

Reading Beckett Reading

I read an average of an hour a day, after an hour the illusion of comprehension ceases,

Kant, Descartes, Johnson, Renard and a kindergarten manual of science: “L’air est

partout”, “Le plomb est un métal lourd et tendre”.

- Samuel Beckett to George Reavey, 27 September 1938.¹

§1

In the above quotation, Samuel Beckett implies that ‘to read’ is an ‘illusion of comprehension’. Beckett does not here presuppose a mental grasping of an essential meaning of words, but posits a mental state in which meaning emerges through the convergence of text and reader. The ontology of meaning in this conception emerges as unstable and transitory, liable to disintegrate at any moment. Such an instability of meaning is a reminder that to examine an author’s reading requires a study of the material traces of this process. In order to critically examine Beckett’s reading, this essay therefore explores his methods of note-taking in the many notebooks he kept, and his working through of philosophical ideas in his fiction. In so doing, the essay argues from empirical evidence that suspends this virtual, mental space of reading, informed by the practice of genetic criticism. The form of Beckett’s reading can thereby be hypothesised from the observation of its material manifestation. As a case-study, Beckett’s notes on Immanuel Kant are thus re-examined for the purpose of considering *how* he read Kant. The decision to re-examine these notes is based on the publication of a number of recent articles and book chapters that explore the relation of Kant’s thought to Beckett’s

¹ Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsensfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, IV vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), I: 1929-1940, p. 643.

oeuvre.² Hence, this essay is a contribution to the debate concerning a relation that John Pilling describes as ‘so *antinomial* [...] that it is difficult to reconstruct what Beckett thought he might achieve by it’.³ The essay puts this reading of Kant in dialogue with Beckett’s post-war novel *The Unnamable*, which provides a fertile text for thinking about the working through of philosophical ideas in Beckett’s fiction. As Dirk Van Hulle and Mark Nixon note in their study of Beckett’s reading traces, an investigation of an author’s reading is also inevitably ‘an exploration of the dynamics of writing as a process that is inextricably bound up with the mechanics of reading’.⁴ The purpose of this essay is thus to examine such a mechanics of reading as it is bound up with writing.

§2

In an oft-cited interview with Gabriel d’Aubarède, Beckett states:

I never read philosophers.

Why not?

I never understand anything they write.⁵

Beckett’s playful aporia here hinges on the logical disjunction of never understanding a text that is never read. To examine this contradiction, we may refer to Ludwig

² See, Peter. J. Murphy, ‘Beckett’s Critique of Kant’, in *Beckett/Philosophy*, ed. by Matthew Feldman and Karin Mamdani (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2015), pp. 261-278; Jean-Michel Rabaté, ‘Beckett’s Kantian Critiques’, in *Think, Pig!: Beckett at the Limit of the Human* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), pp. 92-107; Sue Wilson, ‘Samuel Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape*: Remembering Kant, Forgetting Proust’, *Modern Drama*, 60:1 (2017), 46-68; Conor Carville, *Samuel Beckett and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

³ John Pilling, ‘Dates and Difficulties in Beckett’s *Whoroscope* Notebook’, *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 13:2 (2004), 39-48 (43).

⁴ Dirk Van Hulle and Mark Nixon, *Samuel Beckett’s Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 14.

⁵ Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman (eds.), *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1979), p. 217.

Wittgenstein's consideration of reading in his *Philosophical Investigations*. In this passage of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein brackets out 'the understanding' in his attempt to puzzle out the polyvalence of reading:

I must note that I'm not counting the understanding of what is read as part of 'reading' for the purposes of this examination: reading is here the activity of rendering out loud what is written or printed; but also of writing from dictation, copying something printed, playing from a sheet of music, and so on.⁶

Wittgenstein notes that the word 'to read' is 'extremely familiar to us' in the general circumstances of our life, but is difficult to describe the use of this word in relation to the phenomena it attempts to signify if this is posited as a mental state.⁷ Beckett appears to play on this extreme familiarity of the word, in which the notion of understanding is often encapsulated in the definition of 'to read'.⁸ In this way, Beckett can state that he has 'never read philosophers' in the sense of not fully grasping the meaning of philosophical texts when transmuting them into mental or physical copies. It is therefore logical to state that Beckett has 'read' philosophers in the sense of 'copying something printed', but not 'read' philosophers in the sense of understanding the complexity of their thought. Beckett thereby complicates the definition of 'read' to draw out the many configurations of reading. If reading is defined along with Wittgenstein as 'copying in writing a page of print', then Beckett had indeed read philosophy.

There is another dimension to Beckett's statement that he 'never read philosophy', specifically in relation to Kant. The evidence of Beckett's reading of philosophy indicates that it generally took the form of taking notes from an abundance

⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and J. Schulte, 4th edn, rev. by P. M. S. Hacker and J. Schulte (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), p. 67^c.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ See the definition of the verb 'to read' in the *OED*, <<http://www.oed.com>>.

of secondary sources, as opposed to directly reading philosophical texts. As Matthew Feldman explains, Beckett's note-taking from secondary sources is 'a pattern [...] in many of his borrowings from Western philosophy'.⁹ There are exceptions to this pattern, such as Beckett's reading of the Cartesian Occasionalist philosophy of Arnold Geulincx in 1936, but the evidence considered in this essay indicates that Beckett read very little of Kant's oeuvre directly.¹⁰

One source that exemplifies Beckett's reading as a 'copying in writing' from a secondary source are his 'Philosophy Notes' which date from between early 1932 and late 1933.¹¹ This manuscript consists of a noteworthy 267 unbound folio pages (of recto and verso) on the formation and development of Western philosophy. The main source of these notes is Wilhelm Windelband's revised and translated 1901 *A History of Philosophy*, which Beckett read at the British Museum. In this corpus of reading notes, there are sixty sides on Kant's thought and the development of his idealism in Germany, with this information being derived from Windelband.¹² Other archival sources that evince Beckett's engagement with Kant include notes in the *Dream Notebook* of 1930-31, taken from Jules De Gaultier's *De Kant à Nietzsche*.¹³ Beckett also purchased *Immanuel Kants Werke* in eleven volumes from Munich in January 1938.¹⁴ However, the only volume of Kant's works that contains marginalia and other reading traces is Vol. XI, an introduction to Kant's life and thought by Ernst Cassirer.¹⁵ These marginalia and traces

⁹ Matthew Feldman, *Philosophy*, in *Samuel Beckett in Context*, ed. by. Anthony Uhlmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 301-311 (p. 304).

