Man in Language

Toward a Philosophy of Language
for Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*

Nobuyoshi Saito

I

Expression and representation have been considered to be the two fundamental functions of language. Language either expresses man or represents the world. It either expresses the inner subjective reality of the self, or represents the outer objective reality of the world. Communication is in fact a function derived from these two primary functions: it is a form of mutual exchange between two speakers of their expressions and representations. As for the so-called creative or artistic usage of language, along the undercurrent of the mimesis tradition, and particularly under the lingering influence of the reign of realism in the Age of the Novel—the nineteenth century from Austen to James—, it is still an unquestioned axiom that language does exist or should exist in the literary space of fiction in the same way as it does in the non-literary world. It is true that language in fiction creates something out of nothing. But it creates only in so far as it creates a self as an expressive subject and a world as a represented object. A fictional world obtains its solidity and validity only to the extent that it is a truthful picture—a transparent mirror—of the solid and authentic world.
However, the fictional world is fundamentally different from the real world in that the fictional world is an empty space where nothing exists before the act of creation. Before he exists as an expressive subject in fiction, man first has to be brought into existence as such by someone else who creates/represents him as an object. Man in fiction can exist as an expressive subject only in so far as he is first created as a represented object. This duality of man’s status in fiction as subject/object is formally reflected in the duality of character/author in fiction itself. The author creates the character as an object. The character exists as a subject. The character’s self is a subject for himself and an object of the author’s creation. Since language is the sole means of creation here, the act of bringing into existence is equivalent to the act of naming. The author names the character “he,” and the character names himself “I.” (Charlottle Brontë named her creature Jane Eyre and Jane named herself “I,” just as Charles Dickens named his creature David Copperfield and David named himself “I.”) Once the character’s expressive self is created and begins to exist on his own, the author’s creation seems to recede to a function of representation of an independent object. As one might say in giving advice to a novice writer, “Once you name him, just let him continue to be what he is.” Thus the relationship between character and author has been reversed. What matters in fiction is no longer the author’s power to create itself, but that his creation should appear to be a mere representation. What determines the artistic quality of fiction is the truthfulness of his representation, the quality of his perception and vision. And, of course, the less subjective and the more objective the representation, the better, that is, the more trustworthy. Flaubert’s
omnipotent artist is necessarily invisible, and Joyce's omnipresent creator is necessarily indifferent.¹ Thus the "I" of the character is doubly secured: it is created by an omnipotent creator (the "I" as an object), but it exists independently of his invisible and indifferent author (the "I" as a subject).

Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* begins by saying, "I, say I. Unbelieving." (3), and ends by saying, "I say I, knowing it's not I" (165).² The "I" of the Unnamable is doubly jeopardized: the author has failed to name his character as an object, and the character has failed to name himself as a subject. The author's attempt to name is hopeless: his creature shall be not only unnamed, but unnamable. The character's attempt, if successful, is immediately disbelieved. Their failure to name, their failure to bring the self into existence as an object or as a subject, is an indication of the crisis of language itself. Language's functions of representation and expression are put into question, and then inevitably there is a collapse of the traditional relationship of creation/representation of the author toward the character, and the "relationship" of expression of the character toward himself. The Unnamable says,

I'm all these words, all these strangers, this dust of words, with no ground for their settling, no sky for their dispersing, coming together to say, fleeing one another to say, that I am they, all of them, those that merge, those that part, those that never meet, and nothing else, yes, something else, that I'm something quite different, a quite different thing, a wordless thing in an empty place, a hard shut dry cold black place, where nothing stirs, nothing speaks (139).
"I'm all these words," but they are not the words of expression arising from his subject, but "strangers," a "dust of words" with no origin to come from, no goal to come to. Rather, "I'm a wordless thing," because there is nobody to name him and to bring him into existence as an object. Yet the one who says "I am wordless" is not wordless. If the act of naming is perhaps impossible or questionable at best, and the utter confusion at the core of human existence is beyond any hope of clarification and solution, then why does he speak at all? Because it is impossible for him to stop speaking as long as he exists. A wordless being who can exist only in words, such is the Unnamable. But who speaks then? Who exists?

The nature and scope of this central problem of The Unnamable—the insoluble dilemma of man in language—demand the reader to forsake his old comfortable tools for "interpretation." Beckett's fiction, having discarded the old notions of author, character, and above all the hitherto unquestioned confidence in language, has finally become a fiction, if it still could be called one, about the validity of novel form itself. By the same token our criticism can no longer indulge in the petty excavation of a story, delightful and instructive, fully equipped with a sympathetic character and a reliable author. Rather it has to face the same problem as Beckett does, the most radical questioning ever made by a writer of the relationship of man and language in reality as well as in fiction.

Our prospect is dim, and there is no easy recourse ready at hand. Giving up assumptions and conventions, we have to start from the very origin of the problem, language itself. In order to make tractable as much as possible our task of confronting the perennial enigma of man
in language, the paradox at the core of human existence, as Beckett presents it in the work in question, let us introduce here two opposing views of the relationship between man and language. A French linguist, Émile Benveniste, contends that man speaks language. A German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, asserts that language speaks man. The two agree in regarding the relationship between man and language as that of appropriation—"usage"—, but for the one it is man that appropriates language, and for the other it is language that appropriates man.

Émile Benveniste is among the first to see that person, time and place in the world are reducible to pronoun, tense, and adverbs of time and place in language respectively, all of which in their turn are reducible to a particular instance of discourse. First he detects a fissure in the apparently homogeneous system of personal pronouns. For him, the first and the second persons, "I" and "you," are genuine personal pronouns, and the third, "he," is not. "He" refers to a person as an object in an objective situation, whereas "I" and "you" are definable only within a particular act of utterance. "He" is on the borderline between pronoun and noun: "he" is neither a pure pronoun in that it always has as its basis the possibility of objective reference and identification, nor a pure noun in that its reference has no binding relation with a specific object, but can refer to whatever object. In this heterogeneous pronominal system of "I" / "you" versus "he," the first person has a transcendental status over the other two: "you" cannot be defined except in the utterance of "I" as a "not-I"; "he" does not emerge as an objective referent unless it is appointed such by the speaker, "I." Thus, the system of pronouns is a hierarchi-
cal system with the "I" at its throne. Then what defines the first person, and how?:

To what then does "I" refer? To something quite strange, which is exclusively linguistic: "I" refers to the individual act of discourse in which it is pronounced, and designates its speaker. It is a term which cannot be identified except in what we have called elsewhere an instance of discourse, and which has no other reference than the present one. The reality which it points to is the reality of the discourse. It is in the instance of discourse in which "I" designates the speaker that the speaker enounces himself as a "subject." Therefore it is true to the letter that the foundation of subjectivity is in the exercise of language. If we sufficiently reflect on the point, we will see that there is no other objective witness of the identity of the subject than the one which thus he himself gives on himself (pp. 261-2).

In short, "I" is the person who says "I" in his discourse. The "I" has no substance, no self, "I" has no being except in language.

