upon. So, purely from a standard dramatic angle it seems that the subject of suicide remains the central focus of the play. And in response to whether the subject of suicide has an unusually strong Schopenhauerian feel about it, there are I believe two key indicators which make it so. The first and less obvious indicator as to Beckett's distinctly Schopenhauerian take on suicide is revealed in Dr Piouk's valedictory speech applauding Victor's initial embrace of his

prescription. For as we can see in the doctor's address, the action of suicide is a youthful vigorous stance, it is an investment in the future; even in the description of Victor's hands ('Such a warm hand, so alive') we are given a sense that suicide is being aligned to life at its very peak. All of this I believe is pointing towards the underlying Schopenhauerian principle, that suicide is not life being roundly slapped in its face, but rather an open ended embrace directed towards its very core. The second indicator as to Beckett's own Schopenhauerian positioning of suicide is something, which I have previously touched upon in this chapter, namely the fact that Victor is soon brought into an awareness as to the superficiality surrounding the action of suicide:

<b>VICTOR</b>	What's the guarantee?
<b>DR PIOUS</b>	Of what?
<b>VICTOR</b>	Of effectiveness.
<b>DR PIOUS</b>	The word of a professional, Monsieur, and of an honest man. Look at me! (Victor looks at him) You've looked into these eyes? There's your guarantee.
<b>VICTOR</b>	I believe you.
<b>DR PIOUS</b>	Thank you.
<b>VICTOR</b>	You could pay dearly.
<b>DR. PIOUS</b>	What difference can that make to you?
<b>VICTOR</b>	None obviously, I seek to understand.
<b>GLAZIER</b>	He too! Some hash!
<b>DR PIOUS</b>	(Angrily) Oh you're all the same! give that back to me. (He extends his hand)
<b>VICTOR</b>	I'm keeping it. I'm going to think it out. (Pause) No, I'll be frank with you, it's all thought out. I don't need it. I'm keeping it all the same.

(E., 183.)

It is this sudden rejection of suicide, that I want to propose is Beckett own Schopenhauerian prescription. Rather than the explicit rejection of suicide being somehow a defense of life, as many critics and stage directors are keen to press upon their audience, it is in reality, I believe, a whole-hearted rejection of life; for just as for Schopenhauer, suicide for Beckett is also incapable of calling life into question. It appears what Victor actually wants to achieve by continuing to exist, is a kind of self-advertisement, in which he can appreciate up close the real design to which life has always been intended to serve; in order that he, like Schopenhauer's ascetic may genuinely turn away from life as positive state of self-affirmation. For it does indeed appear that Victor wants to 'look down on that willing part of nature which he is, and withdraw from one's identification with it.'<sup>51</sup>

**VICTOR** (Jerky delivery) I've changed my mind. (A silence) Two years, it's too little. (Pause) A life, it's too little. (Pause) My life will be long and horrible. (Pause) But less horrible than yours. (Pause) I'll never be free. (Pause) But I'll feel myself ceaselessly becoming so. (Pause) My life, I'm going to tell you with what I'll be using it up: with grating my chains against each other. From morning to night and night to morning. That useless little sound, that will be my life. I don't say my joy. Joy, that I leave to you. My calm. My limbo. (Pause) And you come to speak to me of love, of reason, of death! (Pause) Hey, look, go away, go away!

(E., 185.)

As Victor indicates to Dr Piouk he can never be free, but he will through his own form of *abnegatio sui ipsius*<sup>52</sup>, be able to achieve a weakening of the bondage he feels constantly

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<sup>51</sup> See Janaway, C. *Schopenhauer* op.cit., 92.

<sup>52</sup> W.W.R.2., 606.

oppressed by; something which he now realizes the doctor's pill can never remedy. The idea that freedom can never be attained through an individual act of choice, is precisely, I believe, Beckett's message here, for there is no freedom to be had on any individual level in *Eleuthéria*, even in the action which normally constitutes the ultimate act of freedom: suicide. It is this indestructible vision that Victor finds himself hostage to, which I believe carries Beckett's own personal response to the arresting portrayal of the self-conscious subject in *Die Welt* as hostage to its own underlying nature: the *Wille zum Leben*. This peculiarly Schopenhauerian bind is particularly well illustrated by Christopher Janaway who states 'That I am a being that wills life and must strive for other mediate goals, and hence must suffer, does not issue from *my* choices. Furthermore, no contrivance of rationality, no episode of conscious willing, no steps I take, even when successful, can make it the case that the willing in me ceases.'<sup>53</sup> Victor's own inability to give up on life, is part of his own Schopenhauerian understanding, that such a choice was never his to begin with. For, as Victor declares, 'I'll never be free' or to put it in its true Schopenhauerian context, I can never escape that which I am; unauthorized 'freedom'. Having put forward the suggestion that Beckett was primarily using the theme of suicide in *Eleuthéria* in order to highlight the indestructible nature of 'willing' rather than appropriating it as a serious question directed towards life; then the same should be true of *Dream*. If we are to think of Beckett's first novel and play as being essentially a repeat performance of one another; one taking place on the page, the other on stage, as Pattie suggests; then the action of suicide will evidently display the same philosophical bankruptcy in *Dream* as it does in *Eleuthéria*. Indeed, as we can see from the way the narrator reproaches Belacqua in this passage from *Dream*, it becomes apparent that the same self-destruct button which threatens Victor's legitimacy, is doing likewise to Belacqua's:

How could the will be abolished in its own tension?  
 or the mind appeased in paroxysms of disgust?  
 Shameful spewing shall be his portion. He remains, for all  
 his grand fidgeting and shuffling, bird or fish, or, worse

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<sup>53</sup> Janaway, C., *Cambridge Companion*. op.cit., 339.

still a horrible border-creature, submarine bird, flapping its wings under a press of water. The will and nill cannot suicide, they are not free to suicide. That is where the wretched Belacqua jumps the rails. And that is his wretchedness, that he seeks a means whereby the will and nill may be enabled to suicide and refuses to understand that they cannot do it, that they are not free to do it.

(D.F.M.W., 123-124.)

In fact clearly, when it comes to Beckett's own 'derailment' of suicide as an authentic response to the world it is the 'will' which remains the single barrier to activating such an option, not that life is in someway worth clinging to on any moral grounds. As Beckett and narrator says 'How could the will be abolished in its own tension?' This single line encapsulates the Schopenhauerian objections to suicide down to the very letter. For here Beckett is literally setting out the Schopenhauerian position, that what discounts suicide above anything else is the fact that the action does not shut down the will, but remains fully serviceable to the will; as the narrator puts it how can 'the will be abolished in its own tension?' In fact it seems from the evidence provided in *Dream* that one could say with some justification that Beckett's own attitude towards suicide is at this point exclusively Schopenhauerian, for, as this particular passage reveals, Beckett actually turns Schopenhauer's doctrine on suicide into a form of mantra 'The will and the nill cannot suicide, they are not free to suicide'. Also we can appreciate in this passage the way in which 'freedom' itself becomes for Beckett an intractable problem in the context of the 'will'. It would seem that *Dream* edges the explicit Schopenhauerian stakes over *Eleuthéria* merely by the way it declares such an open hand in relation to the will; for it appears with *Eleuthéria* that there is a switch of emphasis from the 'will' onto 'freedom' but nonetheless I see both works pulling in the same direction. If it is the case that Beckett's earliest attempts to exploit the stage carry such an explicit response to Schopenhauer's philosophy, then are we to assume that this is also true of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*? In the last two remaining chapters I want to look at the possibility that Beckett does not actually retract his Schopenhauerian stance, but in truth evolves it into an even more highly-attuned aesthetic dialogue. But before we proceed any further in this direction, one really needs to spend some time gaining a sense of what actually constitutes Schopenhauer's writing, allowing us to see not only the



philosophy, which will be examined at length, but the way in which the philosophy connects to a much broader aesthetic landscape which not only had at its disposal what seems to be the back catalogue of the whole of Western (and in part Eastern) culture, but also a style of writing which unusually for a 'philosopher' is often poetic as well as playful.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Unitary Metaphysics of Arthur Schopenhauer

We want to know the significance of those representations;  
we ask whether this world is nothing more than representation.  
In that case, it would inevitably pass by us like an empty dream,  
or a ghostly vision not worthy of consideration. Or we ask whether  
it is something else, something in addition, and if so what that  
something is.

*Arthur Schopenhauer*

Schopenhauer's philosophical writing not surprisingly by the early 19th century had to navigate the newly created slipstream of philosophical speculation raised by Immanuel Kant's epistemological enquiry *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*). Published in 1781, Kant's critique was (and still is today) regarded as a Copernican revolution in Western philosophy. The nature of this revolution lay in Kant's decision to do something quite unexpected, especially in an age of growing scientific accomplishment which sought to expand the frontier of human enquiry; namely to delimit the knowable world. What Kant sets out to demonstrate is that the perceivable world, is not self-identical nor present to itself; which is to say, the world as we perceive it is not commensurable with an object at all. Kant's genius was to recognize, that what we humans apprehend is itself dependent on a process of representation; and therefore the object of our attention will always be in some way a reflection of our inherent physiological makeup, rather than the object as it is in itself. The fact we cannot dissociate our reality from a predetermined biology, i.e. brain, and central nervous system ensures that the world we orientate ourselves towards, is itself a precondition of our physiology. One effective way of thinking about this entrenched problem, as Magee explains, uses the analogy of the camera and the sound recorder: 'A camera can produce a visual image of a scene, but it cannot produce the smell of it. A sound recorder can give us the sound of it but not a visual image. Parallel things are true of our personal bodily apparatus:

each piece of it can do whatever it can do, but cannot do other things, and it yields its deliverances to our consciousness in forms that are determined by its nature. Our visual experiences come to us in terms made possible by our eyes and what lies behind them, our aural experiences in terms made possible by our inner ears; and without those physical sense organs (or substitutes from them made artificially for the purpose) there would be no seeing or hearing. And so it is for all the other ways in which we apprehend or experience: there could no more be thinking without a brain than there could be digestion without a stomach. The sum total of everything we can conceivably apprehend in any way at all is the sum total of what the apparatus at our disposal can do or mediate, whatever that may be at any given time, and regardless of whether or not we ourselves know what its limitations are.’<sup>1</sup> So it becomes evident, as human beings we are all held to a view of the world that runs parallel to our own predetermined physiological makeup. The world with its characteristic depth and surface comes about not as a result of some external integrity which it has in itself, but rather because our ‘biological wiring’ is calibrated in the way it is. Therefore the reality which we map in relation to our perceived autonomy in the world, cannot independently exist outside the interior operation of the senses. This is not to disclaim the idea that there cannot be a reality outside the sensory fixtures which participates in this process of representing the world, it just means that any speculative move in the direction of such a reality has to abandon the dialectic of presence and absence. To speak of something falling outside our own physiological comprehension is to pose a reality that has no form of representation open to it; for there is literally nothing to register. As Kant says in his critique ‘Representation has nothing to represent. It is subsumed by absence, since there is nothing else’. (fnote, Kant ref)

It is important to recognize that, when Kant speaks of absence being subsumed, the whole notion of something being present or absent is completely negated. Kant is not talking about the removal of something, because that in itself needs to be supported by a positive evaluation. The dialectic of presence and absence comes into force as soon as we initiate the process of removal. What Kant is alluding to is a much more comprehensive grasp of the

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<sup>1</sup> Magee, B., op.cit., 153.

concept of absence, one which loses its negative connotation in terms of the absence of presence; that is to say, an absence which does not partake in the arithmetic mechanism of deduction. It is in this context, of an irreducible absence, that Kant is able to then infer that the two respective props which uphold all modes of representation are themselves firmly pitched within the sensory limits of human experience: namely space and time. For if one is to accept that objective, formal presence, is inextricably bound up with spatial and temporal considerations, then in this newly revised context, space and time can no longer be cognized via the object, because, as Kant shows, the concept of presence has no ultimate foundation in the thing-in-itself. Instead in Kant's philosophical critique, space emerges as the void and time is to be thought of as infinite, which somewhat paradoxically stretches the identity of time beyond normal temporal recognition, it ceases to be marked by the division of the pendulum. Infinite time as opposed to syncopated time cannot be subject to any degree of measurement, be it a nanosecond or even a light year; for all forms of measurement are redundant in the face of the infinite. Indeed the existence of infinite time precludes 'space' and 'time' all together. It is in reality the absence of dimensional space as well as measured time. This in many ways is the crux of Kant's Copernican revolution, for Kant throws out the consciously ingrained idea that space and time are the two unshakable preconditions underwriting the possibility of all 'things':

'We cannot say all things are in time, because with the concept of things in general abstraction is made from every kind of intuition of them, but this is the real condition under which time belongs to the representation of the objects. Now if the condition is added to the concept, and the principle says that all things as appearances (objects of sensible intuition) are in time, then the principle has its sound objective correctness and *a priori* universality.

Our assertions accordingly teach the **empirical reality** of time, i.e., objective validity in regard to all objects that may ever be given to our senses. And since our intuition is always sensible, no object can ever be given to us in experience that would not belong under the condition of time. But, on the contrary, we dispute all claim of time to absolute reality, namely where it would attach to things absolutely as a condition or property even without regard to the form of our sensible intuition. Such properties, which pertain to things-in-themselves, can never be given to us through the senses.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Guyer, P., ed., Wood, A.W. (2000) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 181.

Thus by showing that the data we receive through our senses cannot be matched to the world as it is in itself, Kant is able to create a rift between our conscious identity and the world at large; bringing an end to the pretence that the picture we have of the world can be thought in any way as independent. For not only does Kant show the existence of a mismatch between the world as it comes to be represented through our senses, and as it is in itself, but that, in order to qualify as truly independent the world must by definition lie outside any conceptual and imaginative undertaking. That is to say an independent world, must in truth have no accordance with any category of human thought or apprehension. So, in Kant's mind the material world of objects in time and space, should be regarded more as a map of our own cognition, rather than the world as it exists in itself; for it is the world of our senses that we experience, and not the world. How can an epistemological object both be the thing it represents to our senses, while at the same time be completely independent of such sensory arrangements? Once we see the question laid out in this fashion then the self-contradictory nature of such an enquiry becomes much more evident, than if we were to simply lay the charge 'But why *shouldn't* things actually *be* as they appear to us?'.<sup>3</sup> And yet despite this contradiction our minds seem to have a built in tendency to bypass this reality, in a way which fully suggests that our own mental capacity is not equipped in biological terms to police this distinction. What Kant asks of his reader is not to imagine what this reality could be like, but rather to accept that there is nothing here for the imagination to run with. The reality of such cognitive limits is not just something which is conveniently papered over in theological circles, but it also seems to receive inadequate recognition in science. One particularly good illustration of this lies in the field of cosmology, where one is regularly asked to imagine an event before time and space existed, i.e. the moment just shortly before the 'Big Bang', but this itself implies that time and space has some external reality outside human cognition, it completely ignores the fact that it is the inner structure of human consciousness that bears the signature of time and space rather than the exotic fabric of the early universe.

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<sup>3</sup> See Magee, B., op.cit., 155.

This brings us to Kant's further startling conclusion, that the chain of events such as those resulting in the formation of stars and galaxies are in themselves a magnification of the inner workings of human consciousness. That is to say, the order and structure which we ascribe to objects in space and time can only arise in consciousness due to causality. Kant therefore was able to further infer, that because the objects in space and time were themselves forms of cognitive sensibility, one would also have to accept that any emerging pattern, which the epistemological objects were party to, also had to stand in relation to sensible intuition. So from this Kant deduced that the phenomenal pattern of cause and effect was just as much a sensible imposition as either space or time. As a result Kant concluded that the world as we know it has a clear and necessary structure, but without the categories of space, time and causality there would be a no empirical world to speak of. Importantly, though, Kant also concluded that, as these categories do not exist in the world as it is in itself, there can be no possibility of ever penetrating the essential character of the world, what Kant coined as the *Dinge an sich* (things-in-themselves). So as we can see, Kant's philosophical legacy has a dual character, casting reality into two irreconcilable halves, the world which we encounter as sensory Beings, in the world of appearances *Erscheinungen*; and secondly the world as it is in itself, *Dinge an sich*.

### **The Schopenhauerian Completion of Kant.**

Having laid out the bare bones of Kant's *Critique* we are now suitably poised to enter the main body of Schopenhauer's philosophy, which he himself positioned somewhat remarkably not as a separate 'Schopenhauerian philosophy', but rather as a completion of Kant's own philosophy which he believed had already set out almost all that could be said on the subject of rational philosophical thinking, and as such any philosophical contribution he himself could make would inevitably rest upon Kantian foundations, a point which Schopenhauer himself expresses in terms of '*The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*'; which he sets out in his first significant philosophical publication of the same name.

The basic assertion behind *The Fourfold Root* supports the Kantian view that our own

everyday world is representational rather than substantive in character, and that any rational principles governing the world initiate no inference to a reality outside the initial framework of representation. Schopenhauer in the *Fourfold Root* divides Kant's *Erscheinungen* into four classes of representation. The first class of representation is *intuitive empirical* representation, such things as table lamps and desks; the second class are *concepts*, i.e. abstractions created by the faculty of reason which exist solely in the intellect, while the third class represents the sensory fixture of *time* and *space*. But it is the fourth class which for Schopenhauer will change entirely the rational complexion of the Kantian project, the class that represents the *individual self*. It is here in this fourth class of Schopenhauer's devising, that his thinking takes on a distinctly un-Kantian character, for Schopenhauer the *selbst* or 'self' does not adhere to a subject of knowledge, but rather it arises in the form of active volition; as a subject of willing. For Schopenhauer argues, that given that all knowledge is known through objects, that is to say objects in the Kantian sense, be it a desk or a trapezoid, to know is by definition, to know objects. Therefore to know ourselves as Schopenhauer points out, is to make a very peculiar claim, for it places upon the 'self' in question an unusual degree of pressure which seemingly does not apply to any of the other objects. That is to say, in order to construct the 'self' as a knowing entity, it has to reveal itself as both object and subject; it somehow has to present itself in consciousness as that which is, and that which is not, the focus of its own conscious activity. As a result of identifying a non-representative aspect of the 'self', that which can never be represented to itself, Schopenhauer was able to conclude that the 'self' was neither purely objective nor purely subjective, but somehow falls between the two. This for Schopenhauer exposed a weakness in the Kantian division which sealed off permanently the world of appearances, from the world as it is in itself, for it overlooks that the 'self' unlike the other classes of *sufficient reason* 'looks' inwards as well as outwards. We as subjects do not only perceive ourselves as external bodies in space and time, but we also perceive ourselves internally as a series of motives, or as Schopenhauer puts it 'causality seen from within'.<sup>4</sup> It would be this duality of perspective that would persuade Schopenhauer that Kant had constructed the *Dinge an sich* in false terms. Firstly when we

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<sup>4</sup> O.T.F.R., 214.

look at the division itself between *Erscheinungen* and the *Dinge an sich* it implies that the plurality which is applicable to ‘the world of appearances’ is also applicable to the ‘world as it is in itself’ for given the gap between the two realities ultimately has to be supported by a notion of plurality, there are so to speak two worlds in Kant’s view. So if ‘the world as it is in itself’ can have a pluralistic setting then it would also have to be subject to space and time, for in order to present something as separate they both, not just ‘the world of appearances’ have to occupy space and time. But as we know from Kant, space and time are nothing more than the structural characteristics of experience, so from Schopenhauer’s perspective it is entirely wrong to present the *Dinge an sich* as being separate from *Erscheinungen*, as they have to be linked in someway. Also another grave error that Schopenhauer identified in Kant’s philosophy was his assertion that the *Dinge an sich* actually causes us to experience the phenomenal world, but as Schopenhauer correctly points out in *The Fourfold Root*, according to Kant’s own *Critique*, it is only within the phenomenal world that the law of causality can have any legitimacy at all; outside phenomenal reality, nothing can rightly be called the cause of anything. So when it came to looking for an alternative explanation, one which is capable of upholding the integrity of the *Dinge an sich*, Schopenhauer turned to his model of the *selbst* with its dual perspective, looking both inwards as well as outwards. In it, Schopenhauer identified the way in which the *Dinge an sich* could support both the phenomenal world as well as the ‘noumenal’ world, without having recourse to the adulteration of the original premise on which Kant’s *Dinge an sich* rested. Instead of presenting *Erscheinungen* and the *Dinge an sich* as two separate realities, Schopenhauer re-drew *Erscheinungen* and the *Dinge an sich* in terms of perspective; they would now in Schopenhauer’s mind come to represent two different ways of perceiving the same thing. So ultimately, Schopenhauer’s model did not have to succumb like Kant’s, to the trauma of spatial and temporal division; for there would only be one reality in Schopenhauer’s newly emerging philosophical scheme, but one which could be viewed in two different ways. For Schopenhauer the world’s reality would now fundamentally be read in terms of the ‘self’, its nature would not just mirror the ‘self’s’ it would actually be indistinguishable from it. The world, in a very unKantian stroke would become for Schopenhauer the macrocosm of the ‘self’, and conversely the ‘self’ would



become the microcosm of the world, but ultimately both would be expressions of the same reality:

Everyone finds himself to be this will, in which the inner nature of the world consists, and he also finds himself to be the knowing subject, whose representation is the whole world; and this world has an existence only in reference to the knowing subject's consciousness as its necessary supporter. Thus everyone in this twofold regard is the whole world itself, the microcosm; he finds its two sides whole and complete within himself. And what he thus recognizes as his own inner being also exhausts the inner being of the whole world, of the macrocosm. Thus the whole world, like man himself, is through and through will and through and through representation, and beyond this there is nothing.  
(W.W.R.I., 162)

As we can see, the world and the *self* are capable of collapsing into one another under Schopenhauer's revision of Kant's *critique*, while at the same time holding onto the main foundation of Kant's transcendental idealism, for as Schopenhauer puts it 'the knowing subject, whose representation is the whole world; and this world has an existence only in reference to the knowing subject's consciousness as its necessary supporter.' Whereas *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* is essentially a treatise which spells out the representational nature of our everyday world, Schopenhauer's main opus, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* or *The World as Will and Representation* attempts to do the very thing which Kant's *Critique* displays little inclination towards, that is, to reflect on the actual nature of what Kant himself chose to call the *Ding an sich*. As we can see from the aforementioned extract from *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer himself promptly abandons the opaque language of *Dinge an sich* in order to replace it with a much more immediate language seemingly tailored to the body, that of the 'will' or *Wille*.

So, by merely changing the terms of the *Dinge an sich*, Schopenhauer in actual fact rolls back Kant's own ruling out of the possibility of gaining access to the 'thing in itself; for it is the inner identity of the self, something which is immediately transparent to every conscious being, which occupies the realm of the *Dinge an sich* and not something which is at all remote or unattainable. But having said that Schopenhauer's *Wille* is much more orientated towards the body than Kant's *Dinge an sich*, it soon becomes apparent in *Die Welt* that our

bodies are in fact just one of a series of manifestations generated by the *Wille*. The human body as a biological material entity does not in fact achieve any special status in *Die Welt*, it is just like any other objective phenomenon tied to the a priori forms of representation; space, time and causality, but crucially for Schopenhauer, unlike other phenomena it remains open to its own inner nature:

In fact, the meaning I am looking for of the world that stands before me simply as my representation, or the transition from it as mere representation of the knowing subject to whatever it may be besides this, could never be found if the investigator himself were nothing more than the purely knowing subject (a winged cherub without a body). But he himself is rooted in that world; and thus he finds himself in it as an *individual*, in other words, his knowledge which is the conditional supporter of the whole world as representation, is nevertheless given entirely through the medium of a body, and the affections of this body are, as we have shown, the starting-point for the understanding in its perception of this world. For the purely knowing subject as such, this body is a representation like any other, an object among objects. Its movements and actions are so far known to him in just the same way as the changes of all other objects of perception; and they would be equally strange and incomprehensible to him, if their meaning were not unravelled for him in an entirely different way.

(W.W.R.I., 99)

This ‘entirely different way’ of appreciating the movement and action of the phenomenal world, arises initially in the form of a one word answer to a riddle, which Schopenhauer builds in terms of: *What is the inner nature of things, which the orderly relations among representations themselves do not reveal?*<sup>5</sup>

For Schopenhauer that one word is ‘will’, the strident characteristic of all humans which propels them towards a localized telos; be it expressed in the form of a biological prerequisite such as nutritional acquisition or sexual reproduction, or indeed, dare I say, something as prosaic as completing an academic thesis, can of itself be attributed to ‘will’. So, for Schopenhauer, the self essentially becomes a focal point in which the world can be seen from both sides. It is not that the human self takes up a unique position in the world, it is only that the tiny portion of the world that it does take up can be viewed both internally and externally; what is unique is the experience afforded by the self to inhabit its own inner nature, and by doing so, offer a glimpse into the inner nature of reality as a whole. For if we regard the

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<sup>5</sup> Janaway, C. (1999) op.cit., 139.

scientific explanation of the world as incomplete, or one sided, as invariably Schopenhauer did, then any further intelligibility the world has to offer can only come about if I myself make no separate distinction between my own inner nature and that of the world's as a whole. It was precisely this mode of thinking which galvanized the idea for Schopenhauer that the only plausible candidate for the *Dinge an sich* or as Schopenhauer also referred to it *der inneren Wesen der Dinge* 'the inner nature of things' would have to be in someway commensurate with the human 'will'. Using this platform Schopenhauer began to work with the notion that the whole of reality was governed by 'will' or that is to say a force which bore the outline of human *streben* ('striving') which ultimately manifests itself as 'will'. For it is important to realize at this point, that Schopenhauer does not presuppose that the 'will' as it is recognized in humans, exerts itself in an identical fashion throughout all of reality. For instance the 'will' which Schopenhauer infers is exerting itself in humans, is not, despite being the same 'will' possessive of conscious recognition when it manifests itself in plants, or indeed any other living entity which is not human; also it is true to say that Schopenhauerian will is not just restricted to living entities:

In the first place, I wish the reader to recall those remarks with which we concluded the second book, and which were occasioned by the question there raised as to the will's aim and object. Instead of the answer to this question, we clearly saw how, at all grades of its phenomenon from the lowest to the highest, the will dispenses entirely with an ultimate aim and object. It always strives, because striving is its sole nature, to which no attained goal can put an end. Such striving is therefore incapable of final satisfaction; it can be checked only by hindrance, but in itself it goes on for ever. We saw this in the simplest of all natural phenomena, namely gravity, which does not cease to strive and press towards an extensionless central point, whose attainment would be the annihilation of itself and of matter; it would not cease, even if the whole universe were already rolled up into a ball. We see it in other simple natural phenomena. The solid tends to fluidity either by melting or dissolving, and only then do its chemical forces become free: rigidity is the imprisonment in which they are held by cold. The fluid tends to the gaseous form, into which it passes at once and as soon as it is freed from all pressure. No body is without relationship, i.e., without striving, or without longing and desire, as Jacob Boehme<sup>6</sup> would say. Electricity transmits its inner self-discord to infinity, although the mass of the earth absorbs the effect. Galvanism, so long as the pile lasts, is also an aimlessly and ceaselessly repeated act of self-discord

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<sup>6</sup> Jacob Boehme- Early 17c Lutheran mystic inspired by the alchemical writings of Paracelsus

and reconciliation. The existence of the plant is just such a restless, never satisfied striving, a ceaseless activity through higher and higher forms, till the final point, the seed, becomes anew a starting-point; and this is repeated *ad infinitum*; nowhere is there a goal, nowhere a final satisfaction, nowhere a point of rest.

(W.W.R.1., 308-309)

So, in fact what Schopenhauer is expressing is that the 'striving' which he identifies in humans, is itself a reflection of what takes place throughout the entire fabric of the universe, be it on a sub-atomic level in which the 'striving' is expressed as gravity, ceaselessly compressing and drawing apart matter, or in the form of electromagnetism ensuring sufficient tension arises between opposing particles in the atom, not to mention the fact that the passage expresses itself in terms of the intermolecular forces bearing down upon the whole process of chemical deterioration. What is also revealed from this key passage in *Die Welt*, is that the 'striving' or 'will' is used by Schopenhauer to dramatically illustrate the pressing futility behind biological reproduction, using in this instance the biological model of plant-germination and seed-production. Just like the 'striving' force underlying gravity, so too we see the same 'striving' exhibited in Schopenhauer's own description of the life cycle of a plant, each stage of its development being described as a magnification of restless dissatisfaction, until eventually it culminates, not in resolution, as one would conventionally interpret the production of new life, but rather as it were, a falling in on oneself through sheer exhaustion; which in turn results in having to return to the exact same position which initiated the whole process in the beginning; a fate which is repeated *ad infinitum*. Nor can we see in Schopenhauer's delineation of the plant's life-cycle a point in which the organism achieves a state of rest; for his own emphasis is one of ceaseless activity. So, far from the conventional understanding of 'will' as it is normally applied to an idea of independent human volition: *the power or faculty of choosing or determining; the act of using this power; volition; choice or determination*<sup>7</sup> Schopenhauer's 'will' seemingly appears to be divested of all previously held ideas of independence and choice; as it requires no conscious apparatus to initiate its activity. Schopenhauer, it seems, uses the word 'will' in order to convey a strong notion of desire attached to an undivided inner nature, but clearly any association with individual freedom,

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<sup>7</sup> *The Chambers Dictionary* (1994) Edinburgh, Scotland: Harrap Publishers Ltd., 1997.

involving a process of conscious deliberation, misses the mark completely.

And yet, despite firmly rejecting a conception of 'will' which is invested in an idea of individual freedom, free 'will' is something which remains evidently on the Schopenhauerian table:

my exposition does not eliminate freedom. It merely moves it out, namely, out of the area of simple actions, where it demonstrably cannot be found, up to a region which lies higher, but is not so easily accessible to our knowledge. In other words, freedom is transcendental.

(O.F.W., 99)

For Schopenhauer true freedom has to break from all association with necessity if it is to assert genuine autonomy, and, as everything in the phenomenal world is subordinate to the principles of sufficient reason, then in reality individual human volition must be illusory. For unlike other grades of reality, I as a human subject, am in the unique position of being self-conscious, which provides evidence of what I 'will' as well as revealing to me my own ability to act in accordance with such 'will', but to regard this as being free is for Schopenhauer a grave error. For what I ascertain as being free in myself is nothing more, in Schopenhauerian terms, than an awareness of being able to 'will', rather than consciously manipulating or taking ownership of such 'will'.

The important question for Schopenhauer is whether I as a human subject could have 'willed' otherwise? Raising serious doubts as to whether we as human beings have ultimate control over our conscious actions is something which Schopenhauer achieves with an uncharacteristic degree of logical precision in his prize-winning essay submitted to the Royal Norwegian Scientific Society entitled *Auf der Freiheit des Wille* or *On the Freedom of the Will*; the outline of which Christopher Janaway carefully maps out in his essay 'Will and Nature'<sup>8</sup>:

1. Freedom of the individual human will must be distinguished from freedom of action (the ability of X if one wills to do X).
2. There is freedom of will only if occurrences of the individual's willing enjoy absence of all determination or necessity.
3. An agent's self-consciousness can provide no answer to the

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<sup>8</sup> Janaway, C. (1999) op.cit., 154-155.

question of whether the agent's act of will are necessitated by a ground that determines them.

4. But an objective account of the occurrence of acts of will shows that they must be grounded in causes that necessitate their occurrence.

5. Hence there is no freedom of the individual agent's will in this sense: no acts of will can be without a ground that necessitates them.

6. This conclusion does not remove the sense one has of being responsible for one's deeds, which must be accounted for from a different standpoint.

Interestingly, as one can see from Schopenhauer's conclusion, despite his own logical deduction pointing to an emphatic 'no' when addressing the question 'Is it possible to prove the freedom of the human will from the evidence of self-consciousness?', he does not take it upon himself to argue that our own feelings of responsibility are in anyway unfounded. So in a Schopenhauerian context human consciousness is not the seat or locus of the 'will': it is merely one of the many numerous ways in which it can exert itself. Just as it can exert itself as an unconscious striving in a germinating seed, so the 'will' also exerts itself as a series of conscious motives being acted upon by a human subject; but ultimately for Schopenhauer the 'will' in both instances remains the same. Just like the water flowing through the tributaries of a river delta, Schopenhauer would have us believe that our conscious behavior channels the 'will' in a similarly dendritic fashion, one in which, the motives of the conscious subject are seen to affect the 'will' only in so far as they can change temporarily the course of its direction, delaying what will always inevitably be the same conclusion. Importantly though from Schopenhauer's point of view, regardless of what conscious journey the 'will' endeavors to take, the 'will' in itself remains unchanged:

What the man really and generally wills, the tendency of his innermost nature, and the goal he pursues in accordance therewith these we can never change by influencing him from without, by instructing him, otherwise we should be able to create him anew.[...]From without, the will can be affected only by motives; but these can never change the will itself, for they have power over it only on the presupposition that it is precisely such as it is. All that the motives can do, therefore, is to alter the direction of the will's effort, in other words to make it possible for it to seek what it invariably seeks by a path different from the one it previously followed.

(W.W.R. 1., 294)

Despite not being able to influence the ultimate destination of the 'will' there is in the

Schopenhauerian scheme of things one aspect, which we as humans genuinely have the power to change; that is knowledge, particularly the knowledge relating to the 'will'. It is this capacity which above all binds humans to a uniquely tragic position in the world; for unlike animals, humans can deliberate over the consequences of the will, but without pressing upon it any real change. Thus 'Man' is revealed to 'himself' as a realm of conflict, or better still a contradiction, or even an error. As Schopenhauer says '*Repentance* never results from the fact that the will has changed - this is impossible- but from a change of knowledge. I must still continue to will the essential and real element of what I have always willed; for I am myself this will, that lies outside time and change. Therefore I can never repent of what I have willed, though I can repent of what I have done[...]'<sup>9</sup> so, as we can see the 'will' which is ubiquitous throughout the world only reaches a point of self-recognition once it is expressed in terms of humanity, but none the less it does not change the fact that it is the 'will' which has sovereignty, and not the individual human subject. The picture which arises from Schopenhauer's own systematic interrogation of what actually constitutes 'willful' freedom, especially once it is vetted in relation to Kant's categorical prerequisites, controversially raises no prospect of active volition; for 'willful' action as Schopenhauer sees it, is not something we do, but rather what we are. For the whole question of what we are becomes for Schopenhauer an inroad into the underlying structure of the world in general; on the one hand we are subjects of knowledge, we are that which knows the world objectively, our bodies notwithstanding, while on the other we emerge as willful action, subjects of 'willing'. But for Schopenhauer any dichotomies which arise from such considerations should in themselves carry the status of an illusion, as they depend entirely on the structure of 'sufficient reason'. For let's us not forget that the 'will' unlike human cognition, is not constrained by space, time or causality and in this sense any partition erected in the presence of the 'will' must be in some way an illusion. So the human subject in Schopenhauer's philosophy has no clear resolution on an individual level. Instead Schopenhauer is inclined to think about human individuality in terms of a knot in the undivided fabric of the 'will':

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<sup>9</sup> W.W.R.1., 296.

Now the identity of the subject with that of knowing by virtue whereof (and indeed necessarily) the word "I" includes and indicates both is the knot of the world (*Weltknoten*) and hence inexplicable. For to us only the relations between objects are intelligible; but of these two can be one only insofar as they are parts of a whole. Here, on the other hand, where we are speaking of the subject, the rules for the knowing of objects no longer apply, and an actual identity of the knower with what is known as willing and hence of the subject with the object, is *immediately given*. But whoever really grasps the inexplicable nature of this identity, will with me call it the miracle "*par excellence*."

(T.F.R.O., 211-212)

In this sense there is no genuine breach separating us, the subject, from our perceived world; plurality (what Schopenhauer labels the *principium individuationis*) remains ultimately foreign to the 'will' and as Schopenhauer says in *Die Welt* 'It is not a case of there being a smaller part of will in the stone and a larger part in man, for the relation of part and whole belongs exclusively to space, and has no longer any meaning the moment we have departed from this form of intuition or perception. More and less concern only the phenomenon, that is to say, the visibility, the objectification. There is a higher degree of this objectification in the plant than in the stone, a higher degree in the animal than in the plant; indeed, the will's passage into visibility, its objectification, has gradations as endless as those between the feeblest twilight and the brightest sunlight, the loudest tone and the softest echo.'<sup>10</sup>

### **The Will to Life.**

When considering the higher degrees of 'willful' objectification, such as those that reach the point of biological representation, Schopenhauer identifies two defining threads of 'willful' movement, one which is directed towards survival and the other directed towards reproduction; each in their own turn come together to forge collectively what Schopenhauer describes as *Wille zum Leben* or 'will to life'. As Janaway reminds us, the usual translation of *Wille zum Leben*, and indeed the translation which Payne himself settles for is 'will to live' rather than the less linguistically correct translation 'will to life'. But for the purposes of conveying the essential meaning behind Schopenhauer's philosophy of 'will' it is necessary

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<sup>10</sup> W.W.R.1., 128.



to use a word which supports a much broader conception of living than simply one which upholds individual preservation. Instead it should evoke the whole struggle which all biological organisms orientate themselves towards, not just individual preservation but rather the preservation of the entire species, engendering life and protecting offspring, and it is for this reason that the more inclusive ‘will to life’ captures a greater sense of the original intention behind *Wille zum Leben*, than merely ‘will to live’. For as Janaway, explains coming up with the concept of *Wille zum Leben* was Schopenhauer’s bold attempt to seek out ‘a single hypothesis to explain the ways in which all life forms grow, function and behave.’<sup>11</sup> Again though, one should understand that Schopenhauer’s *Wille zum Leben* has no conscious intention behind it, for it is simply a manifestation of the same undivided striving which stands outside the structure of sufficient reason, only that in this instance it seeks to exert itself in terms of organic life. Therefore Schopenhauer wants to present the biological impetus which propels life forward as a mechanism which sets in motion a cycle of willing and attainment, and that life is effectively the means by which the ‘will’ ensures that all species find themselves somewhere on this cycle of willing and attaining. But because the ‘will’ itself is free from spatial, temporal and causal consideration, there can be no particular instance of willing or attainment held with within the cycle, which is capable of fully eliminating or satisfying the ‘will’. So when Schopenhauer is directed back to the question *what* are we? The answer for him lies within this cycle of desire, humans like all living organisms are in essence *Wille zum Leben*:

Awakened to life out of the night of unconsciousness, the will finds itself as an individual in an endless and boundless world, among innumerable individuals, all striving, suffering and erring; and, as if through a troubled dream, it hurries back to the old unconsciousness. Yet till then its desires are unlimited, its claims inexhaustible, and every satisfied desire gives birth to a new. No possible satisfaction in the world could suffice to still its craving, set a final goal to its demands, and fill the bottomless pit of its heart.  
(W.W.R.2., 573)

For Schopenhauer all life must imply striving, and this applies to humans as it does to any

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<sup>11</sup> See Janaway, C., *Schopenhauer* (1994) Oxford: Oxford University Press., 38.

organism, but it appears, from Schopenhauer's point of view, that the satisfactory attainment of a particular desire should not be assigned positive value, for it partakes in a limitless field of desire where satisfaction can at best only be temporarily sustained, before it is forced to orientate itself towards further permutations of desire. In animals this desire manifests itself primarily in the way of hunger and a need to reproduce, but as conscious achievements they have no legitimate status:

But we see at once from the instinct and mechanical skill of animals that that the will is also active where it is not guided by any knowledge. That they have representations and knowledge is of no account at all here, for the end towards which they work as definitely as if it were a known motive remains entirely unknown to them. Therefore, their action here takes place without motive, is not guided by the representation, and shows us first and most distinctly how the will is active even without any knowledge. The one-year-old bird has no notion of the eggs for which it builds a nest; the young spider has no idea of the prey for which it spins a web; the ant-lion has no notion of the ant for which it digs a cavity for the first time[...]  
(W.W.R.1., 114)

So, for animals the goals to which they orientate themselves have no conscious direction, they remain outside any cognitive framework, whereas in the case of humans the same willful behavior, though no different in character becomes drawn into a evaluative judgement, the human subject to which the 'willing' applies, seeks to interpret this unchosen goal in terms of individual well-being. Life then as a result takes on the false appearance of being open to rational choice. For what we have in reality, in relation to ourselves as human subjects, is not that we will life as a deliberate conscious goal, but rather we will life because we are that very thing, the *Wille zum Leben*. George Simmel, expounding on this very issue, asserts that in the Schopenhauerian context that 'I [the human subject] do not will by virtue of values and goals that are posited by reason, but I have goals because I will continuously and ceaselessly from the depth of my essence.'<sup>12</sup> So, from Schopenhauer's perspective, we as humans do not will from choice, because in essence we are that 'will' the 'will to life'. And in relation to its objectification it finds itself expressed primarily (like all living organisms) in terms of hunger and sexual desire:

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<sup>12</sup> Simmel, G., *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, trans. Loiskandl, H., Weinstein, D., and Weinstein, M. (1986) Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press., 30.