¹⁰ See David Tucker, *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx: Tracing 'A Literary Fantasia'* (London: Continuum, 2014).

¹¹ Samuel Beckett, Notes on Philosophy, MS 10967, Trinity College Library, Dublin. References in this essay to the 'Philosophy Notes' can be consulted in the 'Appendix'. For an overview, see *Notes Diverse Holo[graph]: Catalogues of Beckett's reading notes and other manuscripts at Trinity College Dublin, with supporting essays*, in *Samuel Beckett Today / Anjourd'hui*, 16 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 67-89.

¹² See *Notes Diverse Holo[graph]*, 87.

¹³ Samuel Beckett, *Beckett's Dream Notebook*, ed. by John Pilling (Reading: Beckett International Foundation, 1999), pp. 164-66.

¹⁴ Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, I: 1929-1940, p. 581.

¹⁵ Van Hulle and Nixon, *Beckett's Library*, p. 138; See Immanuel Kant, *Immanuel Kants Werke*, ed. by Ernst Cassirer et al., XI vols. (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1921-1923) on the 'Beckett Digital Library', <<http://www.beckettarchive.org>> [accessed 11 March 2019].

coincide with the critical consensus that Beckett's reading of Kant was primarily through secondary sources and other critical works. Indeed, phrases copied from Ernst Cassirer's introduction to Kant's life and thought make their way into the *Whoroscope Notebook* of mid to late 1938, the last primary source of this essay.¹⁶

§3

'When did he begin to read? Which was the first word that he *read*?', Wittgenstein asks in his *Philosophical Investigations*.¹⁷ Here, Wittgenstein is concerned with how it can be known that an individual has begun to read, or indeed how different types of reading can be critically distinguished.¹⁸ For Wittgenstein, the configuration of an individual's reading can only be analysed or empirically known through a change in behaviour, such as a reader's newfound ability to summarise a section of text.¹⁹ In the next three sections, Beckett's reading is therefore re-examined through his note-taking methods, and the working through of philosophical ideas in his post-war novel *The Unnamable*. The critic Enoch Brater has proposed the idea that Beckett's texts are 'a way of thinking', as philosophy is at work within their texture.²⁰ The analysis that follows is not to suggest that Beckett's reading of Kantian philosophy is applied to the text, but that the text thinks through philosophical ideas and practices in the mode of fiction.

In August 1931, Beckett wrote to Thomas MacGreevy that his work was 'soiled [...] with the old demon of notesnatching'.²¹ 'Notesnatching' is a term used by James Joyce for the method of taking notes from various sources in order integrate them directly or indirectly into his literary work. Joyce used this method in the more than fifty

¹⁶ See, Pilling, 'Dates and Difficulties', 43.

¹⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 68^e [emphasis in original].

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 69^e.

²⁰ Enoch Brater, *Ten Ways of Thinking About Samuel Beckett* (London: Methuen, 2011), p. 2.

²¹ Quoted in Tucker, *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx*, p. 43.

notebooks of short jottings that were then merged into his work.²² Beckett used this method in his *Dream Notebook* of 1930 to 1931, which derives material from a diversity of texts. Pilling's publication of *Beckett's Dream Notebook* sources some 1,200 jottings that Beckett took for the writing of his 1932 novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, and is an invaluable source for examining Beckett's note-taking methods under the influence of Joyce.²³ Beckett would occasionally tick off 'notesnatched' material as it was integrated into his work, similar to Joyce's crossing out of material assimilated into his work in different coloured crayons. This notebook thus suggests that Beckett took Joyce's method as an authoritative model, having worked for Joyce on taking notes to be merged into *Work in Progress*, later published as *Finnegans Wake*.²⁴ As Beckett wrote to Ben-Zvi concerning his reading of books for Joyce, 'I did not suppose he was concerned with the document. It seemed just another notesnatching operation'.²⁵ However, he recognised that such a method 'spoiled' his own early work, due to the overabundance of material that stifled his own expression. Nonetheless, Beckett's notebooks of the 1930s indicate that he did continue to 'notesnatch', but that this method was integrated into a repertoire of note-taking methods. These include summaries of material, comments on quotations, and re-phrasings of the source material, a definite shift from the methods he deployed while under Joyce's influence.

'Notesnatching' records a form of reading that may be called *derivation*, in the sense of a reproduction from the source with little evidence of a meaningful intellectual engagement with the material.²⁶ It implies the snagging of the reader's attention on the

²² Van Hull and Nixon, *Beckett's Library*, p. 11.

²³ Beckett, *Dream Notebook*, p. 173.

²⁴ James Knowlson notes that Beckett frequently 'came away from Joyce's apartment with books to read and report on' in *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), p. 99.

²⁵ Linda Ben-Zvi, 'Mauthner's "Critique of Language": A Forgotten Book at the "Wake"', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 12:2 (1982), 143-163 (143).

²⁶ Wittgenstein uses this terminology in §162 of *Philosophical Investigations*: 'Let us try the following explanation: someone is reading if he *derives* the reproduction from the original', *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 71c.

‘demented particulars’ of the text.²⁷ This method was generally used by Joyce and Beckett with the purpose of appropriating the ‘notesnatched’ material for integration into their own work, and such notes indicate the particular section of the text that arrests their interest. Beckett’s use of this method in the ‘Philosophy Notes’ demonstrates his interest in the ‘straws, flotsam, etc., names, dates, births, and deaths’ of Kant.²⁸ For example, he notes the details of Kant’s birth in 1724 in Königsberg, and that he was the ‘son of a saddler’.²⁹ These details extend to Kant’s employment, philosophical influences, intellectual development, and a list of his publications, taken from a two-page biographical sketch in Windelband.³⁰ This form of note-taking thus demonstrates a reading for particulars that skims over the generalities of a text. Another example of this reading in the form of derivation is a note recorded in 1938 in Beckett’s *Whoroscope Notebook*: ‘Bacon’s ‘De nobis ipsis silemus takn [sic] by Kant as epigraph to Kritik der R.V.’.³¹ This note is derived from Vol. XI of *Immanuel Kants Werke*, and is noted in the marginalia of Beckett’s copy with a pencil mark.³² Cassirer notes in this volume that Kant took the Latin phrase from Francis Bacon to serve as the motto of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated as ‘of ourselves we are silent’.³³ Moreover, this phrase can be traced to the inside back cover of the notebook in which the first draft of *L’Innommable* is written: ‘De nobis ipsis silemus (Bacon, Intro. Novum Organon)’.³⁴

²⁷ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy*, ed. by J. C. C Mays (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 11.