So is the case with time and place, tense and adverbs. Just as the "I" is the speaker of the discourse, so "now" is the time of the discourse, and "here" the place of the discourse. What Benveniste calls two distinct and complementary systems of time, histoire (history/story) and discourse, correspond to the double structure of "he" versus "I"/ "you." The time of histoire is the time of objective chronology in which events take place one after another in the world. The time of discourse, on the other hand, is the "intralinguistic" chronology which determines the logical relations of anteriority and posteriority of one discourse to another. This distinction between the time of histoire and the time of discourse has a striking similarity with the one made
by J. Mc. T. E. McTaggert between the two ordering characteristics of any temporal series. One is the past-present-future relationship ("the A-series"), and the other is the earlier-than (before-after) relationship ("the B-series"). In either of the two series, it is the present that is a primary constituent: in the A-series, it is the between-ness of the present that makes possible this three-termed relational time; in the B-series, the present is that something in relation to which alone something else can be said to be earlier or later. The present is in either case an absolute given which grounds the possibility of the two relational times: in Benveniste's words, "the dividing line is always a reference to the 'present'" (p. 262). As for the relationship between the two series themselves, Benveniste would agree with Peter Bieri in his statement (by way of a critique of McTaggert) that the B-series is a real time which functions as a constitutive principle for the experiential time of the A-series. And "now this 'present' as temporal reference in its turn has only a linguistic given: the coincidence of the described event with the instance of discourse which describes it. The temporal mark of the present cannot but be interior to the discourse" (Benveniste, ibid.).

A similar structural hierarchy informs the systems of adverbs of time and place as well as demonstratives. The group of oppositions such as yesterday/the day before, tomorrow/the next day, next week/the following week, three days ago/three days before, etc. are based on the primary opposition of today (this day)/the day (that day), which is ultimately reducible to the opposition of now (this time)/then (that time). Among adverbial expressions of place such as here, there, over there, near, far, away, etc., it is the opposition of here (this place)/
there (that place) that the others are dependent on (or derived from). Likewise with the group of demonstratives such as this, that, it, these, those, they: the opposition of this/that is the foundation of the system. Now, while the derivative oppositions are defined by the basic ones, by what can those basic oppositions themselves be defined and founded? “This will be the object designated by ostension simultaneous with the present instance of discourse”; “here and now delimit the spatial and temporal instance which is coextensive and contemporary with the present instance of discourse containing ‘I’” (Benveniste, p. 253). Thus, it is “the present instance of discourse” that is the foundation of person, time and place?: it is a system of systems, a sovereignty over all other sub-systems, independent, autonomous, self-sufficient.8

At this point of the present discussion, one may feel tempted to conclude, prematurely, that since language is the sole reality available to man, which consists precisely in the denial of any objective reality—substance—to person, time and place outside itself, Benveniste is saying after all that it is language that speaks man, and not vice versa, that in a word man exists in language. Nothing is more contrary to his belief. For language always remains an instrument to be used, and it could be used only by a being who therefore exists prior to, and independently of, language. Language per se is merely a system of possible meanings which are actualized into specific, “significant” meanings through the particular usage of a speaker. For this reason Benveniste sharply distinguishes the “empty” signs and the “filled” signs, language and discourse (or langue and parole in Saussure’s terminol-ogy), and maintains that it is man’s act of conversion of the one to the other that establishes the ultimate supremacy of man over language.
He is well aware of the problem that while pronouns, for instance, "neither point to 'reality' nor to 'objective' positions in space or in time, but only to a discourse, each time unique, which contains them" (p. 254), such pronouns are already used in a meaningful way in the fait accompli of inter-subjective communication. And he concludes that language has solved this problem by creating an assemblage of "empty" signs, not referential to any "reality," always ready for use, which become "full" at the moment when a speaker assumes them in each instance of his discourse. Having no materialistic reference, they cannot be misused; asserting nothing, they are not subject to the condition of truth and escape all negation. Their role is to provide the instrument of a conversion, which we may call the conversion of language into discourse (ibid.).

By his act of conversion, man fills the pronoun "I" into the real "I." "Language is organized in such a way that it allows each speaker to appropriate language as a whole by designating himself as 'I'" (p. 262). "Ego' is the one who says 'ego'" (p. 260), but this proves all the more irrefutably that there exists the one who is capable of saying it. Language has no other basis than subjectivity, and subjectivity is by definition a property of a subject, who exists therefore prior to language. Man is the foundation of language: language exists in man.

*The Unnamable* begins with the words:

Where now? Who now? When now? Unquestioning. I, say I. Unbelieving. Questions, hypotheses, call them that. Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on. . . . I seem to speak, it is not I, about me, it is not about me (3).

With an absolute authority of his subjectivity, man would say "I," man
would appropriate and fill the empty pronoun. With the subject—speaker—being thus established by himself, "where?" would be inevitably "here," "who?" "I," and "when?" "now." It is impossible to question all this, it is forbidden to doubt all this. Yet the Unnamable does. For him, the "I" is a mere hypothesis at best, and therefore these questions remain unanswerable, being deprived of the very basis of an "ego" for the process of "egocentric particularization." An ego, the foundation, founds itself: the identity with the self, a tautology of the being, is the essence of the self, and infallible. Yet the Unnamable's "I" only "seems" to speak. It is important to note here that the crisis is a crisis of the self, not of language, and that the crisis of the self is originally an incident in the world, not in language. Man in crisis slips away from language, thereby uncovering language as language which had disappeared or become transparent in its own obedient instrumentality for man, in man's sovereign act of appropriation. Benveniste reasoned that since language is used, it should be used by a user who exists prior to language, and dominant in his act of usage. By the same token, however, could it not be argued that language is used, and therefore what is to be used already exists prior to the emergence of a user? That an infinite number of possible meanings exist as a system (langue) indicates that language is an autonomous system, independent and self-sufficient. A speaker does actualize in his discourse a particular one of those potential meanings, but the mode of actualization has already been determined, and not in any reference to the speaker, but exclusively in relation to other members of the linguistic system itself. Rather than filling an empty pronoun with the substance of his being, the subject is in fact hollowed out
and desubstantiated to become such an empty pronoun. Man "uses" language only in so far as he is used by language, in so far as he impotently consents to be disfigured into a mere linguistic entity. Man is born into language, and exists only in the way language allows him and commands him to be. He is a prisoner born and dying in the prison house of language.

I'm all these words, all these strangers, this dust of words, with no ground for their settling, no sky for their dispersing, coming together to say, fleeing one another to say, that I am they, all of them, those that merge, those that part, those that never meet, and nothing else (139).