Therefore the parts of the body must correspond completely to the chief demands and desires by which the will manifests itself; they must be the visible expression of these desires. Teeth, gullet and intestinal canal are objectified hunger; the genitals are objectified sexual impulse; grasping hands and nimble feet correspond to the more indirect strivings of the will which they represent. Just as the general human form corresponds to the general human will, so to the individually modified will, namely the character of the individual, there corresponds the individual bodily structure, which is therefore as a whole and in all its parts characteristic and full of expression.  
(W.W.R.1., 108)

In this sense Schopenhauer brings forth a picture in which all biological functions are a manifestation of the 'will to life'; including therefore the brain. But unlike most philosophical and scientific reflection on the human subject, Schopenhauer does not centralize willful control in the region of brain, in fact the brain in Schopenhauer's philosophy develops as a subsidiary offshoot to the will. For, as Janaway emphasizes, 'The structure of knowledge and of its objects depend on the kind of manifestation of will to life which its subject happens to be. Everything the reader was told at the outset about the world of representation, the forms of space, time, and causality which govern the objects of our experience, and the concepts and judgements which we can obtain from them by abstraction- all of this is merely surface beneath which lurks the driving force of our nature, the will. We grow into creatures who can perceive, judge, and reason, in order to fulfill the ends of life: survival, nourishment, and reproduction.'<sup>13</sup> Therefore Schopenhauer does not put the intellect, before the 'will'. Quite the reverse, if anything it is the intellect which does the 'will's' bidding:

The brain with its function of knowing is nothing more than a *guard* mounted by the will for its aims and ends that lie outside. Up in the watch-tower of the head this guard looks round through the windows of the senses, and watches the point from which mischief threatens and advantage is to be observed, and the will decides in accordance with its report. This *guard*, like everyone engaged on active service, is in a state of close attention and exertion, and therefore is glad when it is again relieved after discharging its duties of watching, just as every sentry likes to be withdrawn from his post. This withdrawal is falling asleep, which for that reason is so sweet and agreeable, and to which we are so ready to yield.  
(W.W.R.2., 241)

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<sup>13</sup> Janaway, C., (1994) op.cit., 40.

As we can see from this dramatic characterization of the 'will's' relationship with the intellect, Schopenhauer portrays the intellect as a down-trodden sentry forced to fall in line with the instructions given by its senior command, namely the 'will'. It is clearly a relationship in which the intellect is subordinate to the 'will'. So rather than the familiar picture of the intellect being synonymous with a command centre, in Schopenhauer's philosophy the reverse is actually true. In fact when it comes to visualizing a locus for the human will, Schopenhauer decides there can be no better candidate than the genitals, for not only do they embody the key tenants of *Wille zum Leben*, but they also crucially remove any suggestion of conscious motivation:

The sexual impulse is the most vehement of cravings, the desire of desires, the concentration of all our willing. Accordingly, its satisfaction, corresponding exactly to the individual desire of anyone, thus to a desire directed to a definite individual, is the summit and crown of his happiness, the ultimate goal of his natural endeavours, with whose attainment everything seems to him to be attained, and with the missing of which everything seems to have been missed. In just the same way we find, as the physiological correlative of all this, in the objectified will, and thus in the human organism, the sperm or semen as the secretion of secretions, the quintessence of all humours, the final result of all organic functions, and in this we have once more proof of the fact that the body is only the objectivity of the will, in other words the will itself under the form of representation.

(W.W.R.2., 514)

It soon becomes apparent in Schopenhauer's writing that any amorous love or sexual desire displayed between two individuals is in reality an extension of the illusory nature of the will's phenomenal appearance. For the desire lovers display towards one another is not in fact trained on their romantic opposite, but rather on something, which has yet to make its phenomenal appearance; that of the unfertilized offspring:

The ultimate aim of all love-affairs, whether played in sock or buskin, is actually more important than all other aims in man's life; and therefore it is quite worthy of profound seriousness with which everyone pursues it. What is decided by it is nothing less than the *composition of the next generation*. The *dramatis personae* who will appear when we have retired from the scene are determined, according to their existence and their disposition, by these very frivolous love-affairs. Just as the being the *existentia*, of these future persons is absolutely conditioned by our sexual impulse in general[...]

(W.W.R.2., 534)

Another illustration of Schopenhauer prising back the phenomenal cover in order to reveal the true purpose behind those countless expressions of shared desire and love, addresses the familiar bond displayed between loving couples:

The quite special and individual passion of two lovers is just as inexplicable as is the quite special individuality of any person, which is exclusively peculiar to him; indeed at bottom the two are one and the same; the latter is *explicite* what the former was *implicite*. The moment when the parents begin to love each other- *to fancy each other*, as a very apposite English expression has it- is actually to be regarded as the very first formation of a new individual, and the true *punctum saliens* of its life; and, as I have said, in the meeting and fixation of their longing glances there arises the first germ of the new being, which of course, like all germs, is often crushed out.

(W.W.R.2., 536)

In fact what Schopenhauer is encouraging his reader to anticipate is the way in which, the human subject is constantly at the beck and call of his or her own species, and by extension their 'will'. The image which Schopenhauer vividly creates, is one which alludes to the idea that there is no cut-off between human subjects, as the 'will to life' manifests itself through and beyond any single individual. Therefore the will's focus and concentration in the stirrings of human sexual desire, despite there not yet having been an act biological insemination, is enough in itself to summon from the infinite depths of the 'will' a noumenal disturbance, which has the potential to surface as a perceived phenomenal division, that of a child. So in the philosophical context of 'will' there can be no action which marks you as separate or unique from the world, your action is always an undivided continuation of the world's unfolding. For Schopenhauer there is no fundamental distinction between a desire indicated by hunger or a desire indicated by the human libido, or, come to that, a desire which motivates one to write a play or indeed compose a thesis. It is only its phenomenal realization, and the degree to which it is expressed that shows it in a different light. As we have already established the human subject in its internal identity is nothing but 'will' and this same 'will' in humans is always expressed phenomenally in terms of the 'will to life'. So in returning back to question *what* are we, there seems to be a further degree of movement on the subject;

though by no means a clear answer. In order to press even further with this question we must return back to the initial structure, which characterizes all of life as essentially being held within a circular holding pattern of desire and attainment. For Schopenhauer life itself is just one way employed by the 'will' to maintain an indestructible strand of desire, a pattern which in Schopenhauer's mind plays to the entire gallery of existence. Schopenhauerian 'will', as we have already seen has no need for any conscious attributes. Its character is purely internal and therefore, unlike varying states of consciousness, it is not party to 'sufficient reason'; it is as Schopenhauer himself describes 'blind'. Therefore the 'desire' which arises from the 'will' is not in any way an indication of conscious awareness, nor either some form of rational directive, but instead a simple measure of deficiency within a particular part of the will, which we so happen ascribe to ourselves. Simply put, 'desire' derives from a need, and that need in turn derives from a deficiency in oneself, but because the will which Schopenhauer identifies in us, is infinite, (it is not applicable to space, time and causality) there can never be an instance when we are fully liberated from its influence, for no matter how many 'goals' we obtain in the course of our lives we can never eliminate what is infinite, namely that which fuels the source of all desire; the 'will'. So in Schopenhauer's philosophical scheme we all will by virtue of the fact that the 'will's' desire is infinite and can never be satisfied. This like everything else, Schopenhauer believed is the governing principle behind all behaviour, including, that is, conscious behavior. The phenomenal occurrence which we stretch out in terms of an individual identity, along with all our personal ambitions and achievements; be it the political and economic hegemony of an entire nation, or the much less vaunted and noble achievement of growing a perfectly proportioned carrot, all, once stripped of their surface appearance, display the exact same structural mechanism at work; the 'will' blindly measuring its own deficiency, through a reflexive impulse to open itself up to an endless chain of desire, temporary fulfillment, and further desire. But what is crucial to this overall view of existence, is the way in which Schopenhauer adopts an almost identical view of desire as Buddhism and Brahmanism. That is to say- all of existence is a form suffering and the cause of suffering is itself 'desire'. As Brian Magee explains, though Schopenhauer did in later life explore Eastern religion (it is even said that he kept a copy of the *Veda* texts close to

his bedside such was his high regard for them), he ‘did not know about Indian religions when he began to write. It was only in his day that translations of their main scriptures into the languages of Western Europe began to appear in significant numbers. Hitherto the intellectually serious ideas of those religions had been scarcely known to Europeans, except perhaps for a small number of Far East travellers, and a handful of specialist scholars.’<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Magee goes on to say ‘it was only because Schopenhauer’s mother introduced him personally to one of those scholars when he was in his middle twenties that he discovered Indian religions as early as he did. The man in question was Friedrich Majer, a key figure in introducing the religions of India to the German-speaking world.’<sup>15</sup> In fact Schopenhauer saw his own position on suffering not just being mirrored in the teachings of Buddhism and Brahmanism, but he also identified it at the heart of the New Testament:

For not only the religions of the East, but also true Christianity has throughout this fundamental ascetic character that my philosophy explains as denial of the [will-to-life], although Protestantism, especially in its present-day form, tries to keep this dark. Yet even the open enemies of Christianity who have appeared in most recent times have attributed to it the teaching of renunciation, self-denial, perfect chastity, and generally mortification of the will, which they quite rightly describe by the name of “*anticosmic tendency*”; and they have thoroughly demonstrated that such doctrines are essentially peculiar to original and genuine Christianity. In this respect they are undeniably right; but they set up this very thing as an obvious and patent reproach to Christianity, whereas just in this are its deepest truth, its high value, and its sublime character to be found.

(W.W.R.2., 615-616)

Though if any reader were to conclude from this, that Schopenhauer was in some way attempting to manoeuvre his philosophy towards some vague divinity, then they would be clearly mistaken. The ‘will’, far from being some species of pantheism, has actually more in common with the selective pressure Darwin later envisaged acting ceaselessly throughout the whole of nature, than say Spinoza’s divine substance:

Thus everywhere in nature we see contest and struggle and the fluctuation of victory[...] Every grade of the will’s objectification fights for the matter, the space and the time of another. Persistent matter must

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<sup>14</sup> Magee, B., op.cit., 164-165.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 165.

constantly change the form, since under the guidance of causality, mechanical, physical, chemical and organic phenomena, eagerly striving to appear, snatch the matter from one another, for each wishes to reveal its own Idea. This contest can be followed through the whole of nature; indeed only through it does nature exist[...] Yet this strife is only the revelation of that variance with itself that is essential to the will. This universal conflict is to be seen most clearly in the animal kingdom. Animals have the vegetable kingdom for their nourishment, and within the animal kingdom again every animal is the prey and food for some other. This means that the matter in which an animal's Idea manifests itself must stand aside for the manifestation of another Idea, since every animal can maintain its own existence only by the incessant elimination of another's. Thus the [will-to-life] generally feasts on itself, and is in different forms its own nourishment, till finally the human race, because it subdues all the others, regards nature as manufactured for its own use.  
(W.W.R.1., 146-147)

It's remarkable to think that Schopenhauer penned these words long before Darwin's own publication of *The Origin of Species*, for what we have in this passage is a description of nature, which like Darwin's theory does not partake in a divine programme, in fact one could legitimately claim, that the theory which Darwin reenacts in *The Origin* deviates very little from this presentation of the natural world in *Die Welt*. Also the appointed view, that Schopenhauer was in fact little more than a misty-eyed metaphysician, far removed from the scientific rigor underpinning Darwin's enquiry, can in my view be instantly dismissed:

Many insects (especially the ichneumon flies) lay their eggs on the skin, and even in the body, of the larvae of other insects, whose slow destruction is the first task of the newly hatched brood. The young hydra, growing out of the old one as a branch, and later separating itself therefrom, fights while it is still firmly attached to the old one for the prey that offers itself, so that the one tears it out of the mouth of the other (Trembley, *Poly-pod*. 11, p. 110, and 111, p 165). But the most glaring example of this kind is afforded by the bulldog-ant of Australia, from when it is cut in two, a battle begins between the head and the tail. The head attacks the tail with its teeth, and the tail defends itself bravely by stinging the head. The contest usually lasts for half an hour, until they die or are dragged away by other ants. This takes place every time. (From a letter by Howitt in the *W. Journal*, reprinted in *Galignani's Messenger*, 17 November 1855.)  
(W.W.R.1., 147)

This passage, as we can see, stands testimony to Schopenhauer's own ability to examine and evaluate some of the most up-to-date entomology journals available at the time of publishing his expanded edition of *Die Welt*. In fact, Schopenhauer's early educational background, is awash with scientific learning, for while studying at Berlin university he regularly attended



lectures on a broad range of scientific subjects, indeed at one point of his university education he thought seriously of taking up medicine, such was his scientific inclination at the time. Even after opting for a philosophical career, Schopenhauer still remained an active participant in the sphere of science; undoubtably the most famous example of this is his collaboration with Goethe on optics. So, having hopefully deflated many of the exaggerated claims that often surfaces in relation to the 'will', one can finally move away from the spectral vision, or phantasmagoric entity harboring a quasi-intelligence that so often interferes with Schopenhauer's philosophical reception.

### **Suffering and Boredom.**

Thus we come now to the matter of connecting Schopenhauer's theory of suffering to his broader philosophy of 'will'. As we have established the engine fueling this model of 'desire' is dependent upon the 'will's' undivided and infinite nature being constrained to a false individualistic impression of itself, namely arising through a process of phenomenal objectification; which amongst its many configurations includes the human subject. Importantly though, as Schopenhauer repeatedly outlines in his philosophy, the 'will' in any objectified state remains at odds with its true identity; for having no option other than to will, and yet, as we can see in a way which plays to a 'false' objectified schema (such as ourselves), then invariably its striving will be less than straight-forward, i.e. the 'will's' most efficient path of expression will be closed off to it. It is this hindrance encountered by the 'will', which ultimately for Schopenhauer constitutes suffering:

We call its [the will] hindrance through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary goal, *suffering*; its attainment of the goal, on the other hand we call *satisfaction*, well-being, happiness. We can also transfer these names to those phenomena of the world-without-knowledge which, though weaker in degree, are identical in essence. We then see these involved in constant suffering and without any lasting happiness. For all striving springs from want or deficiency, from dissatisfaction with one's own state or condition, and is therefore suffering so long as it is not satisfied. No satisfaction, however, is lasting; on the contrary, it is always merely the starting-point of a fresh striving. We see striving everywhere impeded in many ways, everywhere struggling and fighting, and hence always as suffering. Thus that there is no ultimate aim of striving means that there is no measure or end of suffering.

(W.W.R.1., 309)

In this context suffering is not only unavoidable through life, but it is revealed to be the very foundation on which it rests, for Schopenhauer the phenomenal deformity that is the human self, despite its cognitive elevation, remains principally just one more obstacle or ‘kink’ for the ‘will’ to negotiate. Even when Schopenhauer’s inspection falls upon the transitional moment held between the satisfactory attainment of a goal, and a renewed striving, there is still no let up from human unrest. For what we would assume would be one’s own private little oasis, no matter how brief, in which all restless agitation could be vanquished; we have in exchange for ‘paradise’ an unescapable boredom warping what little victory we may raise to ourselves:

Finally, the same thing is also seen in the human endeavours and desires that buoy us up with the vain hope that their fulfilment is always the final goal of willing. But as soon as they are attained, they no longer look the same, and so are soon forgotten, become antiquated, and are really, although not admittedly, always laid aside as vanished illusions. It is fortunate enough when something to desire and to strive for still remains, so that the game may be kept up of the constant transition from desire to satisfaction, and from that to fresh desire, the rapid course of which is called happiness, the slow course sorrow, and so that this game may not come to a standstill, showing itself as a fearful, life-destroying boredom, a lifeless longing without a definite object, a deadening languor.

(W.W.R.1., 164)

So even the idea of missing a stitch in the inevitable chain of suffering, brings with it only a false hope of escape, in fact, for Schopenhauer, boredom, in the context of human existence, presents itself as the returning pendular swing of suffering; hence he writes ‘life swings like a pendulum to and fro between pain and boredom, and these two are in fact its ultimate constituents. This has been expressed very quaintly by saying that, after man had placed all pains and torments in hell, there was nothing left for heaven but boredom.’<sup>16</sup>

Such a picture of humanity inevitably strips the subject of their entitlement to justify to themselves that what they will is in anyway connected to a greater moral or ‘absolute good’; for as we can see all willing is simply an attempt to bring an end to a particular desire, but

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<sup>16</sup> W.W.R.1., 312.

crucially as we have learnt from Schopenhauer's own description of the 'will', in order for there to be any movement in this direction, we always have to locate the action in terms of further renewed desire, for without desire in Schopenhauer's philosophy there is no movement, or life to speak of. So morality, or the lack of it in Schopenhauer's philosophy is inseparably bound up with the 'blind' nature of the 'will':

All *willing* springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfillment brings this to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. Further, desiring lasts a long time, demands and requests go on to infinity; fulfillment is short and meted out sparingly. But even the final satisfaction itself is only apparent; the wish fulfilled at once makes way for a new one; the former is a known delusion, the latter a delusion not as yet known. No attained object of willing can give a satisfaction that lasts and no longer declines; but it is always like the alms thrown to a beggar, which relieves him today so that his misery may be prolonged till tomorrow. Therefore, so long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with its constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we never obtain lasting happiness or peace. Essentially it is all the same whether we pursue or flee, fear harm or aspire to enjoyment; care for the constantly demanding will, no matter in what form, continually fills and moves consciousness; but without peace and calm, true well-being is absolutely impossible. Thus the subject of willing is constantly lying on the revolving wheel of Ixion, is always drawing water in the sieve of the Danaids, and is the eternal thirsting Tantalus.

(W.W.R.1., 196)

For Schopenhauer, there is simply no room for divine assimilation with the 'good', what is 'good' is by virtue what one wills. So the 'good' in the context of Schopenhauerian thinking cannot be delivered over to a virtuous setting; it is bereft of standard moral significance, for ultimate goodness, what he refers to as *summum bonum*, would have to rest with the elimination of willing altogether.

### **Suicide: No Exit.**

This inevitably takes us neatly to the question of suicide, for is it not obvious in the way in which Schopenhauer constructs his world vision, that the most effective solution to his *summum bonum* would be simply to end one's life? And should not the human species therefore have the upper hand over their animal counterparts, by being able to summon upon this newly awakened Schopenhauerian consciousness, and act swiftly and decisively in

bringing an end to one's life? Hopefully having now fleshed out the broad mechanistic framework of Schopenhauer's philosophy of 'will' one can instantly see the error attached to any decision to end one's life in the form of suicide? For any person who thinks they can bring closure to his or her 'will' by simply destroying the body along with its brain function is sadly deluding themselves, for what the suicidal subject attacks is merely the phenomenal manifestation of the 'will' not the 'will' itself, which as we know wills in perpetuity:

If, therefore, a person fears death as his annihilation, it is just as if he were to think that the sun can lament in the evening and say: "Woe is me! I am going down into eternal night." Conversely, whoever is oppressed by the burdens of life, whoever loves life and affirms it, but abhors its torments, and in particular can no longer endure the hard lot that has fallen to just him, cannot hope for deliverance from death, and cannot save himself through suicide. Only by a false illusion does the cool shade of Orcus allure him as a haven of rest. The earth rolls on from day into night; the individual dies; but the sun itself burns without intermission, an eternal noon. Life is certain to the will-to-live [life]; the form of life is the endless present; it matters not how individuals, the phenomena of the Idea, arise and pass away in time, like fleeting dreams.

(W.W.R.1., 280-281)

The emblematic image of the sun is one which Schopenhauer uses to great effect in order to convey the illusion of death, for just like the sun appearing to extinguish all trace of its light each time night descends, so too, death appears to curtail the 'will' which had once surfaced in the individual subject. Whereas in fact the 'will' just like the sun 'burns bright' without intermission,<sup>17</sup> ceaselessly striving, without being drawn to the illusion of plurality. So for Schopenhauer all attempts at suicide are a false move in relation to the 'will' for not only does it allow one's 'will' to continue unabated, but it also shows itself in the form of a desire, (which in many instances as we are aware can be ratcheted up to extreme proportions) and thus feeds directly back into the self-asserting strength and vitality of the 'will'. Also, we can deduce from this passage, that Schopenhauer sees a further delusion attached to the action of suicide, relating to the misleading terms and conditions, under which the 'suicide' writes off his or her life. For the passage which reads 'who ever is oppressed by the burdens of life, who ever loves life and affirms it, but abhors its torments, and in particular can no longer endure the

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hard lot that has fallen to just him' tells us clearly in Schopenhauer's mind that the 'suicide' does not hold life in low esteem. Quite the reverse, in fact it seems that they display an actual reverence towards life; what they do not like, are the conditions on which life has been delivered to them. If only, life had not delivered so many burdens and inconveniences, then one would have never plunged for such an apparently desperate option, they would presumably so to speak have let life off the hook? But crucially for Schopenhauer the whole premise of 'letting life off the hook' smacks of philosophical dishonesty, for unlike his own position the 'suicide' has grossly misread life, seeing it only through the lens of their own individual welfare, whereas in truth, from a Schopenhauerian prospective, there would be no human life to speak of if it were not for the perpetual regeneration of suffering. Life for Schopenhauer equates with suffering, so any life which attempts to cut out its own suffering is itself a contradiction in terms. Interestingly, Schopenhauer does not impose a moral injunction on suicide, say for instance like Kant, who perceived it running in opposition to his own categorical imperative (as he could not conceive of willing suicide in terms of a universal law). For Schopenhauer, this holds no water; for if death were genuinely achievable through suicide, his resistance to the idea would most certainly dissipate:

If criminal law condemns suicide, that is not an ecclesiastically valid reason and is, moreover, definitely ridiculous; for what punishment can frighten the man who seeks death? If we punish the *attempt* to commit suicide, then we are simply punishing the want of skill whereby it failed.  
(P.P..2., 307)

So, as Schopenhauer's essay *On Suicide* makes quite explicit, there are no conventional moral objections, holding him back from condoning suicide, it purely rests on the fact that as an action it makes no significant inroads into the philosophical problem attached to life, which is that all life is predicated on suffering.

### **Schopenhauer's Vorstellung.**

In Schopenhauer's mind, all individual life must correspond in some way to an act of fabrication, for this idea of the 'will' perceiving itself under the wrong terms, leads inevitably

to what Schopenhauer describes as *Weltknoten* ('World-knot'); the world simultaneously cast in terms of both subject and object, the 'I' and the 'not-I'.<sup>18</sup> In an attempt to bring further resolution to this philosophical dilemma, Schopenhauer brings forth a view of the 'world' which allows it to participate both in terms of subject and object. What Schopenhauer cleverly assembles within the title of his principal work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, is a picture of the world which is both 'will' and 'representation' but unlike the dichotomy between, say, the Cartesian *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, or the Kantian *Ding an sich* and *Phenomena*, this dualism rests upon an illusion. For a 'representation' or *Vorstellung* is by definition a non-substantive thing, it is a reflection of a reality, rather than being 'that' reality; what Schopenhauer would describe as a 'Platonic shadow'. But if we speak of definitions, it is in my opinion essential to point to the inherently unstable nature of Schopenhauer's concept of *Vorstellung*, especially when trying to wrestle from it a single definition.

English translations of Schopenhauer's principal work chart just how unsatisfactory the attempts to pin down *Vorstellung* have been. In fact the very essay which is seen to deliver Schopenhauer's philosophy out of relative obscurity (an English essay no less, published in *The Westminster Review* 'Iconoclasm in German Philosophy'), which remarkably, had a greater impact in Germany than did the original publication of *Die Welt*<sup>19</sup>) is reluctant to second guess, at all, at a single definitive translation of *Vorstellung*. John Oxenford, the unsigned author of this eloquent counterblast to Hegelianism, feels so uncomfortable with his own efforts to translate *Vorstellung*, that he decides in the end to highlight his chosen term 'visible existence' with the proviso 'we have been obliged to make use, here and there, of paraphrastic expressions to avoid an attempt to translate the untranslatable word, "Vorstellung."<sup>20</sup> Even John Oxenford, the first acclaimed English translator of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* admits defeat in the presence of Schopenhauer's *Vorstellung*. So, when it comes to English translations of *Die Welt*, the decision to exchange *Vorstellung* for its pallid surrogate, inevitably becomes a moment in which the translator is thrown onto the

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<sup>18</sup> P.P.2., 204.

<sup>19</sup> See Magee, B., op.cit., 148.

<sup>20</sup> *The Westminster Review* (January and April) New Series Vol 3 (1853) London: John Chapman, 142 Strand MDCCCLIII., 402.

defensive:

*Vorstellung* is important for it occurs in the German title of this work. Its primary meaning is that of “placing before”. and it is used by Schopenhauer to express what he himself describes as “an exceedingly complicated physiological process in the brain of an animal, the result of which is the consciousness of a *picture* there.” In the present translation “representation” has been selected as the best English word to convey the German meaning, a selection that is confirmed by French and Italian versions of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. The word “idea” which is used by Haldane and Kemp in their English translation of this work clearly fails to bring out the meaning of *Vorstellung* in the sense used by Schopenhauer. Even Schopenhauer himself has translated *Vorstellung* as “idea” in his criticism of Kant’s philosophy at the end of the first volume, although he states in his essay, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, that “idea” should be used only in its original Platonic sense. Moreover, confusion results in the translation of Haldane and Kemp from printer’s errors in the use of “Idea” with a capital letter to render the German *Idee* in the Platonic sense and of “idea” for the translation of *Vorstellung* as used by Schopenhauer. In the present translation *Idee* has been rendered by the word “Idea” with a capital letter.  
(W.W.R.1., [ix])

As we can see from Payne’s introduction to his own translation of *Die Welt*, he feels duty bound to shrug off his predecessor’s attempts to label *Vorstellung* as “idea” in order to access the broader potential which Schopenhauer’s concept offers. R.B. Haldane and John Kemp who in joint partnership attempted the very first English translation of *Die Welt* brokered what is still for many, the most familiar rendering of Schopenhauer’s title; *The World As Will and Idea*<sup>21</sup>. And rightly, as Payne points out Schopenhauer does use the German word *Idee* in *Die Welt* in order to express something quite different from *Vorstellung*; namely, as he says, a Platonic idea. But rather than identify Haldane and Kemp as guilty of what seems like an blatant omission, I suspect the true intention behind their decision is partially answered in Payne’s own outlining of the neurological aspect of *Vorstellung*. For it is more likely that Haldane and Kemp were just as concerned to evoke “the exceedingly complicated physiological process in the brain” which Payne reiterates in relation to *Vorstellung*, but they do this, not by drawing upon a Platonic notion of “Idea”, rather as I see, being typical 19th century English translators, they do it in the full spirit of British Empiricism. For I suspect

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<sup>21</sup> See, Schopenhauer, A., *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol.1., trans. Haldane, R.B. and Kemp, J. (1891) Second Edition., London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trüber, & Co., Ltd

that Haldane and Kemp are attempting to locate the meaning of Schopenhauer's *Vorstellung* somewhere in the range of Locke's revised conception of Idea; as being in part a monograph of sensory perception<sup>22</sup>. But having made such allowances for Haldane and Kemp, it still remains the fact that borrowing from an earlier Empirical framework, leaves 'Idea' at best only partially equipped to address the full implications of Schopenhauer's *Vorstellung*. Evidently both 'Idea' and 'representation' are compromised attempts to stabilize *Vorstellung*, in fact there seems to be with each new translation an added degree of soul-searching, which leads the translator to pour over a greater range of nuances, as if to make up for past omissions. And yet despite all this, deep down they know personally, that there will remain an aspect of Schopenhauer's *Vorstellung* which will forever evade their translation. For if we take the latest translation of *Die Welt* by Richard E. Aquila, the ground on which *Vorstellung* rests has shifted once again, this time away from 'representation' and onto 'presentation'. Again in the all important preface to the translation, the reader is left in no doubt as to the task Aquila has embarked upon, for it sets out just how fraught with difficulty, if nigh on impossible a project of this kind is:

Now, if even German editors are not able to follow Schopenhauer's instruction in a satisfying manner, how much more must this be the case regarding translations of the editions of his works. For as Schopenhauer explains in his essay "On Language and Words," any translation is "necessarily defective"; "We are hardly ever able to translate from one language into another any characteristic, pregnant, and significant passage in such a way that it would produce the same effect on the reader in a precise and complete manner. The reason for this lies in the fact that concepts often do not correspond with each other in different languages (so, writing this, I am aware that the concept of "concept" does not correspond exactly to the German *Begriff*, and neither does "idea"). Thus even "the very best translation will at most be related to the original as the transposition of a given piece of music into another key is to the given piece itself"; and as Schopenhauer adds, "those who understand music know what that means."<sup>23</sup>

Though Aquila's translation of *Die Welt* is limited like both its predecessors, what I find

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<sup>22</sup> See, First book of Chapter IV On Knowledge A Priori For an account of the doctrine of the abstract Idea or thinking: Schopenhauer, A., *The World as Will and Idea*. Vol.2., trans. Haldane, R.B. and Kemp, J. (1891) London: Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.,Ltd., 228.

<sup>23</sup> Schopenhauer, A., *The World as Will and Presentation*, Vol 1. trans. Aquila, R.E. (2008) New York: Pearson Education, Inc., *Preface to the translation*, Kossler, M., vii-viii.



particularly valuable about Aquila's contribution to the English reception of Schopenhauer's work, is the way in which he not only illuminates *Vorstellung* from a different angle, but also the way in which his own introduction portrays, *Vorstellung* as an unusually commodious kind of 'concept', requiring more than one attempt at unpacking. In fact as Aquila points out there is a degree of slippage between 'concept' and its German counterpart *Begriff*, the two are by no means stringent copies of one another. Unlike the conventional stamp of a concept, the *Begriff* of *Vorstellung* seems a much more open proposition. It is not so much a concept which can be instantly grasped or taken into one's possession, allowing, the concept (or idea) to be held in one's mind as if it were some mental talisman. Instead Aquila brings forth an aspect of *Vorstellung* which seems in the case of Haldane, Kemp and Payne largely put to one side, an aspect of the 'concept' which relates to performance. For Aquila the motivation behind his adoption of 'presentation' for *Vorstellung*, is largely prompted by an attempt to escape the possessive aspect attached to a pronoun such as 'idea' or 'representation' so that he may run with what he describes as 'the central intention in Schopenhauer's use of the term: not possession by, but presentation of objects *to*, a cognizant subject':

With respect to this central sense, it may also be useful to note that the term *Vorstellung* is commonly used to refer to theatrical presentations. Several times, Schopenhauer in fact calls the side of the world that he calls *meine Vorstellung* a *Schauspiel* or a "show" (or "play"): a show that is "mine" in the sense that I am its *spectator*. But as it turns out, it is also mine in another sense. Just as with the corresponding English term, *Vorstellung* can refer either to *what is presented* or to the process or action of presenting it. Thus we may say that *Hamlet* is "our" presentation for the evening; but we may of course also speak of the evening's presentation *of* that play, and of the doings of its various characters. It is just here, however, that a decisive step is taken. For what we soon learn in Book One of this work is that what always *does* the "presenting"- what actually *sets (stellt)* the world as presentation before (*vor*) one- is just that very spectator, the cognizant subject (*erkennendes Subjekt*) itself. And even this falls short of fully capturing the radical character of Schopenhauer's view. For one might still suppose that, even if what does the "presenting" is the cognizant subject itself, what is presented is at least normally an independent existing reality. But for Schopenhauer: "No object without subject." And so, as it turns out, a still more apt analogy would be another upon which he in fact dwells at greater length: what gets presented to one in a *dream*.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Schopenhauer, A., *The World as Will and Presentation*, Vol 1., trans. Aquila R.E. (2008) New York: Pearson Education, Inc., *Translators Introduction*, xiii-xiv.

An appreciation of *Vorstellung* which opens onto a 'theatrical' footing, where one is now setting up Schopenhauer's 'concept' in terms of both that which is presented to, and that which is performed by the cognizant subject, provides a further crucial dimension to the object-subject relationship enacted by the 'will'. For, as Aquila adroitly emphasizes, all flat labeling, such as 'idea', 'representation', and even his own suggestion of 'presentation' remains frustratingly cut off from this vital 'space' that remains so integral to *Vorstellung*'s identity. So when Schopenhauer articulates one 'side' of the world in terms of *Vorstellung*, he is not doing so, purely in the form of neurological projection; but also, importantly, in terms of that which is put in front of the subject, or alternately one could say 'staged' in front of the subject. But as Aquila rightly points out, Schopenhauer's own radicalization of *Vorstellung* entails that the subject not only performs in front of an audience, but that very audience is in fact themselves. Therefore in Schopenhauer's philosophy the stage, on which we all perform, is erected in front of ourselves, we are simultaneously expressed as both performance and audience, in much the same way we think of dreaming:

According to realism, the world is supposed to exist, as we know it, independently of this knowledge. Now let us once remove from it, all knowing beings, and thus leave behind only inorganic and vegetable nature. Rock, tree, and brook are there, and the blue sky; sun, moon and stars illuminate this world, as before, only of course to no purpose, since there exists no eye to see such things. But then let us subsequently put into the world a knowing being. That world then presents itself *once more* in his brain, and repeats itself inside that brain exactly as it was previously outside it. Thus to the *first* world a *second* has been added, which although completely separated from the first, resembles it to a nicety. Now the *subjective* world of the perception is constituted in *subjective*, known space exactly as the *objective* world is in *objective*, infinite space. But the subjective world still has an advantage over the objective, namely the knowledge that the external space is infinite; in fact, it can state beforehand most minutely and accurately the full conformity to law of all the relations in that space which are possible and not yet actual, and it does not need to examine them first. It can state just as much about the course of time, as also about the relation of cause and effect which governs the changes in outer space. I think that, on closer consideration, all this proves absurd enough, and thus leads to the conviction that that absolutely *objective* world outside the head, independent of it and *prior* to all knowledge, which we at first imagined we had conceived, was really no other than the second world known *subjectively*, the world of the *representation* [*Vorstellung*], and it is this alone which we are actually capable of conceiving. Accordingly the assumption is automatically forced on us that the world, as we know it, exists only for our knowledge, and consequently in the *representation* [*Vorstellung*] alone, and not once again

outside that representation [Vorstellung]. In keeping with this assumption, then, the thing-in-itself, in other words, that which exists independently of our knowledge and of all knowledge, is to be regarded as something quite different from the *representation* [Vorstellung] and all its attributes, and hence from objectivity in general.