²⁸ James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 244.

²⁹ Beckett, MS 10967/221r.

³⁰ See Beckett, MS 10967/221r; Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, trans. James Tufts, II vols. (New York: Harper, 1958 [1901]), pp. 534-6.

³¹ Samuel Beckett, *Whoroscope Notebook*, MS 3000, University of Reading Library, 44r.

³² See Kant, *Immanuel Kants Werke*, ed. by Ernst Cassirer et al, XI vols. (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1921-1923), XI: *Kants Leben Und Lehre*, on the ‘Beckett Digital Library’, <<http://www.beckettarchive.org>>.

³³ Ernst Cassirer, *Kant’s Life and Thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 9; For a translation of the full motto, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Marcus Weigelt (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 669.

³⁴ Samuel Beckett, MS SB/3/10, Harry Ransom Research Center, inside back cover; for the digital facsimile, see *L’Innommable / The Unnamable: a digital genetic edition*, ed. by Dirk Van Hulle, Shane Weller and Vincent Neyt (Brussels: University Press Antwerp, 2013), <<http://www.beckettarchive.org>> [accessed 11 March 2019].

This ‘notesnatched’ Latin phrase is subsequently integrated directly into *The Unnamable*:

De nobis ipsis silemus, decidedly that should have been my motto. Yes, they gave me some lessons in pigsty Latin too, it looks well, sprinkled through the perjury.³⁵

This ‘notesnatched’ phrase is subject to a double irony in the context of Beckett’s work. The voice vows to ‘never be silent’ in its attempt to articulate selfhood, while failing to articulate that selfhood except through enfolding the self in the language of the other: ‘I’m in words, made of words, others’ words’.³⁶ Through demonstrating the source of this phrase, it could also be read as ironising the context of this motto in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant’s attempt to analyse the categories of the understanding through objective deduction, without ‘mere opinion’,³⁷ is from the perspective of a modern language critique an impossible task. As the Unnamable recognises, reasoning is not anterior to language but emerges in the process of articulation: ‘that’s all words they taught me, without making their meaning clear to me, that’s how I learnt to reason’.³⁸ As language is the primary technology through which the self emerges into being, to remain silent of the self in writing or reasoning is a logical impossibility.³⁹ Language testifies to the emergence of the self into being, and this trace of subjectivity is ineradicable: Kant cannot avoid subjectivity in the trace of his philosophical writing. Moreover, the quotation may be interpreted as a meta-fictional reflection on the method of ‘notesnatching’, through reconstructing the genetic process the Latin phrase goes through. Beckett ‘sprinkled’ the phrase ‘through the perjury’ of the arduous process of

³⁵ Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*, ed. by Steven Connor (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p. 42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1; p. 104.

³⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 669.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³⁹ Finn Fordham, *I do I undo I redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves in Hopkins, Yeats, Conrad, Forster, Joyce, and Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 16.

writing, in the same way that the Unnamable recalls the phrase to ironically comment on its situation. Beckett's fiction thus demonstrates a more meaningful engagement with or reading of this 'notesnatched' motto than its material trace in the *Whoroscope Notebook*.

§4

Van Hulle and Nixon note that Beckett gradually took 'his distance from Joyce's writing method by changing over to a different way of taking reading notes'.⁴⁰ The 'Philosophy Notes' taken on Kant in 1933 certainly provide traces of many different note-taking methods. These notes provide evidence for a form of reading that may be called *working through*, in the sense of materially merging the text's horizon with the reader's horizon through note-taking to process meaning. In other words, through a material re-articulation the reader can merge their own, or learnt, linguistic resources with those of the source text, in order to work through the complexity inscribed in that source. Here, writing may be thought of as a form of thinking, in the cognitive integrationist sense that 'cognitive abilities are neither solely, nor essentially neural'.⁴¹ Instead, writing can be thought of as 'actively *driving* cognition'.⁴² Hence, note-taking is the trace of a material form of thinking as it unfolds through a process Jacques Derrida terms *différance*: the process whereby meaning emerges within a paradigmatic space of linguistic difference through a syntagmatic temporal deferral.⁴³ Those notes that are summaries, re-phrases, emphases, or comments consequently demonstrate a reading that processes the unstable and transitory 'illusion of comprehension' in the materiality of writing. The 'Philosophy Notes' are additionally more systematic and comprehensive than other archival material.

⁴⁰ Van Hulle and Nixon, *Beckett's Library*, p. 11-12.

⁴¹ Richard Menary, 'Writing as thinking', *Language Sciences*, 29:1 (2007), 621-632 (p. 622).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 628.

⁴³ See Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), pp. 1-27.

For example, this manuscript is markedly different from the *Dream* and *Whoroscope* notebooks, in that the purpose does not appear to be a direct or indirect working of these ideas into Beckett's texts.⁴⁴ Instead, they demonstrate Beckett grappling with the complexity of Kant's thought through Windelband's critical commentary.

This reading in the configuration of working through occurs in the materiality of Beckett's note-taking on Windelband's discussion of the Kantian 'Object of Knowledge':

But our understanding cannot prescribe laws to
Nature as to thing-in-itself, or as systems of such,
and only insofar as it appears in our thought.⁴⁵

This short quotation corresponds to Windelband's discussion of the Kantian notion that nature in-itself is not a connected system, but that the categories of the understanding and sensibility synthesise our knowledge of the world and impose laws upon it as phenomena.⁴⁶ Such a note does not appear to be taken down to integrate into a work Beckett was writing, but instead to process the Kantian ideas discussed here. In this note, Beckett slightly re-phrases this sentence:

But our understanding cannot determine Nature in so far as it exists as a thing-in-itself, or as a system of things-in-themselves, but *only in so far* as it appears in our thought.⁴⁷

Beckett re-articulates Windelband's comment that 'our understanding cannot *determine* Nature' through using the phrase '*prescribe laws*'. This Kantian lexicon is used by

⁴⁴ Van Hulle and Nixon, *Beckett's Library*, p. 12.