This brings us directly to the central tenet of Martin Heidegger's philosophy: language speaks man. First of all, this means that it is not man who speaks language. For the person who tries to see language as language, language is not the activity of the self. If it were, language would then become something whose essence can be determined not in its own nature, as it should, but rather in terms of the usage the subject puts it to. He would find himself not going to language itself, but through it to man, as if it were an inane non-entity. According to Heidegger, the assumption of man's supremacy as a subject—a trend which was formulated in its decisiveness by Descartes for the first time, and in whose last phase the twentieth century finds itself—is the very root of self-alienation inherent in Western thought. The subject first objectifies the world, language, art, and himself, and then subjectifies them by making those objects exist exclusively as objects for the subject, as beings whose essence is definable only in their relations to the subject. Whether the actual mode of subject-object
relations is materialistic production supported by modern science and technology, or aesthetic apprehension and consumption of art-objects in museums, in such relations the essence of the world or art is made to disappear, or transformed into something whose essence consists in its being an object. When we want to find the essence of a thing, we are only seeing an essence, if any, of man's usage of it. As for the similar subject-object relation in language, whether the subject uses language to represent objects or to express his self, or yet again appreciates and consumes it as an object, language as language is effaced completely. Each one of all these cases of subject-object relations is a form of the subject's "experience" of the object. And

To experience in this sense always means to refer back—to refer life and lived experience back to the "I." Experience is the name for the referral of the objective back to the subjective. The much-discussed I/Thou experience, too, belongs within the metaphysical sphere of subjectivity.

[And the Japanese visitor joins Heidegger, the Inquirer, and the host answers as follows:]

J: And this sphere of subjectivity and of the expression that belongs to it is what you left behind when you entered into the hermeneutic relation to the twofold [of being and Being in all beings].

I: At least I tried. The guiding notions which, under the names "expression," "experience," and "consciousness," determine modern thinking, were to be put in question with respect to the decisive role they played (The Way, pp. 35-6).

The "hermeneutic relation" is an alternative to the subject-object relations, a method which enables us to find the essence of the world
as world, of language as language, and of man as man. Just as biblical hermeneutics is the science of interpretation of the relation between the word of Holy Scriptures and the theological speculations about God, which refuses any form of effacement of the word and God into anything else carried out in the name of “explanation,” so the hermeneutic approach to language and human beings will dissolve neither language nor man, but rather bring us directly to their essence as such. (In the sense that it attempts to discover the essence of the given [phenomenon] as given, without trying to describe it—“explain it away”—in terms of anything else, but always reducing it, if ever, to the self-same given, it could be called a form of phenomenology.)

With Benveniste, the subject has “humanized” language so much that language has become a mere mirror which reflects man’s face in its self-effacement as an instrument. Such a utilitarian and ultimately solipsistic approach, argues Heidegger, is fundamentally inadequate for the search for the essence of language as language, “because the essential being [as opposed to the function] of language cannot be anything linguistic” (The Way, pp. 23-4). The origin of the problem of usage, however, lies in a yet more grave methodological problem, the problem of metalanguage. Metalanguage is an impossibility: we cannot have a language with which to speak about language, because we, the subject, are already within what we want to speak about as an object. We can speak about language only from within, and it means that what we want to question is already answered. To suppose that we can go out of language to look at it from without is an illusion, and this illusion, as any other, has a specific ulterior motivation, namely the domination of the subject over the object: “Metalinguistics
is the metaphysics of the thoroughgoing technicalization of all languages into the sole operative instrument of interplanetary information. Metalanguage and sputnik, metalinguistics and rocketry are the Same" (The Way, p. 58). Language is already given. It is impossible to question it from within, and it is equally impossible to go outside it, hence the only right way to approach language is a phenomenological one, which is ready to acknowledge the given in its essence as given:

If we put questions to language, questions about its nature, its being, then clearly language itself must already have been granted to us. Similarly, if we want to inquire into the being of language, then that which is called nature or being must also be already granted to us. Inquiry and investigation here and everywhere require the prior grant of whatever it is they approach and pursue with their queries. Every posing of every question takes place within the very grant of what is put in question.

What do we discover when we give sufficient thought to the matter? This, that the authentic attitude of thinking is not a putting of questions—rather, it is a listening to the grant, the promise of what is to be put in question (The Way, p. 71)11

Language is already granted. Language has already granted itself to man.

If man's receiving of language is a “listening,” language's giving of itself is a “Saying.” Man speaks only in so far as he listens to language. “We hear language speaking.” How? We “listen to language in this way, that we let it say its Saying to us.” Why? “We hear Saying only because we belong within it” (The Way, p. 124). The Saying is sayability, the possibly to say, which enables man to say something. The relationship between the Saying of language and
man's speech may seem to be identical with the relationship between language (*langue*) and discourse (*parole*), but only apparently. *Langue* is a system, already established and autonomous, of possible meanings, and man's discourse is a result of his conscious choice of particular ones from those potential meanings. Discourse is a creative act in that it connects ("predicates") meanings to the speaker, but it is not so in that it cannot influence the independent system, but merely chooses whichever ones of pre-established meanings. Discourse fills *langue*, but it does not touch the receptacle. Linguistics, as Benveniste practices it, proclaims that *langue* is the foundation of discourse, but it does not even attempt to investigate the foundation of *langue* itself except in terms of the act of the speaker's subjectivity. Heidegger, on the contrary, investigates the foundation itself of *langue*, the very possibility of meaning. *Langue* and discourse, which are coextensive with man's speech, are within the domain of grammar, but the Saying is not. Saying is exempt from all rules of linguistic signification and articulations, because it is the founder of all those rules. In order to describe the relation between Language and man's speech, Heidegger employs the same word as Benveniste did, namely, "appropriation," but he means the direct opposite. It is Language that appropriates man. Language "needs" and "summons" man so that he may speak its Saying in his speech. It needs man because it has no organs for verbal articulation, and summons him with the authority as what man, inescapably and irrevocably, belongs to. In other words, in its primordial grant, Language "yields" itself to man, and "owns" him. For such yielding and owning, man can and must speak. "Need" and "summon," "yielding" and "owning" are in fact different descriptions of
one and the same relation of "appropriation." Man "appropriates" language (in the sense that Benveniste understood the term) when and only when Language first appropriates man. And what has to be granted prior to the relation of appropriation is appropriation itself, that is, the possibility of the relation itself. Hence, "what is yielding is Appropriation itself—and nothing else.... Appropriation appropriates man to its own usage" (*The Way*, pp. 127, 130).

Saying contains and exceeds the limits of man's speech. It exists before and without man's verbalization. It has no voice, yet it speaks. How? Language speaks by "showing":

Saying is showing. In everything that speaks to us, in every-thig that touches us by being spoken and spoken about, in every-thing that gives itself to us in speaking, or waits for us unspoken, but also in the speaking that we do *ourselves*, there prevails Showing which causes to appear what is present, and to fade from appearance what is absent. Saying is in no way the linguistic expression added to the phenomena after they have appeared—rather, all radiant appearance and all fading away is grounded in the showing Saying. Saying sets all present beings free into their given presence, and brings what is absent into their absence (*The Way*, p. 126).¹²

Saying does not describe phenomena: it *causes* them, it brings into being what is, and into non-being what is not. "The being of lan-guage"—the essence of language as language—necessarily becomes "the language of being"—the showing of being as being. Yet the question persists: who speaks this "language of being"? It is the Being of all beings that speaks it. It brings beings into their being, lets them show themselves as beings. It calls them into being, calls
their names, names them. But how does Being speak the language of being? By "the soundless gathering call, by which Saying moves the world-relation [the bringing-of-the-world-into-being] on its way, [which] we call the ringing of stillness," by "the soundless tolling of the stillness of appropriating-showing Saying" (The Way, pp. 108, 131): "Language speaks as the peal of stillness. Stillness stills by the carrying out, the bearing and enduring, of world and things in their presence" (Poetry, p. 207). The silence of earth is an echo of the silence of Language. The language of being, which gives Being by speaking to all listening beings, is itself never given. The speaker of the language of being, a founder and grantor of the very possibility of all beings, cannot be granted, known, said.¹³ Language speaks man. Man exists in the silence of the language of being.