(W.W.R.2., 9-10)

In this passage from *Die Welt* we can see the way in which Schopenhauer constructs the phenomenal world in terms of a rudimentary stage, from which he attacks 'realism' stressing the absurdity relating to the idea that an objective, independent world should match up exactly to a second subjective world (the parameters of our own sensory totality) generated in our brains. That in reality the 'stage' we recognize as being an exact reflection of an objective world, is in fact, nothing more, than our own undivided subjectivity turned back on itself; just as in a dream. It is interesting to note that the *Schauspiel* aspect of *Vorstellung* which Aquila so rightly identifies, is something which David Luke, a translator of German himself immediately homes in upon. But where as Aquila is addressing Schopenhauer directly, Luke's Schopenhauerian address is through the work of Thomas Mann; a writer whose novels and short stories are in part a personal response to the Schopenhauer he encounters in the music of Wagner, but also interestingly a writer who in 1938 is delivering papers on both composer and philosopher whilst lecturing in America.<sup>25</sup> Luke it seems has none of the difficulty, that Kemp, Haldane and Payne, seem to experience when it comes to opening out the 'stage' like quality of *Vorstellung*; for when the 'concept' of *Vorstellung* arises in Thomas Mann's work, Luke immediately lines up both 'idea' and 'representation' for instant dismissal, preferring to opt instead for 'illusory show'. In his description of Mann's short story *Gladius Dei*, Luke outlines the manner in which Mann uses a prismatic projection of Schopenhauerian philosophy in order to re-stage his own 'burning of the vanities':

The visual arts are being attacked here because they are the wrong sort of art-because they are allied to immediate life, naive vitality, unreflecting sensuality; and literature ('these luxurious volumes of love poetry') comes under the same condemnation in so far as it, too, is content to be a mere 'seductive stimulus', an 'insolent idolatry of the glistening surface of things'. Such art asserts and celebrates life at the merely empirical level, its subject-matter is no more than what Schopenhauer called 'the world as *Vorstellung*':

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<sup>25</sup> See *Letters of Heinrich and Thomas Mann*, trans. Reneau, D. (1998) Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press., 214-217.

his word has been rather misleadingly translated as 'idea' and as 'representation' but means something more like 'illusory show', that which appears to the senses as the manifestation of the universal underlying life-will.<sup>26</sup>

So as we can see *Vorstellung*, but particularly Schopenhauer's *Vorstellung* is dealt a rough hand when it is asked to compress itself within the restrictive confines of a concept such as 'idea', 'representation' or in fact 'presentation'. Indeed it looks as if the whole notion of *Vorstellung* as a 'concept' or more accurately a *Begriff* is utterly unsustainable once Schopenhauer moves *Vorstellung* into the space of the *Schauspiel*. In our attempt to get closer to the true nature of *Vorstellung* we were able to disregard the early translation of 'idea' with a capital 'I' as an appropriate surrogate, stating clearly that Schopenhauer explicitly uses throughout the development of *Die Welt* the word *Idee* or 'Idea' in order to convey something very different from *Vorstellung*. So what, if not *Vorstellung*, was Schopenhauer's own motivation for using the word *Idee*? In Schopenhauer's writing the different grades of the 'will's' objectification are understood in relation to Plato's own conception of *Ideas*, as he remarks later in the same passage the 'will reveals itself just as much in *one* oak as in millions. There [...]number, there [...] multiplication in space and time[...] and who are themselves multiplied and dispersed therein. But that same plurality of these individuals again applies not to the will, but only to its phenomenon[...]Those different grades of the will's objectification, expressed in innumerable individuals, exists as the unattained patterns of these, or as the eternal forms of things. Not themselves entering into time and space, the medium of individuals, remains fixed, subject to no change, always being, never having become. The particular things, however, arise and pass away; they are always becoming and never are. Now I say that these *grades of the objectification of the will* are nothing but *Plato's Ideas*'.<sup>27</sup> So, for Schopenhauer, the phenomenal variation which we see all around us in the worlds should be regarded no differently from Plato's own metaphysical approach to *forms* or *types*, where each object appearing in the world should not in truth be appreciated on an individual level, that is, as a particular thing in its own right, but rather, as an embodiment of

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<sup>26</sup> Mann, T., *Death in Venice & Other Stories*, trans. Luke, D. (1996) London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, Minerva edition., translators introduction, xxi.

<sup>27</sup> W.W.R.1., 128-129.

a universal idea. It is correct to say that for Schopenhauer, Plato plays just as much a pivotal role in the formulation of his philosophy as does Kant. In fact Christopher Janaway is able to point to an early manuscript remnant in which Schopenhauer asserts quite clearly that Plato's *Ideas* and Kant's *Dinge an sich* should be regarded as one and the same. Although this idea never resurfaced in any of his major publications, there is undoubtably a strong commitment towards an understanding of Kant and Plato which enters the view that both their philosophical positions amount in the end to same thing:

If Kant's teachings, and, since Kant's time, that of Plato, had ever been properly understood and grasped; if men had truly and earnestly reflected on the inner meaning and content of the teachings of the two great masters, instead of lavishly using the technical expression of the one and parodying the style of the other, they could not have failed long ago to discover how much the two great sages agree, and that the true significance, the aim, of both teachings is absolutely the same.

(W.W.R.1., 173)

Though as Janaway explains, Schopenhauer did eventually come to regard the positions of the two philosophers as distinct from one another, but crucially 'the fusion in his mind had acquired an energy of its own. He believed that empirical consciousness, limited as it was to the phenomena of space, time, and causality, was something inferior which we should aspire to escape from, if possible: 'Only if there was a 'better' consciousness, could human beings find anything that was of true value.'<sup>28</sup> This attitude which Schopenhauer displays towards regular human perception, as being in some way retrograde; and the notion that true insight is only within the gift of an exceptional mind, which can see beyond the rudimentary framework of space, time, and causality, clearly has its roots in a strong Platonic legacy. For not only did Plato commit himself to the idea of their being two realms- the real world, represented by the Ideal *forms* or *types*, which can be accessed by what Plato called the clarity of knowledge, and the *dream* world of everyday appearances, which he proposed was supported by an ambivalence of belief; but he also, which is essential to Schopenhauer's own thinking, encouraged one to think of the gap between the 'true' and 'false' worlds as essentially

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<sup>28</sup> Janaway, C., (1994) op.cit., 13-14.

being a mental gap, and in this sense access to the ‘true’ world depends upon a mental perceptive shift, rather than any physical one:

If we compare life to a circular path of red-hot coals having a few cool places, a path that we have to run over incessantly, then the man entangled in delusion is comforted by the cool place on which he is just now standing, or which he sees near him, and sets out to run over the path. But the man who sees through the *principium individuationis*, and recognizes the true nature of things-in-themselves, and thus the whole, is no longer susceptible of such consolations; he sees himself in all places simultaneously, and withdraws.

(W.W.R.1., 380)

Here we have Schopenhauer, just as we do with Plato in the *Republic*, creating his own allegory about the false and misleading appearance pertaining to the world, and as with Plato’s ‘Cave allegory’<sup>29</sup>, it is its common inhabitants who are held in bondage by worldly delusion. But as we can see Schopenhauer’s own misinformed worldly inhabitants are not immobilized like Plato’s bound captives, they are apparently free to run, they can indulge in a sense of movement, be it nonetheless in a repetitive circular holding pattern. In fact it is Schopenhauer’s enlightened figures who withdraw entirely from the prospect of movement, what little freedom they appear to have, they choose to reject outright. But of course as we know in relation to Schopenhauer’s philosophy a freedom represented by movement is always an illusive prospect, as movement itself is bound up with the three key imposters: space, time and causality. In many ways the *principium individuationis* performs the same function in Schopenhauer’s allegory as does the wall erected in Plato’s ‘Cave’, for just like the Platonic wall it too screens off the world as is in itself, and it is only by going beyond the barrier, in the case of Schopenhauer seeing through it, that genuine enlightenment can arise. Schopenhauer himself quite early on in the third book of *Die Welt* returns to the ‘Cave’ allegory in order to reinforce in the reader’s mind that the *Idee or Idea* of his own philosophy resides on the same level as Platonic *Ideas*:

“Time, space, and causality are not determinations of the thing-in-itself but belong only to its phenomenon, since they are nothing but

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<sup>29</sup> See, Plato, *Republic.*, trans. Waterfield, R. (1994) Oxford: Oxford University Press., 240-245.

forms of our knowledge. Now as all plurality and all arising and passing away are possible only through time, space and causality, it follows that they too adhere only to the phenomenon, and by no means to the thing-in-itself. But since our knowledge is conditioned by these forms, the whole of experience is only knowledge of the phenomenon, not the thing-in-itself[...]What has been said extends even to our own ego, and we know that only as phenomenon, not according to what it may be in itself.” This is the meaning and content of Kant’s teachings in the important respect we have considered. Now Plato says: “the things of this world, perceived by our senses, have no true being at all;*they are always becoming, but they never are*. They have only a relative being; they are together only in and through their relation to one another; hence their whole existence can just as well be called a non-being[...] As long as we are confined to their perception, we are like persons sitting in a dark cave, and bound so fast that they cannot even turn their heads. They see nothing but the shadowy outlines of actual things that are led between them and a fire which burns behind them; and by the light of this fire these shadows appear on the wall in front of them. Even of themselves and of one another they see only the shadows on this wall. Their wisdom would consist in predicting the sequence of those shadows learned from experience. On the other hand only the real archetypes of those shadowy outlines, the eternal Ideas, the original forms of all things, can be described as truly existing[...].  
(W.W.R.1., 170-171)

This substantial extract from *Die Welt* allows us to see precisely the way in which Schopenhauer compresses together both Kantian and Platonic ideas, literally sandwiching one on top of the other in order to suggest that the two schools can be revealed like sedimentary layers of rock, each belonging to two very different time periods but none the less sharing the same fault line. For what Schopenhauer effectively creates through this piece of textural layering is a ‘geological’ seam which runs through the entire course of Kantian and Platonic thinking. After reading this extended passage we can be in no doubt as to the way in which Schopenhauer consciously wants his own philosophy to connect up to the idealism of Plato, drawing out a commonality of distrust directed at the senses, and thus at the representation performed by the senses. But not only is there an attempt to assimilate Platonic maxims such as the often recited *they are always becoming, but they never are*; there is also a much broader structural response to Plato, which appears to inform the way in which Schopenhauer expresses his philosophy, especially in a work such as *Die Welt*. For what instantly strikes the reader of *Die Welt*, is the way in which Schopenhauer draws regularly upon allegory in order to set out his own philosophical position. Schopenhauer’s philosophy unlike that of his contemporaries, displays enormous flair for literary invention, as a writer his command of

German was like no other seen in his field, in fact Brian Magee goes so far as to suggest that Schopenhauer was one of the greatest stylists in the German language, pointing to the fact that although Schopenhauer ‘revered Kant as a philosopher above all others, except possibly Plato, he saw him as a careless, unclear and hopelessly inartistic writer- intellectually honest, unlike those charlatans [Fichte, Schelling and Hegel] who dubbed themselves his successors, and genuinely profound, but also dry, and unnecessarily difficult.’<sup>30</sup> Schopenhauer’s writing by contrast is full of wit, and even word play; it effortlessly draws upon a breathtaking range of classical sources, middle and far Eastern doctrine (most notably Hindu and Buddhist), biblical theology, scientific treatise (ancient and modern), not to mention what seems to be an exhaustive knowledge of known Western philosophy, literature, music and art, in order to create an extraordinary synthesis between his own philosophical vision, and the ideas which he sees embedded within such sources. What also remains an exceptional feat is the way in which Schopenhauer, is able to put to work this vast array of sources in order to adjust the pitch and resolution of his own philosophy. This beguiling display of literary proficiency is something which in Schopenhauer’s mind serves as a conscious assault upon, what he regards as the convoluted and labyrinthine confusion of his German contemporaries, epitomized particularly by Hegel. For Schopenhauer the very worst ontological aspects of Aristotle’s philosophy, were incubated and colonized in Hegel’s phenomenology, an intellectual development which he positions as toxic to philosophical clarity, as well as suffocating-German prose:

The method of consideration that follows the principle of sufficient reason is the rational method, and it alone is valid and useful in practical life and in science, The method of consideration that looks away from the content of this principle is the method of genius, which is valid and useful in art alone. The first is Aristotle’s method; the second is, on the whole, Plato’s. The first is like the mighty storm, rushing along without beginning or aim, bending, agitating, and carrying everything away with it; the second is like the silent sunbeam, cutting through the path of the storm, and quite unmoved by it. The first is like the innumerable violently agitated drops of the waterfall, constantly changing and never for a moment at rest; the second is like the rainbow silently resting on this raging torrent. Only through the pure contemplation described above, which becomes absorbed entirely in the object, are the Ideas comprehended; and the nature of *genius* consists precisely in the

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<sup>30</sup> Magee, B., op.cit., 145.



preeminent ability for such contemplation.  
(W.W.R.L., 185)

Instantly from this passage one can recognize the way in which Schopenhauer not only expresses his affinity with Plato, over Aristotle, Idealism over Rationalism, but just as importantly the way he consciously positions his own writing style in terms of something approaching a moral choice. For Schopenhauer, it would seem, raising his own philosophical address to a form of high art, in which poetry can stand shoulder to shoulder, with genuine penetrative philosophical insight, serves to undermine even further the rationalistic doctrine advocated by Hegelian thinking. In fact it could be argued that Schopenhauer perceived in his own writing style a reflexivity, which was simply not available to Hegel or any of his immediate contemporaries, a style which worked as a guarantor against the enclosed logic, barricading and cocooning itself from the the world's broader creative reach.

### **Art and Suffering.**

As we become quickly aware during the course of reading *Die Welt*, it is the arts not the sciences which take precedence in Schopenhauer's philosophy, this itself, even today, never mind in the early 19th century marks the work as highly unusual, which is made even more unusual by the fact that Schopenhauer's own early intellectual interests had a strong scientific trajectory, and, as we have already demonstrated, he remained resolutely determined to keep abreast of the latest scientific advancements. In fact as Cheryl Foster comments in her essay 'Ideas and Imagination, Schopenhauer on the Proper foundation of Art', Schopenhauer eventually concluded 'that studies of animal behavior and the functional connections of organisms lent support to the core of his philosophical view.'<sup>31</sup> So why does Schopenhauer, as Foster reminds us, devote one quarter of *Die Welt* to aesthetics? The answer to this question already lies partially on view in his evocative summary of Aristotelian and Platonic thinking. For as we can see it is Schopenhauer's belief that Platonic thinking circumvents the agitated and bruising ricocheting taking place between Aristotelian form and matter, by appealing to a contemplative state of pure objectivity; which for Schopenhauer is analogous to 'the silent

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<sup>31</sup> Janaway, C. (1999) op.cit., 213-214.

sunbeam cutting through the path of the storm'. It is this aim of bringing a halt to the tireless agitation which the world is constantly open to, of a need to evoke a sense of calm and stillness; or put in a more Schopenhauerian context, to escape the willful criteria of existence, that remains for Schopenhauer the ultimate instruction of his philosophy. As we have already determined escaping the 'will's' influence is not simply a matter of slipping a noose around one's neck or pressing a revolver against one's temple, such recourse only sustains the 'will's' vitality. There has to be in Schopenhauer's mind a different means of address, which does not involve launching a futile assault on the 'will's' phenomenon. For Schopenhauer, this redirected 'assault' on the 'will' uses art, rather than the conventional trap-door triggered by suicide. In order to appreciate why Schopenhauer genuinely believed that it was art, rather than science which could make significant inroads into the 'will's' underlying nature, we first have to look at the way science ultimately expresses itself. What we can say regarding science, is that, as a form of structured enquiry it cannot depart from a goal-orientated model. That is to say all scientific conclusions reside in the form of goals that are reached by modes of striving; essentially speaking, the methodology is a replication of the will's underlying nature; it does not escape the diktat of the 'will'. And as Christopher Janaway judiciously identifies, 'Just as our intellects are organs developed to subserve the will, so all the usual connections which we employ in order to understand objects are will-governed[...]'<sup>32</sup>, so it seems that science as a disciplinary practice will unavoidably keep in play such 'will' driven thinking. It is indeed the fact that science is a goal orientated practice, that makes it so unsuited for Schopenhauer's purposes, for what he wants above all, on a philosophical level, is an understanding of the totality of existence, not a particular thread of it, which is just a blind reinforcement of its nature. For as Schopenhauer comments 'whoever is *great* recognizes himself in all and on the whole, and is therefore concerned about the totality of all things'.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore the way in which science reveals itself as a continuation of the 'will', that for Schopenhauer, rules it out of contention when comes to offering up a universal

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<sup>32</sup> Janaway, C. (1994) op.cit., 58.

<sup>33</sup> Schopenhauer, A., *Manuscript Remains*, Vol. 3., trans. Payne, E.F.J. (1988) Oxford: Oxford University Press., 29.

appreciation of existence. As we know already it is art which Schopenhauer looks to in order to turn this situation around, so what precisely is it that the arts have over the sciences?:

Then, in-stead of the restless pressure and effort; instead of the constant transition from desire to apprehension and from joy to sorrow; instead of the never-satisfied and never-dying hope that constitutes the life-dream of the man who wills, we see that peace that is higher than all reason, that ocean-like calmness of the spirit, that deep tranquility, that unshakable confidence and serenity, whose mere reflection in the countenance, as depicted by Raphael and Correggio, is a complete and certain gospel. Only knowledge remains; the will has vanished. We then look with deep and painful yearning at that state, beside which the miserable and desperate nature of our own appears in the clearest light by the contrast.

(W.W.R.1., 411)

Primarily for Schopenhauer, it is all down to the way in which we as intelligent subjects receive and process art, that through a contemplative engagement with art, the ‘particular’ becomes absorbed into its own objective character, it ceases in Schopenhauer’s view to partake in a goal-motivated framework. Therefore what we are accessing does not exert itself in terms of a subjective desire, instead we momentarily enter a will-less state. If we just pause to think about what is actually being stated here, it would suggest that art in Schopenhauer’s mind has the remarkable capacity of preventing the human subject from appealing directly to the ‘principle of sufficient reason’; time, space and causality, no longer impose themselves between us, the subject and the world:

Raised up by the power of the mind, we relinquish the ordinary way of considering things, and cease to follow under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason merely their relations to one another, whose final goal is always the relation to our own will. Thus we no longer consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things, but simply and solely the *what*. Further, we do not let abstract thought, the concepts of reason, take possession of our consciousness, but instead of all this, devote the whole power of our mind to perception, sink ourselves completely therein, and let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation[...] we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object, so that it is as though the object alone existed without anyone to perceive it, and thus we are no longer able to separate the perceiver from the perception, but the two have become one, since the entire consciousness is filled and occupied by a single image of perception.

(W.W.R.1., 178-179)

This passage is an ideal summary of the way in which the subject’s mind has the opportunity

through art to depart from a will-orientated structure; to slip from underneath the temporal, spatial, and causal bonds, that secure the subject in terms of a breached identity; object-subject, perceived-perceiver. Instead through aesthetic contemplation the subject is able to deliver themselves over to an experience of pure perception; thus, momentarily, we can encounter a state of existence which is no longer susceptible to the deformity of plurality. In such a state, Schopenhauer believes we are briefly afforded a moment in which it is possible to achieve clear objective knowledge capable of gauging the world eternally. Importantly though, being lifted free from the causal mesh which plagues worldly existence, via aesthetic contemplation does not actually destroy the 'will' (nor is it ever inferred as doing so) rather, as Schopenhauer describes, it is 'quietened' through bringing to bear upon the subject's own 'will' the undistorted knowledge of the whole:

Thus, whoever is still involved in the *principium individuationis*, in egoism, knows only particular things and their relation to his own person, and these then become ever renewed *motives* of his willing. On the other hand, that knowledge of the whole, of the inner nature of the thing-in-itself, which has been described, becomes the *quieter* of all and every willing. The will now turns away from life; it shudders at the pleasures in which it recognizes the affirmation of life. Man attains to the state of voluntary renunciation, resignation, true composure and complete will-lessness. At times, in the hard experience of our own suffering or in the vividly recognized suffering of others, knowledge of the vanity and bitterness of life comes close to us who are still enveloped in the veil of Maya.

(W.W.R.1., 379)

As we can see, art shares in Schopenhauer's philosophy a close proximity to the aims of asceticism, especially in the manner in which it attempts to negate the willful character of existence, and subsume the individual ego. The way in which the ascetic attitude subdues the 'will', clearly involves a much more protracted route than that which is undertaken by aesthetic contemplation. It would seem by Schopenhauer's account that it involves fighting fire with fire, in that the ascetic consciously locates his own identity within a realm of continued suffering, but in the process delivers himself over to the knowledge, that their inner being is identical with that of all things in the world. But clearly there are dangers attached to any attempt to mortify the 'will' by such direct and individualistic means. For one has to ensure that the adopted method devised to break down the 'will' is not in anyway taken

up in a zealous fashion, as this would immediately play into the hands of the 'will'. As Christopher Janaway observes: 'Voluntary abstention from sexual activity- that most powerful manifestation of the will to life- is accompanied by intentional poverty, non-avoidance of injury or ignominy from others, fasting, self-castigation, and self-torture. Since all these occurrences are pursued as deliberate ends, asceticism cannot be identical with total will-lessness. The later must occur unpredictably as the 'sudden gleam of silver'<sup>34</sup> arising out of suffering; one can deliberately engineer suffering, but true salvation does not come about by intention or design.'<sup>35</sup> So as we can see Schopenhauer's philosophy stays well clear of advocating that the subjects should in anyway reach an apotheosis with the world by deliberately 'nailing oneself to the cross'. Instead for Schopenhauer one has to revisit the positive character attributed to the world in general, what does it mean to talk about happiness in the context of a world which is predicated on suffering? As we have asserted already, any picture which raises the prospect of sadomasochism instantly plays into the hands of the 'will'; what is required is that happiness itself loses all association with the acquisition of 'something' positive. Importantly though, this is not to simply turn a positive into a negative, a negative that is viewed in terms of the complete reverse of happiness; unhappiness. Rather it involves something along the lines of Kant's own revision of space, in which all traces of a positive or negative distinction are diffused from its assessment, so in the case of happiness, or pleasure, they both arise for Schopenhauer in form of an absence of suffering. Therefore, as a result of 'happiness' revealing itself in terms of suffering's absence, it is suffering that assumes the 'positive' identity, and so true 'happiness,' for want of a better word, is always dependent upon the presence of suffering; for in order to withdraw from suffering, there has to be suffering in the first place. So if we return back to aesthetic contemplation, the 'pleasure' or 'happiness' generated through such an experience, must entail leaving behind happiness and unhappiness as it is commonly registered:

For at the moment when, torn from the will, we have given ourselves up to the pure, will-less knowing, we have stepped into another world,

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<sup>34</sup> W.W.R.1., 392-393.

<sup>35</sup> Janaway, C. (1994) op.cit, 93-94.

so to speak, where everything that moves our will, and thus violently agitates us, no longer exists. This liberation of knowledge lifts us as wholly and completely above all this as do sleep and dreams. Happiness and unhappiness have vanished; we are no longer the individual; that is forgotten; we are only pure subject of knowledge. We are only the *one* eye of the world which looks out from all knowing creatures, but which in man alone can be wholly free from serving the will.

(W.W.R.1., 197-198)

Visual aesthetic contemplation in Schopenhauer's philosophy, if achieved properly, requires the subject to lay aside the subordinate forms of the phenomenon. So when one is looking at the depiction of a tree, let's say, in a painting by Alberto Giacometti, the tree itself should not persist as an individual representation of a particular tree, which once grew in Paris. Instead we should, in the Schopenhauerian sense, engage the 'tree' as a representation of a general form, that of being object for subject. Therefore it becomes, hopefully in our 'eyes' what Schopenhauer describes as the most *adequate objectivity* of the 'will'. In other words Giacometti's 'tree' emerges as a 'Platonic Idea'. All genuine aesthetic contemplation, within the visual field, must in some way involve the extraction of the universal, from the particular, in order that it can arise in the fullness of the whole, without reference to 'the principle of sufficient reason' and hence without engendering suffering. This palliative aspect to art, is for Schopenhauer, one of the key reasons why it holds such a prime position within his philosophy.

Having addressed the visual aspect of art (which I will return to at greater length in the next chapters), it is now time to turn to its non visual counter part represented through music, which for many commentators remains the most compelling aspect of Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory. Music for Schopenhauer has a unique profile amongst all the other arts, in that he regarded it, not as representative of the world through a series of Ideas, but rather as a direct copy of the 'will', which is itself capable of circumventing the Ideas:

As our world is nothing but the phenomenon or appearance of the Ideas in plurality through entrance into the *principium individuationis* (the form of knowledge possible to the individual as such), music, since it passes over the Ideas, is also quite independent of the phenomenal world, positively ignores it, and, to a certain extent, could still exist even if there were no world at all, which cannot be said of the other arts.

(W.W.R.1., 257)

Therefore, in the Schopenhauerian scheme of things music falls outside all formal representation, including language itself. Schopenhauer is adamant throughout *Die Welt* that music is an entirely independent art form, which does not require the additional words of a song, or choreographed action of an opera in order to attain its ends; stressing that '[m]usic as such knows only the tones or notes, not the causes that produce them.' As well as further adding 'even the *vox humana* is for it originally and essentially nothing but a modified tone, just like that of an instrument; and like every other tone, it has the characteristic advantages and disadvantages, that are a consequence of the instrument producing it.'<sup>36</sup> As we can see from Schopenhauer's writing, musical expression is conceived precisely in the same manner as the 'will's, for it is music, and not the human subject, which possesses the body and depth consistent with reality; it is music, which above all speaks authentically, rather than us, the subject. Schopenhauer's reading of music, takes the art form into a metaphysical domain where it is interchangeable with both the 'will' and the world, each ultimately presenting two sides of the same reality. So in Schopenhauer's philosophy it is just as legitimate to present the world as music, as it is to present it as 'will'. In order to grasp this seemingly improbable statement one has to first become acquainted with the melodic structure of music. Music itself as a tonal progressive chain is entirely dependent upon a series of chordal structures which are by necessity incomplete. The movement which music engenders on a tonal basis, can only come about as a necessity to complete or 'finalize' such chordal arrangements, thus bringing about tonal resolution, or what is technically referred to as a 'tonic chord'. But due to the inherent structure of music, tonal resolution itself, brings to an end the possibility of movement, it therefore requires the music to once again present itself in terms of being structurally inadequate, requiring further resolution in order for it to undertake further tonal or harmonic shifts. Once music is examined in this technical context one can instantly begin to draw out the ways in which melodic movement, and the movement perpetuated by the 'will' both operate in relation to a sustained tension arising from a need to bring to a close a state of 'want', but which can only be achieved at the expense of the movement itself. So the actual

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<sup>36</sup> W.W.R.2., 448.

achievement of 'satisfaction' in reference to music and the 'will' cannot be held onto, both are forced to re-open themselves further to 'want' if they are to continue as a modes of expression:

Now the nature of man consists in the fact that his will strives, is satisfied, strives anew, and so on and on; in fact his happiness and well-being consists only in the transition from desire to satisfaction, and from this to a fresh desire, such transition going forward rapidly. For the non-appearance of satisfaction is suffering; the empty longing for a new desire is languor, boredom. Thus, corresponding to this, the nature of melody is a constant digression and deviation from the keynote in a thousand ways, not only to the harmonious intervals, the third and dominant, but to every tone, to the dissonant seventh, and to the extreme intervals; yet there always follows a final return to the keynote. In all these ways, melody expresses the many different forms of the will's efforts, but also its satisfactions by ultimately finding again a harmonious interval, and still more the keynote.

(W.W.R.1., 260)

In terms of perceiving music as the world and not just the 'will' Schopenhauer considers the way in which the four voices or parts of harmony; bass, tenor, alto, and soprano, or alternatively as he so describes, the fundamental note, third, fifth, and octave can be made analogous to the four grades of existence, set out in relation to the mineral, plant and animal kingdom, alongside 'mankind'. So the phenomenal gradation of the 'will' in Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory has its direct counterpoint in music, but with the crucial distinction that unlike the phenomenal grades or Ideas, musical gradation does not express itself in terms of the 'will's' objectification, but instead engages the 'will' directly, having no need for the illusive trappings associated with worldly material endorsement:

Therefore, for us the ground-bass is in harmony what inorganic nature, the crudest mass on which everything rests and from which everything originates and develops, is in the world.[...] Those nearer to the bass are the lower of those grades, namely the still inorganic bodies manifesting themselves, however, in many ways. Those that are higher represent to me the plant and animal worlds. The definite intervals of the scale are parallel to the definite grades of the will's objectification, the definite species in nature. The departure from the arithmetical correctness of the intervals through some temperament, or produced by the selected key, is analogous to the departure of the individual from the type of species. In fact, the impure discords, giving no definite interval, can be compared to the monstrous abortions between two species of animals, or between man and animal.

(W.W.R.1., 258-259)



Unlike Aristotle, Schopenhauer clearly identified music in terms of being anti-mimetic and non-descriptive, for as Brian Magee notes; music is ‘the self-expression of something that cannot be represented at all, namely the noumenon. It is the voice of the metaphysical will. That is why it seems to speak to us from the most ultimate depths, deeper by far than those accessible to other arts, while remaining itself something wholly unamenable to language, or to the understanding by the intellect.’<sup>37</sup> Surprisingly, as Magee comments, Schopenhauer regards the role of the intellect as essentially redundant, during the subject’s reception of music, this is because unlike the visual arts, music is perceived to bypass the Ideas which would normally enter our consciousness; and so there remains no cognitive imprint. Through music, in the Schopenhauerian context the listener is granted immediate entry to the ‘will’ without having to register the experience in terms of worldly locality, its temporality is therefore engaged without spatial representation. It is this, which, for Schopenhauer raises music to supreme heights in his aesthetic scheme. For despite its carrying the exact same profile of the ‘will’, music, in terms of its reception, does not engage its subject in relation to common ‘desire’; there is no, so to speak, individualized ‘suffering’ as the ‘will’s pain cannot be localized, having no means of representation at its disposal; i.e. the ‘strivings’ and ‘desires’ are unable to shelter under the cover of the human subject:

Therefore music does not express this or that particular and definite pleasure, this or that affliction, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, or peace of mind, but joy, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, peace of mind *themselves*, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without any accessories, and so also without the motives for them.

(W.W.R.1., 261)

So, within Schopenhauer’s philosophical programme, music, particularly in its purer instrumental form retains a unique status amongst the arts, for he is clearly of the opinion that music can in fact assemble our inner identity without giving rise to its characteristic suffering.

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<sup>37</sup> Magee, B., op.cit., 171.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Beckett's Vorstellung

*Le bonheur n'est pas chose aisée: il est très difficile  
de le trouver en nous, et impossible de le trouver ailleurs.*  
Chamfort.

Having witnessed the manner in which Beckett tears down the mimetic investment in stage realism, rupturing the tangible fabric to which the 'drawing room' had previously testified with such unstinting loyalty, there seems in the wake of *Eleuthéria*, a growing sense in which the theatre will from now on for Beckett, correspond to a very different space from the one he has just comprehensively trashed.

In fact one could regard *Eleuthéria* in terms of a theatrical clearance; one in which Beckett wanted to assert that the ground on which his subsequent stage efforts would arise would be comprehensively removed from what had previously gone before. And so it would be that the first play which would try out for 'size' this newly erected space would in due course be hailed as one of 20th century's most influential plays; changing in perpetuity the conscious landscape of the theatre for an entire generation of stage directors and actors.

*En attendant Godot* would be the first of Beckett's theatrical productions to inhabit exclusively an environment which would oppose phenomenal investment, as well as moving the action of the play from any affirmative position. It would seem that Victor's own final reproach towards life, would for Beckett be transformed into a new theatrical *modus operandi*, in which all active stage movement becomes a negative inversion of autonomous agency. If we just look at the way in which Beckett presents the world of *Godot*; 'A country road. a tree. Evening.', we can potentially see the space which had opened up during the course of Beckett's own Schopenhauerian address in *Proust* finding immediate recognition on the stage. For instance the depiction or rather the suggestion of a country road is Beckett's

own way of laying out a predetermined path; for which Estragon and Vladimir are bound. It also remains the case that Beckett has chosen a tree to represent the only vestige of stage scenery; and as we know from our examination of *Proust* it is the plant world which serves as the dominant expression of the *Wille zum Leben*; for both in *Proust* and *Die Welt* plants emerge as the naked expression of the 'will to life'. And if we can say anything about Beckett's decision to set both his first and second acts during the evening, it would seem to carry the right identity when it comes to the Schopenhauerian distrust targeted at the phenomenal world; as if the twilight itself is in some way its own disparaging rebuke leveled at the world's objectivity. In fact we can see the 'evening' in the context of *Godot* as another means of barring entry to the kind of illuminated existence which Victor himself is so keen to shut out in *Eleuthéria*. The bare description of *Godot*'s stage directions; country road, tree and evening establishes the abiding pattern which is key to Beckett's own Schopenhauerian movement in *Proust*: that is, an acceptance that all human 'will' possesses a predetermined path; that such a 'will' is essentially expressed through the 'will to life' and that ultimately as an 'artist' one should reject any attachment towards the world which facilitates its freedom. As we have seen cutting oneself off from such a world is not as easy as it may first appear; for even without evoking direct suffering, the painless suicide does nothing to impact on the will's movement as it is simply in truth a misguided assault on the 'will's' phenomenal appearance; not the 'will' in itself. As with *Eleuthéria*, so it is with *Godot* that the subject of suicide also challenges dramatic recognition; but unlike the weight it is potentially assigned in *Eleuthéria*, there is in this newly delivered space of Beckett's little prospect of suicide registering anything beyond a comically inflated gesture towards life's unrelenting boredom and suffering:

**VLADIMIR:** [...] What do we do now?

**ESTRAGON:** Wait.

**VLADIMIR:** Yes, but while waiting.

**ESTRAGON:** What about hanging ourselves?

**VLADIMIR:** Hmm. It'd give us an erection!

**ESTRAGON:** [*Highly excited.*] An erection!

**VLADIMIR:** With all that follows. Where it falls,  
mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you  
pull them up. Did you not know that?

**ESTRAGON:** Let's hang ourselves immediately!

**VLADIMIR:** From a bough? [*they go towards the tree.*] I  
wouldn't trust it.

**ESTRAGON:** We can always try.

**VLADIMIR:** Go ahead.

**ESTRAGON:** After you.

**VLADIMIR:** No no, you first.

**ESTRAGON:** Why me?

**VLADIMIR:** You're lighter than I am.

**ESTRAGON:** Just so!

**VLADIMIR:** I don't understand.

**ESTRAGON:** Use your intelligence, can't you?  
[**VLADIMIR** *uses his intelligence.*]

**VLADIMIR:** [*Finally.*] I remain in the dark.

**ESTRAGON:** This is how it is. [*he reflects.*] The bough...  
the bough . . . [*Angrily*] Use your head, can't you?

**VLADIMIR:** You're my only hope.

**ESTRAGON:** [*With effort.*] Gogo light - bough not break -  
Gogo dead. Didi heavy - bough break - Didi alone.  
Whereas -

**VLADIMIR:** I hadn't thought of that.

**ESTRAGON:** If it hangs you it'll hang anything.  
(W.G., 9-10.)

As we can see, suicide as the ultimate archetype of human freedom has not only been rejected, as it has in *Eleuthéria*, but it is also rendered ridiculous, amounting to what is essentially a tightly-executed vaudeville routine. But if we care to look at the way in which the suicide is being presented in *Godot*, it is the tree; the incarnation of the 'will to life' which supports both Estragon and Vladimir's imagined suicide bid. So, it would seem by way of drawing upon the many recorded accounts of involuntary muscular activity taking place after

a person had been hanged; Beckett is in fact vividly reasserting the Schopenhauerian position, that suicide strengthens the *Wille zum Leben*. For just as the language of Dr Piouk is carried with a life-affirming passion while advocating to Victor that suicide should be the preserve of youth at the height of their energy; there is in Estragon and Vladimir's exchange also the implicit suggestion that their own suicide would be an equally life affirming gesture. In fact when we reflect that Schopenhauer's own characterization of the 'will to life' has its locus, not in any conscious aspect of the human subject but is instead explicitly located in the genitals; then I believe we can begin to see why Beckett has deliberately chosen to represent both the hangman's noose and the erectile member as one consolidated position; for both in the Schopenhauerian scheme amount to the same reinvestment in the 'will'.<sup>1</sup> But what is more, Beckett uses suicide or rather the idea of suicide, in order to bring to *Godot* a further Schopenhauerian requisite; that of desire. For not only does suicide play to the false hope of ending Estragon and Vladimir's suffering, but it becomes just like their continuously deferred meeting with Godot the focus of an unattainable ambition. So, it would seem that all Estragon and Vladimir's desires associated with suicide, sexual vigor, and the emergence of Godot, all collectively in some way hang upon the emblematic embodiment of the 'will'; the tree of life.<sup>2</sup> For it transpires that the tree which Estragon and Vladimir envisage themselves swinging from, is also the agreed rendezvous point for their meeting with Godot:

**ESTRAGON:** Charming spot. [*He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.*] Inspiring prospects. [*He turns to VLADIMIR.*] Let's go.

**VLADIMIR:** We can't.

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<sup>1</sup> ' [...]Beckett's aesthetic creation is shadowed by natural forms of procreation, and all the attendant horrors.' See Stewart, P., *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work*, op.cit., 196.

<sup>2</sup>The act of procreation is further related to the world as the solution is to the riddle. Thus the world is wide in space and old in time, and has an inexhaustible multiplicity of forms. Yet all this is only the phenomenon of the will-to-[life]; and the focus concentration, the focus of this will is the act of generation. Hence in this act the inner nature of the world most distinctly expresses itself[...] Therefore that act, as the most distinct expression of the will, is the kernel, the compendium, the quintessence of the world. Hence we obtain through it a light as to the true nature and tendency of the world; it is the solution to the riddle. Accordingly, it is understood by the "tree of knowledge"; for, after acquaintance with it, everyone begins to see life in its true light, as Byron also says: The tree of knowledge has been pluck'd - all's known. *Don Juan*[...] W.W.R.2., 570.

**ESTRAGON:** Why not?

**VLADIMIR:** We're waiting for Godot.

**ESTRAGON:** [*Despairingly.*] Ah! [*Pause.*] You're sure it was here?

**VLADIMIR:** What?

**ESTRAGON:** That we were to wait.

**VLADIMIR:** He said by the tree. [*They look at the tree.*] Do you see any others?

**ESTRAGON:** What is it?

**VLADIMIR:** I don't know. A willow.

**ESTRAGON:** Where are the leaves?

**VLADIMIR:** It must be dead.

**ESTRAGON:** No more weeping.

**VLADIMIR:** Or perhaps it's not the season.

**ESTRAGON:** Looks to me more like a bush.

**VLADIMIR:** A shrub.

**ESTRAGON:** A bush.  
(W.G., 6)

The remarks of Estragon which set out the ground on which both he and Vladimir rests, could to all intents purposes be considered a theatrical device of economy, in which a virtually bare stage is being offered to the audience as a naturalistic landscape; 'inspiring prospects'. But it quickly becomes apparent that this stretch of the imagination in which the audience may feel obliged to participate, is itself being constantly undermined by the action of *Godot's* two protagonists. For having identified the rendezvous point as the tree they then take it upon themselves not only to question the species of tree; but to raise questions as to whether they are actually in the presence of a tree at all; Vladimir preferring the idea of a shrub over Estragon's idea of a bush. This inability to secure the stage in terms of an objective reality is deliberately calculated as a response to the Schopenhauerian distrust directed towards the phenomenal world. It is clear from stage environment as well as the language which accompanies the characters in *Godot* that Beckett's assault on the mimetic expression of the

theatre has been substantially refined in comparison to his earlier attack surmounted in *Eleuthéria*. Whereas *Eleuthéria* sets up the stage, or at least part of the stage under the recognized terms of domestic realism, in order to reenact its own demolition; *Godot*'s response is to remain completely outside any such theatrical point of reference, its movement being registered within an entirely different space; one which even defeats the initial 'positive' assessment drawn up in relation to the stage demolition seen in *Eleuthéria*. The act of demolition not only reverberates with the action of suicide, but it also has a historical profile as well. For it could be the case that by omitting the destruct button from *Godot*, Beckett is not just offsetting suicide, but to my mind is finding a way to preclude the release mechanism which enables the advancement of history; the 'events' and 'days' which have elapsed cannot reside in the same unchanged state if history is to have any real purchase<sup>3</sup>. And yet even the option of doing away with one's self in an attempt to change the inevitable complexion of one's daily existence is not available to Beckett's protagonists. In many ways the rejection of suicide in *Godot* is not only a phenomenal rejection, but also as I see it, an historical rejection as well.<sup>4</sup> For in *Godot* it can be said that both Estragon and Vladimir are ultimately in wait for a handover that never takes place; and so in this very important respect Beckett's play bars any historical movement which rests upon an abrupt and dramatic fluctuation in human events; something which clearly fits well with the Schopenhauerian agenda:

To the man who has properly grasped this, and is able to distinguish the will from the Idea, and the Idea from its phenomenon, the events of the world will have significance only in so far as they are the letters from which the Idea of man can be read, and not in and by themselves. He will not believe with the general public that time may produce something actually new and significant; that through it or in it something positively real may attain to existence, or indeed

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<sup>3</sup> In David Addyman's Bergsonian address to *En attendant Godot* he describes a dramatized setting in which Beckett's characters fail to grasp the 'melody' of action which he sees explicitly linked to the space of the play. See David Addyman 'En attendant Godot: A New Philosophical Landscape' Fifield, P. and Addyman, D., *Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies New Critical Essays* (2013) London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 77.

