Behaviorism, Consciousness, and the Literary Mind

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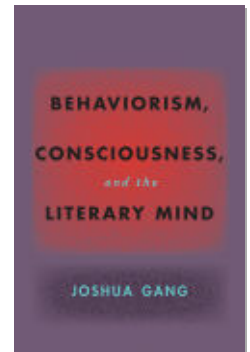Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

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3   Mental Acts

What kind of existence can mental actions, as distinct from physical actions, have on the dramatic stage?[1] If we go back to Beckett's novels *Murphy* and *Molloy*, we might conclude that the answer to this question is "none." By the end of these novels, mental actions don't really exist anymore—at least not as phenomena unto themselves. For if introspection really is a form of sensation or observation, as these novels suggest, then there can be neither ontological nor epistemological differences between mental actions and physical actions. And it is this lack of distinction between mental and physical actions, this lack of dualism, that *Murphy* identifies with the theater. But even if we don't agree with this reasoning, the conventions of dramatic performance still seem to work against the realization of mental actions onstage. For while written texts (e.g., novels and poems) can distinguish between mental and physical actions easily enough, the theater is constrained by physics and the logical entailments of behavior (including speech). In that way there's an obvious similarity between characters onstage and people offstage. Mental actions can certainly be embodied and represented onstage. But in the same way that I can't extract my mental actions and look at them from across the room, it's hard to imagine how a mental action might happen onstage without some kind of physical embodiment or ownership. Indeed, without embodiment or ownership, it's not clear how we would perceive them or if we would even recognize them as "mental" at all. Therefore, whether for philosophical reasons, formal reasons, or even just folk psychology, it seems unlikely we'd ever conclude that mental actions can exist onstage in their own right.

Ostensibly, the desiccated psychologies we encounter in Beckett's plays would do nothing to change this. Nor would the slightly less desiccated psychologies we find in the early plays of Harold Pinter, whom Ruby Cohn

described as both "Beckett's spiritual son" and "at least a cousin of the Angry Young Englishmen."[2] Insofar as the plays of Beckett and Pinter entertain the reduction of psychology to physiology, or either occlude or deny mental states entirely, some have gone as far as describing these plays as "behavioristic." For Theodor Adorno, Beckett's *Endgame* (1957) was an example of drama without meaningful psychology. In "Trying to Understand *Endgame*" (1958), he argued that "the inward element supposedly signified" by dramatic speech and gesture "no longer exists" (128). "Beckett's figures," he wrote, "behave primitively and behavioristically, corresponding to conditions after the catastrophe . . . flies that twitch after the swatter has half smashed them" (128). Unlike Adorno, Hannah Scolnicov doesn't invoke the legacy of "muscle-twitchism," but she asserts the behaviorism of Pinter's plays just the same. In *The Experimental Plays of Harold Pinter* (2012), she notes that "behaviorist psychology treats the individual as a 'black box.' . . . It is this way of thinking about human psychology that Pinter adapted for his plays, representing behavior without providing an inner mechanism" (20).[3] Like Beckett's plays, Pinter's also seem to be evacuated of mental representation, if not evacuated of some mental content as well.[4]

And yet when we turn to moments in some of Beckett's and Pinter's most famous plays—*Waiting for Godot* (1953) and *The Homecoming* (1964)— something else seems to be going on. The mise-en-scènes of these plays, whether *Waiting for Godot*'s emptiness or *The Homecoming*'s unfinished home renovations, bring out the barren, unforgiving physicality of theatrical performance. At the same time, they also insist that mental actions and concepts should somehow be realizable onstage. And they do this despite the logical and practical problems entailed by such realization. In *Waiting for Godot*, Lucky and Pozzo insist that mental actions are in fact the same kind of performable, observable actions as singing and dancing. The grammar of Pozzo's offer to have Lucky "dance, or sing, or recite, or think" reinforces this absurdity. You can watch someone while they think, but you can't watch thinking the same way you'd watch dancing. And yet Lucky makes an earnest attempt to do this kind of public thinking anyway. Part of his performance includes the following commentary on "physical culture": "In spite of the strides of physical culture," he says, "the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie skating tennis of all kinds flying sports of all sorts" (43). "Conating"—the desire to act—sneaks in between "gliding" and "camogie," as if they were all spectator sports. Conating, it would seem, is something

you ought to be able to watch at an arena or at the theater, despite the obvious difficulties of doing so.