The Unnamable has said, "I, say I. Unbelieving." (3), and "I say I, knowing it's not I" (165). It is precisely because he has said "I" that he has to disbelieve it, that he knows it is not "I." His speech has broken the silence of his being in which he is "a wordless thing in an empty place, a hard shut dry cold black place, where nothing stirs, nothing speaks" (139). His words, whatever they say, only announce his expulsion from the true domain of Being, a fatal alienation of his being from his Being:

This voice that speaks, knowing that it lies, indifferent to what it says, too old perhaps and too abased ever to succeed in saying the words that would be its last, knowing itself useless and its uselessness in vain, not listening to itself but to the silence it breaks (26).

Knowing all this, why does he continue to speak? Because he cannot
stop speaking. Language is the condition of human existence. As long as he is, he belongs to Being, and has to listen to it say its Saying to him. He is needed and summoned by the language of being for his act of speech. The distance between man and Saying, which emerges by the installment of the relation of appropriation, is equal to the distance that separates man's being from his Being, to the extent of his self-alienation. He is called from far by the command of Language, and he performs his duty so that he may return to his own origin, to the pristine silence of his Being. In a word, he speaks with the sole purpose of going silent. The fact that he is still speaking, the fact of his discourse, proves that he has not performed his duty yet, still looking for the means to attain the goal: "One starts speaking as if it were possible to stop at will. It is better so. The search for the means to put an end to things, an end to speech, is what enables the discourse to continue" (15). But is it ever possible for man to put an end to speech and go silent? It is impossible, except perhaps by death, that is, by such an absurd notion of the absence (non-being) of his being. Man exists as long as he speaks. Yet he speaks as long as he does not exist. Here is in its cruel simplicity the insoluble perplexity of man in language. A way out might be contrived: a thesis that man speaks in his being, but is silent in his Being. This, however, is not a solution of the alienation, but merely its displacement. What is intolerable is that there shall be an abyss somewhere, and forever, for man. The reality of his being, if ever there is any, is always a reality of his self-alienation, and the language of his being, if ever his own, is always a language of his self-falsification. Man exists in so far as he does not exist. But this
is surely too absurd. Is it not?

In spite of their express desire to examine language as language, both Benveniste and Heidegger in the end refer the foundation of language to something nonlinguistic: the linguist refers language to the subject (subjectivity of the speaking subject), and the philosopher refers it to Being (the ontological foundation of man’s ability and necessity to speak). The one contends that man speaks language, and the other that language speaks man. Their diametrically opposite views of the relation between man and language, that of appropriation, are ultimately reducible to the difference of their concepts of man’s status: “man speaks in his being” versus “man speaks in his Being.”

Apart from the obvious contradiction between these two theses, each one of them already contains a conflict in itself. “Man speaks in his being,” yet his act of speaking (discourse) is regulated by a system of langue, independent, autonomous, hence totally indifferent to the subject. “Man speaks in his Being,” yet his verbal articulation is nothing more than a meaningless disturbance in the true silence of the language of Being. Be it a system of possible meanings, or a system of sayabilities, the Unnamable cannot define and secure his being by referring it to something or someone else: “I owe my existence to no one” (7). He is in irremediable solitude: “Yes, in my life, since we must call it so, there were three things, the inability to speak, the inability to be silent, and solitude” (53). He is a being, but he cannot speak; he is a Being, but he cannot be silent. He cannot name his being, and there is no one else to name him either. Hence he is, unnamable.
II

The stalemate seems to be sufficiently terminal. Yet this is only a beginning, an "exordium" to the story of his disbelieved "I." This stalemate has not been proven yet to be absolutely terminal. For instance, might it not be only a temporary state of affairs? Have we not forgotten to take into consideration another fundamental condition of human existence, namely, time? Thus "quietly, stealthily the story would begin, as if nothing had happened, and I still the teller and the told" (30). Man's discourse might be a process in the time of his history and story. He is speaking, and then there might be something to be spoken of, toward which his discourse proceeds as if on a journey. Well, man is always speaking of ("expressing") himself one way or the other. Then, the goal is a self which he gradually comes to realize in the time of his life-history. On the other hand, man's speech might be a process of searching for its end, that is, a process of returning to and remaining in the silence of his Being where he will have to speak no more. As the title of Heidegger's book suggests, man in discourse might be "on the way to language" of silence. The two goals of two different journeys move man, call and draw him to themselves. Man's movement in time is given an end. Given an end to attain, the movement in time now becomes a pilgrimage. And inevitably the pilgrimage calls for a pilgrim. Two different pilgrimages call and name two pilgrims on their ways, Mahood and Worm.

Mahood, the latest "vice-exister" (37) of the Unnamable, exists as a self among the living in the world, and also as a subject with the sovereignty of his subjectivity in his usage of language. First, as a
self in the world, he is given a number of concrete and tangible attributes and situations which constitute his identity and life, such as his native land, father and mother, wife and children, places he has been and faces he has seen, etc. The clarity and solidity of his identity and life, of his manhood, are the clarity and solidity of those components, and his life is a process of being determined and defined by the relationships with them into which he successively enters. Yet the substantiality of those relations is illusory, because the terms of each relationship are but insubstantial beings in time. How can the dying father and mother define, and be defined by their equally decaying son to any degree of certainty and permanence? Mahood's house—the establishment of the human race—is filled with "screams of pain and wafts of decomposition" (47), and this endless succession of living things in time is an unchangeable "natural order of things" in "the great life torrent streaming from the earliest protozoa to the very latest humans" (ibid.). If kinship cannot be a foundation for an identity and name, the relationship with other beings cannot become its reliable substitute, either. At first, Madeleine (or Marguerite), a proprietress of a chop-house, is convinced of the "substantiality" of Mahood living in a jar, and this kind-hearted mistress of the eating-house feeds him and covers him from cold. Yet his "substantiality" is nothing more than the "substantiality" of the "jar" of his body, of his physical subsistence, whose well-being is a mere interlude, a passing illusion in the cycle of the living things where "all is killing and eating" (74). In spite of all her "goodness" and "attentions such as hers, the pertinacity with which she continues to acknowledge [him]" (77), Madeleine is "losing faith in [him]" in the same way as "the
belief in God is sometimes lost following a period of intensified zeal and observance" (78), and "the moment is at hand when [his] only believer must deny [him]" (79). Neither goodness nor faith can stop the flux of time in which Mahood and herself are mutually perishing each moment. The immediate clarity and tangibility of Mahood’s "life," his name and identity, prove to be utterly insubstantial and incomprehensible, being situated as he inevitably is within the perpetual motion of human race coming out of nowhere and going out to nowhere. Thus his existence as a self in the world and in time cannot be a foundation for his being. His life as a pilgrimage, as a process of becoming, does not let him come to be except as an ever perishing one in time.