<sup>4</sup> In adopting such a view one would also have to reconsider what it would mean to 'historicize' Beckett's work, something which Theodor W. Adorno put readily into practice For Adorno, Beckett's is essentially a post-Holocaust art, corresponding to conditions after the catastrophe'. See Weller, S., *A Taste for the Negative*, op.cit., 130-133.

that time itself as a whole has beginning and end, plan and development, and in some way has for its final goal the highest perfection (according to their conceptions) of the latest generation that lives for thirty years. Therefore just as little will he, with Homer, set up a whole Olympus full of gods to guide the events of time, as he will, with Ossian, regard the figures of the clouds as individual beings. For, as we have said, both have just as much significance with regard to the Idea appearing in them. In the many different forms and aspects of human life, and in the interminable change of events, he will consider only the Idea as the abiding and essential, in which the will-to [life] has its most perfect objectivity, and which shows its different sides in the qualities, passions, errors, and excellences of the human race, in selfishness, hatred, love, fear, boldness, frivolity, stupidity, slyness, wit, genius, and so on. All of these, running and congealing together into a thousand different forms and shapes (individuals), continually produce the history of the great and the small worlds, where in itself it is immaterial whether they are set in motion by nuts or by crowns.

(W.W.R.1., 182-183.)

As we can see Schopenhauer makes no distinction between the clashes of great empires and the petty squabbling arising over the last turnip; both events are indistinguishable from one another once examined on the level of the 'will'. What matters to Schopenhauer is not the outward phenomenal expression of these two events, but rather the unchanging universal Idea which they both embody. For it is only in the Idea that we achieve a true understanding as to why Napoleon brought down the Holy Roman Empire, or that one person should see fit to take the last turnip. From Schopenhauer's point of view there is no 'higher goal' attaining to the course of history than what is essentially a pettifogging relating to the circulation of 'nuts'. As this passage from *Die Welt* makes all too clear, Schopenhauer never buys into the Hegelian proposition that the history of the human race is in some way building up towards to some ultimate vindication in logical clarity. Instead Schopenhauer is committed to the idea that it does not matter how long you run the reel of time in relation to the history of 'Man' there will never appear the enlightened subject *par excellence* which Hegel originally surmised. In fact from Schopenhauer's point of view the historical record will give precisely the same reading where ever you decide to stop it. Time for Schopenhauer is never expressed in terms of having a beginning or an end; it remains an unbroken expression of what is fundamentally an undivided reality. And in this respect both history and time partake in the same identical structure which is incapable of modification.



## Endgame: A Will of two Halves?

At this juncture I would like to broaden the theatrical point of reference, by setting out this newly created space not only in respects to *Godot*, but also *Endgame*, Beckett's own translation of *Fin De Partie* (1957) which follows directly from *Godot*. For rather than looking at these plays separately, it is important to emphasize the way in which the space of *Godot* does not shift in relation to *Endgame* (indeed any of his subsequent plays) but rather it is the perspective which changes. With regards to the Schopenhauerian model of history as a reflection of the invariable character of the 'will', Beckett's *Endgame* provides what is unmistakably an image which plays to all the aforementioned strengths of such model:

**HAMM:** Is it working? [*Pause. Impatiently.*] The alarm, is it working?

**CLOV:** Why wouldn't it be working?

**HAMM:** Because it's worked too much.

**CLOV:** But it's hardly worked at all.

**HAMM:** [*Angrily.*] Then because it's worked too little!

**CLOV:** I'll go and see. [*Exit CLOV. Brief ring of alarm off. Enter CLOV with alarm-clock. He holds it against HAMM'S ear and releases alarm. They listen to it ringing to the end. Pause.*] Fit to wake the dead! Did you hear it?

**HAMM:** Vaguely.

**CLOV:** The end is terrific!

**HAMM:** I prefer the middle. [*Pause*] Is it not time for my pain-killer?

**CLOV:** No! [*He goes to the door, turns.*] I'll leave you.

**HAMM:** It's time for my story. Do you want to listen to my story?

**CLOV:** No.  
(ENDG., 34.)

This image of Hamm and Clov pressing their ears to an alarm-clock, as its wound spring is

released to initiate its ringing, provides what is for me a supreme example of how Beckett has delivered to the stage a reassessment of spatial representation; in which the movement and appearance of subjects on stage are themselves located in terms of absolute space. For I would like to propose that within this compressed space of action, in which Clov raises the ringing alarm-clock to Hamm's ear, Beckett presents to his audience a performance which locates the reality ascribed to both protagonists; as mutually dependent upon one another. A reality which is capable of locating Hamm's performance within Clov, and Clov's performance within Hamm. As both listen attentively to the ringing of the alarm-clock they participate in the entire history of mankind; both on the level of the individual and as the entire human race. For what we have in Clov's raising of the alarm-clock to Hamm's ear, is a movement on stage which openly registers desire, enacted through the mechanism of suffering: (the beating down of the hammer<sup>5</sup>) whilst revealing in the same action that it is this very mechanism which transmits 'Man's' unalterable future, along with both 'his' past and present. What I believe is being represented is life's collective journey in which one may attempt to draw solace from 'this' or 'that' particular moment in one's life. Hamm seemingly opts for the 'middle' period in one's life in which one presumably reaches the pinnacle of what life has to offer in strength and unchallenged vigor; whereas Clov opts for the final death knell 'The end is terrific!' But as a result of Beckett throwing into focus both human existence as it stands in relation to the macrocosm and the microcosm; we can see that even Clov's positioning of his own demise as something that can be distinguished from the other hammer-blows does not actually hold up. Clov it would seem is just as guilty as Hamm in trying to retrieve from life some scrap of positive value; even if like Clov it simply rests in the actual moment the curtain falls on the whole exhausted performance. For what the alarm-clock shows is precisely what Schopenhauer advocates, that the entire span of a human life bears no distinction from beginning to end; each hammer blow marking its passage like the arm of Schopenhauer's pendulum swinging 'to and fro between pain and boredom'.<sup>6</sup>

Within such framing there can be no justification in trying to make a case for human existence

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<sup>5</sup> [...] the glare of will and hammer strokes of the brain[...] See, Ackerley, C.J. and Gontarski, S.E., *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2004) New York: Grove Press, 389.

<sup>6</sup> See, W.W.R.1., 312.

on the grounds of these ill conceived scraps of comfort which Hamm and Clov jokingly single out; for it is clear that both Schopenhauer and Beckett remain resolutely determined to pull away from any eudaemonistic practice:

Here I take the idea of wisdom of life entirely in the immanent sense, namely that of the art of getting through life as pleasantly and successfully as possible, the instructions to which might also be called eudemonology. Accordingly, they would be instructions on how to have a happy existence. Such might perhaps be again defined as one that, considered purely objectively or rather with cool and mature reflection (for here it is a question of a subjective judgement), would be definitely preferable to non-existence. From this conception of it, it follows that we should be attached to it for its own sake and not merely from the fear of death; and again from this that we would like to see it last for ever. Now whether human life does or ever can correspond to the conception of such an existence, is a question that as we know, is answered in the negative in my philosophy; whereas eudemonology presupposes an answer in the affirmative.

(P.P., 313.)

Again it is precisely this inversion of eudemonology which Schopenhauer performs in relation to his own thinking that we also see being enacted by Beckett:

And many a time, having strayed for one reason or another from the place where the meal had been brought to me, I couldn't find it again, when I felt the desire to eat. Then I searched high and low, often with success, being fairly familiar with the places where it was likely to have been, but often too, in vain. Or I did not search at all, preferring hunger and thirst to the trouble of having to search without being sure of finding, or of having to ask for another tray to be brought, and another basket, or the same, to the place where I was. It was then when I regretted my sucking-stone. And when I talk of preferring, for example, or regretting, it must not be supposed that I opted for the least evil, and adopted it, for that would be wrong. But not knowing exactly what I was doing or avoiding, I did it and avoided it all unsuspecting that one day, much later, I would have to go back over all these acts and omissions, dimmed and mellowed by age, and drag them into the eudemonistic slop.<sup>7</sup>

(MOL., 55.)

As we can see from Beckett's *Molloy*, a work which was published in 1950, two years before *Godot* [was written in French,] human desire is clearly being assigned to the basic

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<sup>7</sup> Rather than access the inverted Schopenhauerian identity of 'eudemonology', Matthew Feldman cites a much less corrupted Aristotelian identity. See, Matthew Feldman 'Philosophy', Uhlmann, A., *Samuel Beckett in Context*, op.cit., 308.

requirements of eating and drinking; something which remains equally perfunctory to both *Godot* and *Endgame*. So regardless of what one picks out in an attempt to exonerate one's life; nothing can be done to detach these achievements from their fundamental causal structure; that of suffering. But crucially Beckett, just like Schopenhauer dismisses any suggestion that one should resort to suicide, instead it would seem that the answer lies with providing one's suffering with a much more acute definition, in order that the suffering itself may be perceived as the universal condition of all life and not just something which comes about through individual misfortune. Any action which is set up to satisfy a particular hunger or desire specific to one's individual needs, remains entrapped within the illusion of the *principium individuationis*; and it is for this reason I feel Clov refuses to administer Hamm's painkillers. For if Clov, is moving towards a position in which he can break through the *principium individuationis* then he must begin to recognize the true nature of 'things-in-themselves' seeing himself in all places simultaneously. For it is only then that Clov will recognize the futility in trying to remedy the situation by momentarily suppressing the pain peculiar to this or that isolated representation of life, as it does nothing in the way of addressing the true scale and dimension of suffering. Clov, unlike Hamm can fully appreciate that there is no line of demarcation separating his own reality from that of his master; their suffering does not have a cut-off point, as they are both a product of universal suffering rather than any misappropriated notion of individual suffering; the kind of which Hamm strongly remonstrates towards.<sup>8</sup> Following on from Clov's dismissal of Hamm's request for his painkiller, Hamm then invites Clov to listen to his story, which Clov once again promptly declines. The story, like the painkiller is being offered up by Beckett as yet another sedative which Clov is equally unwilling to entertain. For there is clearly I suspect an attempt by Beckett to reveal literary narrative as being analogous to the dissonant structure of the 'will'; in which the stories' mechanism, similar to the modal pressure of music, relies upon an alternating process of expectation and resolution. So, as a result of Beckett asserting a connection between what he perceives as the causal expression of the 'will' and his own

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<sup>8</sup> See, Pothast for an alternative account of Schopenhauerian suffering which resides on a much more divided level: "All characters have their own way to suffer[...]", Pothast, U., op.cit., 203.

literary narrative, I believe we can begin to establish why Beckett looked to alternative ways, such as the theatre in order to escape the inadmissible nature of the novel. For having in his own mind made such a connection it would be obvious, that as a novelist who set out to derail the 'will', the very idea of initiating a narrative as the means of doing so, would inevitably turn out to be a self defeating exercise; otherwise one would have to devise a way of bringing the entire construction of the novel to its very knees, whilst claiming to have abandoned the very thing one was in the midst of perpetuating:

I am the absentee again, its his turn again now, he who neither speaks or listens, he who has neither body or soul, its something else he has, he must have something, he must be somewhere, he is made of silence, there's a pretty analysis, he's in the silence, he's the one to be sought, the one to be, the one to be spoken of, the one to speak, but he can't speak, then I could stop, I'd be he, I'd be the silence, I'd be back in the silence, we'd be reunited, his story the story to be told, but he has no story, he hasn't been in story, it's not certain, he's in his own story, unimaginable, unspeakable, that doesn't matter, the attempt must be made, in the old stories incomprehensibly mine, to find his, it must be there somewhere, it must have been mine, before being his, I'll recognise it, in the end I'll recognise it, the story of the silence that he never left, that I should never have left, that I may never find again, that I may find again, then it will be he, it will be I, it will be the place, the silence, the end, the beginning, the beginning again, how can I say it, that all words, there all I have, and not many of them, words fail, the voice fails, so be it[...]

(T.U., 417. )

In many ways this is the essential crux of the Schopenhauerian dilemma, how does one ultimately escape what one is, while at the same time having no adequate means of representing that something, and hence what one is ultimately trying to escape:

Philosophy has its value and virtue in its rejection of all assumptions that cannot be substantiated, and in its acceptance as its data only of that which can be proved with certainty in the external world given by perception, in the forms constituting our intellect for the apprehension of the world, and in the consciousness of one's own self common to all. For this reason it must remain cosmology, and cannot become theology. Its theme must restrict itself to the world; to express from every aspect *what* this world *is*, what it *may be* in its innermost nature, is all that it can honestly achieve. Now it is in keeping with this that, when my teaching reaches its highest point, it assumes a *negative* character, and so ends with a

negation. Thus it can speak here only of what is denied or given up; but what is gained in place of this, what is laid hold of, it is forced (at the conclusion of the fourth book) to describe as nothing; and it can add only the conclusion that it may be merely a relative, not an absolute, nothing. For, if something is no one of all the things that we know, then certainly it is for us in general nothing. Yet it still does not follow from this that it is nothing absolutely, namely that it must be nothing from every possible point of view and in every possible sense, but only that we are restricted to a wholly negative knowledge of it; and this may very well lie in the limitation of our point of view.

(W.W.R.2., 611-612.)

As we can see Schopenhauer's own address towards 'the world' becomes increasingly negative in character the further it advances towards its target, until eventually Schopenhauer's philosophy has to end 'with a negation'. But it is clear from what Schopenhauer says in *Die Welt*, that the negation does not in itself indicate a 'void' in terms of dead space, nor indeed a point in which anything is intrinsically lost or destroyed; but instead marks the point in which conventional representation ceases to make any positive impact, and as a result therefore can only respond in negative terms. The fact that Beckett's own work carries the exact same instinct to lodge its progressive development in terms of a mounting negative resolution; I believe comes about through Beckett's own determination to devise a corresponding prose structure which matches this same Schopenhauerian movement towards negative expression. For instance when we look to the fact that many of Beckett's characters lose the original function of their limbs or whose body parts are simply cut out of the picture all together; it seems that in many ways the failing body itself is providing a platform from which Beckett is taking his cue. For rather than just view Beckett's characters from the limited perspective of some inevitable decline, in which their physical degradation signals the growing wretchedness of an aging subject, there is I believe another angle to which Beckett's portrayal of decrepitude is open; namely that it captures a space which only has recourse to negative representation. It could be the case that for Beckett the physical wretchedness displayed by his characters is in fact a starting point from which he gifts them 'the lie to the body':<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> W.W.R.1., 380.

For just as I had difficulty in sitting on a chair, or in an arm-chair,  
because of my stiff leg you understand, so I had none in sitting on  
the ground, because of my stiff leg and my stiffening leg, for it was  
about this time that my good leg, good in the sense that it was not stiff,  
began to stiffen. I needed a prop under the ham you understand, and  
even under the whole length of the leg, the prop of the earth.  
(MOL., 71)

We can see from this passage from *Molloy* that ‘goodness’, as in the goodness of Molloy’s leg, does not actually reside in anything substantive; its ‘goodness’, like Schopenhauer’s assessment of pleasure, rests in an entirely negative context; it is defined in relation to what it is not, rather than what it is. It is this perspective which Beckett brings to his work, which I suspect is derived directly from his reading of Schopenhauer; but also importantly I believe if Beckett did indeed wants his work to approach the kind of absolute space Schopenhauer himself tries to allude to in *Die Welt*, then he would most certainly have been aware, that as a writer he is left only with the possibility of trading in negatives.<sup>10</sup> Just as Schopenhauer concedes with his own philosophy ‘it can speak here only of what is denied or given up’, so it is also true that much of Beckett’s work plays to the same instruction:<sup>11</sup>

**HAMM:** Sit on him!

**CLOV:** I can’t sit.

**HAMM:** True and I can’t stand.

**CLOV:** So it is.

**HAMM:** Every man his speciality. [*Pause*] No phone calls?  
[*Pause*] Don’t we laugh?

**CLOV:** [*After reflection.*] I don’t feel like it.

**HAMM:** [*After reflection.*] Nor I. [*Pause.*]...  
(ENDG., 16)

The fact that Beckett’s work is engaged in a process of denuding itself of the body, whilst upholding the prospect that all physical locomotion culminates in its own paralysis, I believe

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<sup>10</sup> [...] the world is an absolute ‘Not I’, Zimmern, H., *Arthur Schopenhauer*, op.cit., 234.

<sup>11</sup> W.W.R. 2., 612.

is part of Beckett's way of taking his work to the brink of this boundary, in which all remaining movement in the context of both language and physical representation can only be advanced in negative terms. For it is within this landscape of 'negatives' that Beckett himself may have tried to bring about his own literary equivalent of absolute space:

[...]there I am the absentee again, it's his turn again now, he who neither speaks nor listens, who has neither body nor soul, it's something else he has, he must have something, he must be somewhere, he is made of silence, there's a pretty analysis, he's in the silence, he's the one to be sought, the one to be, the one to be spoken of, the one to speak, but he can't speak, then I could stop, I'd be he, I'd be the silence, I'd be back in the silence, we'd be reunited, his story the story to be told, but he has no story, he hasn't been in story, it's not certain, he's in his own story unimaginable, unspeakable, that doesn't matter, the attempt must be made[...]

(T.U., 417)

And yet like Schopenhauer's own revelation in relation to Kant's *Ding an sich* the reality which one remains a part of should not be thought of as inaccessible, in fact it is fully accessible, by virtue of our being; or as Schopenhauer likes to put it 'causality seen from within'.<sup>12</sup> But as we have already mentioned in relation to Schopenhauer's philosophy, despite each one of us having direct access to the thing-in-itself we are nonetheless completely ill-equipped to represent the reality it constitutes. As we can see in the mounting pressure on Beckett's writing, there is a determination to display in his prose an inevitable failure to bring a descriptive representation to the reality which his novel, and he himself, ultimately share. At the same time however, that prose is also obliged to represent an unremitting striving, which, like Schopenhauer's own depiction of the 'will' is never fully satiated:

[...] perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story,  
before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me,  
if it opens, it will be I, it will be 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.

(T.U., 418.)

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<sup>12</sup> O.T.F.R., 214.



The story which *The Unnamable* raises like a spectre is no doubt connected to the same story which Hamm is so eager to recite to Clov, but as we can see in the instance of *Endgame*, Clov is entertaining none of it; for Clov it would seem ‘can’t go on’. And yet despite Clov’s resounding ‘No’ to Hamm’s story, he is actually partaking, be it ‘unwillingly’ in the same story, which had previously unfolded on the pages of *The Unnamable*; for despite his protestations Clov remains actively embroiled in the very story he is trying to suppress. It would seem Beckett’s *Endgame* replays on one level precisely what the voice of *The Unnameable* decries throughout its monologue; that the story being told is part of a much greater story, but one which is impervious to any editorial input: ‘we’d be reunited, his story the story to be told, but he has no story, he hasn’t been in story, it’s not certain, he’s in his own story’.<sup>13</sup> So in effect what emerges as the Unnameable’s story is a repeat of Clov’s own predicament:

**HAMM:** Did I move?

**CLOV:** No.  
[HAMM *throws down the gaff.*]

**HAMM:** Go and get the oilcan.

**CLOV:** What for?

**HAMM:** To oil the casters.

**CLOV:** I oiled them yesterday.

**HAMM:** Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday.

**CLOV:** [*Violently.*] That means that bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use the words you taught me. If they don’t mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent.  
[*Pause.*]  
(ENDG., 32.)

Having said the story remains unaltered, I believe what is actually being delivered to the stage which is actually different, is not so much the story, but the perspective on such a story.

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<sup>13</sup> Beckett, S., *Trilogy* (1994) London: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd., 417.

Beckett I believe wanted to create an art form which could directly respond to the absolute character of 'will' without sacrificing the contribution of the artist. And it seems having hit an impasse with the novel, it is the theatre which offers Beckett a 'lifeline' when it comes to maintaining his stake as an artist:

At the end of my work there's nothing but dust - the namable. In the last book - *L'Innomable* - there's complete disintegration. No "I", no "have", no "being". No nominative, accusative, no verb. There's no way to go on. The very last thing I wrote - *Textes pour rien* - was an attempt to get out of the attitude of disintegration, but failed.<sup>14</sup>

In order to understand what kind of 'lifeline' the theatre could offer, I believe we have to consider what it is about a performance upon stage, which takes Beckett's work away from the inevitable pressure to reveal it self solely in terms of an expanse of negatives, which are interspersed with pauses. It has often been put forward that the reason Beckett turned to the theatre, was in order to escape the solipsistic imprisonment he engendered with the novel, that somehow the stage would once more open up the possibility of a broader range of interaction, in an attempt, as it were, to restore the 'I' and the 'being' to his work. But the idea that this restoration would come about by simply introducing the prospect of live interaction to his work, or by giving a platform to the human presence in 'real' time; that somehow his work would once more assert itself in terms of a tangible reality, in which the human body, would be able to broadcast not a 'negative', but a 'positive', I feel is somewhat misplaced. For having shown already the way in which Beckett used his previous work as a means to seriously explore his own response to Schopenhauer's writing, the very thought that at this stage he would try simply to return to a material setting, in order to make more 'real' the voices which arose from the pages of his novels; as if to put flesh on the bone, does not in any way seem to be appropriate, especially in light of Beckett's own assault on the body:

Let us try and get this dilemma clear. Follow me carefully. The stiff leg hurt me, admittedly, I mean the old stiff leg, and it was the other which I normally used as a pivot, or prop. But now this latter, as a result of its stiffening I suppose, and the ensuing commotion

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<sup>14</sup> Shenker, I., *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage* [An Interview with Samuel Beckett, *New York Times*, 5th May 1956, section II, 1-3.] (1978) London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 148.

among nerves and sinews, was beginning to hurt me even more than the other. What a story, God send I don't make a balls of it. For the old pain, do you follow me, I had got used to it, in a way, yes, in a kind of way. Whereas the new pain, though of the same family exactly, I had not yet had time to adjust myself.

(MOL., 76-77)

Clearly any attempt to reinvest in this phenomenal calamity would be a serious step 'backwards'. So, can there be a sense in which turning to the theatre does not necessarily restate a claim on the body?

In order to answer yes, one has to imagine a case in which the performance enfolding in front of its audience is not as secure as one would initially suspect; its reality cannot take refuge in the subject, in fact the action on stage becomes its own disclaimer towards the very subject it is representing:

**CLOV:** Why this farce, day after day?

**HAMM:** Routine. One never knows. [*Pause.*] Last night I saw inside my breast. There was a big sore.

**CLOV:** Pah! You saw your heart.

**HAMM:** No it was living. [*Pause. Anguished.*] Clov!

**CLOV:** Yes.

**HAMM:** What's happening?

**CLOV:** Something is taking its course.  
[*Pause.*]  
(ENDG., 26.)

The language of *Endgame* occupies the same vexed ground as *The Unnamable*; so in what sense, with respects to Beckett's work has the theatre been able to offer him a genuine lifeline? From my own perspective I believe that it was the theatre, which actually allowed Beckett to take his own appreciation and understanding of Schopenhauer to another level, for having literally taken the language of the novel in a direction which has no descriptive point of reference (the unnamable), where one's movement is traced in relation to an outpouring of negatives, punctuated by pauses; there seems on the face of it nothing left to hand over to the theatre. For how can he allow an actor to stand up on stage and proclaim himself to be the very thing which could not be expressed in *The Unnamable*? Instead though, rather than use

the stage as platform to present ‘the unnamable’ or ‘thing-in-itself’, what I do believe Beckett grasped in relation to the stage is that it could be used to emphasize a very different perspective of ‘the unnamable’, not what it is intrinsically, but rather what it is in terms of ‘representation’ or more acutely *Vorstellung*. If as I suspect Beckett’s own engagement of Schopenhauer’s writing was as far reaching as this thesis is proposing, then there is no doubt in my mind that Beckett would have been able to appreciate the way in which Schopenhauer had not only moved the Kantian identity of the *Ding an sich* towards a much more expressive identity encompassed by the ‘will’ but also that his adoption of the term *Vorstellung* opens out Kant’s *repraesentatio* in a way which seeks to highlight the phenomenal world in terms a ‘presentation’ or ‘show’; that is to say an object for a subject *Objekt des Subjekts*.<sup>15</sup> In fact we can see from Schopenhauer’s writing that his own conception of *Vorstellung* was an attempt to rescue Kant’s phenomenal characterization of the world from its unduly abstract appearance:

An essential difference between Kant’s method and that which I follow is to be found in the fact that he starts from indirect, reflected knowledge, whereas I start from direct and intuitive knowledge. He is comparable to a person who measures the height of a tower from its shadow; but I am like one who applies the measuring-rod directly to the tower itself. Philosophy, therefore is for him a science *of* concepts, but for me a science *in* concepts, drawn from knowledge of perception, the only source of all evidence, and set down and fixed in universal concepts.

(W.W.R.1., 452-453.)

Schopenhauer clearly wants his phenomenal conception of the world to escape the flatness of Kant’s indirect formula, as he puts it ‘a science *of* concepts’, and instead consider the phenomenal character of the world as something which we directly inhabit as ‘a science *in* concepts drawn from knowledge of perception’. So, it is evident from Schopenhauer’s own writing that his decision to adopt the ‘concept’ (or *Begriff*) of *Vorstellung* rather than simply borrow Kant’s *repraesentatio* was in order to bring home to the reader a sense in which worldly phenomena rely upon an onlooker or spectator:

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<sup>15</sup> See, W.W.R.2., 177.

He [Kant] skips over this whole world of perception which surrounds us, and which is so multifarious and rich in significance, and he sticks to the forms of abstract thinking. Although he never states the fact, this procedure is founded on the assumption that reflection is the ec[o]type of all perception, and that everything essential to perception must therefore be expressed in reflection, and indeed in very contracted, and therefore easily comprehensible, forms and outlines. Accordingly what is essential and comfortable to law in abstract knowledge would place in our hands all the threads that set in motion before our eyes the many-coloured puppet-show of the world of perception.  
(W.W.R.1., 453.)

In fact, as this passage reveals, Schopenhauer clearly wanted to raise the phenomenal aspect of the world in terms of a ‘puppet-show’ and therefore Richard E. Aquila’s suggestion that Schopenhauer’s use of the ‘concept’ *Vorstellung* in the title of his principal work, had been deliberately adopted in order to convey this theatrical construction of ‘representation’, or as Aquila translates it ‘presentation’ is fully justified. For as we can see from *Die Welt* Schopenhauer wants to impress upon his reader, the need to move away from abstraction and instead connect to a much more immediate and less rarified environment than the one Kant offers, and it is in this sense that I believe we should as Aquila suggests, view Schopenhauer’s *Vorstellung* not only with reference to *repraesentatio* but also to bring on board its theatrical identity, that which is commonly cited in relation to a theatrical presentation.<sup>16</sup> And above all it is the staging of a puppet-show which for Schopenhauer encapsulates the essential model for worldly participation:

In short, *determinism* stands firm; for fifteen hundred years attempts to undermine it have been made in vain. They have been urged by certain queer ideas which we know quite well, but dare, not call entirely by their name. In consequence of it, however, the world becomes a puppet show worked by wires (motives) without its even being possible to see for whose amusement. If the piece has a plan, then a *fate* is the director; if it has no plan, blind necessity is the director. There is no escape from the absurdity other than the knowledge that the *being and essence* of all things are the phenomenon of a really *free will* that knows itself precisely in them; for their *doing and acting* are not to be delivered from necessity. To save freedom from fate or change, it had to be transferred from action to the existence.  
(W.W.R.2., 321.)

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<sup>16</sup> See, Schopenhauer, A., *The World as Will and Presentation.*, Vol 1., trans. Aquila, R.E. (2008) New York: Pearson Education, Inc., translators introduction., xiii.

For the stage which Schopenhauer purports the world to be is not one which is given over to individual action, in which the players are free to interpret the script in a manner of their own choosing. In fact as Schopenhauer sees it, their movements upon the stage are not to be construed as action derived from autonomous choice at all, but rather as an unconscious expression of their own essential character. As we can the Schopenhauerian stage action is derived from a blind director who randomly pulls on wires, bringing about the appearance of a motive in each player, but which in truth is simply an amplification of the ‘*free will* that knows itself precisely in them’. It is clear from the way Schopenhauer speaks of the world in terms of a *Puppenspiel* that he not only wanted *Vorstellung* to be accessed in terms of ‘representation’ but also appreciated within the broader context of *Schauspiel*; the world as theatre or even ‘play’.<sup>17</sup>

Having already provided evidence that Beckett had indeed accessed Schopenhauer in the original German; then the opportunity to recognize the full potential to which *Vorstellung* remains accountable, is inevitably that much more greater than if one were simply relying on a translation. In fact as we can see from Beckett’s own notebook composed during the late 70’s early 80’s (the ‘Sottiser Notebook’) he remains determined to preserve the original German ‘Begriff’ as he writes in the entry dated (23.3.81) Die Welt ist meine Vorstellung, directly underneath which he pens “meine Wille.”<sup>18</sup>

When it comes to fielding an explanation as to why Beckett switched his attention away from the novel and onto the theatre, then I believe we should look for our answer in these very lines; for the theatre would in the face of Beckett’s own Schopenhauerian leanings present himself with an unique opportunity to reveal his art not only through an unending performance of suffering and boredom, which ultimately fails to deliver an adequate representation of itself; but also importantly register the second philosophical tier that Schopenhauer’s writing testifies to: the ‘World as *Vorstellung*’. By staging his work Beckett would most certainly have been able scrutinize *Vorstellung* in a way which is simply not

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<sup>17</sup> Aquila, R.E., op.cit., xiii.

<sup>18</sup> See, Beckett, S., *Sottiser Notebook* Beckett Archive: Reading University., MS2901.

available to the novel, for now he would be able to bring to the fore the very aspect of *Vorstellung* which remains so elusive to literary translation; the constituent ‘*vor*’ and ‘*Stellung*’ allowing *Vorstellung* to be realized in relation to its taking up a position before a subject or spectator. For in writing ‘*Die Welt ist meine Vorstellung*’ in the ‘Sottisier Notebook’ Beckett no doubt wanted to remind himself of the opening first lines of *Die Welt*:

The world is my representation”: this is a truth valid with reference to every living and knowing being, although man alone can bring it into reflective, abstract consciousness. If he really does so, philosophical discernment has dawned on him. It then becomes clear and certain to him that he does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth; that the world around him is there only as representation, in other words, only in reference to another thing, namely that which represents, and this is himself.

(W.W.R.1., 3.)

If we are to take seriously the idea that Beckett’s work was in some way an attempt to bring to fruition an aesthetic which participates in the structural identity of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, then this opening passage I believe can tell us a great deal about Beckett’s own considerations towards the advantages of staging his work in front of an audience, as opposed to simply allowing it to rest on the page:

**HAMM:** What’s the weather like?

**CLOV:** The same as usual.

**HAMM:** Look at the earth.

**CLOV:** I’ve looked.

**HAMM:** With the glass?

**CLOV:** No need of the glass.

**HAMM:** Look at it with the glass.

**CLOV:** I’ll go and get the glass.

[Exit CLOV.]

**HAMM:** No need of the glass!

[Enter CLOV with telescope.]

**CLOV:** I’m back again, with the glass. [He goes to window

*right, look up at it.*] I need the steps

**HAMM:** Why? Have you shrunk? [*Exit CLOV with telescope.*] I don't like that, I don't like that.  
[*Enter CLOV with ladder, without telescope.*]

**CLOV:** I'm back again, with the steps. [*He sets down ladder under window right, gets up on it, realizes he has not the telescope, gets down.*] I need the glass.  
(ENDG., 24.)

For here in *Endgame* Beckett creates a performance which draws into focus the way in which the phenomenal appearance of the world has no independence outside the reception of the eye, that both the earth and sun 'in themselves' remain outside the experience of the subject; for Clov, it seems, must fall in line with Hamm's instruction and view the world through the eyepiece his master provides. Clearly what Beckett is emphasizing with the telescope remains entirely consistent with the Schopenhauerian position: that without the subject of experience the world in an objective sense would cease to exist.<sup>19</sup> So we can see in this instance Beckett using the stage in order to underline the fact that the world which we receive through our senses, is no more real than the world being played out on stage, they are both representations. Therefore by working within the context of the theatre Beckett is able convey *Vorstellung* in a way which is both accountable to *repraesentatio* as well as its interior fabrication of *Schauspiel*; that of 'placing and presenting before an audience'. It has often been noted that Beckett's own attempts to demonstrate the perceptual overlap between what constitutes as real and the image masquerading under the guise of reality, owes itself primarily to Berkeley's Idealism, for Beckett, having a Trinity College background would have possibly felt a close affinity with the Bishop, and indeed while at Trinity it is known that he did indeed study Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the principle of Human Knowledge*.<sup>20</sup> But even in the light of giving Berkeley's *Esse est percipi* star-billing in the only film Beckett

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<sup>19</sup> This position as Mathew Feldman points out is also consistent with Schopenhauer in a surprisingly different context, for in *Die Welt* Schopenhauer remarks "For practical life genius is about as useful as an astronomer's telescope is in a theatre [W.W.R.2., 146.] see Feldman, M., *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'* (2006) London: Continuum International Publishing Group., 13.

<sup>20</sup> See, Uhlmann, A., *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image* (2006) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 118.



ever scripted, the consideration towards perception remains to my mind still weighted in favour of Schopenhauer. This is not to say that I want to repudiate the idea that Berkeley's idealism does not resonate within Beckett's work; nor do I want to suggest that the inclusion of Berkeley is there simply for the purpose of ridicule; but rather that Beckett's address towards Berkeley is an attempt to consciously enter a similar position which Schopenhauer himself acknowledges at the opening of *Die Welt*; that modern philosophical enquiry starts with Descartes, but it is not until it is taken up by Berkeley do we arrive at *idealism* proper.<sup>21</sup>

This truth is by no means new. It was to be found already in the sceptical reflections from which Descartes started. But Berkeley was the first to enunciate it positively, and he has thus rendered an immortal service to philosophy, although the remainder of his doctrines cannot endure. Kant's first mistake was the neglect of this principle, as is pointed out in the Appendix. On the other hand, how early this basic truth was recognized by the sages of India, since it appears as the fundamental tenet of the Vedanta philosophy ascribed to Vyasa, is proved by Sir William Jones in the last of his essays: "On the philosophy of the Asiatics" (*Asiatic Researches*, vol. IV, p. 164): "The fundamental tenet of the Vedanta school consisted not in denying the existence of matter, that is, of solidity, impenetrability, and extended figure (to deny which would be lunacy), but in correcting the popular notion of it, and in contending that it has no essence independent of mental perception; that existence and perceptibility are convertible terms." These words adequately express the compatibility of empirical reality with transcendental ideality.

(W.W.R.1., 3-4.)

As we can see from the opening of *Die Welt*, Schopenhauer is at pains to stress that it was Berkeley who above any other Western philosopher was the first to truly 'enunciate' the fundamental character of conscious perception. And it is on this very page stressing Berkeley's 'immortal service to philosophy' (that is to say Schopenhauer's philosophy) that we find the identical line from *Die Welt* which Beckett pens in his 'Sottisier Notebook': *Die Welt ist mein Vorstellung*.

### **Film: The Thin Veil and the Nail.**

The idea that this Schopenhauerian assimilation of Berkeley, is consciously being taken up by Beckett is further supported in my view by the knowledge that *Film*, his only cinematic

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<sup>21</sup> See, W.W.R.2., 4.

project, which is explicitly framed in relation to Berkeley's *Esse est percipi*, had originally been given the title *The Eye*.<sup>22</sup> This alone of course would not stand to shift the weight of evidence away from Berkeley and onto Schopenhauer, as Schopenhauer's theory on optics can be easily trumped by Berkeley's *Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*.

But once we are aware of the importance of the eye, in respects to Schopenhauer's thinking; the way in which the 'eye' and 'I' collapses into both 'subject' and 'object' in his writing, revealing what he calls 'a miracle *par excellence*' it is evident that Berkeley is not the only one in the frame.<sup>23</sup> For as soon as we bring the eye 'singular' into the context of Berkeley I believe Beckett is not only evoking Berkeley, but that he is also carrying the opening sentiments of *Die Welt*, for it is in *Die Welt* that we see the 'eye' and *Esse est percipi* speak as one: 'the world around him is there only as a representation, in other words only in reference to another thing, namely that which represents, and this is himself.' Also it is vital to remain aware of the fact that Schopenhauer opens *Die Welt* with the notion that true philosophical discernment towards the world begins by disclaiming any knowledge of the earth or the sun, 'but only an eye that sees the sun'. So, it is in this context that I see in a work such as *Film* Berkeley's own assessment towards vision working hand in hand with Schopenhauer's; but where one takes leave of Berkeley in *Film*, leaving as it were Schopenhauer behind, relates to the causal structure of suffering and how this in itself becomes identified with perception.

One particular frame of *Film* I would like to consider depicts 'O' the 'object' (Buster Keaton<sup>24</sup>) being perceived by 'E' the 'eye' (the camera) face on:

Cut to E, of whom this very first image (face only, against ground of tattered wall). It is O's face (with patch) but with very different expression, impossible to describe, neither severity nor benignity, but rather acute *intentness*. A big nail is visible near left temple (Patch side).  
(FILM., 47.)

I have chosen this frame from *Film* because I believe, despite his turning to a new medium

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<sup>22</sup> See, FILM., 65.

<sup>23</sup> See, O.T.F.R., 211-212.