⁴⁵ Beckett, MS 10967/225r.

⁴⁶ Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, p. 542.

⁴⁷ Ibid. [emphasis in original].

Windelband in other contexts, and it can be argued that Beckett's appropriation of this vocabulary here indicates the process of working through. That is to say, he re-contextualises a Kantian phrase to process the meaning of both the terminology and the different context.

This appropriation of the phrase '*prescribe laws*' further develops the intertextuality of the notes to work through the reading of Windelband. Through a re-phrased iteration of the source, this note relates to other entries that detail the laws prescribed to nature as phenomena in Kantian thought. It thereby intertextually refers to such determining factors as the 'laws of cause and effect', untangling the meaning inscribed in the source.⁴⁸ Moreover, in the phrase 'as to thing-in-itself', Beckett uses 'as' in the function of a conjunction to show that these laws are applied to 'nature' *and* the 'thing-in-itself' generally. Beckett's re-phrasing to 'as to thing-in-itself' thereby universalises the process of the understanding prescribing laws to things, indicating an apprehension of Kantian thought. Beckett additionally adds emphasis to the prepositional phrase 'as it appears in our thought', which perhaps manifests his interest in 'a private, inviolable, non-physical mental realm' at this time in 1933.⁴⁹ This more expansive note-taking method thus retains the trace of a reading as working through the complexities and nuances of Windelband's discussion.

The Unnamable is a text concerned with the philosophical complexities of the relation of knowledge to its object, and the text is a way of thinking through such philosophical concerns. The Unnamable asks:

And things, what is the correct attitude to adopt towards things? And, to begin with, are they necessary? What a question.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Beckett, MS 10967/226v.

⁴⁹ J. M. Coetzee, *Late Essays: 2006-2017* (London: Vintage, 2018), p. 181.

⁵⁰ Beckett, *The Unnamable*, p. 2.

In the 'Philosophy Notes', Beckett notes the fundamental question addressed in Kant's philosophical system: '*the relation of knowledge to its object*, in what does it consist & in what does it rest?'.⁵¹ Beckett's novels are arguably a way for him to work through his reading and understanding of philosophy in a different mode to sources he consulted: 'I wouldn't have any reason to write my novels if I could have expressed their subjects in philosophic terms'.⁵² Beckett appropriates philosophical ideas from his reading, and works through their complexities in the situations of his novels. This argument is substantiated in the above quotation, in which the Unnamable questions in a Kantian manner the 'correct attitude to adopt towards things' in order to determine the subject's relation to the world.

The question of whether things are 'necessary' further indicates the philosophical inflection of the Unnamable's concern as to the provenance of things in experience. 'Necessary', in the philosophical sense, refers to the ontology of a thing that exists in-itself. In Kantian terminology, this would be the noumena or 'thing-in-itself', which is ontologically distinct from its representation in the mind and therefore unknowable through phenomenological perception. The objects of human knowledge are instead termed 'phenomena', experienced through the synthesis of the understanding and the sensibility. Hence, in Kantian philosophy, the ontology of things can never be known independently of the mind. The Unnamable contemplates such an idea throughout the text.

This philosophical conundrum appears to be an idea the Unnamable is puzzling over when considering the unpredictable play of lights: 'They are perhaps unwavering and fixed and my fitful perceiving the cause of their inconstancy'.⁵³ The Unnamable is

⁵¹ Beckett, MS 10967/223r.

⁵² Graver and Federman, *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, p. 154.

⁵³ Beckett, *The Unnamable*, p. 4.

only able to tentatively think of the lights as ‘unwavering’ through the non-sensuous faculties. They consider that the perception of the lights may be determined by the representational capacity of the mind, and not directly known as they are. The Unnamable’s ‘fitful perceiving’ is perhaps the condition of the object of experience, and the lights exist as phenomena determined by this ‘fitful perception’ in ‘their irregularity, their instability, their shining strong one minute and weak the next’.⁵⁴ Indeed, Beckett displays a keen interest in the notion that the conditions of our perception are the conditions for the objects we perceive, translating from Cassirer’s introduction to Kant the following into his *Whoroscope Notebook*: ‘Kant’s proof that the conditions of the possibility of experience [are] also the condition of the possibility of the objects of experience !!!’.⁵⁵ The three exclamation marks indicate Beckett’s intrigue in such a philosophical notion that to the untrained mind overturns common assumptions regarding experience.

§5

In his biography of James Joyce, Richard Ellmann notes that Joyce asked Beckett to read Fritz Mauthner’s *Beiträge zu Einer Kritik der Sprache*, in order to report back to him on Mauthner’s neo-Kantian, nominalist view of language.⁵⁶ Shane Weller argues that the impact of Mauthner on Beckett was profound, ‘strengthening his sense that a gulf divides word and world’.⁵⁷ This indicates an important form in which Beckett encountered Kant that has not yet been discussed. In the writings of Mauthner encountered in 1938, Beckett was exposed to various critiques and appropriations of Kantian philosophy

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Beckett, MS 3000/59r; this corresponds to *Kants Werke, XI: Kants Leben Und Lebre*, p. 208.

⁵⁶ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 648-9.

⁵⁷ Shane Weller, ‘Humanity in Ruins: Samuel Beckett’, in *Language and Negativity in European Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 90-124 (p. 96).

mediated through another philosophical mind. Mauthner, like Windelband, regarded Kant's thought as integral to the subsequent development of Western philosophy. Beckett thus read texts that position Kant as the foremost modern philosopher who recognised the rupture between the subject and object. For example, in a verbatim typescript from a section of Vol. II of Mauthner's *Kritik*, Beckett notes down the following:

In his negative thinking Kant is already the destroyer of everything; we bow before the intellect which in its strongest hours started the gigantic work, which in the form of the de-construction of language or of thought was necessary.⁵⁸

Beckett appears to have been reading Mauthner alongside Cassirer's *Kant's Life and Thought*, as in the *Whoroscope Notebook* notes taken from Cassirer are interspersed with those taken from Mauthner.⁵⁹ This indicates a form of reading in which several sources are read alongside one another to develop a nuanced and critical understanding of Kantian thought. In the above quotation, for example, Mauthner reinforces Beckett's sense that the fundamental component of the subject-object fissure developed from Kantian thought is language: 'more and more my language appears to me like a veil which one has to tear apart in order to get to those things (or the nothingness) lying behind it'.⁶⁰ Although Beckett had not yet read Mauthner at the time he wrote this letter in 1937, it does represent his engagement with Kantian thought via Windelband and his reading of Arthur Schopenhauer in the early 1930s. These archival sources are some of the most compelling evidence for a type of reading that may be called *apprehension*, in the

⁵⁸ Samuel Beckett, 'Notes on Mauthner', MSS 10971/5/1-4; my translation is taken from Matthew Feldman's, *Sourcing "Aporetics": An Empirical Study on Philosophical Influences in the Development of Samuel Beckett's Writing* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: Oxford Brookes University, 2004), p. 386.