Just as his self cannot reach the end of his life-history where he does not have to move any more, so Mahood as a subject cannot reach the end of his discourse (life-story) where he is able to say what there is to say. His sovereignty as a subject in his use of language is gradually corroded, paradoxically, by the very notion of "use." Man uses language. Then there must be something for which he uses it. Self-expression? But the collapse of the self in the world has just been witnessed above. Then he uses it for something else, whatever it may be, because at any rate, it is "impossible to speak, and yet say nothing" (20), because a subject, in order to be as such, always needs an object. Man's existence entails an act of speaking, which in its turn entails the existence of something to be spoken of: "once the idea of obligation [to speak] has been swallowed, I should interpret it as an obligation to say something" (31). Thus the time of discourse begins. The speaker begins to move in language. It is quite natural, humanely
speaking, to suppose that if he is moving, there must be an end toward which he can be said to be moving: “[I have to] think of myself as somewhere on a road, moving, between a beginning and an end, gaining ground, losing ground, getting lost, but somehow in the long run making headway” (36). Speaking, man is already on the way through laguage. Then there should be “word to say,” an end to reach, and above all, “a truth to recover” at the end of his discourse (35-6). If so, man’s movement is “a labor to accomplish,” “an imposed task” (ibid.), it is a pilgrimage. However, man obtains such teleology of his movement in time at the expense of an unrelieved psychosis of anxiety and self-incrimination. The pilgrim’s desire and compulsion to reach the end only intensify the anxiety of his “pensum” not yet done, his “lesson” not yet said. It would be inevitable that such anxiety should project itself into the figure of a master furiously accusing his indolent and incompetent servant of a sin of not having done his duty yet. “In the frenzy of utterance the concern with truth” (15), a truth to know, words to say, only breeds another mad wish “to know, to remember, one’s transgression” (68). As long as man exists and speaks, he is moving in time of history and story. To reach the goal and rest, to say the last word and go silent, would mean that he shall cease to be. Yet a being cannot cease to be. Being no more, it shall not be a being any more. As long as he is, he is on the way. It is forbidden to stop. Hence the interminably of pilgrimage, and the end-less anxiety and sin of the pilgrim on his way.

Such is Mahood’s “life” with a name and identity, as a self and subject. The crisis of the self in the world inevitably conduces to a crisis of the relation of man and language. Because of his insubstan-
Man in Language

tiality, man cannot “use” and “appropriate” language any more. He is no longer able to “fill” the empty sign, but rather he slips away from it, revealing language as language. Language loses its foundation of the speaker, its full signs are depleted, thereby betraying themselves as empty. “In the meantime,” in the middle of a journey from an imaginary beginning to an unattainable end, there is “no sense in bickering about pronouns and other parts of blather. The subject doesn’t matter, there is none” (102). Deserted by the person, the “I” cannot but be a hollow pronoun: “enough of this cursed first person, it is really too red a herring. . . . . Bah, any old pronoun will do, provide one sees through it. Matter of habit” (77). A pilgrim’s sin of not having reached an end yet, of still moving in time remains, but whose sin is it exactly, and against whom?:

all here is sin, you don’t know why, you don’t know whose, you don’t know against whom, someone says you, it’s the fault of the pronouns, there is no name for me, no pronoun for me, all the trouble comes from that, that, it’s a kind of pronoun too, it isn’t that either, I’m not that either, let us leave all that, forget about all that (164).

A person used to be permeated with a self, and a name used to permeate a pronoun, and the link between the person and the name used to an irrefutable nucleus of man’s being. Now the link has been broken, the four-runged ladder of human existence has been cut. A self is forsaken unnamable, a pronoun is discarded unfillable. Belief in the link of the person and name is only a “matter of habit,” a mere convention without any intelligible basis whatsoever. Yet every convention has its own zealous guardians and jealous prosecutors.
Scandalized by an unnamable one with no identity, they insist on "imputing" a life to him, "saddling" him with a lifetime (59), in short, they insist on naming him. They, zealots of "the dead tongue of the living" (70), demand his participating in their stupendous "tom-foolery" called humanity, his believing wholeheartedly in their miserable "poor trick that consists in ramming a set of words down your gullet on the principle that you can't bring them up without being branded as belonging to their breed" (51). They tell him to be the same way as they are, that is, endlessly: "what they all wanted, each according to his particular notion of what is endurable, was that I should exist and at the same time be only moderately, or perhaps I should say finitely pained" (48). Yet the collapse of the self in time is irrevocable: "man" and "life," "name" and "identity," they are nothing but mere words, their words.

Thus the story of Mahood is ended: it is the Unnamable "who win[s], who tried so hard to lose" (80–81). Either doomed or unreal is his journey toward language, toward articulation of what there is to be reached, known, and said. Rather, should not the journey have been in the opposite direction toward silence, toward a being, resting in itself, with no need to speak and know? Such being is Worm. He does not move, does not know, does not speak. He does not know there is anything to know, to move to, to speak of. He has no need or desire for self-possession, because he is not splintered into a self to be possesed and a self to possess. He is in absolute self-possession and self-knowledge. He is, like a rock in the field is. "Worm, to say he does not know what he is, where he is, what is happening, is to underestimate him. What he does not know is that
there is anything to know” (82). Worm in the sanctuary of his being, in a place “with no way in, no way out, a safe place. Not like Eden. And Worm inside. Feeling nothing, knowing nothing, capable of nothing, wanting nothing” (85).

However, even this sanctuary turns out in the end to be “like Eden,” a paradise to be banished from. “Banishment” or “expulsion” means none other than the emergence of a relation within a being, the division of being into two terms which the relation relates each other. In the final analysis, a human being cannot be a being-in-itself, but only a being-for-itself. The relation of “for” is the only possible mode of consciousness, a primary ontological alienation inherent in human beings as opposed to beings-in-themselves such as a rock in the field. The relation may take various forms—that of conception, knowledge or speaking—, but the existence of an abyss or cleavage over which the relation installs itself as a bridge is, invariable: the relation cuts in order to connect. The concever is “banished” from the conceived by their mutual bond of conception; knowledge is a connecting cleavage itself between the knower and the known; and the speaking is a dividing linkage between the speaker (teller) and the spoken (told). The relation of conception: “Feeling nothing, knowing nothing, he [i.e. Worm] exists nevertheless, but not for himself, for others, others conceive him and say, Worm is, since we conceive him, as if there could be no being but being conceived, if only by the beer” (82). The relation of knowledge and speaking: “I [i.e. the Unnamable]’m like Worm, without voice or reason, I’m Worm, no, if I were Worm I wouldn’t know it, I wouldn’t say it, I wouldn’t say anything, I’d be Worm” (83). The relation deprives a being-in-itself of its finitude and
self-sufficiency, and transforms it into a being-for-itself. The essence of a being defined as the conceived, known or spoken, cannot be found in itself any more, but only in its relation to the indispensable other, the conceiver, knower or speaker. The former needs the latter to reveal its nature. Thus the relation puts a being-in-itself on a journey toward the other. The darkness, nescience and silence of being-in-itself have been broken. Man as a being-for-itself is condemned to listen to, in Heidegger’s words, “the peal of stillness,” “the soundless tolling of the stillness” of other beings-in-themselves in their immaculate bliss. Worm is in his paradise,

until the instant he hears the sound that will never stop. Then it’s the end, Worm no longer is. We know it, but we don’t say it, we say it’s the awakening, the beginning of Worm, for now we must speak, and speak of Worm. It’s no longer he, but let us proceed as if it were still he. . . . Poor Worm, who thought he was different, there he is in the madhouse for life (85-6).