<sup>24</sup> For a comprehensive account of Buster Keaton's participation in *Film* see Bignell, J., *Beckett on Screen: The Television Plays* (2009) Manchester: Manchester University Press, 133-138.

such as cinematic film Beckett is still determined to advance a notion of absolute space, which we see first arising in *Godot* and *Endgame*; but also crucially maintain, the interior dimension of *Vorstellung*; both in terms of 'E' and the potential audience which make cinema possible. For instance when we consider Beckett's portrait of 'O', head on what Beckett is presenting to the 'eye' is in fact the same dichotomy represented on the stage in *Endgame*, but which in this instance attempts to accommodate the same vision on one face. The face, not uncharacteristically with Keaton, is deadpan, the head remains fixed looking directly into the camera, the right eye stares wide open, contrasted with the left which sports an eye patch. A long nail is visible near the temple with the the eye patch. In this one frame I believe we have the same compressed portrait as we see with Hamm and Clov. 'O' just like Hamm and it should be said Willie (whose name not only evokes Beckett's own father's but also Schopenhauer's *Wille*) in *Happy Days*, bears the signature of the handkerchief covering the head, which in this particular shot has been removed; just as it is with Hamm's handkerchief at the beginning of *Endgame* (though in *Endgame* it covers the entire face).<sup>25</sup> Hamm is blind just as is 'O's left eye, which is aligned to a nail. Before attempting to unpack such a densely compressed image, I believe it is important that we should first look to some previous explanations attempting to elucidate Hamm's relationship with Clov; the most obvious one being that which alludes to a Cartesian parody, between mind and body.<sup>26</sup> As it is Clov that does all the running there has been a natural tendency in Beckett criticism; to see Clov as being representative of the body, and Hamm who supplies the instructive commands to Clov's actions, in turn being representative of the mind; thus setting out the poverty attached to the Cartesian vision. Another popular construction is to read Hamm's and Clov's relationship in terms of a dramatization of the Hegelian dialectic between 'master' and 'bondsman' where Hamm is assigned to the 'master' role and Clov, the 'bondsman'.<sup>27</sup> Also there is the suggestion by Knowlson that Beckett's Hamm 'is like a dying God of whom we have hearing

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<sup>25</sup> See, Knowlson, J., *Damned to Fame.*, op.cit., 7.

<sup>26</sup> See, Kenner, H., *Samuel Beckett A Critical Study* (1962) London: John Calder London., 117-132.

<sup>27</sup> See, Harding, J.M., *Adorno and a Writing of the Ruins: Essay on Modern Aesthetics and Anglo-American Literature and Culture* (1997) New York: State University New York Press., 53-63.

ever since Nietzsche: a God with a demiurge (Clov) who is seeing to the assembly of a dog and has not completed this work (is God's work ever complete? Ever to be complete?) and a blind God, moreover, blind and tyrannical, like Fate.<sup>28</sup> Each construction as we can see is perfectly serviceable with the context of *Endgame*, in fact I would say there is legitimate accommodation for all these competing views, along with the manifold identities of Hamm and Clov; the most prominent of which being Noah's son and Ham's own male heir. Ham who is a direct descendent of Adam, and whose own son Canaan is cursed by Noah as a result of Ham witnessing his own father's nakedness, is clearly being consciously earmarked by Beckett in the naming of Hamm.<sup>29</sup>

22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brethren without.  
 23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid *it* upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces *were* backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.  
 24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him  
 25 And he said, Cursed *be* Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.  
 (GENESIS, 9., 15.)<sup>30</sup>

As we can see from the chapter in *Genesis* the progeny of Ham is cursed by Noah 'a servant of servants shall be unto his brethren.' And so by taking up this biblical construction of *Endgame* we can identify Clov as being an amplification of the 'Curse of Ham'. There is of course a very different Ham which Beckett no doubt is deliberately planting in the context of

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<sup>28</sup> Knowlson, J., and Pilling, J., *Frescoes of the Skull*, op.cit., 122.

<sup>29</sup> See Ruby Cohn's examination of Beckett's pun on Noah and Ham of *Genesis*, Cohn, R., *Just Play*, op.cit., 239.

<sup>30</sup> *The Holy Bible*: Authorized King James Version (undated) London Henry Frowde : Oxford University Press., 15.

theatre, that which points to 'sham acting'; and still we cannot end there. For there is also the Old English word 'ham' to reflect upon denoting the back of the knee, which is itself derived from a Germanic base meaning 'be crooked' and so on a completely different level Hamm's own name comes to reinforce his wards acerbic comments summing up both their outlook on life:

**CLOV:** [*Sadly.*] No one that ever lived ever thought so crooked  
as we.  
(ENDG.,16)

All these identities can be said to circulate legitimately in *Endgame*, and no doubt a great deal more; but there is to my mind one particular identity which underpins them all, and that is, their respective names carry the identity of 'hammer' and 'nail', *clou* being of course French for nail; which again is re-played in Hamm's parent's names, Nag and Nell. For apart from the German allusion to *Nagel* and its English counterpart 'nail' you also have within the linguistic marriage of Nag and Nell the very notion of verbal hammering; that is to say 'nagging'. This Hammer and nail identity being ascribed to *Endgame* is one which Hugh Kenner feels should be approached with some caution as he remarks 'Hamm, then, and Clov. Ham and clove? And Nagg and Nell: German *Nagel*, nail, and English Nail? Perhaps. And the French for nail is *clou*, in which case 'Hamm' suggests 'hammer'. As so often we are being teased by hints of system, not to be pursued.'<sup>31</sup> Personally I feel the 'hammer' and 'nail' occupies *Endgame* on a much deeper level, in fact I would go so far as to say it evokes the essential structure which underlines the whole of Beckett's work. For the idea that the allusion to the hammer and nail is merely a playful tease by Beckett, which ultimately has no substance, can I believe be countered by the fact that Beckett depicts a disturbingly large nail next to 'O's temple when 'E' looks at 'O' head on, framed against the tattered wall. In this frame from *Film* there can be no mistaking the explicit intention by Beckett to register the disconcerting juxtaposition between the exposed nail and 'O's temple. This to my mind has nothing to do with a misleading jest, it would seem that for Beckett, the nail's presence is

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<sup>31</sup> Kenner, H., *Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett* (1973) London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 121

integral to the entire composition. So, in this one frame we can retrieve the signatures of both Hamm (the black eye patch) and Clov (the nail) but much more importantly it is what they represent in each other's company. For I believe what Beckett is representing in the respective names of Hamm and Clov, is the reality pertaining to Clov (the nail), for the nail cannot exist outside the 'realm' of the hammer, the reality of the nail is completely dependent upon the hammer for shaping its whole identity. But crucially this picture is also dependent upon another inescapable factor and that is, if it were not for the 'hammering' there would be no nail to speak of, as it is actually the structure of the 'hammering' which supports the reality of the nail; for without the 'hammering' there is no Clov to 'pin down'. For in this context it is not just the secret combination to the larder that keeps Clov tied to Hamm, but rather something much more intractably linked to the underlying structure of reality; a reality which I believe has been fostered by Beckett's own Schopenhauerian sympathies. For as we have already determined in relation to Schopenhauer's conception of the 'world' as *Wille*; life resides in an expression of suffering; its very reality participates in its fundamental structure; therefore in this Schopenhauerian sense Clov like all expression of life, has no reality outside the condition of suffering. And it is for this reason that I believe ultimately Clov cannot remove himself from his master's presence, despite the fact that he is obviously the source of Clov's suffering:

**CLOV:** If I could kill him I'd die happy.  
 [Pause.]  
 (ENDG., 24)

Therefore the signature of the nail and hammer, once added to *Esse est percipi* shifts the emphasis away from Berkeley and back onto Schopenhauer; for now perception does not just rest within the context of 'being', that is to say 'being' in its most anodyne sense, but instead 'being' specifically in terms of suffering. So, rather than take *Esse est percipi* to simply mean: 'to be is to be perceived' we should now translate the Berkeleian headline of *Film* as: 'to be suffering is to be perceived'. Once we begin to appreciate suffering as providing the causal structure of Beckett's work, then not only is 'O's' fraught attempt to escape the 'eye' of the camera lens an attempt to free himself from the phenomenal conception of being, divided

between 'object' and 'subject'; but ultimately it is one which is driven by the doomed ambition to escape suffering altogether. For in this extended context the phenomenal division arising from the relationship between 'object' and 'subject' is itself participating in the same fundamental structure as suffering. 'O' in his reluctance to be viewed by 'E' is driven to the false sanctuary of his apartment; having encountered already an elderly couple, as well as a single old lady on the stairs leading up to his room. With each encounter 'E' fixes upon the subjects, capturing their faces in a state of alarm (mouths open) whilst 'O' hastily attempts to leave 'E' further behind. On reaching his apartment, having closed the door, concealed the mirror, fish bowl, and parrot cage, ejected both the dog and cat, as well as set about destroying a series of photographs (featuring a young couple raising a child, which includes a single photograph of 'O') and a representation of God the father (a print of a 'worm' like subject with large saucer-shaped eyes), he even goes so far as to take the precaution of turning a folder through 90 degrees to prevent it from possessing an eye-like appearance. But after all this he still awakes in his rocking chair to the trained eye of 'E'. No matter how effective the effort on 'O's part to expunge the presence of the 'eyes' in the 'subject'; the connection between 'object' and 'subject' remains unaffected; 'O' still remains at the mercy of 'E'. So, after all this there must be something in the nature of 'O's relationship with 'E' which *extends* much further than a simple 'object-subject' binary .

Clearly what 'O's action are unable to account for is the reality which brings together 'O' and 'E' into a single identity; in other words 'O' and ultimately *Film* itself is never in a position to adequately represent what Schopenhauer himself describes as a 'miracle *par excellence*'.

Beckett's portrayal of 'O's attempt to launch an assault on the world's phenomenal identity shares in the same futility which we observe in relation to Beckett's own treatment of suicide; for 'O's own efforts to edit-out the phenomenal world, in the end only acts to reinforce it.

As we have seen already in the context of Schopenhauer, an objective assault on the world can never be accessed in terms of an act of individual freedom, as freedom itself can never be enacted within an empirical setting:

I have shown in the essay *On Freedom of the Will* that only on its assumption is a person's action nevertheless *his own*, in spite of

the necessity with which it follows from his character and from the motives; but here *aseity* is attributed to his true being. Now the same relation holds good of all things in the world. The strictest *necessity*, honestly carried out with rigid consistency, and the most perfect *freedom*, raised to omnipotence, had to appear simultaneously and together in philosophy. But without doing violence to truth, this could come about only by putting the whole necessity in the *acting and doing* (*operari*), and the whole *freedom*, on the other hand, in the *being and essence* (*esse*). In this way a riddle is solved which is as old as the world, just because hitherto it has always been held upside down, and freedom was positively looked for in the *operari*, and necessity in the *esse*.

(W.W.R.2., 320.)

So if we apply this Schopenhauerian version of freedom to Beckett's own depiction of 'O's flight from 'E', it could explain why 'O's own attempt to access his autonomous freedom through 'motion' or 'action' is itself a doomed exercise; for it would seem that 'O' also falls victim to the illusory inversion of another 'O' and 'E' that of '*operari*' and '*esse*'. As it is with many of Beckett's titles, the decision on his part to finally call his cinematic project *Film I* believe carries with it more than one identity. Far from seeing the title as simply some empirical declaration denoting the medium of cinema; as if to say it is what it is on a material level; I suspect the true meaning for Beckett rests, not with the idea of transparency, but instead is seen as further reinvestment in the illusory aspect of *Vorstellung*. For the idea of 'film' as a covering, barrier, or thin sheet, is an image which pervades much of Beckett's work; be it indicated in the sheet which is removed from Hamm, or the handkerchief that rests on his face; along with those which cover the heads of both Wille and 'O', not forgetting also the one retained in the allusion relating to the biblical 'Ham'.<sup>32</sup> There is also a range of invisible barriers, ones preventing Watt from encountering Knott, or Estragon and Vladimir from encountering Godot, not to mention the barrier which separates Molloy from Moran; along with those of a more demonstrative character; such as the railings which separate the 'aberddeen' from Molloy, or the urns forming a barrier around W1, W2 and M in *Play*. Interestingly Beckett's title *Play* also has the capacity not only to make an explicit reference towards that which it is, as a piece of theatre or performance; but as we have already

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<sup>32</sup> See, Robert Champigny account of clothing in *samuel beckett now: Critical Approaches to His Novels, Poetry and Plays*, ed., Friedman, M.J. (1975) London: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 123.



exposed in relation to Schopenhauer's own treatment of *Vorstellung* as 'show' or 'play'.<sup>33</sup> Therefore it is possible that both the titles of *Film* and *Play* are in fact sharing in the same identity, that they are both characterizing Beckett's work in terms of *Vorstellung*. The idea that the title *Film* is somehow alluding to a thin barrier is also picked up by Anthony Uhlmann in *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*. In his chapter entitled 'Beckett, Berkeley, Bergson, Film: the intuition image', he alights upon the fact that Bergson in his essay on Berkeley 'has identified an image of matter as a thin transparent film situated between God and man'<sup>34</sup> thus impressing upon Uhlmann the possibility that *Film* could in fact be Beckett's own cinematic response to Bergson's image of Berkeley. But having already expressed doubts over the many Bergsonian connections drawn up in respects of *Proust* (seeing it in part as a misappropriation of Beckett's own reading of Schopenhauer, particular his address to time) I also feel that *Film* in a similar fashion owes a great deal more to *Die Welt* than any reading of *Time and Free Will*. So now having suggested that the Berkeleian identity of *Film* is in fact feeding back into the Schopenhauerian premise of *Vorstellung* it would seem from this perspective that Beckett himself would have sought a 'cover' with a much less divine provenance than the one being offered by Uhlmann<sup>35</sup>:

Accordingly we have to refer the whole world of phenomena to that one in which the thing-in-itself is manifested under the lightest of veils, and still remains phenomenon only in so far as my intellect, the only thing capable of knowledge, still always remains distinguished from me as the one who wills, and does not cast off the knowledge-form of *time*, even with *inner* perception. Accordingly, even after this last and extreme step, the question may still be raised what that will, which manifests itself in the world and as the world, is ultimately and absolutely in itself; in other words, what it is, quite apart from the fact that it manifests itself as *will*, or in general *appears* that is to say, is *known* in general. This question can never be answered, because, as I have said, being-known of itself contradicts being-in-itself, and everything that is known is as such only phenomenon.

(W.W.R.2., 197-198)

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<sup>33</sup> See, Aquila, R.E., op.cit ., translator's introduction xiii.

<sup>34</sup> Uhlmann, A., *Samuel and the Philosophical Image*., op.ct., 121.

<sup>35</sup> "In endless space countless luminous spheres, round each of which some dozen smaller illuminated ones revolve, hot at the core and covered over with a hard cold crust; on this crust a mouldy film has produced living and knowing beings: this is empirical truth, the real, the world.: W.W.R.2., 3.

As we can see, Schopenhauer in *Die Welt* presents his reader with a very striking depiction of a 'film' in the guise of 'the lightest of veils'. For I suspect in this image of the 'veil' (the veil of Mâyâ<sup>36</sup>) lies the true inspiration behind the multifarious sheets and handkerchiefs which cover the faces and heads of Beckett's characters<sup>37</sup>. The handkerchief, presumably blood-stained as in the case of Hamm's serves in my view as the ideal ideogram of the Schopenhauerian 'veil'; for not only does it capture perfectly the image of a light, almost insubstantial cover, shrouding what is essentially the preeminent signature of conscious perception (the head); but as Beckett makes clear in the stage directions of *Endgame*, it also bears the full weight of human suffering; by the fact that it is 'blood-stained'. So, unlike Berkeley or Bergson, the 'film' in this instance, separating 'Man' from his non-divisible noumenal reality, carries a heavy inscription of suffering, just like the long nail aligned with 'O's' temple, which inevitably carries an image of Christ's suffering on the cross.<sup>38</sup> Also by bringing the performance within the context of 'absolute' space, we have a situation in which the handkerchief can be simultaneously, a somewhat unremarkable piece of improvised protective covering, adding to the phenomenal slew which Beckett attaches to his characters; as well as the exact same partition on which is stretched the whole phenomenal identity of 'Man'. For I believe by identifying the space of the performance in 'absolute' terms Beckett makes it possible to transform what is virtually an undetectable blood-stain mottling a handkerchief, into the collective marker for an entire human species; while in the same instance turn the disheveled figure on whose head the handkerchief rests into the noumenal expression of a blind indomitable 'will' governing the whole of reality:

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<sup>36</sup> See, W.W.R.1., 253. Also see Mark Nixon 'Yet the importance of Schopenhauer to Beckett, and especially the passage of the veil of Maya, the manner in which it is lifted and the affect it has on the individual who sees through it, reaches far beyond the early critical essay, and profoundly affects his personal and aesthetic thinking.' Nixon, M., *German Diaries*, op.cit., 169.

<sup>37</sup> It is interesting also to raise attention to Beckett's own considerations towards language appearing as a veil. See, Beckett, S., *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writing and Dramatic Fragments.*, ed., Cohn, R. (1983) London: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd., 171-172.

<sup>38</sup> See, Gontarski, S.E., *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts* (1985) Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press: Bloomington., 102. Also see, for an account of Beckettian suffering reflected through Christ's crucifixion Sage, V., *Structure and Meaning in the Novels of Samuel Beckett* (University of East Anglia Doctoral thesis: 1971).

[...] HAMM *stirs. He yawns under the handkerchief. He removes the handkerchief from his face. Very red face. Black glasses.*]

**HAMM:** Me - [*he yawns*] - to play. [*He holds the handkerchief spread out before him.*] Old stancher! [*He takes off his glasses, wipes his eyes, his face, the glasses, puts them on again, folds the handkerchief and puts it neatly in the breast-pocket of his dressing-gown. He clears his throat, joins the tips of his fingers.*] Can there be misery - [*he yawns*] - loftier than mine? No doubt. Formerly. But now? [*Pause.*] My father? [*Pause.*] My mother? [*Pause.*] My ...dog? [*Pause.*] Oh I am willing to believe they suffer as much as such creatures can suffer. But does that mean their sufferings equal mine? No doubt. [*Pause.*]

(ENDG., 12.)

It would seem that Hamm's entire demeanor and outward appearance is conspiring on one level to present to the audience what is essentially a staged characterization of the descriptive monogram which Schopenhauer assigns to the 'will': that it is blind, and that it commands the entire show through a regimen of suffering.

### **Clov Up in The Watch-Tower.**

But clearly in order to advance my Schopenhauerian evaluation of *Endgame* I cannot simply build a case out of the fact that Hamm has lost his eye sight, and that he runs his manservant ragged getting him to carry out his daily chores. Unusually though for a Beckett play, I believe it is possible to identify in *Endgame*, the outlined attempt to make his stage available to a specific image which Schopenhauer himself exploits in order to illustrate the 'will's' relationship to the 'intellect'. But before I move any further in this direction I feel we should return to the passage setting out Hamm's opening profile to the audience. As we can see in the description of Hamm's stirring, once Clov has thrown off the protective dust-sheet, leaving Hamm to remove from his own face the handkerchief; the first words he utters on awakening leaves one to contemplate a peculiar remark: 'Me- [*he yawns*] - to play.' What is one to make of this? Is Beckett indicating to the audience that the 'play' is now up and running? On some level this must be true; but I personally believe that there is a great deal more going on in

Hamm's statement than the simple indication that the 'game' has now commenced. What I would like to propose is that within this utterance of Hamm's, we actually have Beckett setting out what he reiterates much latter in his Sottisier Notebook: 'Die Welt ist meine Vorstellung'. For as we have now established, one of Schopenhauer's preferred translations of *Vorstellung* was in fact 'play' or 'show', as it offered an alternative to the more theorized translation of 'representation'. Therefore I would suggest that the correct way in which to view Hamm's first utterance should be: Mine- [*he yawns*] - to Vorstellung; for now I believe we can fully appreciate the way in which Beckett in the opening scene of *Endgame* has gone about erecting the persona of Hamm in terms of the 'will' taking on a phenomenal identity.<sup>39</sup> Instead of looking upon the removal of the sheets and handkerchief purely as some kind of phenomenal divestment, or as Kenner describes as a striptease 'first the curtain goes up, then the sheets are removed, then the cloth uncovers Hamm's face, then the black glasses come off his eyes: a ritual strip-tease.'<sup>40</sup> it can also be regarded as the very antithesis of a striptease. For what I believe is being played out in terms of Hamm's and Clov's opening appearance on stage, which to the audience looks every bit like a disrobing; becomes in the context of Beckett's 'absolute' (theatricalized) space the 'will' acquiring its phenomenal guise through the assistance of the intellect:

**HAMM:** Get me ready. [*CLOV does not move.*] Go and get the sheet. [*CLOV does not move.*] Clov.  
(ENDG., 13.)

It is the causal structure arising from the toing-and-froing of Clov's activity (including throwing off the dust-sheets) that can be considered as a major part of the phenomenal costume which the 'will' slips into through the assistance of the the intellect. After having made two concerted efforts to promote Clov as the intellect, rather than what many critics have previously assumed is Hamm's designated role, I feel it is now time to look at the passage from *Die Welt* which I believe has been directly shadowed by Beckett in the stage

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<sup>39</sup> Quite extraordinarily we seem to be back in the exact same space as *Human Wishes*: 'You are knotting, Madam, I perceive.'

<sup>40</sup> Kenner, H., *Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett* op.cit., 122.

design of *Endgame*:

The brain with its function of knowing is nothing more than a *guard* mounted by the will for its aims and ends that lie outside. Up in the watch-tower of the head this guard looks round through the windows of the senses, and watches the point from which mischief threatens and advantage is to be observed, and the will decides in accordance with its report. This *guard*, like everyone engaged on active service, is in a state of close attention and exertion, and therefore is glad when it is again relieved after discharging its duties of watching, just as every sentry likes to be withdrawn from his post. This withdrawal is falling asleep, which for that reason is so sweet and agreeable, and to which we are so ready to yield. On the other hand, being roused from sleep is unwelcome, because it suddenly recalls the *guard* to his post.

(W.W.R.2., 241.)

As we can see from Schopenhauer's own description of the 'intellect' working in partnership with the 'will' it is the 'intellect' which he envisages doing all the running, rather than the 'will'. Also importantly we can see that the way Schopenhauer positions the 'intellect' (brain) as a *guard* who is unable to be discharged from his duties while in the active service of the will; and whose discharge can only come about through the prospect of sleep (for on awaking the 'sentry' is suddenly recalled to 'his' post), has a direct correspondence to the way in which Beckett characterizes the regimented behavior of Clov, as he goes about his daily ritual of waking up his master. But most strikingly it is the way in which the stage itself in *Endgame*, has been deliberately arranged with the intention of carrying the spatial monogram of a head; its two large windows serving as 'eyes'. This of course is not unique to Beckett; as it could be argued that the theatre has always in some way ever since Plato been viewed as a surrogate interior for the human head. But clearly once we locate Clov's own ancillary task of conveying directly to his blind master what he sees from the vantage point of each window (while perched on top of a stepladder, with his eye pressed up against Hamm's telescope); within this licensed conceit of the head; then it becomes apparent just how much this innocuous slapstick routine in *Endgame* actually owes to Beckett's private reading of Schopenhauer:

**HAMM:** No need for the glass!

[Enter CLOV with telescope.]

**CLOV:** I'm back again, with the glass. [*He goes to window right, looks up at it.*] I need the steps.

**HAMM:** Why? Have you shrunk? [*Exit CLOV with telescope.*] I don't like that, I don't like that.  
[*Enter CLOV with ladder, but without telescope.*]

**CLOV:** I'm back again, with the steps. [*He sets down ladder under window right, gets up on it, realizes he has not the telescope, gets down.*] I need the glass.  
[*he goes towards the door.*]

**HAMM:** [*Violently.*] But you have the glass!

**CLOV:** [*Halting, violently.*] No I haven't the glass!  
[*Exit CLOV.*]

**HAMM:** This is deadly.  
[*Enter CLOV with telescope. He goes towards ladder.*]

**CLOV:** Things are livening up. [*He gets up on the ladder, raises the telescope and lets it fall.*] I did it on purpose. [*He gets down, picks up the telescope, turns it on auditorium.*] I see . . . a multitude . . . in transports . . . of joy. [*Pause.*] That's what I call a magnifier. [*He lowers the telescope, turns towards HAMM.*] Well? Don't we laugh?

**HAMM:** [*After reflection.*] I don't.

**CLOV:** [*After reflection.*] Nor I. [*He get up on ladder, turns the telescope on the without.*] Let's see. [*He looks, moving the telescope.*] Zero . . . [*he looks*] . . . zero . . . [*he looks*] . . . and zero.

**HAMM:** Nothing stirs. All is-

**CLOV:** Zer -

**HAMM:** [*Violently.*] Wait till you're spoken to! [*Normal Voice.*] All is . . . all is . . . all is what? [*Violently.*] All is what?

**CLOV:** What all is? In a word? Is that what you want to know?  
Just a moment. [*He turns the telescope on the without, looks, lowers the telescope, turns towards HAMM.*]  
Corpsed. [*Pause.*] Well? Content?

(ENDG., 24-25.)

As soon as we place this arched exchange between Hamm and Clov, alongside the aforementioned passage in *Die Welt*, portraying the 'intellect' as a 'sentry' who longs to be discharged from his post, while up in a 'watch-tower' looking out through 'the windows of the senses' from where he reports any dangers to the his senior in command (the 'will') ; then

we would be hard pressed not to recognize on some level that *Endgame* is an attempt by Beckett to dramatize Schopenhauer's own appraisal of the 'will's' primacy over the 'intellect'. And as to the rest of Clov's domestic duties, Clov clearly fills out the Schopenhauerian costume to a T:

Thus the intellect is originally a hireling engaged on a laborious task and kept busy and in constant demand from morning till night by its lord and master, the will.  
(P.P.2., 68.)

### **The Three Legged Pomeranian.**

Once we puncture *Endgame*'s Schopenhauerian veil as it were; the 'dark glass' appears just that ever so more revealing. One particular image in *Endgame* which normally courts a great deal of interest; is Hamm's fluctuating affection towards his dog:

**HAMM:** Is my dog ready?

**CLOV:** He lacks a leg.

**HAMM:** Is he silky?

**CLOV:** He's a kind of Pomeranian.

**HAMM:** Go and get him.

**CLOV:** He lacks a leg.

**HAMM:** Go and get him! [*Exit CLOV.*] We're getting on.  
[*Enter CLOV holding by one of its three legs a black toy dog.*]

**CLOV:** Your dogs are here.  
[*He hands the dog to HAMM who feels it, fondles it.*]

**HAMM:** He's white, isn't he?

**CLOV:** Nearly.

**HAMM:** What do you mean, nearly? Is he white or isn't he?

**CLOV:** He isn't.  
[*Pause.*]

**HAMM:** You've forgotten the sex.

**CLOV:** [*Vexed.*] But he isn't finished. The sex goes on at the end.

[Pause.]  
(ENDG., 30.)

This image of Hamm reviewing the construction of his 'dog', through Clov's reluctant assistance; is normally considered as a parody of *Genesis*; with Hamm being every inch the divine creator; and what is more, it certainly has not gone unnoticed that of all the countless animals Beckett could have made the focus of Hamm's 'handiwork'; he opts for an animal which bears the name of 'God'. So it would appear after all that Beckett even during the period of *Endgame*, had still not fully escaped the shadow of Joyce; that is if we are to believe that Beckett's primary investment in Hamm's 'dog' is the resurrection of Dedalus's 'dogsbody'.<sup>41</sup> Indeed there have been efforts to locate the relationship between Hamm and Clov; in terms of an inflated self portrait depicting Beckett's own relationship with the visually impaired Joyce; and again no doubt all these consideration have a degree of buoyancy; but when it comes to consider what Goethe himself would fittingly describe as 'des Pudels Kern' of Hamm's toy dog; certainly from my point of view if such a dog were ever to be fashioned a collar, the inscription on it would in all likelihood read 'Atman'. For this stout phonic label is not only the Sanskrit word denoting our true self, extending beyond all phenomenal identification; but much more importantly it is also the name which Schopenhauer gave to one of his highly prized pet poodles. This on surface would justifiably be dismissed as yet another floating corpse of a dog; its significance being that of any other canine we could possibly care to mention, for instance Descartes' own 'Monsieur Grat' who unusually had been spared his master's dissection knife. And of course this would be true, if it were not for the fact that Hamm's dog as Clov remarks is 'a kind of Pomeranian'.<sup>42</sup> For there can be no doubt in my mind that Beckett himself has Clov refer to Hamm's mongrel creation as 'a kind of Pomeranian' in order to obliquely reference 'Gdansk Pomerania' or to give it its less Polish identity 'the Hanseatic city of Danzig'. As soon as we are able extract 'Danzig' from Hamm's 'pet project' then I believe *Endgame*'s full Schopenhauerian character can be

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<sup>41</sup> Joyce, J. *Ulysses* (1992) London: Penguin Books Ltd., 58.

<sup>42</sup> In the 1967 Berlin production of *Endgame* (*Endspiel*) Ruby Cohn remarks on the fact Beckett used a toy dog poodle 'In homage to the German philosopher Schopenhauer, who loved his poodle, the toy dog became a ragged, almost black, almost life size poodle[...]' See, Cohn, R., *Just Play*, op.cit., 245.



given further license, for Danzig happens to be the officially recorded birth place of Schopenhauer.<sup>43</sup> So having identified the one item which Hamm seemingly displays genuine affection towards, as having itself a ‘Schopenhauerian kernel’; I would suggest rather than attribute the three legs of the dog to an allusion of the holy trinity (the father, the son and the holy ghost) as one may be persuaded to do so, having already considered the possibility that Hamm’s dog is a parody of divine creation; it should rightfully in my mind be attributed to the three religions (Brahmanism, Buddhism and Christianity) which Schopenhauer himself personally identified as having each at their core, the same fundamental message as his own philosophy:

[...] as for true Christians, the world is a vale of tears, *Ατης λειμών*. He compares it, as did Plato later, to a dark cave wherein we are confined. In our earthly existence he sees a state of exile and misery and the body is the prison of the soul. These souls were once in a state of infinite bliss and reached the present perdition through their own fault and sins. Through sinful conduct they became even more ensnared in this perdition and are involved in the circle of metempsychosis. On the other hand, through virtue and moral purity, which also included abstinence from animal food, and by turning away from earthly pleasures and desires, they can again reach their previous state. Hence the same fundamental wisdom, constituting the basic idea of Brahmanism, Buddhism and indeed true Christianity (by which is not to be understood optimistic, Jewish-Protestant rationalism) was also brought home to us by this ancient Greek, whereby the *consensus gentium* concerning it was rendered complete. It is probable that Empedocles, whom the ancients generally described as Pythagorean, obtained this view from Pythagoras, especially as at bottom it is shared even by Plato, who is likewise under the influence of Pythagoras.  
(P.P.1, 35)

For now having conferred upon the dog its Schopenhauerian ‘rosette’ we could infer with a degree of confidence, that the reason Clov is so reluctant to ‘nail’ the dog’s sex, is due to the fact that Clov, for Beckett, represents a certain advancement in relation to the philosophical position of Schopenhauer; namely, that Clov has made a deliberate attempt to step back from

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<sup>43</sup> See., W.W.R.1., op.cit., translators introduction [v].

his own identity as purposeful ‘willing’ that is to say *Wille zum Leben*.<sup>44</sup> It is Clov, and not Hamm who has advanced or raised his ‘game’ in a Schopenhauerian context; for Hamm’s annoyance at Clov, for withholding the dog’s ‘sex’ would suggest that it is Hamm who has not heeded the instruction which all *Die Welt* readers confront on entering the ‘main work’; for clearly the image of Hamm doting over his toy dog is the very antithesis of what Schopenhauer asks of his reader: *Sors de l’enfance, ami, réveille-toi!* (“Quit thy childhood my friend, and wake up.” Tr.<sup>45</sup>) Amongst the two protagonists it is Clov who has left the nursery, leaving Hamm to seek solace in the hollow, artificial facsimiles of life. Clov has deliberately chosen to withhold the ‘sex’ from the dog, for I believe, he like Schopenhauer’s ascetic or *genius* appreciates that ‘his willing that develops over time is, so to speak, the paraphrase of the body, the elucidation of the meaning of the whole and of its parts. It is another way of exhibiting the same thing-in-itself of which the body is already the phenomenon. Therefore instead of the will, we can also say affirmation of the body. The fundamental theme of all the many different acts of will is the satisfaction of the needs inseparable from the body’s existence in health; they have their expression in it, and can be reduced to the maintenance of the individual and the propagation of the race.’<sup>46</sup> In another instance in *Endgame*, there is a very different depiction of Clov resisting his master’s efforts to shape his identity in terms of his sexual appetite:

**HAMM:** This is slow work. [*Pause.*] Is it not time for my painkiller?

**CLOV:** No. [*Pause.*] I’ll leave you, I have things to do.

**HAMM:** In your kitchen?

**CLOV:** Yes.

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<sup>44</sup> Beckett’s refusal to pin down the sex of many of his characters is also examined by Paul Stewart ‘Beckett’s ambiguous use of nonreproductive sexuality severs the link between the sex object and the identification of the subject that approaches it. More often than not Beckett’s characters are indifferent to the niceties of sexual choice[...] The need to scratch the itch of sex, however indicates the tenacity of sexual desire, and therefore the tenacity of the will-to-[life]. Beckett’s indebtedness to Schopenhauer is never more clear than in the shared belief in the link between desire, procreation, and the creation of further suffering[...]’ See Stewart, P., *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett’s Work*, op.cit, 196.

<sup>45</sup> W.W.R.1., 2.

<sup>46</sup> W.W.R.1., 327.

**HAMM:** What I'd like to know.

**CLOV:** I look at the wall.

**HAMM:** The wall! And what do you see on your wall? Mene, mene? Naked bodies?

**CLOV:** I see my light dying.

**HAMM:** Your light dying! Listen to that! Well, it can die just as well here, *your* light. Take a look at me and then come back and tell me what you think of *your* light.

[*Pause.*]

(ENDG., 16-17.)

As we can see, once we locate the way in which Hamm's identity can be flagged up in relation to Schopenhauer's 'will' then we can begin to appreciate the way in which Beckett is positioning Clov's own resistance towards Hamm's sexual innuendo 'Mene, mene? Naked bodies'; as well as refusing the offer of pain-killers, as a reflection of his own inner struggle waged against the 'will'. It seems that by refusing Hamm's pain-killers (for we should not forget that in the context of the 'will' both Hamm and Clov are in fact one inseparable entity) Clov is using his own suffering to turn the 'will' against its natural state of self-affirmation. It is this same 'willful' mortification which I personally feel is being represented in Clov's answer to Hamm's libidinous query about what he gets up to in his kitchen - 'I see my light dying'. So taking all this into consideration we can now see why Beckett positions suicide, or more to the point why the killing of Hamm remains 'off the board' as an legitimate move for either Clov or Hamm. For the 'endgame' is as Hamm points out 'slow work', there are no easy exit strategies available to this Schopenhauerian 'game' they both appear to be in the process of playing. *Endgame*, like *Godot* preceding it, I believe on a fundamental level is all about the prospect of waiting for death; let's not forget that, just like the 'god' in Joyce's dead dog, there is also death to be found in Beckett's own mirrored construction of the divine; a German death no less: Go[dot] '*tod*'. But in my view the Schopenhauerian dimension of Beckett's work means that the 'waiting game' can never take up a position in which it can welcome death with open arms; because as we know on a Schopenhauerian level wanting death as Clov, Hamm, Vladimir and Estragon all apparently do (that is on the 'surface' of Beckett's work) is a reinvestment in the very thing they are all determined to weaken; namely

suffering ‘in-itself’. For any shade, or complexion of desire, as Schopenhauer shows throughout his work, actually replicates the structure of suffering. It is this intractable framework that I feel Beckett was determined to exploit in all his work; for in doing so I believe he saw a genuine possibility that his work could ultimately reveal a fundamental truth relating to the world in general. But not only this, I suspect as an artist Beckett genuinely believed that by using Schopenhauer in this way; he had alighted upon the purest account available of the undifferentiated character of both tragedy and comedy.

### **Refusing to Jump the Rails.**

One example of the way in which Beckett refines the expressive space in which this same intractable sentiment between the desire to move one’s identity away from a perpetual reinvestment in suffering; while knowing at the same time that any abrupt shift to break one’s ties with its causal structure will defeat the whole project involved in the rejection of suffering, is brought into extraordinary focus in Beckett’s *Rockaby*:

let down the blind and stopped  
time she went down  
down the steep stair  
time she went right down  
was her own other  
own other living soul  
so in the end  
close of a long day  
went down  
let down the blind and down  
right down  
into the old rocker  
and rocked  
rocked  
saying to herself  
no  
down with that  
the rocker  
those arms at last  
saying to the rocker  
rock her off  
stop her eyes  
fuck life  
stop her eyes  
rock her off  
rock her off

[*Together: echo of ‘rock her off’, coming to rest of rock,  
slow fade out.*]

(ROCK., 441-442.)

As we can see from Beckett's depiction of the 'woman' in the rocking chair there is no attempt to 'jump the rails'<sup>47</sup>; for just like Clov she is determined to see out life's course. And yet it seems the very thing she is determined to see out, is the very thing she rejects: fuck life. But this abruptly issued rejection of 'life' by the recorded voice accompanying the action of the rocking 'women' for me personally sums up what Beckett himself actually set out in *Dream*: that the will cannot 'be abolished in its own tension'.<sup>48</sup>

For here we have Beckett characterizing the 'woman's' rejection of life, in a manner which in Schopenhauerian terms endorses the very thing one is desperate to undermine. Far from pushing one away from the 'will' as it is manifested in the human subject it is in fact bringing the subject closer to it. For in the expression 'fuck life' Beckett captures the 'will' at the point of its highest resolution in all living creatures; the moment of sexual reproduction; while at same time showing that any attempt to reject the will in terms of its individual appearance in a particular subject will inevitably just serve to strengthen it; such as we see with Vladimir and Estragon both imagining themselves achieving erections through a joint suicide pact. In fact the expression 'fuck life' is in one context a form of verbal suicide, but more importantly though in relation to *Rockaby*, it is I believe being used by Beckett to tersely spell out the intractable problem relating to 'the willing and nilling'. As we can see, unlike the recorded voice issuing the violent rejection of life, the 'woman' in the chair has no intention of delivering her own will (which as we know from Schopenhauer's writing is most clearly defined in terms of the will-to-life) a victory in terms of suicide; for instead of throwing in her proverbial towel it is 'she' and not the recording, who issues the words 'More':

*time she stopped*  
[Together: echo of 'time she stopped', coming to rest of  
rock, faint fade of light.  
Long pause.]