⁵⁹ See, Pilling, 'Dates and Difficulties', p. 43.

⁶⁰ Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, I: 1929-1940*, p. 518.

sense of grasping the complexity of a text and developing the ability to engage meaningfully with it.

In *The Unnamable*, the story of Mahood's approach towards the rotunda in which his family are waiting demonstrates an intellectual engagement with Kant's aesthetic thought:

This obligation, and the quasi-impossibility of fulfilling it, engrossed me in a purely mechanical way, excluding notably the free play of the intelligence and sensibility.⁶¹

The Kantian aesthetic terminology of 'the free play of the intelligence and sensibility' is not in the first draft of the text, which reads instead, 'à l'exclusion de tout le reste'.⁶² This indicates that Beckett adds this juxtaposition of the mechanical aesthetic of his novel to the Kantian exuberant and harmonising 'free play' experienced in the apprehension of beauty at a later stage. Such a juxtaposition suggests an intellectual apprehension of the Kantian aesthetic model in his *Critique of Judgement*, mediated through Cassirer and Windelband.⁶³ Kant suggests that the aesthetic phenomena is not subsumed under the conceptual power of the understanding, but that the imagination and understanding harmonise in an exuberant free play. This experience mediates between the particular and the universal, as the aesthetic object has the potential to excite this response universally.⁶⁴ In contrast, Beckett's aesthetic induces an experience of exhaustion through the mechanical negativity and permutations of language:

⁶¹ Beckett, *The Unnamable*, p. 32.

⁶² Samuel Beckett, MS SB/3/10/34^v [emphasis added].

⁶³ Carville, *Samuel Beckett and the Visual Arts*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 48-59. See also, Carville, *Samuel Beckett and the Visual Arts*, pp. 6-7; pp. 212-13.

What am I to do, what shall I do, what should I do, in my situation, how proceed? By aporia pure and simple? Or by affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered, or sooner or later?⁶⁵

Beckett's aesthetic holds out the possibility that through the exhaustion of the finite system of linguistic constructions the veil of language may be perforated. Such a discourse 'must go on', in order to realise the discursive space in which a 'quasi-impossibility' remains in play, the prefix 'quasi-' indicating a potential for communication. It may be argued that Beckett accordingly sounds out the partition of the subject-object relation through writing the space of rupture. This writing is therefore a 'way of thinking' the philosophical ideas and problems Beckett had encountered in his reading of Kant via philosophical critiques, appropriations, critical introductions, and other secondary sources.

§6

This essay has re-examined the dynamics of Beckett's reading of Kant in the materiality of his note-taking and fiction to articulate the polyvalent act of reading. In so doing, it has developed a vocabulary to hypothesise the different forms of reading that can be observed in the many note-taking methods used by Beckett. Van Hulle and Nixon observe that the 'generative capacity' of reading 'incites the reader to go beyond and develop autonomous ideas'.⁶⁶ This examination of the many configurations of Beckett's reading has thus further allowed for a discussion of its 'generative capacity' in the most terminal novel of his post-war trilogy. Moreover, it suggests that through engaging with

⁶⁵ Beckett, *The Unnamable*, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Van Hulle and Nixon, *Beckett's Library*, p. 19.

Beckett's notes as traces of a complex reading mechanism, genetic criticism can take account of the contours of reading as they are inscribed in the materiality of the archive.

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Appendix: Notes on Philosophy; TCD MS 10967/221^f-229^f

TCD MS 10967/220-229 are handwritten notes on Immanuel Kant taken from: Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, trans. James Tufts, II vols. (New York: Harper, 1958 [1901]). My transcription of this manuscript is taken from the facsimile and microfilm of these notes held at the University of Reading, Special Collections. For an overview of these notes, see *Notes Diverse Holo[graph]: Catalogues of Beckett's reading notes and other manuscripts at Trinity College Dublin, with supporting essays*, in *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui*, 16 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 67-89. For the dating of the material in these notes, see Matthew Feldman, 'Beckett and Philosophy, 1928-1938: A Falsifiable Reappraisal', in *Falsifying Beckett: Essays on Archives, Philosophy, and Methodology in Beckett Studies* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2015), pp. 75-88. References to TCD MS 10967 are given with the archival page number, followed by reference to its source in *A History of Philosophy*. My thanks to Mark Nixon for his generous assistance in determining some difficult points of transcription.

TCD MS 10967/221^f; pp. 534-6.

Immanuel Kant (1724 Königsberg – 1804

di.) son of a saddler. Born at Königsberg

1755 Privatdocent, 1770 full professor

Pre-critical period ends about 1770.

of great influence in his development the

antithesis between Leibnio-Wolffian meta-

physics & Newtonian natural philosophy.

In theoretical philosophy he passed through *mancher-*

lei Umkippungen his standpoint. In the *Physical Mondology* he sought to adjust opposition between Leibniz & Newton by distinction of things-in-themselves (which known metaphysically) & phenomena, or things as they appear (to be investigated physically). In the writings after 1760 he rejects the rationalist metaphysics & [?] mathematics and philosophy: the mystico-dogmatic system of *Inaugural Dissertation* rests on Leibniz's *Nouveaux Essais*.

Kritik der reinen Vernunft the “doomsday Book” of german philosophy. Main other writings of the critical period:

Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik (1783)

Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten (1785)

Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft (1785)

Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (1788)

Kritik der Urtheilskraft (1790)

Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft (1793)

Zum ewigen Frieden (1795)

Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechts – und

Tugendlehre (1797)

Der streit der Fakultäten (1798)

TCD MS 10967/221^v

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TCD MS 10967/222^r; pp. 532-3.