If Mahood is on the threshold of creation between rising murmurs and crumbling language, Worm is on the threshold of conception between dying noises and broken silence. Worm cannot be and remain in silence, just as Mahood could not reach and remain in language. The sound neither subsides into silence nor amounts to language, and it is unstoppable:

Ah if only this voice could stop, this meaningless voice which prevents you from being nothing, just barely prevents you from being nothing and nowhere, just enough to keep alight this little yellow flame feebly darting from side to side, panting (116-7).
The voice, which prevents him from being nothing, cannot create him in the fullness of something, either. Because of the noise, the possibility of a language dawns on him. He even knows the existence of language, or he is known to it. Knowing and being known to language, he is gradually “getting humanized” (101). If only it occurred to him, as it did to Mahood in the beginning, to have a slightest belief in the possible existence of a self to become, truth to recover, words to say, then “he’d be somehow suddenly among us” (105). He, a convert, would find himself on a journey toward Mahood, who is ahead of him, as we have already seen, on his own utterly futile and doomed journey toward language.

The stories of Mahood and Worm are a story of the “I” lacerated between the two. Mahood and Worm are two of the names which could have named the Unnamable if he were namable. But he is unnamable, and his predicament in his double inability to speak and not to speak is unchangeable. What he has been doing all this while is in fact to “quote” Mahood, and “play” Worm (44, 81). He could not become Mahood because of his inability to speak, nor Worm because of his inability to be silent. The language with which to create Mahood was not his language, but only “theirs”; the silence in which to conceive Worm was broken by a language which cannot be but his. If he were a person, he could have used language and spoken it, but he is only a pronoun. If he were a being, he could be and remain silent, but he is exiled from the silence of being into the domain of language. Language, the ultimate and inescapable proof of a human being, is the very thing that prevents him from being what he is. The substance of being consists in its absence. A person is a
pronoun, but the pronoun is the only person available to man. Can this be true?

Could there possibly be any stone left unturned for a clue as to the substance of the Unnamable, as to his name? At the persistent instigation of a voice of "the same old irresistible boloney," saying, "at your age, to have no identity, it's a scandal" (125), the Unnamable unwillingly sets about a quick and foreseeably fruitless review of the old recipes and credentials for a being. The empirical and objective formula for an identity by means of photographs, files, medical reports, etc.: "all lies, they know it well, I never understood, I haven't stirred, all I've said, said I've done, said I've been, it's they who said it" (126-7). The biological formula based on the idea of parentage: but "father and mother [are] both dead, at seven months interval, he at the conception, she at the nativity" (126), and, macroscopically, the only legitimate ancestor of man is a nothingness toward which Worm is heading, "that unthinkable ancestor of whom nothing can be said" (91). The intersubjectivity formula: but, as has been already seen, even Madeleine has lost the faith in the substantiality of the Unnamable. The formula by solidarity of fellow creatures, "likes" and "cogeners": but the "we" of a multitude, "unbeknown to ourselves, unbeknown to each other," each burying the other, are just chanting piously an endless macabre dirge which serves as an epitaph for dogs as well (127-8). The formula for self-transfusion through imagination into another more solid identity: but "with closed eyes I see the same as with them open... I see, with closed eyes, with open eyes, nothing, I see nothing... [that is] what it is to be unable to lose yourself" (147). The formula for convergence or coagulation of emotions into the resemblance of a single
organic center of consciousness: “trains” of loving and weeping, “with emotion,” at every junction in the unstoppable cycle of illusory possessions and unavoidable lossess, which is life, “there’s a story for you, that was to teach me the nature of emotion, that’s called emotion, [that is all] what emotion can do, given favourable conditions” (167–8). The two quite feasible formulae by the concept of time. The first one by memory: but “I invented my memories, not knowing what I was doing, not one is of me,” and the only memory which seems to be real, substantial enough not to be disowned, is that of Worm, “he who I know I am, . . . who I cannot say I am . . . he [who] knows nothing, knows of nothing, neither what it is to speak, nor what it is to hear, to know nothing, to be capable of nothing” (161). The second one by Malone’s notion of an assured death in the future, which shall prove a life having been lived prior to that end: “I was grievously mistaken in supposing that death in itself could be regarded as evidence, or even a strong presumption, in support of a preliminary life. And I for my part have no longer the least desire to leave this world, in which they keep trying to foist me, without some kind of assurance that I was really there” (77). And finally the absurd formula, obviously too absurd: “by the absurd prove to me that I am, the absurd of not being able” to be (82). Any of these old credentials and formulae is in capable of establishing an identity of the Unnamable, of proving his existence, of naming him. What remains in the end is still his language, and nothing else.

Language is what is left irreducible after the Unnamable’s long and relentless process of the trimming-down of human existence in search for its true substance, its nucleus. In order to flee from the false con-
ventions and compositions of “man” and “life” in the world and in time, he has been on a journey of decomposition—whose theoretical program was first formulated in Proust in 1931—along with his “troop of lunatics” (27), “Mahood and Co” (68), beginning with Murphy and Watt, followed by Mercier, Camier, Molloy, Moran and Malone. He has delimited the region of his true being more and more narrowly, step by step, revealing and discarding one after another those compositions and contraptions which allegedly constitute man’s being in its full solidity and certainty. He has retracted his being, or “descended” into it, successively from, first, love and friendship, men’s society, the external physical world, the body and the senses, then the mind as a function of reason and memory, and the mind as a hollow place (the skull), until finally he becomes “a great smooth ball . . . featureless, but for the eyes, of which only the sockets remain. . . an egg, with two holes no matter where to prevent it from bursting” (23). Such a journey of decomposition is in fact a journey of the Unnamable toward Worm, toward a being in the silence of its own truth. Even this journey cannot be finished, for language remains indecomposable, an insurmountable bulwark of human existence. Then, why not simply conclude that language is the foundation of man, and rest in peace? Because language, indecomposable, is by its nature the very kernel of composition, capable of producing eternally by itself and for itself inventions and lies, fables and stories. Thus, out of unstoppable noises and murmurs quietly and stealthily another journey begins in the opposite direction on the already trodden futile road. It is inevitable that noises should amount some day to a resemblance of a language, which becomes a voice, which causes an ear and a mouth, which cause a
head, then a body, its senses and memory, then things present and past, and finally the world itself, until "man" and "life" are restored all over again:

a voice like this, who can check it, it tries everything, it's blind, it seeks me blindly, in the dark, it seeks a mouth, to enter into, who can query it, there is no other, you'd need a head, you'd need things, I don't know, I look too often as if I knew, it's the voice does that, it goes all knowing, to make me think I know, to make me think it's mine.... The place, I'll make it all the same, I'll make it in my head, I'll draw it out of my memory, I'll gather it all about me, I'll make myself a head, I'll make myself a memory (174-5).