**w:** More.  
[Pause. Rock and voice together.]

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<sup>47</sup> D.F.M.W., 123-124.

<sup>48</sup> D.F.M.W., 123.

v: so in the end  
close of a long day  
went down  
in the end went down  
(ROCK., 440.)

So, just as it is possible to see in Clov's own attempt to take on his master, as being representative of a 'subject' attempting to turn his 'will' against itself; I believe it is also possible to see the same struggle being enacted between the 'women' and the 'voice' in *Rockaby*. For just like the repeat of Hamm with his own sarcastic putdown of life 'Can there be misery - [*he yawns*] - loftier than mine?' the 'voice' in *Rockaby* has again all the appearance of wanting to frame life in an equally disparaging way, and yet as I have shown, I believe this same 'voice' is being brought forward by Beckett as the ironically strong guarantor of 'life'. The issued instruction of 'More' by the 'woman' in the rocking chair captures the resolve of a subject who is determined to make a defiant stand against their own 'will' as an expression of continuous suffering. Beckett shows that, despite the 'voice' appealing to the 'woman' to 'stop' (which in the case of *Endgame* has its parallel in Hamm's appeal to Clov to kill him; or alternatively his persistent 'nagging' to have his 'pain-killers'; which like Doctor Piouk's prescription to Victor in *Eleuthéria* all seem to be offering an easy solution to suffering) 'she' takes it upon herself to continue to inhabit the 'life' which 'she' is so patently rejecting. Importantly though; there seems to be carried in this action the recognition that suicide as such holds no answer to 'suffering'. For as we know in a Schopenhauerian sense 'suicide' has only recognition on a phenomenal level. In the context of the 'will's' undifferentiated reality 'suicide' brings us full circle, back to the point in which the 'will' once again finds an opening in which it can blindly push forward in yet another bid to assert itself in terms of 'suffering'. Again I feel, because Beckett himself, like Schopenhauer is choosing to address the undifferentiated character of the 'will'; his work in one sense is about showing the failure attached to portioning out suffering in 'this' or 'that'

individual as a means of containment.<sup>49</sup> In fact it would seem that the ‘woman’ in *Rockaby* is on the point of reaching the stage in which her own ‘will’ is recognized as being one with the world in general; where her own object-subject distinction is losing all definition:

time she went down  
down the steep stair  
time she went right down  
was her own other  
own other living soul  
(ROCK., 441.)

The ‘voice’ of the recording, for me, is Beckett’s own way of addressing the staging problems of trying to represent a reality which in itself has no phenomenal recognition; and in this sense is an advanced step in relation to allowing the ‘will’ to be staged in terms of what is still in relation to *Endgame* a visual parody of the ‘will’.<sup>50</sup> Also there is a clear attempt by Beckett with the more intensely concentrated performances, such as *Rockaby* to move away from using the stage in an attempt to re-inhabit specific metaphorical imagery which Schopenhauer himself exploits throughout his writing.

### **The Stamp of a forced Condition with Strings Attached.**

Having said this I expect one would naturally ask oneself if this method of addressing certain problems of staging is present in *Endgame* how is it not present in Beckett’s earlier theatrical offering; *Waiting for Godot*? In fact though not as sharply defined as *Endgame*’s ‘watch tower’ I believe *Godot* does indeed have its own equivalence; it being the very image which for so many critics, quite understandably had been drawn into a visual souvenir of what seems to be the legacy of Auschwitz and Bergen-

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<sup>49</sup> Unlike my own undifferentiated characterization of Hamm and Clov, Ulrich Pothast presents each character representing a different individualized approach to suffering: ‘All characters have their own way to suffer[...] When Gogo or Didi, or Hamm and Clov, or Nagg and Nell briefly forget about their different afflictions and when nothing else does happen which attracts their attention they are *bored*. It is as if they exist to be examples of Schopenhauerian tragicomic figures’ Pothast, U., *The Metaphysical Vision*, op.cit., 203-204.

<sup>50</sup> See, Wulf for a much more psychologically constructed assessment of the taped voices interaction with the subjects in Beckett’s plays, Wulf, C., op.cit., 99-101.

Belsen<sup>51</sup>:

*Enter POZZO and LUCKY. POZZO drives LUCKY by means of a rope passed round his neck, so that LUCKY is the first to appear, followed by the rope, which is long enough to allow him to reach the middle of the stage before POZZO appears. LUCKY carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a greatcoat. POZZO a whip.]*

**POZZO:** *[Off.] On! [Crack of whip. POZZO appears. They cross the stage. LUCKY passes before VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON and exits. POZZO at the sight of VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON stops short. The rope tautens. POZZO jerks it violently.] Back!*  
(W.G., 14.)

Pozzo is driven forward by his manservant Lucky by way of a connecting rope which is passed around his neck, forming a rein or tether-like arrangement which his master holds onto while being dragged forward. It is also clear from Beckett's stage directions that Pozzo cracks a whip in order to propel his manservant forward. It strikes me, having been involved in a close reading of *Die Welt*, that there is one particular image which Schopenhauer creates of the 'will' driving its 'subject' forward that bears a remarkable similarity to Pozzo and Lucky's disposition in *Godot*:

And as it is with the persistence in life, so is it also with its action and movement. This is not something freely chosen; but whereas everyone would really like to rest, want and boredom are the whips that keep the top spinning. Therefore the whole and each individual bear the stamp of a forced condition. Since everyone is inwardly indolent and longs for rest, but must never the less go forward, he is like his planet, that does not fall into the sun only because a force driving it forward does not allow this to happen. Thus everything is in permanent tension and forced movement, and the course of the world goes on, to use an expression of Aristotle (*De Coelo*, ii, 13), *οὐ φύσει, ἀλλὰ βία* (*motu non naturali, sed violento*). Only apparently are people drawn from in front; in reality they are pushed from behind. It is not life that entices them on, but want and trouble that drive them forward. Like all causality, the law of motivation is a mere form of the phenomenon. Incidentally, here is to be found the origin of the comical, the burlesque, the grotesque, the ridiculous side of life; for, driven forward against his will, everyone bears himself as best he can, and the resultant perplexity and embarrassment often present

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<sup>51</sup> See, Hammer, E., *Adorno and the Political* (2006) London: Routledge., 69. See also, Dan Gunn 'Samuel Beckett', Poole, A., *Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Auden, Beckett: Great Shakespeareans Volume XII* (2012) London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 179.



a ludicrous effect, however serious may be the care and worry underlying them.  
(W.W.R.2., 359-360.)

As we can see, Schopenhauer's description of the 'willful' movement of a subject being 'the stamp of a forced condition' which is initiated by the 'whips' of 'want and boredom' would alone lend itself somehow to Beckett's own characterization of Lucky's bondage at the hands of Pozzo. Schopenhauer continues in this passage to set out an image of the 'subject' who 'longs for rest, but must nevertheless go forward'; as well as depicting the phenomenal illusion of willful action in terms of being 'drawn from in front' when in truth what such an illusion is hiding is the reality that 'people' are 'pushed from behind'. Thus this passage from *Die Welt* carries what I believe to be the essential instruction behind Beckett's own image of Pozzo and Lucky; for knowing of Beckett's own thorough reading of Schopenhauer before composing *Godot* it would be very difficult not to believe that this particular image in *Die Welt* had no bearing on his visual construction of Lucky's bondage to Pozzo. Also I strongly suspect that within this same extended passage, we can also reveal why Beckett has chosen to dress up his characters from *Godot* in what is clearly more than a nod to the music hall tradition of slap-stick and burlesque.<sup>52</sup> For here in the phenomenal illusion of human volition we have Schopenhauer himself pointing precisely to 'the origin of the comical, the burlesque, the ridiculous side of life'. In fact it looks as if when it comes to *Godot* this same passage can provide a feasible explanation as to why in the second act of the play both Lucky and Pozzo (now blind) are depicted as being unable stand up under their own weight:

**VLADIMIR:** Perhaps we should help him first.

**ESTRAGON:** To do what?

**VLADIMIR:** To get up.

**ESTRAGON:** He can't get up?

**VLADIMIR:** He wants to get up.

**ESTRAGON:** Then let him get up.

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<sup>52</sup> See, Pilling, J., *Proust and Schopenhauer: Music and Shadows*; Section 10 of *Beckett and Music.*, ed Mary Bryden (1998) Oxford: Oxford University Press., 176.

**VLADIMIR:** He can't.

**ESTRAGON:** why not?

**VLADIMIR:** I don't know.

[POZZO writhes, groans, beats the ground with his fists.]

(W.G., 70.)

The answer to this puzzle as to why Pozzo cannot stand up under his own weight I believe has everything to do with the way in which Beckett has chosen to use the theatre in order to radically address himself to the concept of *Vorstellung* which as we have already revealed does not only come forth in terms of 'play' or 'show' but what Schopenhauer himself envisages as *Puppenspiel*.<sup>53</sup>

Accordingly, we often see a miserable figure, deformed and bent with age, want, and disease, appeal to us from the bottom of his heart for help for the prolongation of an existence, whose end would necessarily appear as altogether desirable, if it were an objective judgement that was the determining factor. Therefore, instead of this, it is the blind will appearing as the tendency to life, the love of life, vital energy; it is the same thing that makes plants grow. This vital energy can be compared to a rope, stretched above the puppet-show of the world of men, on which the puppets hang by means of invisible threads, while they are *only apparently* supported by the ground beneath them (the objective value of life). But if once this rope becomes weak, the puppet sinks; if it breaks, the puppet must fall, for the ground under it supports it only in appearance; in other words, the weakening of that love of life shows itself as itself as hypochondria, spleen, melancholy; the complete exhaustion of that love of life shows itself as an inclination to suicide.

(W.W.R.2., 359.)

It is this Schopenhauerian projection of the world as *Wille und Puppenspiel* that I believe can explain why Pozzo cannot stand up under his own weight; for just like a puppet whose 'invisible threads' have no tension he resides in a helpless heap on the ground. For as it is with Schopenhauer's description, it is not the ground which supports our reality, but the 'will' which acts like a 'rope' from which are suspended by 'invisible threads'. And as we can see from the way in which Schopenhauer describes in this instance how the 'rope' loses its

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<sup>53</sup> It is interesting to note that F.N. Lees raises one possible meaning of Godot's name in connection with the French word 'godenot' - denoting 'a conjurer's puppet': see, Lees, *Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, Lees, F.N. (1961-1962) *Samuel Beckett*, 38.

tension through the weakening and complete exhaustion for one's love of life; which can eventually shows itself in the subject as 'hypochondria, spleen, melancholy' and 'as an inclination to suicide'; it actually lists many of the characteristics which can be directly accredited to Beckett's own characters.

It is well known that Beckett, during theatrical rehearsals would often encourage his actors to read Heinrich von Kleist's essay *On The Puppet Theatre*, which he felt would be of enormous benefit if they could just bring to their performances an understanding of Kleist's own re-evaluation of the theatre:<sup>54</sup>

'And the advantage that the puppet would have over living dancers?'  
'The advantage? In the first place, my dear fellow, a negative one, namely this: that it would be incapable of *affectation*. - For affectation occurs, as you know, whenever the soul (*vis motrix*) is situated in a place other than a movements centre of gravity. Since the puppeteer, handling the wire or the string, can have no point except that one under his control all the other limbs are what they should be: dead, mere pendula, and simply obey the law of gravity; an excellent attribute which you will look in vain among the majority of our dancers. [...] 'Also,' he said, 'these puppets have the advantage of being *resistant to gravity*. Of the heaviness of matter, the factor that most works against the dancer, they are entirely ignorant: because the force lifting them into the air is greater than the one attaching them to the earth. What wouldn't our friend G. give to be four or five stone lighter or to have such a weight working in her favour in her entrechats and pirouettes! Marionettes only *glance* the ground, like elves, the momentary lends the limbs a new impetus; but we use it to *rest* on, to recover from the exertion of the dance: a moment which is clearly not dance at all in itself and which we do nothing with except get it over with as quickly as possible.'<sup>55</sup>

It is interesting to note that Schopenhauer's own 'puppet-show' in *Die Welt* bears witness to an almost identical description as Kleist's marionettes. Kleist's description is one in which the 'marionettes only *glance* the ground' without actually having to rest upon its surface, while Schopenhauer describes the puppets hanging 'by means of invisible threads, while they are *only apparently* supported by the ground beneath them'. In fact when Schopenhauer resorts to an image of the world as *puppenspiel* in *Die Welt* it is more likely than not, that he himself is drawing upon his own reading of Kleist. For though he does not directly cite Heinrich von

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<sup>54</sup> See, Knowlson, J., and Pilling, J., op.cit., 277-284.

<sup>55</sup> Kleist, H., *Selected Writing of Heinrich von Kleist*, ed., and trans. Constantine, D. (1997) London: The Orion Publishing Group Ltd., 413-414.

Kleist, unlike his poet ancestor Ewald von Kleist<sup>56</sup> in *Die Welt*, it is inconceivable that a figure such as Kleist, whose work had been deeply affected by Kant, and who as a writer had been taken up by Goethe's Weimar circle (his play *Der zerbrochne Krug* had been premiered by Goethe in Weimar in 1808) would have escaped the attention of Schopenhauer.<sup>57</sup> So any similarity between Schopenhauer's and Kleist's description of the 'puppet' should in fact hold no surprise once we identify a similar Kantian shadow cast over Kleist's work. So rather than just see Beckett's own approach towards his actors as 'marionettes' as being one which was primarily inspired by Kleist, I feel it should not exclude the possibility that Beckett was in fact seeing Kleist as means of providing another front to the theatre as a form of 'puppetry' one which initially found expression in a vision towards the theatre as 'Vorstellung'. In this sense Beckett's own interest in Kleist could be better appreciated in terms of an attempt to further refine what I believe is essentially Schopenhauerian in origin. Also, one could further suggest that Beckett's decision to bind his characters with 'rope', in a fashion which is clearly capable of carrying the signature Schopenhauer's phenomenal illusion of forward motion; where one is being pushed from behind, rather than being drawn from in front, would justifiably in my opinion lead us to consider that on one level Beckett is positioning the manservant Lucky as the 'intellect', just as he does with Clov, while his taskmaster he positions as the 'will', as is true with Hamm.<sup>58</sup> But there is another passage which I feel is just

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<sup>56</sup> See, W.W.R.1., 240.

<sup>57</sup> See, Kleist, H., op.cit., 421.

<sup>58</sup> 'If a man born blind touches a body of cubical shape, the sensations in his hand are quite uniform[...] yet these sensations contain absolutely resembling a cube. But from the resistance felt, his understanding infers immediately and intuitively a cause thereof, and through that inference the cause now presents itself as a solid body. From the movement of his arms when touching the object, while the sensation of the hands remain the same, he constructs the cubical shape of the body in space[...] If he did not have it within himself the representation of cause and of a space together with its laws, the image of a cube could never result from those successive sensations in the hand. If we let a rope run through our closed hands, then as the cause of the friction and of the duration thereof and in this position of our hand, the rope will construct a long cylindrical body moving uniformly in the same direction. But from that mere sensation in his hand there could never come to him the representation of movement, i.e., change of place in space by means of time.' O.T.F.R., 82. (The 'friction on the rope' passage instantly reminds one of the 'rope' Lucky is tethered to. But importantly it is the space in which the rope moves in relation to subject, that we can see having deeper Schopenhauerian implications for the performance and movement of character.) 'The plot for *Waiting for Godot*, if there is one in the usual sense, serves only to show the relationship between Estragon and Vladimir in its strange emptiness and furthermore, to show how the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky degenerates to what can be communicated by someone blind to someone dumb by whipping or jerking a rope.' Pothast, U., *The Metaphysical Vision*, op.cit, 197.

as worthy of attention when it comes to assigning Lucky and Pozzo to a Schopenhauerian inspired construction of the 'intellect' tied to the 'will':

For what bridle and bit are to an unmanageable horse, the intellect is to the will in man; it must be led by this bridle by means of instruction, exhortation, training, and so on; for in itself the will is a wild and impetuous an impulse as is the force appearing in the plunging waterfall; in fact, it is, as we know ultimately identical therewith. In the height of anger, in intoxication, in despair, the will has taken the bit between its teeth; it has bolted, and follows its original nature. In *mania sine delirio*, it has completely lost bridle and bit, and then shows most clearly its original and essential nature, and that the intellect is as different from it as the bridle is from the horse. In this state it can also be compared to a clock that runs down without a stop after a certain screw is removed.

(W.W.R.2., 213.)

As we can see from this passage, Schopenhauer's image of the 'intellect' harnessed to the 'will' in this fashion (appearing as an 'unmanageable horse' with a 'bridle and bit' between its 'teeth' spurred on by 'a wild and impetuous' force) has in more ways than one its own dramatic reflection in Beckett's presentation of Lucky and Pozzo. For the way Beckett chooses to present Lucky's bondage to Pozzo is also in terms of one 'subject' being driven by another 'subject' in a way which is clearly suggestive of a 'man' taking the reins of a horse and trap. Also it is clear from the play, that as soon as Lucky becomes unburdened from his 'harness' he becomes self-evidently something which is far-removed from a dumb creature; displaying an erudition worthy of its own 'Copernican revolution':

**LUCKY:** Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqu with white bread quaquaquaqu outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing[...] for reasons unknown in spite of the strides of physical culture the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all sorts autumn summer winter

winter tennis of all kinds hockey of all sorts penicillin  
and succedanea in a word I resume[...]  
(W.G., 36-37.)

As we can see from this tirade of words pouring from the mouth of Lucky, at times barely holding on to any sound comprehension; the fact that his consideration towards the divine has Augustinian recognition; being outside of time, as well as not being subject to extension, positions the identity of Lucky well outside that of any dumb creature. But it is the manner in which Lucky's knowledge arises as an uncontrollable outpouring that cannot seemingly stop of its own accord; which in some way carries Beckett's own response to Schopenhauer's attempt to envisage what it would be like if the human 'mind' could momentarily be uncoupled from the burden of the 'will' in order to show itself in a very different light. In fact the outpouring of all this rarefied theorizing on space and time seems to be spilling out not through any conscious delivery as such, but more in the way of a stored pressure-release; as if it were just like Schopenhauer's 'clock' running 'down without a stop after a certain screw is removed'. But importantly one should always remember that within the context of the 'will' the division between human consciousness and the 'will' is never a reality; therefore when it comes to appreciating Lucky and Pozzo; just as it is with Hamm and Clov, or even Vladimir and Estragon, their division resides on a phenomenal level; on the level of '*Vorstellung*'.<sup>59</sup> So having found it now possible to identify the way in which Beckett could have been drawn to an explicit Schopenhauerian allegorical construction in *Godot*, as he was with *Endgame*, we can now return back to the idea of Beckett continuing to pursue the theatre in relation *Vorstellung* but particularly *Vorstellung* in terms of the *Puppenspiel*; and how this idea finds accommodation in *Endgame*. My own response to the reader would be - follow the trail of the 'desert'. But before contemplating how a number of repeated allusions to the 'desert' in *Endgame* open upon a vision of the theatre as 'puppet-show' I would like to begin first by considering how it is that we find the 'desert' in the midst of the dark interior of Hamm's household. For despite what we the audience see with our own eyes; namely Hamm and Clov

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<sup>59</sup> Indeed, these pseudocouples (amongst which Shane Weller includes Hamm and Clov) often appear to illustrate Schopenhauer's claim that in the realm of representation (*Vorstellung*) the will, failing to recognize itself, turns against itself in its blindness. Tormentor and tormented are thus one and the same[...]. See Shane Weller 'Orgy of False Being Life in Common' Barfield, M., Feldman, M. and Tew, P. *Beckett and Death* (2009) London: Continuum International Publishing, 39.

residing in a dimly lit enclosed room, with two high windows, it would appear much of the language in *Endgame* is directed towards ‘desert’:

**CLOV:** [*Fixed gaze, tonelessly.*] Finished, it’s finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. [*Pause.*] Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there’s a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap.  
(W.G., 12.)

There is also Nagg’s exchange with Nell about the contents of their respective ashbins:<sup>60</sup>

**NELL:** it isn’t sawdust. [*Pause. Wearily.*] Can you not be a little accurate, Nagg?

**NAGG:** Your sand then. It’s not important.

**NELL:** It is important.  
[*Pause.*]  
(ENDG., 19.)

While also in Beckett’s *Endgame* there are a number of explicit references to the ‘desert’ itself.

**HAMM:** What? What’s she blathering about?  
[*CLOV stoops, takes NELL’s hand feels her pulse.*]

**NELL:** [*To CLOV.*] Desert!  
[*CLOV lets go her hand, pushes her back in the bin, closes the lid.*]

**CLOV:** [*Returning to his place beside the chair.*] She has no pulse.

**HAMM:** What was she drivelling about?

**CLOV:** She told me to go away, into the desert.  
(ENDG., 22.)

Having already looked at the possibility of Clov engaging in a form of Schopenhauerian asceticism it would seem that in many ways the fit and proper setting for Clov’s asceticism should indeed be, as it has been for many an ascetic before him ‘the desert’.

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<sup>60</sup> ‘[...] Quandt [the art critic Johann Gottlieb von Quandt, the ‘truest friend’ Schopenhauer possessed whilst living in Dresden] would often remind Schopenhauer [...] ‘If I ever had at all a good idea,’ he said, ‘you always asked me where I had read that, as if I picked up all my thoughts out of the dustbins of literature.’ See, Zimmern, H., *Arthur Schopenhauer*, op.cit., 95.

It is this competing image of the desert which as Claus Zilliacus rightly suggests 'is never far from the linguistic investment of *Endgame*', citing that 'A manuscript that Beckett called "*Avant Fin de partie*" foregrounds thirst and dying of thirst'.<sup>61</sup> Indeed once we become aware of the fact that 'a very early holograph (1950) from the *Fin de partie* cluster describes the locale of that play as a desert' then it becomes apparent that the original decision by Beckett to follow *Endgame* with the short mime *Act Without Words* (*Acte Sans Paroles*) was fully intended to act as a further commentary on *Endgame*.<sup>62</sup> In fact as Zilliacus reveals in his paper 'Act Without Words 1 as Cartoon and Codicil' Beckett himself actually referred to the mime as a 'codicil to *Endgame* "in some obscure way" thereby as Zilliacus says 'prompting us to view the mime not as a work in its own right but as a supplement or appendix, a heteronomous work whose presuppositions and context should be looked for in *Endgame*'.<sup>63</sup> Therefore as soon as the connection is made between *Endgame* and *Act Without Words* (1) the so called 'desert language' which emerges during the course of *Endgame* is itself pointing to a reality which the phenomenal appearance of Beckett's play is deliberately failing to back-up. But rather than jumping to the conclusion that we should now be of the view that *Act Without Words* (1) is in some way a continuation of Clov's fate once he leaves the service of Hamm, having entirely abandoned his master's language; as Zilliacus puts it 'The tyrant has been deserted for the desert: his man is gone from refuge' we should in my view pause for one moment and reflect on what this would actually imply.<sup>64</sup>

**CLOV:** This is what we call making an exit.

**HAMM:** I am obliged to you, Clov. For your service.

**CLOV:** [*Turning, sharply.*] Ah pardon, it's I am obliged to you.

**HAMM:** It's we are obliged to each other. [*Pause. CLOV goes towards door.*] One thing more. [*CLOV halts.*] A last

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<sup>61</sup> See, Buning, M. and Oppenheim, L. ed., "*Beckett in the 1990's*". Selected papers from the Second International Beckett Symposium held in the Hague, 8-12 April, 1992 (Rodopi Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA, 1993), 298-299.

<sup>62</sup> Buning, M. and . Oppenheim, L.op.cit., 298.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>64</sup> Buning, M. and Openheim, L., 299.



favour. [Exit CLOV.] Cover me with the sheet. [Long pause.] No Good [Pause.] Me to play. [Pause. Wearily.] Old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing.  
(ENDG., 51.)

For any attempt to position the mime as if it were some kind of dramatic follow-on from *Endgame*, picking up from the events which left Clov in his hat and coat, ready to depart from his master; falls foul of resurrecting the causal framework which Clov it appears has 'left for dead'. For if we just care to take a look at the way in which the closing scene in *Endgame* enfolds; it appears on the surface that Hamm's request to Clov to cover him with the 'sheet', is in someway an indication to the audience that 'he' is declaring some form of gracious defeat in the face of Clov's hard-won victory. But this I believe carries the same pitfall as does the thinking which constructs *Act Without Words* in episodic terms.<sup>65</sup> For let us just consider what we have previously established in relation to 'uncovering' and 'covering' in the wider Schopenhauerian context of absolute space; that is to say, both of these actions participate in the same causal structure which can give succor to the 'will'. And so in this context we can regard Hamm's last request to his manservant, as yet another attempt by the 'will' to get the 'intellect' to reinvest in its future; but Clov is clearly all too wise to the old scoundrel's 'game' and thus resolutely refuses to 'play' along. Again we can see in Hamm's reply 'No Good', the implication that this last bid to rescue his phenomenal identity has fallen through: the 'Me to play' (that is Clov's own 'will's' capacity to play out in terms of 'Vorstellung') has it seems been completely rescinded by Clov. For the image we are left with is not Clov leaving Hamm's premises, but simply remaining unresponsive to Hamm's calls; for the fact is Clov still remains in the presence of Hamm.<sup>66</sup> It is the conscious identity of Clov, that has said its adieu; not the 'will' that inhabited 'Clov', for despite the absence of a

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<sup>65</sup> As Pothast states 'Beckett had claimed that causality is one of the will's instruments to keep the person's world uniform, reliable and, in the last analysis, untrue. True reality for Beckett is only accessible to an artistic procedure which is not committed to the following rules of empirical causality.' Pothast, U., *Metaphysical Vision*, op.cit., 196. So, as a result of this adopted view it would seem highly unlikely that any episodic structure attaching *Act Without Words (1)* to *Endgame* was ever envisaged by Beckett. Therefore I would personally argue Beckett's comments specifying that the 'desert' was outside rather than inside, was in part emphasizing its outward appearance, that which holds to its phenomenal characterization, which he himself was out to undermine.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 212-213.

conscious identity, Clov's 'will' in the shape of Hamm still persists: 'Old stancher! [*Pause.*] You...remain.'<sup>67</sup>

This closing scene in *Endgame* clearly illustrates in my mind Beckett's own genuine commitment towards a vision in which death can never abolish the irrepressible reality of suffering. So, having revealed what could be described as *Endgame*'s Schopenhauerian stature, we should I believe in all honesty rule out the suggestion that Beckett would have attached an additional dramatic piece to *Endgame* which would play to the same causal structure which he as a playwright seems so determined to leave behind. Therefore I strongly suspect that the original addition of the 'mime' in *Endgame* was there to present an alternative perspective on the intractable relationship between Hamm and Clov. In this sense it is not a continuation of *Endgame* that *Act Without Words* (1) attempts to stage through the mime; but instead it is more like a recording of *Endgame* being replayed back to its audience under a different frequency setting.<sup>68</sup> For there is one clear signature which both *Endgame* and the 'mime' raise in complete solidarity with one another; the shrill sound of Hamm's whistle:

Desert. Dazzling light.  
The man is flung backwards on stage from right wing. He falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself, turns aside, reflects.  
Whistle from right wing.  
He reflects, goes out right.  
Immediately flung back on stage he falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself, turns aside, reflects.  
Whistle from left wing.  
(A.W.W., 57.)

It is evident from the beginning of the 'mime' that the shrill blasts from the whistle are in someway dictating the boundaries of the action being played out on stage; for with each attempt that the 'man' tries to fulfill a particular action, such as retrieve a carafe of water, or

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<sup>67</sup> ENDG., 53. During rehearsals for the 1967 Berlin production of *Endspiel* Ernst Schröder asked Beckett 'whether Hamm covers himself to die, Beckett replied: "Nein, nur damit er besser schweigen Kann." See Cohn, R., *Just Play*, op.cit., 224.

<sup>68</sup> In a letter to Gottfried Buttner (5th Sep 1970) 'Beckett characterized *Act without Words I* as a "vertical play" See Gottfried Buttner 'Schopenhauer's Recommendations to Beckett', Moorjani, A. and Veit, C. *Samuel Beckett Today/ Aujourd'hui: Samuel Beckett: Endlessness in year 2000 /Fin sans fin en l' an 2000* (2000) Amsterdam: Rodopi, 144-122.

utilize a pair of scissors, the desired outcome always escapes him; as if a metaphysical rug was being pulled from underneath his feet. Clearly what the mime artist is lending himself to is a reworking of the myth of Tantalus. For just like the fate of Tantalus on the shores of Tartarus his hunger is perpetually directed towards a tree which withdraws its branches each time he tries to recover its 'fruit', while his thirst in the same fashion is equally thwarted:

He turns, sees tree, reflects, goes to it, sits down in its shadow, looks at his hands.

A pair of tailor's scissors descends from flies, comes to rest before tree, a yard from ground.

He continues to look at his hands.

Whistle from above.

He looks up, sees scissors takes them and starts to trim his nails.

The palms close like a parasol, the shadow disappears.

He drops scissors, reflects.

A tiny carafe, to which is attached a huge label inscribed WATER, descends from flies, comes to rest some three yards from ground.

He continues to reflect.

Whistle from above.

He looks up, sees carafe, reflects, gets up, goes and stands under it, tries in vain to reach it, renounces, turns aside, reflects.

(A.W.W., 58)

So with each attempt to satisfy a particular desire, the 'man' is helpless to prevent the foundation on which 'his' fulfillment rests to be withdrawn from his grasp.

The structural character of this mythical fate, can clearly in many ways be considered as Beckett's own attempt to locate the dissonant structure of both the 'will', and the 'will's' interchangeable face; music, into some form of concrete representation.<sup>69</sup> But again we can look upon such work as a direct bid, like *Godot* and *Endgame* to theatrically traverse the landscape of Schopenhauer's writing. Having already taken sometime to explore the imaginative terrain of *Die Welt* it must be apparent to the reader that the myth of Tantalus registered deeply with Schopenhauer's own inferences towards the 'will's' inexhaustible capacity for suffering:

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<sup>69</sup> With Beckett's insistence that musical score should not be attached to *Godot*, remarking "I do not believe that the text of *Godot* could bear the extensions that any musical setting would inevitably give it." It would suggest that from Beckett's own perspective the music of *Godot* was in some way already imbedded deep into the interior fabric of the play. See, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1941-1956*, op.cit., 475-476.

Therefore, so long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with its constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we never obtain lasting happiness or peace. Essentially, it is all the same whether we pursue or flee, fear harm or aspire to enjoyment; care for the constantly demanding will, no matter in what form, continually fills and moves consciousness; but without peace and calm, true well-being is absolutely impossible. Thus the subject of willing is constantly lying on the revolving wheel of Ixion, is always drawing water in the sieve of Danaids, and is the eternally thirsting Tantalus.

(W.W.R.1., 196)

Once again I feel it is beneficial to reproduce this ‘Tartarean’ passage from *Die Welt* in order to appreciate just how important the image of Tantalus was to Schopenhauer’s aesthetic assessment of his own philosophy.<sup>70</sup> So, clearly with this in mind the fact that Beckett had originally decided to couple *An Act Without words* (1), to a play, which, if the general evaluation of my thesis is correct, was significantly shaped by Schopenhauerian thinking; then we must accept in some way that Beckett’s re-staging of the myth of Tantalus was in fact driven by a pressing desire, to consolidate his own aesthetic vision towards a theatrical representation of suffering capable of being simultaneously expressed on an individual and undifferentiated level.<sup>71</sup>

Having followed the trail of ‘sand’ I believe the reader is now in a suitable position to fold out their deck-chairs and take stock of the initial question which has led us to where we are: How does *Endgame* accommodate the theatrical conception of ‘Vorstellung’ in terms of *puppenspiel*? Clearly if we are now able to access a dimension of *Endgame* which Beckett has chosen to present in terms of a tightly choreographed performance; which is apparently governed in part by a series of lowered and raised ‘ropes’ then it would seem if anything, Beckett’s possible allusions to Pozzo’s and Lucky’s ‘puppet’ like behavior in *Godot* becomes an even more explicit consideration in *Endgame*.

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<sup>70</sup> Note that Beckett’s *Whoroscope Notebook* includes a detailed reference to both Ixion and Tantalus, both of whom Schopenhauer speaks of in the same passage in W.W.R.1: see Ackerley, C.J., *Demented Particulars: The Annotated Murphy* (Journal of Beckett Studies) (1998) Vol 7., 31.

<sup>71</sup> ‘What Schopenhauer said about the essential nature of in “*On Aesthetics*” in his *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851) also holds for Beckett’s two mimes and all of his major plays[...] Büttner, G., ‘Schopenhauer’s Recommendations’, op.cit., 118.

### **A Party With an Open Invitation: The Polymorphism of the Will.**

It seems that Beckett wants the 'mime' to participate in the same space as *Endgame*, that the 'desert' Beckett's characters speak of and allude to, is not in anyway outside the confines of Hamm's room; but they themselves are in fact, in the context of the 'will's' polymorphism, participating in both spaces. The desert which the mime act confronts in *Act Without Words I* is in reality the same environment that both Clov and Hamm wake up to each day (Grain upon grain[...] the impossible heap); the blasts from the whistle I suspect are the same commands issued by Clov's master; while the on going battle waged by the two protagonists (which on one level both characters can be assigned as a single indivisible entity) are marked by the individual setbacks which the 'man' dusts 'himself' down from. As Zilliacus puts it 'It is Clov's mime and the whistle is Hamm's.'<sup>72</sup>

What the language of 'desert' exposes in relation to *Endgame*, is the way in which on one level the language deliberately acts to confound what we witness on a phenomenal level, such as the light-starved interior of Clov and Hamm's dwelling. Thus in one sense the language actually limits what we as audience can piece together on a purely visual level; in fact in many ways *Endgame's* 'desert language' seems to run in a completely antithetical direction to the imagery which Beckett makes available on stage. But there is, having said this, one image which Beckett makes available to his audience which seems far from out of place in a desert setting; and that is the appearance of Hamm's very red face: [*He removes the handkerchief from his face. Very red face. Black glasses*].<sup>73</sup> For as soon as we place the contrasting black glasses over Hamm's red face, suddenly the image which emerges from under the handkerchief is one which supports the idea of 'sun-burn'. And so it would appear, that just like Winnie's 'parasol' in *Happy Days* the intention behind Hamm's 'black glasses' is in someway a protective measure against the sun. It would seem that Beckett is allowing the meaning underpinning the 'black glasses' to run simultaneously in two apparently contradictory directions: one which upholds the identity of the glasses in terms of sun-

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<sup>72</sup> Buning, M. and Oppenheim, L., op.cit., 298.

<sup>73</sup> ENDG., 12.

glasses; there to protect the eyes from the sun, while at the same time locking their identity into an overall representation of Hamm's blindness; which in this context makes any protective measure towards the eyes obsolete.<sup>74</sup> The fact that the truth relating to such an image can participate in two contradictory directions is, itself, something which I personally believe is important to Beckett's overall attempts at establishing aesthetic criteria for absolute space:

I have shown that all empirical perception implies the application of the law of causality. Hence knowledge of this is a condition of all experience, and therefore cannot be given and conditioned through experience, as Hume asserted. Proofs are generally less for those who want to learn than for those who want to dispute. These latter obstinately deny directly established insight. Truth alone can be consistent in all directions; we must therefore show such persons that they admit under one form and indirectly what under another form and directly they deny, i.e. the logically necessary connexion between what is denied and what is admitted[...] For every deduction from concepts is exposed to many deceptions on account of the fact, previously demonstrated, that many different spheres are linked and interlocked, and again because their content is often ill-defined and uncertain. Examples of this are the many proofs of false doctrines and sophisms of every kind. Syllogisms are indeed perfectly certain as regards form, but very uncertain through their matter, namely the concepts. For on the one hand the spheres of these are often not defined with sufficient sharpness, and on the other they intersect one another in so many different ways, that one sphere is partly contained in many others, and therefore we can pass arbitrarily from it to one or another of these, and again to others, as we have already shown.

(W.W.R.1., 67-68.)

As we can see from *Die Welt*, because empirical perception rests upon the law of causality (and as such resides within the context of 'Vorstellung') the truth relating to any perceived fixture in our conscious field of 'vision' is in fact not secure in any real sense; but in reality 'can be consistent in all direction'. It is the fact that Beckett transforms his theatrical space into a supersaturated field of allusion and counter allusion; in which Hamm not only is legitimately registered in reference to the 'will' but also all those other identities which have

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<sup>74</sup> Eric Prieto proposes 'The "nominalist irony" Beckett mentions as a technique for advancing non-conceptual literature might be expressed as a radicalized variant of the Schopenhauerian description of poetic language in terms of intersecting conceptual spheres: by relating words to one another in such a way that individual concepts compete and interfere with each other, the poet might be able to force the reader to adopt a mode of interpretation able to participate in this other, higher mode of knowledge identified with the realm of Ideas and Kantian noumenon: see, Prieto, E., *Listening In: Music, Mind, and the Modern Narrative* (2002) Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 175.

previously been unearthed; such as Prospero,<sup>75</sup> the Biblical Ham, the Ham from Dickens' *David Copperfield*, as well as supporting a portrait of the visually impaired Joyce<sup>76</sup>. Or even I would suggest that this same blind misanthrope could be registered as a self-portrait of Beckett's own private relationship with Schopenhauer; for we just have to think of the way Beckett presents Hamm's turbulent affection towards his 'pomeranian' project. But importantly what arises in such a densely constructed field of allusion, is an inevitable overlap, in which both the Schopenhauerian projection of Hamm is overlapped with a whole panoply of other Hamms vying for contention, as it does with the formal overlap of Schopenhauer's 'syllogisms' which he remarks 'are indeed perfectly certain as regards form, but very uncertain through their matter, namely concepts. For on the one hand the spheres of these are not defined with sufficient sharpness and on the other hand they intersect one another in so many different ways[...].' In one sense Beckett's depiction of Vladimir and Estragon quibbling over whether their rendezvous point is a 'shrub' or a 'bush' when as an audience we are first led to believe it is a tree; captures perfectly the dilemma which all readers of Beckett's work experience when it comes to committing oneself to a particular allusion over a host of other possible allusions. Importantly though in the context of the spatial reality of the 'will' they can all co-exist. Therefore what I am proposing is that by amassing such a densely overlapping range of allusions; each capable of pulling in several directions simultaneously, that Beckett himself creates a space which is capable of expressing the polymorphous phenomenal character indicative of Schopenhauerian 'will'. And by doing so Beckett creates an aesthetic space which can give a much more credible account to the undemarcated expression attempted in *Dream*: 'He remains, for all his grand fidgeting and shuffling, bird or fish, or, worse still, a horrible boarder-creature, a submarine bird, flapping its wings under a press of water. The will and nill cannot suicide, they are not free to suicide.'<sup>77</sup> Having been brought back to the subject of 'suicide' it would seem that there is still an aspect of Beckett's 'mime' which not only supports a theatrical re-staging of the myth

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<sup>75</sup> see, Dan Gunn 'Samuel Beckett', Poole, A., *Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Auden, Beckett*, op.cit., 158.