1. CRITIQUE OF REASON

[In first place?] synthesis of Enlightenment motives.

Wolffian metaphysics, popular philosophers, Hume, Rousseau, Newtonian natural philosophy, English psychology of motive, Deism from Toland & Shaftsbury to Voltaire, political [iconoclasm?] in France – all cooked through.

Inadequacy of rationalist scholasticism & Empirical psychology to deal with problem of knowledge drives him to seek in Leibniz's "virtual innateness" the possibility of metaphysical certainty. The [?] abilities of his epistemology thus grounded led him to the tedious investigation of 1770-80 culminating in the Critique of Pure Reason.

Recognised that the psychological method breaks down before philosophical problems, he separates problem connected with origin & development of the rational faculties from that connected with their value. Concentrating, with all Enlightenment, not on things but on reason itself, he finds universal judgements that can neither

be reduced to natural acquisition or to innateness.

It is necessary, in order to determine extent of authority of these judgements, to examine them in every possible context, both as to their content & relations in rational system.

This task he xxx ^{^designated} as *Critique of Pure Reason*,

& this method as the *critical or transcendental*

method ; its object the *possibility of*

synthetic judgements a priori. [judgements

are analytical when relation of predicate to

subject inheres in concept of later (explicative

judgements) ; synthetical when in [*?]

logically distinct from both subject-predicate

TCD MS 10967/222^v; pp. 533-4.

(ampliative judgements). This [*?], in

the case of synthetical judgements *a posteriori*

(judgements of perception), is the act of per-

ception itself ; while in the case of synthetical

judgement *a priori* (i.e involving universal

principles), it remains to be sought. *A priori*,

in Kantian terms, is not a psychological,

but an epistemological mark; it means

not a chronological priority to experience, but

a universality & necessary validity in rational

principles transcending, & incapable of being proved by, experience. i.e a logical, not a chronological, priority. The validity of rational principles is independent of their genesis in consciousness. All philosophy that seeks to prove this validity is dogmatic. The critical philosophy, a transcendental method, examines simply the form in which they appear & their faculty of being employed universally and necessarily.

This criticism, that applied epistemologically, extends to the other rational modes, as thinking, feeling, & willing and the fundamental mental forms.

Kant's doctrine is thus divided into a theoretical, practical, & aesthetic part, under Three Criticisms, of Pure Reason, Practical Reason & judgement.

TCD MS 10967/223^r; pp. 537-8.

A. OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE (KRITIK DER REINEN VERNUFT)

Proceeds from position of modern Terminism.
His liberation from that of Woolfian naïve realism,
xxx which regarded logical necessity &

reality as identical, consisted in his ^{seeing} xxx the im-
 possibility of determining by means of “pure reason”
 i.e. logical operations with conceptions, anything
 as to the existence or causal relations of real things.
 The metaphysical structure has no relation with
 reality. He now sought this relation in the con-
 ceptions given by experience, but was shaken from
 this “dogmatic slumber” by Hume, who demon-
 strated that the Forms of conceptual knowledge of
 reality, especially that of causality, are not
 given in perception & have no demonstrable relation
 with the Real. (N.B. that is classical passage
 in Preface to *Prolegomena*, Kant opposes Hume not
 to Wolff, but to Locke, Reid & Beattie only. The dogmatism
 therefore, from which Kant confessed to have been
 freed by Hume, was that ^{not of rationalism, but} of empiricism.) This
 Reality was not to be inferred from “Given” conceptions
 either. His *Inaugural Dissertation* advances
 a [?] attempt to solve the problem by means of
 Leibnizian doctrine of virtual innateness &
 pre-established harmony between monad that knows
 & monad which is the known. But reflection ex-
 pelled this harmony as a metaphysical assumption
 incapable of proof. Thus neither empiricism nor
 rationalism nor Leibnizian meditation can
 solve cardinal question – *the relation of knowledge*

to its object, in what does it consist & in what does it rest?

Kant's answer to this is the *Critique of Pure Reason*, x proceeds from fact of actual presence of synthetic judgements a priori in three theoretical sciences, viz: mathematics, pure natural science & metaphysics & aims at examining their claim to necessary and universal validity.

The new element which separates the

TCD MS 10967/223^v; pp. 538-9.

Critique from *Inaugural Dissertation* is the conception of synthesis (faculty of reason to unite or unify a manifold). Here Kant finds common element between Forms of sensibility & understanding regarded as separated in the *Dissertation*, in accordance with their characteristic attributes of receptivity and spontaneity respectively. This conception of synthesis as spontaneous unification of the manifold bursts the xxx psychological scheme of the *Dissertation*.

Synthesis of theoretical reason completes itself in three stages. (1/ combination of sensation into perceptions take place in the Forms of space & time. (2/ combination of perceptions into experience

of natural world of reality takes places by means of
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
xxxxx concepts of the understanding. (3) Combination
of judgements of experience into metaphysical
knowledge take place by means of general
principles, which Kant calls Ideas. These
are the 3 Forms of synthesis of which each
higher stage has the lower for its content. The
critique of reason has to investigate what the
especial Forms of synthesis are at each stage,
& in what consists their necessary and universal
validity. (Transcendental aesthetic)

Mathematics^ mainly [?] of Inaugural
Dissertation. Mathematical propositions synthetic
& object of construction in pure perception.
Their necessity and universal validity, not to be
established by any experience, involves their being
valid as an a priori principle of perception. The
“pure forms of perception” or “perceptions a priori”
are the ideas of space & time. The idea of the
infinite space & of the infinite time do
not depend on empirical perception of finite
space and time, but antecede under particular

TCD MS 10967/224^r; pp. 539-40.

perception of nebeneinander & nacheinander
which are only presented to the mind as
parts of space & time in General. Space & time
are neither “concepts” nor related to idea of
finite magnitude as class-concepts
to [particulars?], but as whole to part. They are
pure perceptions (anschauungen), i.e not
founded on empirical perceptions (wahr-
nehmungen), but lying at the basis of all such,
& therefore necessary. They are the Given Forms of
pure perception from which we cannot escape,
the laws of relation in which alone the manifold
of sensations may be synthesised. Further:
space is the form of the outer sense, time that
of the inner ; all objects of particular senses
are perceived as spatial, all objects of self-perception
as in time.