This is none other than a new journey of composition toward Mahood. And still "it's the voice does that" all. It cannot be but one of those rigmaroles of Mahood and Co. It cannot be but a composition of "their" language.

Yet still, "this voice that is not mine, ... can only be mine, since there is no one but me" (26). The third of "the three things" in the Unnamable's life is equally a certainty as ever: his solitude. The abysmal fissure of human beings into a person and a pronoun, between language and silence, is so painful that it is unavoidable that man should be tempted to overcome it, negatively as it is, by regarding it as necessitated by "the unintelligible terms of an incomprehensible damnation" (27), that he should sometimes find himself in "a daze of baseless unanswerable self-reproach" (121). If man is only being punished thus, then maybe he has committed a sin, but there must also be an atonement for it. If to have wanted to speak is a sin, then
it is a sin against nescience and silence, to which he can humbly pray to be restored. If, on the contrary, to have failed to speak is a sin, then it is a sin against knowledge and language, which he can piously pray to attain. In either case, it is improbable that man should ever be able to attain a full atonement, but at least he shall know which way to go, and the anxiety of man moving in time shall be allayed, though just a little it may be, by the serenity of a sinner on his repentant pilgrimage. Whether sin is “an impediment to [dynamic] movement up the cone” toward God, as with Dante, or “a [changeless] condition of [static] movement round the sphere” of humanity, as with Joyce, the movement would no longer be utterly meaningless. If there existed an “everlasting third party,” a master or God or whatever (123), he would witness the relation of the Unnamable with Mahood or with Worm, and name what sin it is that is his. Yet the Unnamable is alone. He is innocent, because there is no one to name his sin. Even if there does exist such a third party, solitude would not allow the Unnamable to recognize and maintain the relation as a relation:

What have I done to God, what have they done to God, what has God done to us, nothing, and we’ve done nothing to him, you can’t do anything to him, he can’t do anything to us, we’re innocent, he’s innocent, it’s nobody’s fault (138).

The impression, however, persists that man is in the state he is in because he is unable to do what there is to be done; we are all innocent, but it seems as if we have only “fallen” to this innocence of ours (124).

The problems of language and of man’s status in it ultimately lead
to the problem of logos, and man's relation to it. Benveniste's thesis that man speaks language and Heidegger's that language speaks man would be in no disagreement as to regarding logos as the ultimate foundation of man and language. With Benveniste, man exists prior to language, and uses it for his own purposes. Among many "purposes" of his, Christianity has long named the truest one for man, a truth to recover, a self to become, a place to be, at the end of his life-long pilgrimage in time. And that truth is revealed to man by the Word of God. The Logos names Man as something for a man to realize and become. With Heidegger, on the other hand, language speaks man, language brings man into being as man. Man, and the world, have already been given by the language of being which itself is never given in the world, never known to man. The Logos, "the name for Being and for Saying" (The Way, p. 80), has already named man in his inescapable condition, in what he can be and must be. In other words the only difference between the linguist and the philosopher lies in that with the one, for the self in the world the Logos is at the end of his journey, whereas it is in the beginning of his journey with the other. The authority of the Word in the journey through the Book is unshakable from the "flat" in Genesis ("Let there be a man") to the bidding in Revelation ("Come to me"). It is not very surprising then that their philosophies of language should find their harmonious unison in John, for instance:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light
of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (i. 1-5).

Man is created (named) as man by the Word; the Word, a light, names the goal for man still groping in the darkness in the time of history (the world) and story (discourse). Man's banishment from his origin in Language is only a beginning of his journey toward the end of language as his goal. However, retorts the Unnamable, an origin and a goal, a beginning and an end, are all mere hypotheses, unverifiable and, if verified, unattainable. The only thing man knows is the fact that he is already moving, and speaking, between an imaginary beginning in silence and an unreachable end in language, that in the meantime he is floundering in unstoppable time of history and story. He is unable to name his being: he has no self to name, it is perishing in time, so he is only an empty pronoun; he has no being to name because he is forever exiled from his being. And he is alone: even his sin, much less his being, cannot be named, since there is no one else to name it. Thus, he names himself as an unnamable being. He is as an un-be-able being. This is the only way man can be, until perhaps the moment comes when the perishing self or banished being will regain its paradise in the eternity of Being or nothingness. Until then, "you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on" (179).

The Unnamable remains unnamable. The author, Samuel Beckett, has failed to name his creature. His failure places him at a particular point in the history of fiction, and art in general. In the realist fiction of the nineteenth century, the character always had the ability to name himself. His self was able to appropriate language, and suffuse the
pronoun with its irreducible subjectivity. He had the absolute authority to name himself "I." What the author had to do after his original act of creation was just to give him a proper name so that the "I" of the character may begin to exist as an independent object outside of his subjective self-determination. Thus, the teleological time in which the character lives his life (history) in the world toward an end of self-knowledge, the meaning of what has been lived prior to that end, was in a perfect parallelism with the teleological time in which the reader reads a story in a book toward an end of revelation of the truth, the meaning of what has been read prior to that end. Elizabeth Bennet's self-knowledge at the end of (a certain stage of) her history in the world coincided with the reader's knowledge of the meaning of story at the end of Pride and Prejudice. Tess of the d'Urbervilles lived her history forward until the end where the meaning of her life was fixed forever, just as the reader read her story forward until the end where the meaning of her book was revealed once and for all. The assumption of the existence of an end both in history and in story is the very thing that enabled the character as well as the reader to live and read forward, that is, meaningfully. Apparently, modernist writers in the twentieth century radically departed from such mechanics of meaning of the nineteenth-century realism. They came to realize that history was not such a teleological time as so many biographers and chroniclers, admirers of History and devotees of science, believed in the past century. They felt that man in time did not proceed in any direction to any goal, and that consequently, the world was not a substance and foundation of meaning in itself, by just mirroring which art could be so meaningful, so useful. For Proust, Joyce and Eliot, history was
rather a monster, a nightmare, a chaos. However, they still had the same desire as those believers in History and Story for the existence of a teleological time, the same conviction that meaning and order could be either discovered or created only in a "progressive time"—that is, both spatially and temporally progressive—proceeding toward an end. Hence they defined art as a form with a teleological time (kairos) that was to conquer the formlessness of the world in meaningless time (chronos). After the disappearance of God who used to move History in the world toward His purpose and truth, those modernist appointed themselves a god who was capable of moving story, if not History any more, toward his own omniscience and omnipotence. Because the Logos of the Creator no longer seemed to permeate His Creation (and, of course, its mimetic reproduction in art, either), now the logos of the creator alone could and should permeate his creation at least.