<sup>76</sup> See, McDonald, R., *The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett* (2006) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 49.

<sup>77</sup> D.F.M.W., 123.

of *Tantalus*; but also that it raises 'suicide' in relation to one of Tantalus' unattainable 'fruits':<sup>78</sup>

Whistle from right wing.  
He reflects, goes out right.  
Immediately flung back on stage he falls, gets up  
immediately, brushes himself, turns aside, reflects  
Whistles from left wing.  
He does not move.

He looks at his hands, looks round for scissors, sees them,  
goes and picks them up, starts to trim his nails, stops, reflects,  
runs his finger along blade of scissors, goes and lays them on  
small cube, turns aside, opens his collar, frees his neck and  
fingers it.

The small cube is pulled up and disappears in flies, carrying  
away rope and scissors.

He turns to take scissors, sees what has happened.

He turns aside, reflects.

He goes and sits down on big cube.

The big cube is pulled from under him. He falls. The big cube  
is pulled up and disappears in flies.

(A.W.W., 59-60.)

As we can see with Beckett's 'mime' the signature of the scissors changes quickly from one of domestic utility to one of suicidal intent. But no sooner does he put down the scissors in order to contemplate slitting his throat, that the very 'object' on which 'his' suicide bid rests is hauled up into the flies, along with the 'rope lasso' which now inevitably in the mind of the audience carries the insuperable signature of a hangman's noose.

The fact that Beckett positions 'suicide' in terms of something which is not just desirable, but also something which is unattainable; moves the performance of the 'mime' into clear Schopenhauerian territory.

### **Happy Days: Raising the Temperature of the Theatre.**

Having identified the rich Schopenhauerian terrain on which an *Act Without Words* (1) lies, I believe we can now attempt to broach the question why it was that Beckett looked towards the 'desert' in answer to a location, not just for *Endgame* and an *Act Without Words* (1), but

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<sup>78</sup> 'The normal condition of human persons is that of subjects who live in a word dominated by Time, who are incessantly changing with Time, but who long for a reality exempt from Time. Beckett describes our longing for this reality by comparing us to Tantalus, but a Tantalus who confirms his thirst in a state of thirsting itself - Just as Schopenhauerian subjects confirm their willing nature in the very state of willing[...]' Ulrich, P., *The Metaphysical Vision*, op.cit., 96.



also the work which follows immediately in the wake of these two plays; *Happy Days*:

*Expanse of scorched grass rising centre to low mound. Gentle slopes down to front and either side of stage. Back an abrupt fall to stage level. Maximum of simplicity and symmetry. Blazing light.*  
(H.D., 138.)

One of the functions of the ‘desert’ in respects to Beckett’s work is to reinforce an understanding that his characters are constantly positioning themselves in response to their own hunger and thirst; be it simply for food, or that other gnawing preoccupation, death.<sup>79</sup> And so Beckett it would appear is deliberately opting for an environment which has the inevitable consequence of bringing to the fore the insurmountable reality which hunger plays in giving definition to all life:

**HAMM:** Why don’t you kill me?

**CLOV:** I don’t know the combination of the larder.  
[*Pause.*]  
(ENDG., 15.)

There is also the suggestion with Beckett’s characters that hunger serves as its own window onto the ‘fathomless’ reality which all living subjects remain open to:

**ESTRAGON:** Fancy that. [*He raises what remains of the carrot by the stub of leaf, twirls it before his eyes.*]  
Funny, the more you eat the worse it gets.

**VLADIMIR:** With me it’s just the opposite.

**ESTRAGON:** In other words?

**VLADIMIR:** I get used to the muck as I go along.

**ESTRAGON:** [*After prolonged reflection.*] Is that the opposite?

**VLADIMIR:** Question of temperament.

**ESTRAGON:** Of character.

**VLADIMIR:** Nothing you can do about it.

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<sup>79</sup> We need only think of the way in which Beckett’s own characterization of Samuel Johnson, centered upon his preoccupation with death and dying to see his attempt in establishing a common unity of space which he never intended to be driven from.

**ESTRAGON:** No use struggling.

**VLADIMIR:** One is what one is.

**ESTRAGON:** No use wriggling.

**VLADIMIR:** The essential doesn't change.  
(W.G., 13-14.)

As we can see with Estragon and Vladimir's exchange in *Godot* it is their own 'hunger' which they cast in terms of the *Ding an sich*; seemingly maintaining like Schopenhauer that hunger is not just symptomatic of a lack of food, but that we ourselves are a form of objectified hunger, which can never be satiated; for as Beckett's two protagonists conclude it does not matter how much we 'consume' with respects to our hunger, we all still remain ultimately hungry: 'The essential doesn't change.':

Thus, although every particular action, under the presupposition of the definite character, necessarily ensures with the presented motive, and although growth, the process of nourishment, and all the changes in the animal body take place according to necessarily acting causes (stimuli), the whole series of actions, and consequently every individual act and likewise its condition, namely the whole body itself which performs it, and therefore also the process through which and in which the body exists, are nothing but the phenomenal appearance of the will, its becoming visible, the *objectivity of the will*. On this rests the perfect suitability of the human and animal body to the human and animal will in general [...] Therefore the parts of the body must correspond completely to the chief demands and desires by which the will manifests itself; they must be the visible expression of these desires. Teeth, gullet and intestinal canal are objectified hunger; the genitals are objectified sexual impulse; grasping hands and nimble feet correspond to the more indirect striving of the will which they represent.  
(W.W.R.1., 108.)

As Schopenhauer sets out in *Die Welt* our bodies' constant demand for 'nourishment' does not primarily arise out a need to fuel some complex organic machine; but that the organism along with its anatomical complexity is the inevitable consequence of the 'hunger'. And so in this context we can see a direct correspondence between the way Schopenhauer attributes to 'hunger' a primary significance, one which drives deep into underlying reality of the *Ding an sich*; alongside the collective recognition of both Estragon and Vladimir, that they too are ultimately a manifestation of hunger, and as such, there is nothing one can do to correct this:

‘One is what one is. No use wriggling.’ Again this idea that one’s appetite opens onto a ‘fathomless’ reality is reworked in the opening remark of Hamm in *Endgame*:

**HAMM:** [...]But does that mean  
their sufferings equal mine? No doubt. [*Pause.*] No, all is  
a - [*he yawns*] - bsolute, [*proudly*] the bigger a man is the  
fuller he is. [*Pause. Gloomily.*] And the emptier.  
(ENDG., 12.)

Just like Schopenhauer, Beckett constructs the human identity in terms of a ‘hunger’ which has acquired its own peculiar phenomenal identity; and whose magnitude alone fixes the reality of ‘suffering’. For just as we have seen with Schopenhauer; hunger, pain, desire, call it what you will, remains ultimately an expression of the same reality; what really distinguishes ‘suffering’ from ‘hunger’, or even ‘desire’ from ‘pain’ is merely the scale on which they are presented. In fact once we locate Estragon and Vladimir’s exchange about the ‘carrot’ in a Schopenhauerian context it becomes evident that the fatalism they are venting in relation to hunger, also bodes true of suffering as a whole. So what appears to be a whimsically arched conversation about ‘hunger’ designed to keep the boredom at bay (which as we know is also a strong Schopenhauerian stress) instantly takes on an acerbity that is the equal of any of Vladimir’s turnips. For as soon as we bring to the conversation a much more attuned Schopenhauerian ear, then it would seem what is actually being conveyed through Estragon and Vladimir’s exchange about ‘hunger’ is a resigned view towards the unassailable bind between ‘suffering’ and ‘life’: they suffer, because they, like all expression of life are at their root an unqualified manifestation of ‘suffering’ as Vladimir says: ‘One is what one is’ (*Ding an sich*). Once we eavesdrop in this Schopenhauerian fashion, Estragon’s dictum: no use ‘struggling’ no use ‘wriggling’ becomes in many ways the same message which Clov steadfastly adheres to in the face of his own suffering at the hands of Hamm. Also I suspect that in this same conversation about the ‘carrot’ there resides not only a message about suffering in general, but also an equally important comment about the philosophical dishonesty attached to suicide: ‘No use wriggling - the essential doesn’t change.’ Having considered the role of ‘hunger’ and ‘thirst’ in relation to the ‘desert’ there remains one abiding image which both these signatures of ‘want’ rally around; namely the sun. As an image it

presides over not just an *Act Without Words*, but also *Endgame* (the window to the right of the stage is trained on the 'sun' while the window to the left is trained on the 'world') as well as *Happy Days* whose stage action takes place under the imagined glare of the sun.<sup>80</sup> Importantly though from a Schopenhauerian angle it is the image of the 'sun' which foreshadows much of the debate on suicide in *Die Welt*:

Conversely, who-ever is oppressed by the burdens of life, whoever loves life and affirms it, but abhors its torments, and in particular can no longer endure the hard lot that has fallen to just him, cannot hope for deliverance from death, and cannot save himself through suicide. Only by a false illusion does the cool shade of Orcus allure him as a haven of rest. The earth rolls on from day into night; the individual dies; but the sun itself burns without intermission, an eternal noon. Life is certain to the will-to-[life]; the form of life is the endless present; it matters not how individuals, the phenomena of the Idea, arise and pass away in time, like fleeting dreams. Therefore suicide already appears to us to be a vain and therefore foolish action[...]  
(W.W.R.1., 280-281.)

In the context of *Die Welt*, it is the 'sun' which stands to remind oneself of just how meaningless suicide is as an attempt to remove an individual's suffering from the undifferentiated suffering which constitutes the world's reality. From an individual perspective the sun appears to take its leave from the heavens each night, only to make a renewed entrance the following day; despite the fact we know full well it never leaves the celestial stage. It is this illusion which the sun carries, day in and day out, that for Schopenhauer sums up his own attitude towards the misconceived intermission which is apparently on offer with suicide. For me, Beckett's own decision to reveal the sun as an unchanging constant, both in relation to *Endgame* and *Happy Days*, carries the same message for his characters as it does for Schopenhauer; that all the exits and entrance points which mark themselves in relation to human existence, are appearances, themselves no more

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<sup>80</sup> Importantly we must not forget that as an image it also takes up a significant presence in the novels: The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new. As we can instantly appreciate the fact Beckett describes the sun having no alternative but to shine, fits very comfortably with the premise of the *Wille*. One would suspect also, as it is with Schopenhauer, that Beckett's image of the sun plays equally to the image of the sun in *ISAIAH 60*. Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee, See *The Bible: Authorized King James version with Apocrypha* (1998) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 820.

substantive than the apparent rising and setting of the sun.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Sealing Off the Exits: Beckett's Refinement of Performative Space.

It would certainly seem from the manner in which Beckett is determined to take his performance away from the conventional reliance upon stage entries and exits; there could indeed be some Schopenhauerian impetus underlying this development. For when we think of a stage character, leaving or entering through the mock registration of a 'door', we instantly afford to that character a freedom over the space in which they find themselves. Therefore by undermining this option in relation to the stage, this same autonomy which we were previously willing to imagine in relation to our character is no longer available. Through this very decision alone, we can create a situation in which the character no longer retains jurisdiction over the space in which they find themselves; they as actors become hostage to a stage performance that offers little or no breathing space for autonomous movement; which as we can see in the case of *Not I* almost literally comes to fruition:

#### *Note*

Movement: this consists in simple sideways raising of arms from sides and their falling back, in a gesture of helpless compassion. It lessens with each recurrence till scarcely perceptible at third. There is just enough pause to contain it as MOUTH recovers from vehement refusal to relinquish third person.  
(N.I., 375.)

Beckett's decision to restrict the performative action of *Not I* to the movement of a single mouth, alongside a series of diminishing arm gestures made by a standing djellaba-clad Auditor, which by all accounts is barely visible to the eye of the audience, provides what is unquestionably a theatrical space whose movement is carried away from the subject and placed instead onto the language itself.<sup>81</sup> Remarkably Beckett creates a space in which the body of the subject is less substantive than the words issuing from its 'mouth'; for it would

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<sup>81</sup> See, Knowlson, J. and Pilling., *Frescoes of the Skull* (1979) op.cit., 195.

seem by restricting the focus of the performance to a solitary mouth, the space of the performance has by virtue of this been dispossessed of all entry points which can support the appearance of a divided or partitioned reality. And from the way in which Beckett introduces the 'mouth' to the audience, that is, by synchronizing the sound of the 'mouth's' voice to the dimming of the auditorium lights, becoming only intelligible once the stage curtain is fully raised; leads one to think, that the reality of this performance, does not actually play to the conventional recognition of the stage curtain as a means of subdivision. In fact, as we can see with the first intelligible utterance from the script, it is the language of the play which is forced to take up the pressure of being divested of its normal points of entry, leaving the 'mouth' or indeed the audience to construct their own imagined 'doorway' from which Beckett's character can make its first appearance:

**MOUTH:** . . . out . . . into this world . . . this world . . . tiny little  
 thing . . . before its time . . . in a godfor- . . . what? . . . girl? . .  
 yes . . . tiny little girl . . . into this . . . out into this . . .  
 before her time...godforsaken hole called . . . called . . .  
 no matter . . .  
 (N.I., 376.)

As is evident from the printed monologue of *Not I*, the intelligible 'out' is set in lower case, promoting the idea that what we take as the opening remark of *Not I*, should in fact be regarded as part of unending stream of language which has no point of entry or ingress. As the dots suggest, the 'out' is in fact being represented as the first audible section of a monologue, which has long since begun even before the curtain is raised. It seems that the written text of *Not I* allows the reader to appreciate what is being received as a pause during the play's performance, which should in fact be re-thought in terms of an audible digression; in which the ear is failing to track what in reality is undifferentiated; therefore we are left with only the representative pressure of the language itself, to create not so much gaps and holes but only the appearance of 'gaps' and 'holes'. In many ways one can think of Beckett shadowing linguistically, what Schopenhauer himself proposes in terms of the *Vorstellung* of birth and death:

Now he who thus links his existence to the identity of *consciousness*,

and therefore desires for this an endless existence after death, should bear in mind that in any case he can attain to this only at the price of just as endless a past before birth. For as he has recollection of an existence before birth, and so his consciousness begins with birth, he must look upon his birth as an arising of his existence out of nothing. But then he purchases the endless time of his existence after death for just as long a time before birth; in this way the account is balanced without any profit to him. On the other hand, if the existence left untouched by death is different from that of individual consciousness, then it must be independent of birth just as it is of death. Accordingly, with reference to it, it must be equally true to say "I shall always be" and "I have always been," which then gives two infinities for one. However the greatest equivocation lies in the word "I," as will be seen at once by anyone who calls to mind the contents of our second book and the separation there carried out of the willing part of our true inner nature from the knowing part. According as I understand this word, I can say: Death is my entire end"; or else: "This my personal phenomenal appearance is just as infinitely small a part of my true inner nature as I am of the world." But the eye or ego is the dark point in consciousness, just as on the retina the precise point of entry of the optic nerve is blind, the brain itself is wholly insensible, the body of the sun is dark, and the eye sees everything except itself.  
(W.W.R.2., 490-491.)

As Schopenhauer sets out in *Die Welt*, once the body of the subject is transferred to the context of its own 'will' (absolute space) its individual significance recedes to an infinitely small point, losing all perceptible definition. In this sense, birth is analogous to a distorted field of vision in which the resulting 'I' is merely a blind spot cut off from its own undivided totality; so what we actually attribute to individual recognition is itself part of this distortion. As soon as we assemble the individual subject in relation to its own 'will' then the foundation on which it rests is no more substantive than a shadow; indeed it could be that this same consideration carries into Beckett's own reassessment of stage-lighting, which, in respect to the ordinance of the later performances takes on a notable complexity. One such work of this late period (first published in 1980) which can illustrate the extent to which the stage lighting has become a highly complicated structural consideration; so as to allow for the definition of a character to fluctuate between objective and non-objective representation, is *Rockaby*:

*Light:*

Subdued on chair. Rest of stage dark.  
Subdued spot on face constant throughout, unaffected by successive fades. Either wide enough to include narrow limits of rock or concentrated on face when still or at mid-rock. Then throughout speech face slightly swaying in and out of light.



Opening fade-up: first spot on face alone, long pause, then light on chair.

Final fade-up: first on face alone, long pause, then light on chair.

Final fade-out: first chair, long pause with spot on face alone, head slowly sinks, comes to rest, fade out spot.

(ROCK., 433.)

In my view the way in which the character of *Rockaby* is partially illuminated throughout a series of successive 'fades' allows Beckett to present to his audience a representation of the polymorphic environment of the 'will' without apparent recourse to material props. For what at first is revealed through the performance as an elderly woman rocking away her last remaining moments of life, in an attempt to reconnect to the very motion which she had first been introduced as a baby; is also carried much deeper as a performance, in which I believe, as I have already set out in relation to *Rockaby*, this piece speaks about the intellect's efforts to subdue the 'will'.<sup>82</sup> What Beckett is able to present through an exquisite piece of lighted choreography, is not only a personalized account of a woman's desperate bid to break through the banality of her existence, and connect meaningfully to another living 'soul' ('quiet at her window only window facing other windows other only windows all blinds down never one up hers alone up'<sup>83</sup>) but that her rocking, which partially casts her face into shade also participates in the universal transience of the whole of humanity. For in the precise manner in which Beckett captures the woman's face being momentarily cast into shadow as she rocks back in her chair, there is I believe transmitted in this very movement the same scene in which Clov (the representative of the conscious identity) says his adieu to Hamm; but in this instance in which Beckett has achieved another aesthetic refinement in his absolute characterization of the 'will', he is able to compress this entire scene in one single repetitive action. But just as we have explored in relation *Endgame*, despite the phenomenal departure of the intellect; the 'will' is still blindly pushing forward, looking ceaselessly for new phenomenal avenues. Therefore using the lighting in this structural sense, as the woman in the

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<sup>82</sup> For an alternative account of the of 'rocking' in *Rockaby* devised upon the image of the new born baby in Arnold Geulincx *Ethics*, see Uhlmann, A., *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*, op.cit., 78-85. Interestingly the image of the cradle is used by Geulincx 'to explain the relation of our will to the will of God', so as soon as we remove the divinity, we are find ourselves back in the arms of Schopenhauer. See Ibid., 79.

<sup>83</sup> Beckett, S., *Complete Dramatic Works* op.cit., 438.

chair rocks back into the darkness, she by this very action loses all phenomenal resolution and yet still remains just like Hamm (and Schopenhauerian 'will') undiminished. It certainly seems to me that with this carefully considered use of lighting Beckett is able to move much closer to a more fully realized aesthetic vision of the 'will' than what has previously been attempted with *Godot* and *Endgame*. For now as we can see with *Rockaby*, the 'will' as it is manifested in the 'woman' goes much further in obtaining an undifferentiated identity in which both the micro and the macro-worlds are revealed as ultimately sharing in the same identity. As Schopenhauer puts it:

Thus microcosm and macrocosm elucidate each other, whereby they prove to be essentially the same. This consideration that is associated with man's inner nature, penetrates and permeates the whole of metaphysics in all its parts and cannot again appear separately as psychology.  
(P.P.2., 19.)

By exploiting the rocking motion of the chair, so that the woman's head moves in and out of a narrowly defined region of light, Beckett I believe is able to re-stage in the blinking of an 'eye' an re-enactment of the 'will's' phenomenal acquisition and ultimate release of the human subject; the light and shadow resurrecting and distinguishing the subject in one single rocking action; thus capturing life and death as an undifferentiated reflex, rather than a punctuated interval in which the subject can enter and leave the stage:

Life is then given out as a gift, whereas it is evident that anyone would have declined it with thanks, had he looked at it and tested it beforehand; just as Lessing admired the understanding of his son. Because this son had absolutely declined to come into the world, he had to be dragged forcibly into life by forceps; but hardly was he in it, when he hurried away from it.  
(W.W.R.2., 579.)

Beckett has in my view been able to reconfigure in one single action byway of stage-lighting, the mind going 'wombtomb':

Torture by thought and trial by living, because it was fake thought and false living, stayed outside the tunnel. But in the umbra, the tunnel, when the mind went wombtomb, then it was real thought and real living, living thought.

Thought not skiv-vying for living nor living chivvying  
thought up to the six-and-eightpenny conviction, but  
live celebration that drew no wages and emptied no slops.  
(D.F.M.W., 45.)

As we can see from the *Dream* passage, the mental acquisition of the 'wombtomb' bears all the hallmarks of a state of Schopenhauerian aesthetic disinterest, in which the mind seeks to remove itself from the attachment of all desire; for as Beckett says of this newly acquired state of mind it 'drew no wages and emptied no slops.' Therefore the breakdown in object-subject distinction allowing the 'woman' to 'let down the blind and [go] right down into the old rocker'<sup>84</sup> is itself not just a dramatic staging of an elderly woman edging towards her own demise; but I believe much more importantly it is representing an artistic vision which is moving away from willful attachment.<sup>85</sup> For as Beckett implies in *Dream*, true aesthetic contemplation irons out all the gains and losses, in an attempt not just to close the gap between life and death, but to shut out suffering altogether. And this would undoubtedly, no matter how fleetingly, constitute the ultimate accomplishment in Schopenhauerian terms. As we can see in *Dream* 'wombtomb' is literally an attempt by Beckett to close the gap between life and death linguistically; so that in the context of his novel it does not present the conventional punctuation between life and death, or indeed 'object' and 'subject'. In this sense as we have already explored previously with *Dream* this whole approach to the novel brings about an underlying pressure in Beckett's writing to reveal itself in terms of a reality which presents no division; despite all efforts brought by Belacqua to break through its surface. So, by directing his attention to the theatre Beckett has been able to remain committed to a view of the absolute and undivided character of the 'will' and yet still have the kind of room necessary for legitimizing his role as an artist, something which he felt (as we can appreciate from his interview in the *New York Times* in 1956) his prose writing was no

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<sup>84</sup> Beckett, S., *The Complete Dramatic Works* op.cit., 440. As we can see as well as hear, the 'verticality' of *Rockaby* takes on greater and greater definition as the performance progresses.

<sup>85</sup> As Chris Ackerley sets out in his essay 'The Geometry of the Imagination' the vertical trajectory of Murphy mind (or otherwise) starts from a position representative of *Nominalism* and *Realism*, that which is tied to surface *Phenomena* and moves away into a space designated to the *Noumena*. But interestingly this vertical movement is also seen to coincide with a signature of illumination: *light*, the *half-light* and the dark; which as I see it could also be equally applied to *Rockaby*. See Chris Ackerley 'Samuel Beckett: Geometry of the Imagination', Fifeild, P. and Feldman, M. *Samuel Beckett's: Debts and Legacies New Critical Essays* (2013) London: Bloomsbury, 98.

longer capable of delivering. It seems that for Beckett, the theatre not only satisfied his own deeply entrenched Schopenhauerian sympathies, but just as crucially it allowed for a spatial movement unavailable to the novel. The undivided surface of the novel, becomes utterly transformed in the context of Beckett's theatre, for the same indivisible pressure, as witnessed in the novel, is allowed to take on perspective unimaginable to the printed page; in which the space of the 'subject' can transmit the reality of a 'character' in terms of an interior and exterior; whose movement 'permeates all its parts'. So, in the context of the 'will', what we judge as an individual, cut off and isolated from its fellow subjects ('sitting at her window quiet at her window only window facing other windows') is in fact no different from the retinal blind spot in *Die Welt* preventing the eye from ever receiving a full picture of itself. In fact like most of Beckett's stage work, the 'eye' is never far from his calculations, which in the instance of *Rockaby* it would appear that the subject of the woman's reality becomes literally confined to the 'eye' itself as it does in Schopenhauer.<sup>86</sup> For I suspect by locating the performance of *Rockaby* within a polymorphic context, Beckett attempts to register the 'micro' and the 'macro' as one indivisible expression, in which the movement of the rocking chair bears the stamp of a singular eye blinking; with the 'blind' of the woman's room forming the accompanying eye lid, looking out towards other eyes, all of whose 'lids' are drawn closed:<sup>87</sup>

all blinds down  
 never one up  
 hers alone up  
 till the day came  
 in the end came  
 close of a long day  
 sitting at her window  
 quiet at her window  
 all eyes  
 all sides  
 (ROCK., 438.)

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<sup>86</sup> See Wulf's account of the language in *Rockaby* creating a verbal image which can form 'a kind of projection screen for our own meditations.' Wulf, C., op.cit., 133.

<sup>87</sup> As an image it clearly brings to mind Belacqua in *Yellow*: "Belacqua made a long arm and switched off the lamp. It threw shadows. He would close his eyes, he would bilk the dawn in that way. What were the eyes anyway? The posterns of the mind. They were safer closed." See, Beckett, S., *More Pricks than Kicks*. (1993) London: Calder Publications Ltd., 173.

Interestingly, if we care to compare Schopenhauer's image of the 'eye' in *Die Welt* ('the eye or ego is the dark point in consciousness, just as on the retina the precise point of entry of the optic nerve is blind'<sup>88</sup>) with Beckett's own dramatic reconstruction of the 'eye' in *Rockaby* (in which the 'rocker' is concurrently being projected as an 'eye' moving underneath its eyelid) then it is quite plausible to imagine; especially in the context of 'absolute' space; the exterior and interior reality of the eye folding in on itself, so that the solitary woman is now held in relation to a projected image, with the backrest of the chair as it were forming the retina on which she herself is being projected. And as we have seen already with the accompanying stage notes to *Rockaby*, Beckett himself provides his own retinal blind spot:

Subdued spot on face constant throughout, unaffected by successive fades.  
(ROCK., 433.)

So in a quite remarkable fashion I believe Beckett has been able to register the aged woman in *Rockaby* as yet another form of *Vorstellung* in which she herself is an 'image' housed in her own 'eye'. Also it would seem that the 'eye' in *Rockaby* does not just rest with the woman in the rocking chair, but is by extension the 'eye' of the audience which ultimately the entire performance rests upon. What remains astonishing though, is the way Beckett is able to achieve this polymorphic construction without in anyway compromising the space in which he locates, what is, a deeply moving portrayal of a woman whose return to infancy is her only defense against the ravages of suffering and infirmity, before she passes away in her rocking chair. It is precisely the manner in which Beckett is able to hold onto to his personal Schopenhauerian assessment of suffering, and the phenomenal insecurity arising from it, while at the same time still be able to create a subject whose movement and reaction to life; is fully recognizable as human. For the woman in *Rockaby*; though located in the same impenetrable space as *Dream*'s 'cubic unknown'<sup>89</sup> and the *Trilogy*'s 'unnamable', displays its phenomenal skepticism in a way which can still accommodate a carefully observed account of institutionalized dementia; the kind of which Beckett himself would have been all too familiar

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<sup>88</sup> W.W.R.2., 491.

<sup>89</sup> D.F.M.W., 124.

with, having witnessed his mother's own degenerative decline with Parkinson's disease.<sup>90</sup> Beckett, it seems with *Not I* and *Rockaby*, has arrived at a position in which he moves significantly closer to what I believe, is an attempt to create an undifferentiated aesthetic space in which the performance can achieve a dramatic representation of the 'will' harnessed to the intellect without having to resort to any forced dichotomy, which spills over into allegory. As a performance *Not I*, just like *Rockaby* and *What Where* fundamentally shifts the ground on which the dramatic subject is able to reveal in one undivided expression its own implacable opposition to what it is in terms of language, intellect and ultimately 'will':

...what? ... the buzzing? ... yes ... all  
the time the buzzing ... so called ... in the ears ... through  
of course actually ... not in the ears at all ... in the skull ...  
dull roar in the skull ... and all the time this ray or beam  
... like moonbeam ... but ... probably not ... certainly not ...  
always the same spot ... now bright ... now shrouded ...  
but always the same spot ... as no moon could ... no ...  
no moon ... just all part of the same wish to ... torment  
(N.I., 378.)

It seems that *Not I*, as a dramatic performance, signals Beckett's own disquiet at having to rely upon a divided image to express what in truth is not a dichotomy at all. For as we can see the body can no longer be used as a serviceable address to pinpoint the willful subject, whose conscious identity moves between the ears and the skull, like some infuriating insect that needs swatting: 'the buzzing? ... yes ... all the time the buzzing'. In *Not I* all this indivisible traffic between the subject and the world; ultimately leads to one destination; that of suffering: 'just all parts of the same wish to ... torment'. And so in this sense, the idea that the reality of the subject is fundamentally operating in the context of one single 'desire', namely, to create 'suffering', remains itself fundamentally Schopenhauerian in its outlook. Thus we have arrived at a view, in which the stage for Beckett has been a continued assault on the systematized geometry of space, leaving the entry and exit points of his plays to be raised in connection to a miscalculated assessment towards the world. It might now be worth

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<sup>90</sup> See 'He was profoundly affected by what he described as the 'terrible moral and physical distress' See Knowlson, J. *Damned to Fame*, op.cit., 382. .

returning to some earlier dramatic territory in order to assess just how it could be that the 'absolute' environment which we see governing the later performances has emerged from this attempt to cast all material and intertextual gaps as illusory. We have already begun to uncover, the extraordinary way in which Beckett uses allusions in order to achieve a form of spatial density, without recourse to the kind of spatial geometry which the Glazier in *Eleuthéria* tries to enforce each time he reaches into his 'tool kit'. For example, in the case of *Endgame*, despite the fact that we as an audience are allowed to see Clov put on his Panama hat and tweed coat, in anticipation of his exit, he does not actually leave Hamm's household; he merely stands away from Hamm refusing to respond to his master's voice, having said all that he is prepared to say:

**CLOV:** This is what we call making an exit.  
(ENDG., 51.)

So it would seem that the new theatrical space, which Beckett makes available after *Eleuthéria*, radicalizes the theatrical ground plan of the performative stage, in which there is no longer available to the performance a spatial retreat which participates in the appearance of division. The fact that the performance of *Endgame*, unlike *Godot*, is held within one act, and not spread over two, could also have played to this same consideration concerning the eradication of a divided appearance; which apart from *Happy Days*, the play which directly follows *Endgame* and *Act Without Words* (1) becomes the standard approach to all his theatrical work. In fact in the television play *Eh Joe*, which is set in a bedsit, the door itself is opened and closed, but it is never accessed in terms of an exit or an entrance. Indeed even in the instance when we clearly see the intention of the door being used as a barrier; as in *Film* it soon becomes apparent that any faith in this arrangement does not itself hold out. So, just as Beckett's characters are unable to locate the exit points in their performance, be it through a series of imagined doors or verbal pauses in their speech; it also remains ultimately true of that other perceived exit point, 'suicide'; therefore the omission of 'suicide' becomes in the instance of Beckett's work, a way of ensuring that even the 'emergency exits' are sealed. And Just like the 'Beethoven pauses' in *Dream*, Winnie's 'Amens' in *Happy Days* offer an

equally unsustainable sanctuary; they like all the ‘pauses’ in Beckett’s work, are in effect only illusory sightings of of a cessation which can never come to pass:

**WINNIE:** [*Gazing at zenith.*] Another heavenly day. [*Pause. Head back level, eyes front, pause. She clasps hands to breast, closes eyes. Lips move inaudible prayer, say ten seconds. Lips still. Hands remain clasped. Low.*] For Jesus Christ sake Amen. [*Eyes open, hands unclasp, return to mound. Pause. She clasps hands to breast again, say five seconds. Low.*] World without end Amen.  
(H.D., 138.)

As we see with Winnie’s opening prayer of the day, the ‘Amen’ on which she tries to conclude does not it itself allow for any sustained pause, instead it would seem it leaves her quietly exasperated.<sup>91</sup> For once viewed from under its ecclesiastical investiture, Winnie’s prayer can be seen as a supplication for some kind of intermission: ‘For Jesus Christ sake Amen.’ So I would actually argue that the space which we are confronted by in *Happy Days* remains every inch a copy of *The Unnamable*:

I’ll recognise it,  
in the end I’ll recognise it, the story of the silence that he never  
left, that I should have never have left, that I may never find again, that  
I may find again, then it will be he, it will be I, it will be the place,  
the silence, the end, the beginning, the beginning again, how can I  
say it, that’s all words, they’re all all I have, and not many of them,  
the words fail, the voice fails, so be it, I know that well, it will be  
the silence full of murmurs...  
(T.U., 417.)

By using the doxology, *Gloria Patri*; Beckett has been able to capture the tension between the reality which is implicit in the sentence, that there is no ‘worldly’ intermission, alongside Winnie’s own desire for an entr’acte: ‘World without end Amen.’ But because Beckett is able to achieve this by exploiting an already familiar sentence structure; there appears nothing forced about the language; and yet as soon as we observe it outside the assurance of its liturgical framing, I believe the words re-enact the very bind which Schopenhauer raises

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<sup>91</sup> “In Humanistic Questism” prayer is the possibility of escaping the confines of language, the “tongue-tied profanity”: Beckett, S., *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writing and Dramatic Fragments.*, ed., Cohn, R. (1983) London: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd., 68. See also, Mathew Feldman ‘Agnostic Quietism’ Kennedy, S and Weiss *Samuel Beckett: History, Memory, Archive New Interpretations of Beckett in Twenty-First Century* (2009) Palgrave Macmillan.



between 'desire' and the world as 'will' or as Schopenhauer would say in German: *Wille*:<sup>92</sup>

Poor Willie - [*examines tube, smile off*] - running out - [*looks for cap*] - ah well - [*finds cap*] - can't be helped - [*screws on cap*] - just one of those old things - [*lays down tube*] - another of those old things - [*turns towards bag*] - just can't be cured - [*rummages in bag*] - cannot be cured - [*brings out small mirror, turns back front*] - ah yes - [*inspect teeth in mirror*] - poor dear Willie - [*testing upper front teeth with thumb, indistinctly*] - good Lord! - [*pulling back upper lip to inspect gums, do.*] - good God! - [*pulling back corner of mouth, mouth open, do.*] - ah well - [*other corner, do.*] - no worse - [*abandons inspection, normal speech*] - no better - no worse - [*lay down mirror*] - no change - [*wipes fingers on grass*] - no pain - [*looks for toothbrush*] - hardly any - [*takes up toothbrush*] - great thing that - [*examines handle of brush*] - nothing like it - [*examines handle, reads*] - pure . . . what? - [*pause*] - what? - [*lays down brush*] - ah yes - [*turns towards bag*] - poor Willie -  
(H.D., 139.)

As we can see from *Happy Days*, Beckett's own theatrical construction of 'Willie's world' is in many respects on a dramatic par with Schopenhauer's picture of life as a form of momentary distraction, : endlessly plagued by boredom, repetition and suffering. In all likelihood, any partnership arising in *Happy Days* (1961) a play which has come straight off the back of *Endgame* (1957), would on some level represent the intellect's own attempts to subdue the 'will'. As we know from *Die Welt*, the subject is never in a position to destroy his or her own 'will' through an artistic programme of aesthetic disinterest. If there were any doubt as to whether to place this aesthetic appreciation in a non- Schopenhauerian camp, we simply need to observe from the way in which Winnie's verbal reflections fall immediately on the prospect of minimizing pain 'no pain - hardly - any - great - thing that - nothing like - pure . . . what? - what? - ah yes - poor Willie'. As we can see, having excluded the descriptive action of Winnie going about her daily ablutions, what is revealed, having in one sense held back the phenomenal characterization of the play, is in my view Beckett's own meditation on Schopenhauerian aesthetic disinterest:

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<sup>92</sup> The idea that Beckett exploits an already familiar sentence structure in order to conceal what I believe to be an aesthetic dialogue between the intellect and the 'Wille', carries the same ambition set out in the dramatic fragment of *Human Wishes*, see below introduction.

Raised up by the power of the mind, we relinquish the ordinary way of considering things, and cease to follow under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason merely their relations to one another, whose final goal is always the relation to our own will. Thus we no longer consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things, but simply and solely the *what*.  
(W.W.R.1., 178.)