Space & time being the “unchangeable Form of
our sensuous receptivity”, it follows that all cog-
nitions determined by these without reference to
particular empirical content proves universal &
necessary validity. In realm of the sensibility,
the only object of a priori knowledge is the
Form of the synthesis of manifold given by sen-
sation – laws of arrangement in space & time.
Universality & necessity of this knowledge in-

telligible only if space & time are nothing but the necessary forms of sensuous perception. If they possessed a reality independent of functions of perception, the a priori character of mathematical knowledge would be impossible; (the naïve conception of space and time as innate ideas is absolutely un-Kantian) ; [so?] then they could be known only through experience, i.e. never in a universal & necessary way.

TCD MS 10967/224^v; pp. 540-1.

This last mode of knowledge is possible only if they are simply the Form under which all things perceived must appear. Thus for Kant the a priori & phenomenal are interchangeable conceptions. The only universal and necessary elements in man's knowledge is the Form under which things appear in it.

The ideality of space & time he distinguishes Very exactly from “subjectivity of sense qualities” held by him, and all philosophy after Descartes & Locke, to be self-evident. The phenomenality of colour, taste etc. had been based, since Protagoras and Democritus, on relativity of impressions; whereas the phenom-

ality of space & time is deduced by Kant precisely from their invariability. For him the sense qualities xxx^{are} only an individual & contingent mode of representation, while Form of space & time are the universal & necessary mode in which all things appear. Sensation gives an individual idea, mathematics a necessary, universally valid perception of actual world; but both are merely different stages of the phenomenal appearance, behind which the thing-in-itself remains unknown. Space & time hold without exception for all objects of perception but for nothing beyond; they have “empirical reality” & “transcendental ideality”.

Natural science (transcendental analytic)

Main advance of *Critique* beyond *Dissertation* resides in extending of same principles in a parallel investigation of epistemological value formed by synthetic Forms of understanding

TCD MS 10967/225^f; pp. 541-2.

such natural science principles as that of causality are synthetic, but incapable of being actualised in experience. Without them the knowledge of nature would lose its validity,

for nature is a connected system, actually perceived through our senses, but always through conceptions. The faculty of synthesising manifold of perception Kant calls the understanding; & the categories or pure conceptions of the understanding are the Forms of the synthesis of the understanding, just as space & time are the Forms of the synthesis of perception.

If now Nature, an object of knowledge, were a real connected system, independent of the function of our reason, we could know it only through experience & never a priori; a universal & necessary knowledge of nature is possible only if the conceptions determine nature itself.

If Nature prescribed laws to our understanding, we should only have an empirical, inadequate knowledge: an a priori knowledge of Nature is therefore possible only if the case be reversed & our understanding prescribes laws of Nature.

But our understanding cannot prescribe laws to Nature as to thing-in-itself, or as systems of such, and only insofar as it appears in our thought. An a priori knowledge of Nature is \therefore possible only if the connection which we think between perceptions is also nothing but our mode of ideation; the conceptual relations, in which Nature is an

object of knowledge, xxx are also only “phenomenal”.

Synthetic forms of understanding distinguished

From the selection of formal logic, [illegible] on principle

of contradiction. For these only establish relations

between conceptions according to contents already

given within them, xxxx & do not involve such

modes of combination as relation of cause & effect,

substance & accident, etc. (as Hume had shown).

TCD MS 10967/225^v; pp. 542-3.

Here Kant introduces his transcendental logic

side by side with analytic Forms of the

understanding, relating conception given

as to content appear the synthetic Forms of

understanding, through which perceptions are

made objects of conceptual knowledge.

Images of sensation, co-ordiante in space &

changing in time, become “objective” only

by being thought as things with abiding qualities

and changing states; but this relation expressed by

means of the category inheres analytically

neither in perceptions nor perceptual relations.

In analytical relations of Formal logic thinking

is dependent on its objects & is ultimately [?] [?]

[?] [only?] a reckoning with given magnitudes

Synthetic Forms of transcendental logic, on the contrary, evince the understanding in its creative function of producing out of perception the objects of thought itself.

This distinction between formal and transcendental logic is fundamental antithesis between Kant & Greek theory of knowledge, which had prevailed up till that time in its view of the “objects” as given independently of thought, Kant the first to discover that objects of thought are themselves the products of thought. The spontaneity of reason the deepest kernel of his transcendental idealism.

But while he thus set a new epistemological logic of synthesis alongside the analytical logic of Aristotle, concerned with relations involved in subsuming ready-made conceptions, he yet held that both had a common element, viz: the science of judgement. In the judgement the relation is thought between subject & predicate is asserted as holding objectively; all objective

TCD MS 10967/226^r; pp. 543-5.

thinking is judging. Hence there must be as many categories as there are kinds of

judgement, & Kant thought he could deduce the former from the latter. This resulted in an artificial construction.

In order to explain how the categories “make” the objects of experience” Kant distinguishes between judgements of perception (i.e. experiencing relation of sensations in space & time for individual conscience) & judgements of experience (i.e. asserting such relation as objectively valid). & defines difference in epistemological value to be, that in the judgement of experience the relation is regulated by a category, a conceptual connection, whereas in mere judgement of perception this is lacking. This succession becomes objective when categorised as causal. All particular constructions of spatial & temporal synthesis of sensations become objects only by being combined according to the rule of the understanding.

Thus individual consciousness contains a contrast between a movement of ideas for which it claims no validity outside itself, & an activity of experience, in virtue of which it knows itself bound in a way valid for all. Only in this dependence consists reference of thought to object. But individual consciousness is unaware of this co-operation of categories,

accepting its results as [?] in his apprehension.

Thus for the “production of the object” a higher common consciousness must be assumed, entering the individual consciousness not with its functions, but only with their result.

This he termed “consciousness in General” or “transcendental apperception”.

Experience is ∴ the system of phenomena

TCD MS 10967/226^v; pp. 545-6.

in which the spatial & temporal synthesis of sensation is determined by rules of the understanding. Thus “Nature as phenomena” is the objects of a priori knowledge, [?] the categories hold for & antecede all experience.

Nature is the system of sensations perceived in the forms of Space & Time & ordered accordingly to the categories. The Metaphysics of Nature are manifold, independently of psychology & chemistry which are merely descriptive disciplines, as the categories formulated & affiliated mathematically to the motion which is [?] of all Natural occurrence & change.