The logos of the artist is precisely what Beckett, a post-modernist, had to renounce when he found himself unable to name his character. What his admission of his inability to name his character really admits is that he cannot create (represent) his creature as an independent object, and that for this reason his character cannot begin to exist as an autonomous subject who should be able to name himself. His art expresses neither, directly, a self of the created character, nor, indirectly, a self of the creating author. In a word, his art is inexpressive in every respect. Nonetheless, art by definition can be itself only as an expression. (That much is Beckett "traditional," and to that extent the myth of Art persists.) Hence, his art becomes a paradox itself: it is an expression, yes, but it is nothing but "the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to
express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire
to express, together with the obligation to express."17 Beckett's art
expresses, since it is required to express something, nothing but the
impossibility to express. Ultimately, the author's predicament in his
double inability to express and not to express is exactly the same as
the Unnamable's predicament in his double inability to speak and not
to speak. The author who has fallen down from the old comfortable
throne of his logos finds himself in the same nadir as the character
who has failed to be lifted up toward the cozy parlor of "man" and
"life." The author who is unable to name is the flesh and blood of the
character who is unable to be named. No, any relation, even that of
parentage, is impossible to maintain between the two, for they are
one and the same: the Unnamable. But surely, one would protest, the
author is named, we know it, with the good and reputable name of
Samuel Barclay Beckett? A "matter of habit," the Unnamable would
answer.

Notes

1 cf. "The artist should be in his work as God in his Creation, invisible and
omnipotent" (Flaubert in his letter to Mlle de Chatepice dated March 13, 1857:
my translation); "The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or
behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence,
indifferent, paring his fingernails" (Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young

2 L'Innommable, originally written in French in 1949 and published by the
Editions de Minuit in 1953, was translated by the author as The Unnamable,
and published by Grove Press in 1953. All quotations from the book in this
study are from the Grove Press edition, followed by page reference in parenthe-
sis.

4 The difference between history and story depends on the degree of the speaker's objectification—the degree of substantiality of "he," "then," and "there" as objects—, which is in inverse proportion to the substantiality of subjects, "I" (and "you"), "now" and "here." History is a story without a narrator: "In fact, there is no narrator any more. The events are presented as if they produced themselves as they appear on the horizon of history. Nobody speaks here; the events seem to speak themselves... [Its time is] the time of the events outside the person of a narrator" (Benveniste, p. 241). The disappearance of a narrator, the effacement of narration inevitably remind us here of the realist ideal of an invisible God-artist.


6 See Takiura, *op. cit.*, chap. 5, i ("The B-seires as a ‘real time’").

7 In other words, the *deixis*—the situational specificity of pronouns and adverbs—is the function of discourse: "It is useless to define these terms [i. e. adverbs of time and place] or demonstratives in general by the deixis, as we usually do, unless we add that the deixis is contemporary [and coextensive] with the instance of discourse which carries an indicator of person: each time by referring to it, demonstratives obtain their unique and particular character, which is the constitutive element of the instance of discourse to which they refer" (Benveniste, p. 253).

8 Quite interestingly, by a similar procedure, Bertrand Russell finds the foundation of language in the concept of *this: here* is "the place of this," *now* is
"the time of this," and I is "the biography to which this belongs to." Language is a system of "egocentric particulars" thus defined by the foundation of this. Now, he argues, this is not a substance in itself, but rather "this' depends upon the relation of the user of a word to the object with which the word is concerned." In other words, this is nothing but a relationship between the ego (speaker) and language. (Russell, An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth [London: Unwin, 1950], pp. 108, 111; also see Takiura, op. cit., pp. 125-131). As shall be discussed below, Russell's reduction of this to the function of the ego is quite similar to Benveniste's final reduction of "discourse" to the "subject" through the act of appropriation.


10 My paraphrase and discussion of Heidegger's philosophy of language are based on the two collections of his essays on language, one, On the Way to Language, trans. by Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), and the other, Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). I quote him from these two books, each time with the abbreviated title and page reference, without bothering to name the title of an individual essay quoted.

11 By way of a critique of Russell's "theory of types"—his methodological distinction between "object-language" and "metalanguage"—Wittgenstein asserts that "No proposition can make a statement about itself, because a propositional sign cannot be contained in itself" (Tractatus, 3. 332 [p. 16]). The consequence of the impossibility of metalanguage is formulated by him in a curiously symmetrical way to Heidegger's thesis. To the latter's argument that what is to be questioned is already answered, the former responds by saying, "When an answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words," and his conclusion would be acceptable for the latter as well: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (op. cit., 6.5 and 7 [pp. 73, 74]).

12 cf. Wittgenstein: "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest [that is, show themselves]. They are what is mystical" (op. cit., 6. 522 [p. 73]). More than anyone else, Wittgenstein could have understood exactly how Heidegger, the phenomenologist, is turning into a mystic here.
13 cf. Wittgenstein: "God does not reveal himself in the world" (op. cit., 6. 432 [p. 73]).

14 From a broad historical perspective, the two opposing views of Benveniste and Heidegger could be regarded as the latest continuation of the controversy between nominalism and realism over the problem of the relationship of language and existence, a controversy which dates back to the ancient Greeks. In the Middle Ages, for example, nominalism, represented by William of Occam, contends that universals are no more than names assigned to them, and realism, represented by Thomas Aquinas, maintains that universals have a real objective existence. The crucial point at stake is not so much whether universals do or do not have an objective existence as whether the source of their existence and intelligibility—their ideas—lies in man's mental activity or in the supra-human divine spirit. From the nominalist standpoint, universals are gradually formed empirically from the particulars through man's ability of abstraction. The existence as well as the intelligibility of universals originate in man's ideas, which in their turn are processed in and for abstraction by means of language. From the realist standpoint, on the other hand, universals are Platonic ideas according to which—"in the image of" which—things are created by God, and therefore, by virtue of which things are what they are. Ideas exist before the creation, and the creation is none other than the articulation—naming—of them. In short, for nominalism, things exist as man's language names them, and for realism, things exist as God's language names them. As Russell points out in his History of Western Philosophy ([London: Unwin, 1979], pp. 459-465), the difference of Occam and Aquinas was less great for themselves than it appears for the moderns, and was in fact more of a difference of emphasis, one being on universale post rem whereas the other being on universale ante rem. Yet Occam's "insisting on the possibility of studying logic and human knowledge without reference to metaphysics and theology" (Russell, p. 465) opened a decisive, if yet potential, gateway to the later secular humanistic philosophies based on the concept of man as a subject. In this respect, one may dare to say, knowing it is a mere crude schematization, that if one line of descent runs from Occam through Descartes to Benveniste, the other line runs from Aquinas (though strictly secularized) through Husserl to Heidegger.

15 The terms and contradistinction of "being-in-itself" and "being-for-itself"
come from Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*.