In fact when we consider the possibility of locating Beckett's own meditations on Schopenhauerian aesthetics, by essentially cutting free Winnie's speech from the images and action which accompany them on stage, (something which we have already seen in relation to the voice recording and woman in *Rockaby*), then we are in one sense, actually approaching the Schopenhauerian instruction, of ceasing 'to follow under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason'. Having seen already the way in which on occasion the words in *Endgame* seem at odds with the play's phenomenal setting, I believe in the case of *Happy Days* there is a further attempt to reform the language (which as we can see with its 'hyphens' appears very differently to *Godot* and *Endgame*) in order to move the space of the theatre towards a much less differentiated platform, in which the performance can now raise the possibility of a dramatic characterization which moves outside the material framing of the body. For in one very obvious sense Winnie's performance is rendered immobile, by the sheer fact that in the first act she is buried up to her waist in a 'mound' of earth, while in the second, she is buried up to her neck, meanwhile her husband Willie is hidden altogether and only occasionally does the audience get to glimpse his arms or bald head (which Beckett indicates in the script is 'trickling blood').<sup>93</sup> emerging from behind the mound. So, by deliberately incapacitating the phenomenal profile of the stage performance, I believe we can begin to establish a trajectory which will eventually take Beckett into the theatrical space reserved for *Not I*, *Rockaby* and *What Were*, in which the movement of the performance moves away from the subject, and onto the language of the play (in the instance of *Rockaby*, it is the rocking-chair and not the subject which moves). In this sense the 'will' of the subject clearly becomes conflated with the play's language; in a way which I believe to be, every bit as insoluble as that which we see in *Dream* or *The Unnamable*. Having identified the way in which Winnie's

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<sup>93</sup> Beckett, S., *The Complete Dramatic Works* (2006) London: Faber and Faber Limited., 141.

prayer opens onto the same ground as *The Unnamable*, I believe that this indivisible characterization of space, has significant implications for any entropic model of *Happy Days* which looks to exploit the signature of ‘disintegration’ such as that put forward by Knowlson:

‘Certainly hundreds of words are expended on the most humdrum of activities: combing her hair, doing her nails, cleaning her spectacles, inspecting her gums, and reading the words on the medicine-bottle label or on the handle of her tooth brush. Some of these actions merely fill in the time for Winnie but may point to the theme of physical decline and decay and suggest that a more universal form of entropy is operating as lipstick and medicine both run out.’<sup>94</sup>

For if we are to assume that the space of *Happy Days* bears any resemblance to the undifferentiated character of Schopenhauer’s ‘will’, in which both Winnie and Willie are inextricably bound to one another, in a manner recalling Hamm and Clov’s own relationship; then it would seem that any deterioration mapped in relation to the subject, be it in the plurality of language or indeed the ‘objects’ to which such a plurality extends; is itself I suspect, being offered as yet another illusion operating in the context of *Vorstellung*. Because of this, the ‘holes’ and ‘gaps’ arising in the worn and tired appearance of the language in *Happy Days* does nothing in the way of silencing the ‘will.’ For, unlike Knowlson’s own assessment, which speaks of an ‘attempt to impose some meaning on a meaningless world with worn-out words’.<sup>95</sup> I believe any such attempts to derive an optimistic breathing space from the language Winnie manages to salvage from the empty commercial packaging, newspapers and liturgy (another form of litter) are sadly mistaken, due to the fact that the pluralism underpinning such a lexicon is clearly part of the *Principium Individuationis*, which as we have already examined in relation to *Die Welt* and *Proust* is seen as a false construction in respect to true art. And yet in a way there is something in what Knowlson says, not that a renewed meaning springs from the fragmentation of a disposable culture, let’s say, the way Eliot envisioned in *The Waste Land*, but rather that an impoverished language such as we see in *Happy Days* can itself hold value, in the way its very tiredness

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<sup>94</sup> Knowlson, J. and Pilling, J., *Frescoes of the Skull* op.cit., 103

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 102

participates in a weakening of desire ('no worse - no better - no worse'). The reason why Beckett presents the language of *Happy Days* as being the product of refuse, is in my view precisely because he believed language as a whole plays to a hollow illusion, it holds all the promise of piece of empty packaging; honouring all kinds of spurious claims in relation to individual empowerment and freedom; when in truth its is nothing more than 'dressing up' the same 'old stancher'.<sup>96</sup> Where the obscenity lies for Beckett is the way in which this mental packaging has been allowed to assume the identity of 'freedom' that all of us as a collective human species, have on some level bought into this, including, dare I say Beckett himself. For in the context of the *Ding an sich*, if language is to have a 'positive' value at all; (we speak of language as the ultimate gift) then in a fully-fledged Schopenhauerian sense, language becomes an unavoidable extension of suffering; for the only thing that corresponds to anything 'positive' is the 'will' whose purpose has no meaning other than to generate blind suffering, of which 'desire' is a part. So, if at this point Beckett has as an artist deliberately intended to equate language with suffering, then clearly one needs to be in a position to either refrain from language as much as one can; or alternatively suppress the 'positive' evaluation of the language which lies at the disposition of his art; by moving it fully into the domain of *Vorstellung* which in truth carries neither a 'positive' or 'negative' (no worse - no better - no worse) value. In my view this is truly the language of 'Not I', for it is a language which is trying to desperately stay clear of any 'positive' evaluation which will inevitably drag 'it' back down into the mire of the 'will'; and thus open the 'subjects' identity up to the limitless and imperishable structure of suffering:

. . . words were- . . . what? . .  
 who? . . .no! . . . she! . . .  
 (N.I., 379.)

If Beckett's stress on the 'what' is indeed deliberately evoking the *what* which Schopenhauer explicitly connects to the *Ding an sich*; then it is clear in relation to *Not I* that the 'positive' acquisition of the subject, operating in conjunction to a grammatical clause is itself being reconfigured by Beckett as a means of providing the 'will' with a convenient route into its

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<sup>96</sup> ENDG., 53.

own suffering. In this more highly attuned presentation of the 'will' what we initially encountered in terms of a staged performance, depicting one character assisting another character to wake up, as we see in *Endgame*; is itself I believe, transferred to the insoluble space of *Not I*, so what appears to be an uncontrollable, erratic out-burst from an elderly woman, who has fallen from social grace, is in fact charting the phenomenal descent of the 'will' back into the subject.<sup>97</sup> For the 'what?' (namely the 'will' gauging its own phenomenal possibility) voices the fateful 'who' which leads to the inevitable acquisition of the subject - the 'she'. All of which Beckett frames in terms of suffering: 'no! . . . she!' This is, I believe, Beckett's own stage refinement of Clov throwing aside Hamm's dust-sheet; in other words what is being depicted is the 'will's' own phenomenal emergence, via the intellect. For in the context of *Not I*, just as it is in Schopenhauer's *Die Welt* as soon as the 'will' moves into the guise of a conscious subject, it has the misfortune of instantly raising the definition of its own suffering; so that now the necessity of suffering is linked to its very survival and movement:

she suddenly realized . . . gradually realized . . . she was not  
suffering . . . imagine! . . . not suffering! . . . indeed . . . could not  
remember . . . off hand . . . when she had suffered less . . .  
unless of course she was . . . *meant* to be suffering . . .  
ha! . . . *thought* to be suffering . . . just as the odd time . . . in  
which case of course . . . that notion of punishment . . . for  
some sin or other . . . or for the lot . . . or no particular  
reason . . . for its own sake . . .  
(N.I., 377.)

As the monologue from *Not I* reveals, suffering is being regarded as the primary state of all living and conscious reality, the 'mouth' is open to the possibility that 'she' is here to suffer: 'unless of course she was . . . *meant* to be suffering'. This is precisely Schopenhauer's own position in relation to his philosophy of 'will' that underneath all the 'window dressing' the only free movement possible is that which locates itself in terms of suffering; and again as we can see from the script of *Not I*, suffering and punishment comes into being 'for its own sake'. As we can gauge from the disclosure of the 'mouth', there appears to have temporarily arisen

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<sup>97</sup> 'Blindfolded with a hood over her face, she suffered sensory deprivation: "I [Billie Whitelaw] went to pieces. I felt I had no body; I could not relate to where I was; and, going at that speed, I was becoming very dizzy and felt like an astronaut tumbling into space. I swore to God I was falling.'" see, *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett*, op.cit., 411.

a most unexpected state of being; a state which does not itself engender suffering. But having said this, it appears that what Beckett is trying to present, is the difficulty one has in holding on to such a fragile arrangement; for as soon as the 'mouth' tries to secure 'its' own 'absence of suffering' in conscious terms, it appears to slide. The very realization itself, appears to allow the 'non suffering state' to fall back towards 'willful desire' and eventually suffering itself: 'she was not suffering . . . imagine . . . not suffering! . . . indeed . . . could not remember . . . off hand. . . when she had suffered less. . . unless of course she was . . . *meant* to be suffering'. In fact in many ways, it is the same kind of conscious descent which also reverberates in Kleist's *Das Marionettentheater*:

It seemed, he replied, taking a pinch of snuff, that I had not read the third chapter of Genesis attentively; and a man not familiar with that first period of all human education could not properly discuss those following it, let alone the last.  
I said that I was perfectly well aware of the damage done by consciousness to the natural grace of a human being.<sup>98</sup>

So from this perspective the phenomenally-deprived vision which Beckett creates in relation to *Not I* is not at all I suspect in any way attempting to summon up an image of hell; that is to say, anything more hellish than what had previously been represented through his work.<sup>99</sup> In fact I feel if anything the phenomenal dispossession which Beckett achieves in relation to the performance of *Not I* has the very opposite intention; but rather to reconfigure a type of 'grace' which Kleist and Schopenhauer touch upon:

Apprehension of an idea, its entry into our consciousness, comes about only by means of a change in us, which might also be regarded as an act of self-denial. To this extent it consists of knowledge turning away entirely from our own will, and thus leaving entirely out of sight the precious pledge entrusted to it, and considering things as though they could never in any way concern the will. For only thus does knowledge become the pure mirror of the objective inner nature of things. A knowledge so conditioned must be the basis of every genuine work of art as its origin.  
(W.W.R.2., 367.)

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<sup>98</sup> Kleist, H., op.cit., 414.

<sup>99</sup> "Mouth's situation is more harrowing, suggestive of an inescapable hell.": see, Worth, K., *Samuel Beckett's Theatre Life Journeys* (1999) Oxford: Clarendon Press Oxford., 59.

Again in such a refined theatrical space, I feel, just as with the previous examination of *What Where*, that Beckett with *Not I* is actually driving the performance in a direction which renders the 'I' between the audience and the 'mouth' up on stage, as one undifferentiated entity; whose movement within such a phenomenally deprived space become inseparably bound to each another. In this sense Beckett has transfigured the Kleistian puppetry of Schopenhauer's *Vorstellung* in which the 'puppeteer's' invisible threads operate not just in relation to the actors on stage, but also the audience in their seats; who by having essentially no other sensory point of reference other than the 'mouth' are forced to align themselves with an indeterminate 'subject' whose language takes on a density, which is seemingly raised to a point, in which it the language, and not the 'mouth' is in possession of the real movement being represented on stage:

... no idea ... what she was saying  
 ... imagine! ... no idea what she was saying! ... till she began  
 trying to ... delude herself ... it was not hers at all ... not  
 her voice at all ... and no doubt would have ... vital she  
 should ... was on the point ... after long efforts ... when  
 suddenly she felt ... gradually she felt ... her lips moving  
 ... imagine! ... her lips moving! ... as of course till then she  
 had not ... and not alone the lips ... the cheeks ... the  
 jaws ... the whole face ... all those- ... what? ... the  
 tongue? ... yes ... the tongue in the mouth ... all those  
 contortions without which ... no speech possible ... and  
 yet in this ordinary way ... not felt at all ... so intent one  
 is ... on what one is saying ... the whole being ... hanging  
 on its words ...

(N.I., 379.)

As we can see from *Not I* it is the words issuing from the 'mouth' which are obliged to literally spell out the mouth; what initially constituted as the 'subject', is itself being shown to move under the instruction of the language. So just as the puppeteer pulls on the strings to register the movement of the limbs of the puppet; Beckett's script has an equal effect on the freedom of movement in relation to the acting. In my view, the recitation about the 'lips, cheeks, jaw, face, mouth, and tongue' is not about the 'subject' taking repossession of its body, in which the 'mouth' draws upon a heightened physical sense of itself; but rather about tracing the indivisible movement under all of these localized divisions; so that the 'voice' can emerge from underneath the false or illusory assembly of the 'mouth'. Beckett I believe with

*Not I* is moving the language beyond the subject in order that the ‘mouth’ can bear witness to itself, via the audience; so that it too, like the ‘subject’ in *Rockaby* can be cast as a ‘blind-spot’ on a undifferentiated reality. In this sense, the later performances really do testify to the extraordinary effort on Beckett’s part to radically reorientate the theatre; in a way which allows for a performance capable of representing the ‘subject’ on a totally naturalistic level, while at the same time; removing the same ‘subject’ from the illusory assessment of spatial, temporal and causal freedom. As we can see with Beckett’s *Not I* and *Rockaby*, their great achievement over *Endgame* is the way in which Beckett can locate the performance of these two plays behind the phenomenal facade of the ‘subject’, without having to compromise the space of the ‘subject’ in terms of an extendable reality; the kind to which the head motif in *Endgame* invariably falls foul; due to its ‘box within a box’ construction. Having looked to the spatial refinement of Beckett’s latter plays; I feel we should now return to the transitorial territory of *Happy Days* in order to consider what kind of development is in play, which could possibly lead us in the direction of the spatial reconfiguration of *Not I* and *Rockaby*. Clearly with respects to *Happy Days* the play still remains in the service of a recognizable spatial profile; insofar as Beckett locates the identity of Winnie and Wille amongst the phenomenal scraps which constitute their domestic existence. But it would seem by this point, that for Beckett the decision has been reached that what little objective character he does concede to his plays will remain fixed as well as severely restricted in its vocabulary. For as we can observe with *Happy Days* there has clearly been a deliberate attempt by Beckett to recirculate the same phenomenal vocabulary as that of *Endgame*; just think of the handkerchief that covers Willie’s head from the unremitting sun, or the optical adjusted character of Winnie’s engagement with her immediate environment.<sup>100</sup> All of which can trace their phenomenal outline to the blood stained handkerchief covering Hamm’s face, and the telescope which Clov peers through in response to his master’s instructions.<sup>101</sup> It could even

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<sup>100</sup> For a more personalized Schopenhauerian construction of Winnie’s myopia see, Weller, A., *A Taste for the Negative: Beckett and Nihilism* (2005) London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing., 149.

<sup>101</sup> It should also be noted that Pozzo in *Waiting for Godot* requires glasses in order to judge whether Vladimir and Estragon are human: see, W.G., 15.



be said that the mound which is raised up to Winnie's neck in act Two of *Happy Days* is itself an attempt by Beckett to dramatically re-present Clov's own imagined landscape of accumulating 'grain', eventually resulting in its own 'impossible little heap':

**CLOV:** [*Fixed gaze, tonelessly.*] Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. [*Pause.*] Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. [*Pause.*] I can't be punished any more. [*Pause.*]  
(ENDG., 12.)

So, what I want to convey is the idea that by recirculating the same fixed phenomenal profile; Beckett himself imposes upon the dramatic space in which he is working in, a movement which does not arise from change initiated by a particular action or individual character; but one which arises through altering the perspective of the 'play' which in 'itself' does not come under any revision. It is this which I believe Beckett himself is determined to forge in relation to his work; that is to say, to set about creating a drama whose entire movement is premised upon perspective; and not causal movement, the source through which all suffering is ultimately directed. By doing this I believe Beckett is actually attempting to locate his work outside the structure of suffering; in effect to create what Schopenhauer himself thought only applicable to the category of music; an art-form which does not play to the structural mechanism of suffering. In effect you could say Beckett was out to create genuine 'music drama' and do exactly what Wagner was unable to do with his opera; i.e. create an art-form which is capable of following through with Schopenhauer's aesthetic agenda; which of course is not to magnify the 'will' to unprecedented levels as we see with Wagner; but its exact reverse to lower its resolution as much as is feasibly possible. But not only is Beckett able to locate his art in terms of minimizing suffering, but also just as crucially to the Schopenhauerian agenda by recirculating the images of his previous work; he upholds the idea that 'the source of true wisdom lies not in abstract rational knowledge, but in the correct and profound apprehension of the world in perception.'<sup>102</sup> In many ways it is even possible to look upon these reinforced images, which circulate throughout Beckett's work, in terms of his

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<sup>102</sup> W.W.R.2., 80.

own theatrical fidelity towards the principle of Platonic Ideas; which as we know are fundamentally integral to Schopenhauer's own philosophy:

Therefore the twenties and early thirties are for the intellect what May is for the trees; only at that time do the blossoms, of which all the later fruits are the development, begin to show. The world of perception has made its impression, and thus has laid the foundation of all the subsequent ideas of the individual. By reflection this individual can make clear to himself what has been apprehended; he can still acquire much knowledge as nourishment for the fruit that has once begun to show. He can enlarge his views, correct his concepts and judgements, and really become master of the material acquired through endless combinations. In fact, he will often produce his best work much later, just as the greatest heat begins only when the days are already growing shorter. But he has no longer any hope of new original knowledge from the only living source of perception.

(W.W.R.2., 81.)

What the dramatic structure of *Happy Days* reveals to my mind, is precisely this move to stage in front of an audience a performance whose movement ceases to be an issue of active freedom; but instead holds out the value of the performance in terms of being able to change the tone and resolution of a play that has already had its spatial parameters fixed. In this way I believe that the original ambition of *Dream's* 'melodic little book' is still very much alive with Beckett, only that this time it has been transferred to the stage:

Now the point is that it is most devoutly to be hoped that some at least of our characters can be cast for parts in a liu-liu. For example, John might be the Yellow Bell and the Smeraldina-Rima the young Liu and the Syra-Cusa the Stifled Bell and the Mandarin the Ancient Purification and Belacqua himself the Beneficient Fecundity or Imperfect, and so on. Then it would only be a question of juggling like Confucius on cubes of Jade and playing a tune. If all our characters were like that - liu-liu-minded - we could write a little book that would be purely melodic, think how nice that would be, linear, a lovely Pythagorean chain-chant solo of cause and effect, a one fingered telephony that would be a pleasure to hear.

(D.F.M.W., 10.)

In this sense Beckett's characters of Winnie and Clov, or even that of Willie and Hamm, all move within the same theatrical structure, but rather than representing each character as a separate and distinct reality in themselves; they are, I believe essentially the same repeated notes, which in the case of Winnie and Clov or Willie and Hamm, change only in relation to

the degree of stress placed behind them. In fact not only do I believe that Winnie and Willie sound the same notes as Clov and Hamm; but this is I believe also true of the 'Mouth' and 'Auditor' in *Not I* and the 'Women' and 'voice' in *Rockaby*; all of these characterizations remain ultimately fixed in relation to the 'intellect' and the 'will'. As Schopenhauer says in *Die Welt* 'He can enlarge his views, correct his concepts and judgements, and really become master of the material acquired through endless combinations[...] But he has no longer any hope of new original knowledge'. For Beckett I believe that he saw his art only emerging as fully legitimate if he could openly remain as a novelist and playwright fully accountable to such a judgement:

He took the biscuit carefully out of the packet and laid them face upward on the grass, in order as he felt of edibility. They were the same as always, a Ginger, an Osborne, a Digestive, a Petit Beurre and one anonymous. He always ate the first-named last, because he liked it the best, and the anonymous first, because he thought it very likely the least palatable. The order in which he ate the remaining three was indifferent to him and varied irregularly from day to day. On his knees now before the five it struck him for the first time that these prepossessions reduced to a paltry six the number of ways in which he could make this meal. But this was to violate the very essence of assortment, this was red permanganate on the Rima of variety. Even if he conquered his prejudice against the anonymous, still there would be only twenty-four ways in which the biscuits could be eaten. But were he to take the final step and overcome his infatuation with the ginger, then the assortment would spring to life before him, dancing the radiant measure of its total permutability, edible in a hundred and twenty ways!  
(MUR., 57.)

Both these passages from *Murphy* and *Dream* are securely on board with the Schopenhauerian principle regarding the predetermined deck which one is left to shuffle in relation to the Ideas, and the knowledge of those Ideas available to all living subjects.<sup>103</sup> Also the fact that these limited combinations are recognized in the context of music with *Dream*, and hunger with *Murphy*, also underlines, that this numbers-game has a distinctly Schopenhauerian impression about it. But it would seem having said this, that there is one glaring omission which we cannot ignore in relation to the passage of *Dream* and that is the explicit mention of a 'Pythagorean chain-chant'. Is it not more correct in this instance to

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<sup>103</sup> See Magee, B., *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, op.cit., 38-39.

credit the philosophical influence much more towards Pythagoras of Samos rather than Schopenhauer? In order to answer this I believe it is helpful to consider James Knowlson's own words when giving an account of the several occasions he spoke to Beckett:

On several occasions he spoke of his great love for the writing of Schopenhauer, whom he read as early as 1930, and told me (in 1983) that he was currently reading an interesting essay by Karl Jaspers on that philosopher. We also spoke of Pythagoras and of the Pythagorean theory of numbers, with Beckett playing down his knowledge of Greek philosophy and contrasting it with Joyce's great erudition. Yet notes that he wrote in the mid - 1930's on Windelband's *History of Philosophy* have come to light since his death, showing how fascinated he was in man's various attempts to explain the universe and how much he did know about Pythagorean thinking.<sup>104</sup>

It is normally widely emphasized, the philosophical importance, which both Plato and Kant have in relation to Schopenhauer's philosophy, but it is rarely the case that Pythagoras's name is brought up in connection to Schopenhauer in such an unequivocal fashion; and yet though one could justifiably say that Pythagoras does not carry the same weight of either Plato or Kant in the construction of Schopenhauer's work, his school of thought is nonetheless very important to the way in which Schopenhauer approaches the *Vorstellung* of birth and death. As with all attendees of the Pythagorean school, it is necessary to sign up to the doctrine of 'transmigration of souls' i.e. *Metempsychosis*:

We might very well distinguish between *metempsychosis* as the transition of the entire so-called soul into another body, and *palingenesis* as the disintegration and new formation of the individual, since his *will* alone persists and, assuming the shape of a new being receives a new intellect. The individual, therefore, decomposes like a neutral salt whose base then combines with another acid to form a salt.  
(P.P.2, 276)

As we can see Schopenhauer is determined to ensure that his reader should not in anyway make the false assumption that the transmigration he raises in connection to the 'will' has anything to do with the preservation of a divine entity; but instead he compares it to an insensible reaction, akin to chemical decomposition and synthesis. So if we return to Knowlson's account of his conversation with Beckett, it is most likely that the interest

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<sup>104</sup> Knowlson, J., *Images of Beckett* (2003) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 18.

Pythagoras did generate, was itself born out of an attempt to to give further definition to the kind of space which Schopenhauer reveals in relation to his own writing:<sup>105</sup>

When we read what is said in scholia to Aristotle (p. 829, Berlin edition) about the Pythagoreans' philosophy of numbers, we may be led to suppose that the use of the word λόγος at the beginning of the gospel ascribed to John, a use so strange, mysterious, and verging on the absurd, and also the earlier analogues thereof in Philo, are derived from the Pythagorean philosophy of numbers, that is, from the meaning of the word λόγος in the arithmetical sense as numerical relation, *ratio numerica*. For according to the Pythagoreans, such a relation constitutes the innermost and indestructible essence of every being and hence it is the first and original principle, ἀρχή; where-upon ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος<sup>[106]</sup> might be true of everything.  
(P.P.1, 38.)

As we can see with Schopenhauer's own account of Pythagoras in the first volume of *Parerga und Paralipomena* it is clear that Schopenhauer regards the Pythagorean school as making a significant contribution towards our own understanding of the world's indestructible character; and it is the 'numbers' which he cites in relation to this view. As we can see from Knowlson's own account this is the very subject that Beckett discusses with him in one of his quoted conversations; after 'having already spoke of his great love for the writing of Schopenhauer'<sup>107</sup> and had also declared he had been reading a paper by Karl Jaspers on Schopenhauer<sup>108</sup>. For it would seem that, any notes that Beckett did possess on Pythagoras, were indeed part of his engagement with Schopenhauer's writing; having taking them as it were second hand from Windelband's *History of Philosophy*.<sup>109</sup> So rather than the focus

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<sup>105</sup> It is important to note that the first quote leading to the introduction of *The Fourfold Root* is Schopenhauer's own translation of a Pythagorean oath ("By him who implanted in our mind the quaternary number, the source and root of eternally flowering creation. - Pythagorean form of oath. - Tr). Personally I would suggest this opening quote by Schopenhauer takes us directly to the crux of Beckett's televised performance *Quad*. This would entail in my view a cautionary note against such remarks as Stan Gontarski "the play could be seen as Beckett's most vivid image of postmodern literary theory and literal decentering". See S.E. Gontarski 'Quad and Catastrophe': Gontarski, S.E. *On Beckett: Essays and Criticism* (1986) New York: Grove Press, 404.

<sup>106</sup> ['In the beginning was the word.'] trans Payne, E.F.J

<sup>107</sup> Knowlson, J., *Images of Beckett*, op.cit., 38.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 38.

entirely being taken up by Pythagoras; I regard Beckett's Pythagorean expression in *Dream* is itself tied up with a deepening Schopenhauerian conviction towards the word and art. In many ways the Pythagorean chain-chant if we care to look at it, not only is connected to music; something which unites Schopenhauer with Pythagoras, but it is also expressed in terms of being able to adjust or moderate the pitch of cause and effect: 'a lovely Pythagorean chain-chant solo of cause and effect, a one fingered telephony that would be a pleasure to hear.'<sup>110</sup> It would seem therefore that for Beckett his own treatment of Pythagoras emerges very like that of Berkeley, in the sense that the philosophy of Pythagoras does not detract from Schopenhauerian thinking, but actually can be seen to enforce it. In fact, having settled upon a Schopenhauerian explanation for the Pythagorean chain-chant; where does this leave the whole oriental construction of the instrument from which the chain-chant is based?:

'Supposing we told now a little story about China in order to orchestrate what we mean. Yes Ling-Liun then, let us say, went to the confines of the West, to Bamboo valley, and having cut there a stem between two knots and blown into same was charmed to constate that it gave forth the sound of his own voice when he spoke, as he mostly did without passion. From this the phoenix male had the kindness to sing six notes and the phoenix female six other notes and Ling-Liun the minister cut yet eleven stems to correspond with all that he heard. Then he remitted the twelve liu-liu to his master, the six liu male phoenix and the six liu female phoenix: the Yellow Bell, let us say, the Great Liu, the Great Steepleiron, the stifled Bell, the Ancient Purification, the Young Liu, the Beneficient Fecundity, the Bell of the Woods, the Equable Rule, the Southern Liu, the Imperfect, the Echo Bell.  
(D.F.M.W., 10)

Once again I believe it is Beckett's own reading of Schopenhauer; that has lead him to this Chinese formulation of music in *Dream*, which is capable of being reconciled with Pythagoras:

...the Pythagoreans had correctly interpreted under the name δέκα ἀρχαί<sup>[111]</sup> the *Yin* and *Yang* of the Chinese. That the metaphysics of music, as I have explained in my chief work (vol. I, § 52 and vol. ii, chap. 39), can be regarded

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<sup>110</sup> D.F.M.W., 10.

<sup>111</sup> ['The ten principles' (of the Pythagoreans).] trans Payne, E.F.J.

as an exposition of the pythagorean philosophy of numbers, has already been briefly alluded to by me in that work. Here I will explain the matter somewhat more fully, but assume that the reader has before him the foregoing passages. According to these, *melody* expresses all movements of the will as it makes itself known in man's self-consciousness; in other words, it expresses all emotions, feelings and so on.

(P.P.1., 37-38.)

In this opening paragraph on Pythagoras, we have all the necessary components to construct Beckett's liu-liu instrument. For we have Schopenhauer expressing the view that the pythagorean philosophy of numbers is at its core a comprehensive description of his own metaphysics of music; but also he sets out the idea in the same paragraph, that the Pythagoreans themselves had formulated their own Presocratic version of the Chinese *Yin* and *Yang*. Crucially also what distinguishes the liu-liu expression of music, is that it is 'purely melodic'<sup>112</sup> and as Schopenhauer describes in relation to his own metaphysical model of music '*melody* expresses all movements of the will as it makes itself known in man's self-consciousness; in other words, it expresses all emotions, feelings and so on.' [ref here ?] So it would appear that in fact Beckett's own 'Chinese little story' is in itself just as much about an affirmation of Schopenhauerian 'will' as it is about music. Having raised the importance of *metempsychosis* to Schopenhauer's own assessment of life and death, one would expect that, if Beckett was determined to locate his writing and theatre in relation to his own maturing Schopenhauerian assessment towards the world, and given that his reading of Schopenhauer was indeed as intimate as this thesis is proposing, he would make some kind of aesthetic gesture towards this aspect of Schopenhauerian thinking. I propose that Beckett did much more than simply raise a gesture towards Schopenhauer's *metempsychosis*, and that it would in due course serve to open up the imaginative space of the theatre in way which has never been equalled by any playwright. That is to say Beckett's own engagement with Schopenhauer's conception of *metempsychosis* would itself eventually lead to the dramatic spatial reassessment of *Not I*, *Rockaby* and *What where*. But in order to illustrate this I feel we should look to a play which sits in-between *Not I* and *Rockaby*: that is *Foot Falls*:

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<sup>112</sup> D.F.M.W., 10.

**M:** Mother. *[Pause]* I heard you in my deep sleep. *[Pause.]*

**V:** Yes, May.

**M:** Where you asleep?

**V:** Deep asleep. *[Pause.]* I heard you in my deep sleep. *[Pause.]*  
There is no sleep so deep I would not hear you there.  
*[Pause. M resumes pacing. Four lengths. After first length, synchronous with steps.]* One two three four five six seven eight nine wheel one two three four five six seven eight nine wheel. *[Free.]* Will you not try to snatch a little sleep?  
*[M halts facing front at R. Pause.]*

**M:** Would you like me to inject you again?

**V:** Yes, but it is too soon.  
*[Pause.]*

**M:** Straighten your Pillows? *[Pause.]* Change your drawsheet?  
*[Pause.]* Pass you the bedpan? *[Pause.]* The warming-pan?  
*[Pause.]* Dress your sores? *[Pause.]* Sponge you down?  
*[Pause.]* Moisten your poor lips? *[Pause.]* Pray with you?  
*[Pause.]* For you? *[Pause.]* Again.  
*[Pause.]*

**V:** Yes, but it is too soon.  
(FOOTE., 399-400.)

Reading over this passage from *Foot Falls* one is reminded at every corner, of Clov's own attendance to his master Hamm. For instance 'May<sup>113</sup>' (whose name not only recalls Beckett's own mother's, but also somewhat conveniently stands in for Schopenhauer's own analogy of the intellect in its twenties and thirties, having at this point laid down all the subsequent ideas open to it 'what May is for the trees'<sup>114</sup>) informs the audience that she too, just like Clov, was tasked with the chore of administering painkiller injections; as well as attending to all her daily needs during her growing infirmity: 'Change your drawsheet...Pass you the bedpan...Dress your sores...Sponge you down.' All of these chores are precisely the kind of chores we expect to be part of Clov's domestic vocabulary; indeed the drawsheet itself echoes Hamm's own covering. And as we can see the 'voice's' own reply to May's suggestion of

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<sup>113</sup> See, Knowlson, J., *Damned to Fame.*, op.cit., 1.

<sup>114</sup> See, P.P.2., 81. Interestingly Beckett chooses to punctuate the time line in relation to Krapp's recorded tapes at 30 year intervals: 'Thirty-nine today, sound as a bell, apart from my old weakness, and intellectually I have now every reason to suspect at the ...[hesitates].' *Complete Dramatic works*, op.cit., 217.



administering the painkillers carries the same deferment as is the case with *Endgame*: ‘Yes, but it is too soon.’ It is as if Beckett is attempting to locate May in the exact same spatial position as Clov, while that of her Mother’s ‘voice’ occupies the same seat as Hamm’s. But also it seems, especially from the way Beckett layers the dramatic characterization of May over her mother’s ‘voice’, that May is in some way positioning herself to occupy the exact same space as her mother; thus bringing about her own dramatic *metempsychosis*:

The *necessity of death* can be inferred primarily from the fact that man is mere phenomenon, not a thing-in-itself and thus not ὄντως ὄν.<sup>[115]</sup> If he were, he could not perish. But that the thing-in-itself at the root of phenomena of this kind can manifest itself only in them, is a consequence of its nature.

What a difference there is between our beginning and our end! the former in the frenzy of desire and the ecstasy of sensual pleasure; the latter in the destruction of all the organs and the musty odour of corpses. The path from birth to death is always down hill as regards well-being and the enjoyment of life; blissfully dreaming childhood, light-hearted youth, toilsome manhood, frail and often pitiable old age, the torture of the last illness, and finally the agony of death. Does it not look exactly as if existence were a false step whose consequence gradually become more and more obvious?

(P.P.2., 288.)

This is in many ways the very trajectory which Beckett choses to collapse in relation May’s relationship to her mother. For she too has reached the point at which each step she takes to cross the width of the stage; is itself broadcasting the lie, which Schopenhauer himself sets out in terms of ‘a false step’. For just like the vision of Victor pacing up and down in his bare room, ‘rubbing his chains together’ in order to gauge ‘That useless little sound’<sup>116</sup> that Victor says will be his ‘life’; so too does May try to move her entire identity into the little intervals of sound she is able to produce with her rhythmic steps:

V:[...]Seven eight, nine, wheel. [*M turns at L*<sup>[117]</sup>, *paces one more length, halts facing front at R.*] I say the floor here, now bare, this strip of floor, once was carpeted, a deep pile. Till one night, while still little more than a child, she called he mother and said, Mother this is not enough.

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<sup>115</sup> [‘That which truly is’ (expression used by Plato).] trans Payne, E.F.J.

<sup>116</sup> E., 185.

<sup>117</sup> See foot plan of Beckett’s staging of *Footfalls*: Beckett, S., *The Complete Dramatic Works* op.ct., 399.

The mother: Not enough? May-the child's given name  
 -May: Not enough. The mother: what do you mean, May,  
 not enough, what can you possibly mean, May, not  
 enough? May: I mean, Mother, that I must hear the feet,  
 however faint they fall. The mother: The motion alone is  
 not enough? May: No, Mother, the motion alone is not  
 enough, I must hear the feet, however faint they fall.  
 (FOOTF., 401.)

As May spells out to her 'mother' she needs to 'hear the feet' for the 'motion alone is not enough; this I believe plays to exactly the same identity as Victor, who is determined to raise the resolution of his own suffering; in order that the 'will' under which all suffering is ultimately perpetuated, will itself in due course turn against its own nature; thus weakening its attachment with the subject. It is this same unmovable drama, whose space remains fixed in relation to all of Beckett's characters; each in their own turn will be carried over into the other, in order to express exactly the same unrevised movement and expression of their predecessors:

That which dies perishes, but a seed is left behind out of which a new being proceeds; and this now enters existence without knowing whence it comes and why it is precisely as it is. This is the mystery of *palingenesis* and chapter 41 of volume ii of my chief work may be regarded as its explanation. It is accordingly clear to us that all beings living at this moment contain the real kernel of all that will live in the future; and so to a certain extent these future beings already exist. Similarly, every animal standing before us in the prime of life seems to exclaim to us: 'Why do you complain of the fleeting nature of all those who are alive? How could I exist if all those of my species who existed before me had not died?' Accordingly, however much the plays and masks may change on the world stage, the actors in all of them nevertheless remain the same. We sit together, talk, and excite one another; eyes gleam and voices grow louder. Thousand of years ago, *others* sat in just the same way; it was the same and they were the *same*. It will be just the same thousand of years hence. The contrivance that prevents us from becoming aware of this is *time*.  
 (P.P.2., 276.)

It is as if May resides in exactly the same spatial position as Clov and that of her mother's 'voice' seemingly occupies the seat of Hamm. What changes is not the position of Beckett's character, but the degree to which Beckett seeks to raise or lower phenomenal definition of the 'intellect', along with the strength of its accompanying 'will'. The fact that the 'voice' of

May's mother displays much more noticeable affection towards her 'daughter' than seemingly does Hamm towards his ward, does not move in anyway the position of their indissoluble partnership; what changes is is phenomenal definition; which in the absolute context of the 'will' changes nothing. That is apart from the fact, of course, that the phenomenal definition, one is in the position to give to the 'will' itself impacts on the 'will's' capacity to connect to such a 'representation'; though not destroy, it can actually weaken it. And it is this balancing act that I believe Beckett is performing each time when he commits himself to a particular dramatic project. So as I have previously suggested in relation to the theatrical space from which Beckett is starting from, it seems that for him there is no need to move it from the position it took up in relation to *Eleuthéria*. So in this sense Beckett is determined to follow through with the Schopenhauerian premise so consummately expressed with the 'biscuits'<sup>118</sup> in *Murphy* that as an artist he will set out to 'become master of the material acquired through endless combinations'.<sup>119</sup> So having addressed himself to the theatre in this manner, that is by locating his characters in exactly the same space as the characters which proceeded them, Beckett is able to represent the illusion of movement; or more correctly the *Vorstellung* of movement; without in fact registering any movement at all; because in truth the action has not moved from its original position; that is to say, from its movement in relation to Beckett's own first depiction of the 'intellect's' struggling to weaken its own 'will'. In this sense I believe Beckett was aiming at something truly remarkable with his plays; to create a work which does not engender suffering; namely to operate a dramatic framework which does not itself participate in the active causal structure which underlies the mechanism of suffering. Beckett is able to present the action of his character as one indissoluble expression, which over the course of successive plays does not change in any way from one play to the next. Hence he delivers to the audience, again and again, in these performances the open lie which *time* is determined to conceal. The consequence is that Beckett himself is, for want of a better word 'free' to salvage his role as an artist by moving his identity as a playwright outside the very mechanism which initiates drama. That mechanism is a false individual autonomy which

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<sup>118</sup> See, Beckett, S., *Murphy*, (2003) London: John Calder (Publishers) Ltd., 57.

<sup>119</sup> See, W.W.R.2., 81.

surrenders all artistic production to willful expression, thus in Beckett's eyes making it redundant. Through that redundancy, the notion of 'movement' is finally confined in his plays to perception alone.

## CONCLUSION

By way of engaging in a full and open reading of Schopenhauer, free from the constraints of having to anticipate a sudden break in Beckett's creative direction, I hope to have shown that Schopenhauer's influence extended far beyond the shallows of his early youth, but instead served as a source of aesthetic renewal capable of radically reformulating the open stage. For as this thesis has demonstrated throughout, it is perfectly feasible to see in Beckett's own decision to switch his attentions away from the novel and onto the theatre, as an attempt to open up a second front in response to the much earlier Schopenhauerian dialogue previously uncovered in relation to *Proust*.

As this thesis has been able to establish the theatre, unlike the novel, is ideally positioned to create an aesthetic response towards the 'will' which endeavours to move beyond its initial negative reception in language. For I hope this thesis has gone someway in illustrating Beckett's artistic response to Schopenhauer remained a constant source of aesthetic inspiration throughout his working career as a playwright as well as novelist, allowing him access to a space in which his own intuition towards the world could move freely without apparent contradiction. In this sense Schopenhauer's writing as I have chosen to present it, did not just carry the stamp of worldly pessimism for Beckett, but marked an opportunity to register a real shift in performative depth.

By identifying a significant pressure within Beckett's own writing to extend the novels' representational capacity beyond conventional genre coherency, we can establish that for Beckett the issue of aesthetic representation remained fundamental to his whole endeavour as an artist. But as I have been able to chart in relation to the way Beckett's aesthetic engagement in his earliest theatrical work becomes enmeshed in the subject of 'suffering', and its conscious identity, that this in itself can be read in terms of a much broader artistic response to Schopenhauer's conception of *Vorstellung*. And as this thesis demonstrates by way of

reconfiguring these cogent themes in response to an altered dramatic setting, it is possible to see why in the case of Beckett 's own work, the initial expression of music (cited in *Proust*) becomes reformulated in terms of a single undifferentiated theatrical construction.

By using Schopenhauer's model of *Vorstellung* we can free up all the disparate philosophical allusions from having to adopt individual privileged positions, and instead recirculate them in terms of speaking to a single undifferentiated space, whose range of contradiction is only registered in relation to their phenomenal appearance.

Also by raising *Vorstellung* in terms of an artistic response, we can avoid altogether the need to access a description of the world which relies upon the theoretical maintenance of abstract concepts. In this sense we can appreciate the way in which this Schopenhauerian model of *Vorstellung* does not itself have to appeal directly to a reductive philosophical strategy.

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