All of these categories, the universally and necessarily

valid principles & [highest?] principles of all Natural
science, universally & necessarily valid without
empirical proof, are, what in Nature [?]

[the next two and a half lines are illegible]

[...]

laws of cause and effect,

that all substance are in

[illegible material] Kant's dynamic

theory of matter elicits doctrine already [?]

in the Natural History of the Heaven, that the

substance of that which is moveable in space

is the product of two forces which maintain

an equilibrium in varying degree – those

of attraction and repulsion.

These metaphysics of Nature can only be
a metaphysics of phenomena, & no other
is possible. The categories, being Forms for
relating, are themselves empty, referring to
their objects only in perceptions, which present a
manifold content to be combined. The

TCD MS 10967/227^r; pp. 546-7.

perceptions, in their task, are only syntheses
in forms of space & time of that given by sensations.

Accordingly, the only object of human knowledge

is experience, i.e. phenomenal experience.

The distinction prevailing since Plato between noumena & phenomena has no meaning.

Knowledge of things-in-themselves through “sheer reason” extending beyond experience, is a chimera.

This introduces pivotal investigation of Kant, into justification of phenomenon itself.

He has resolved naïve conception of “object” partly into sensations, partly into synthetic

Forms of perception & understanding; nothing seems to remain beside individual consciousness as truly existing, except the “consciousness in general”, the transcendental apperception.

Where then are the “things”, of which Kant declared that it has never come entered his head to deny their reality?

Conception of the thing-in-itself can no longer have positive content, as it has in Leibniz & in *Inaugural Dissertation*. It can no longer be an object of purely rational knowledge, nor indeed an “object” at all. But it remains “thinkable”, if only as a noumena.

Human knowledge is limited to objects of experience, because the perception required

for use of categories is in our case only the
receptive sensuous perception in space & time.

If one could suppose a perception of a non-

TCD MS 10967/227^v; pp. 547-8.

receptive kind, producing synthetically
not only its Forms, but also its contents –
a truly “productive imagination” – its
objects would no longer be phenomena, but
but things-in-themselves. Such a faculty could
be intellectual perception (intuition) a
intuitive intellect, the unity of the two
knowing faculties of sensibility and understanding,
which in man appear separated, though
their constant inter-dependence indicates
a hidden common root. Thus Noumena,
or things-in-themselves, are thinkable negatively
as objects of a non-sensuous perception, of
which our knowledge can predicate nothing.
They are thinkable as limiting conceptions of
experience.

But if things-in-themselves were denied
“all would be immediately resolved into phen-
omena”, involving the assertion that nothing is
real but what appears to man, or other sensuously

receptive beings – a presumption incapable of proof. Transcendental idealism must not deny reality of noumena, it must only deny possibility of them becoming objects of human knowledge. Noumena must be thought, but are not knowable. Thus Kant xxx won back the right to designate objects of human knowledge as “only phenomena”.

Metaphysic (Transcendental dialectic)

a metaphysics of the supersensuous is impossible, an[d] is shown by criticism of Leibnizo-

TCD MS 10967/228^r; pp. 548-9.

Wolffian school-metaphysics. But that which causes the experienced must yet be thought; and the transcendental illusion discovered by which even the great thinkers have at all times been seduced into regarding this, which must be thought, as object of knowledge.

Kant proceeds from antithesis between activity of the understanding & sensuous perception. Categorical thinking relates the data of perception so that every phenomenon is conditioned by other phenomena. So that

the understanding, in order to think the individual phenomenon completely, would have to grasp the totality of its conditions, which cannot be done. The categories cognise the conditionality of each phenomena only by means of other phenomena, which in turn recognize their conditionality to be cognised, & so on ad infinitum. Thus the relation between sensibility & understanding involves necessary but insoluble problems; these Kant calls ideas & the faculty required for this highest synthesis of the cognitions of the understanding he calls Reason in the narrower sense.

Supposing the problem solved, the sought Totality of Conditions must be thought as itself unconditioned. This conclusion of the infinite series, inaccessible to the understanding, must nevertheless be thought, as goal of understanding

TCD MS 10967/228^v; pp. 549-50.

The ideas are mental representations of the unconditioned, which must necessarily be thought without even becoming object of knowledge & the transcendental illusion

of the metaphysicians consists in regarding them as [given?] whereas they are only aufgegeben (set as a task). They are not constitutive principles producing like the categories objects of knowledge, but only regulative principles, by which the understanding is constrained to farther & farther connecting links in the conditioned of experience.

There are three such ideas. The unconditioned for the (1) totality of all phenomena of the inner sense (2) all data of the outer sense (3) all the conditioned in general; thought respectively as souls, the world, God.

(1) Paralogisms of Pure Reason. Points out in usual proofs for the substantiality of soul the quaternion terminorum of a confusion of logical subject with real substrate: conception of substance applicable only in field of external sense; idea of soul unconditioned real unity of all unity of all phenomena of inner sense, as little capable of proof as of refutation, & the heuristic principle for investigating inter-connections of the psychical life.

(3) Ideal of Reason combats right of ontological proof of god to infer existence

from the conception alone; shows that cosmological proof involves a petitio principii when it seeks “first cause” of all that is “contingent”

TCD MS 10967/229^r; p. 550.

in an “absolutely necessary being”; & shows that the teleological or physico-theological argument at the best – granted beauty, harmony & purposiveness of the universe – leads to ancient conception of a wise & good “architect of the universe”. yet the assumption of living, real unity of all reality constitutes only powerful motive for empirical investigation.

(2) Antinomies of Pure Reason, showing absurdities that result from the universe being treated as object of knowledge. For according as we follow, on the one hand the demand of the understanding for completion of series of phenomena, &, on the other, the demand of the sensuous perception for endless continuance of same, mutually contradicting propositions may be maintained.

He proves in the theses (1) that the world must have beginning & end in space & time.

(2) That the divisibility of its substance is limited.

(3) That events must have free (i.e. unconditioned)

beginning. (4) That God is an absolutely
necessary Being; & in the antithesis the con-
-tradictory opposite in each case.

In the unknowable world of noumena it is not
a contradiction to think freedom & god, whereas
neither is to be met with in the world of phenomena