The Homecoming, too, is invested in drawing the audience's eyes to things that can't be seen onstage. One of Lenny's favorite ways to needle his brother Teddy—who might or might not be a philosophy professor—is to pose logical conundrums. How, he asks, "can the unknown merit reverence?" (52). Teddy doesn't have an answer. But Ruth—who might or might not be Teddy's wife—does: "Look at me. I . . . move my leg. That's all it is. But I wear . . . underwear . . . which moves with me . . . it . . . captures your attention. Perhaps you misinterpret. The action is simple. It's a leg . . . moving. My lips move. Why don't you restrict . . . your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant . . . than the words which come through them. You must bear that . . . possibility . . . in mind" (52-53; ellipses in the original). Ruth's comments seem to pull in two different directions. Ostensibly, Ruth asks for a kind of behaviorism here. Teddy and Lenny—as well as the audience—are directed to "restrict" themselves to observable action. And yet Ruth undercuts this direction by drawing our eyes, so to speak, to things we can't observe—forcing us to conceive of her mental actions as being somehow empirically knowable. To make this point, Ruth draws a parallel between her underwear and her psychological motivation, which she distinguishes from "the words which come through them." Both of these unknown objects, Ruth insinuates, "merit reverence." But Pinter, by way of Ruth, has performed some logical sleight of hand. Ruth's comments here blur the line between objects that *won't* be shown onstage and phenomena that *can't* be staged at all. The implication is that Ruth's motivation is knowable in the same way that her underwear is, even though one is a mental concept and the other is a physical object. Through this parallel, Pinter creates the expectation that Ruth's motives might exist or operate onstage independently of her speech and gestures. He teases us with the possibility that we might get to "see" these motives at some point, although we never do.

My claim here is that, despite what we might infer from the end of *Murphy*, the plays of Beckett and Pinter are not at all the behavioristic enterprises often assumed. Instead, as we see in these moments from *Waiting for Godot* and *The Homecoming*, their plays stipulate that mind-body dualism is a necessary aspect of theatrical performance. Moreover, even as they acknowledge the seeming impossibility of their tasks, these plays try to conceive of mental actions onstage as being somehow epistemologically dis-

tinct from physical actions. As I mentioned in the introduction, Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* argued that the belief in mind-body dualism manifested itself in several ways. One of these was ontological: the belief that minds and bodies are made of different substances (a point I discussed in the introduction). Another was that minds and bodies are members of the same logical category (a point I have discussed throughout this book). But there was also a third epistemological manifestation, which will be my focus here: a belief in two "collateral histories, one consisting of what happens in and to his body, the other consisting of what happens in and to his mind. The first is public, the second private. The events in the first history are in the physical world, those in the second are in the mental world" (2). Ryle's point, of course, was that this belief in two worlds is a mistake. Beckett and Pinter, however, sought to stage these worlds separately and simultaneously. In their efforts to achieve this, both playwrights ultimately created dualistic mise-en-scènes that could hypothetically accommodate both mental and physical actions while also maintaining an essential epistemological distinction between the two.[5]

To show the ways they did this, as well as the different ways Beckett and Pinter instrumentalized these dualistic spaces, I divide the rest of this chapter into four sections. In the first, I examine behaviorism's logical and epistemological arguments against mind-body dualism. Obviously one of these arguments—Ryle's claim that mind-body dualism comprises a category-mistake—is central to this book as a whole. But in order to analyze the conceptual stakes in Beckett's and Pinter's mise-en-scènes, it's necessary to trace the evolution of behaviorism's critique of dualism, focusing in part on Ryle's distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that"—and the ways that dualism might nonetheless persist in theatrical performance. In the second section I turn to Beckett's plays *Eleutheria* (1948) and *Krapp's Last Tape* (1957), both of which use a dualistic mise-en-scène to give mental actions a physical reality but do so in a way that doesn't merely turn them into physical actions. In *Eleutheria*, which was Beckett's first play but only published and performed after his death, a split set allows the simultaneous staging of a "main action" and a "marginal action," which comprise different kinds of performances that the audience is encouraged to know in different ways. In *Krapp's Last Tape*, the set's lighting design divides the stage into different epistemological zones corresponding to the different kinds of knowledge that can be accessed there. Additionally, Krapp's memories are stored not in his head but on tape reels, which allow these memories to

exist onstage independently of Krapp's body. Pinter's plays *The Birthday Party* (1955) and *The Dumb Waiter* (1957) also make use of a dualistic mise-en-scène—using the main stage to represent "words spoken" and relegating "things known" to an unseen offstage space. And much as Ruth suggested that her motives and underwear were knowable in the same way, *The Birthday Party* and *The Dumb Waiter* let their characters and audiences imagine that the difference between "words spoken" and "things known" is one of degree rather than type. But insofar as Pinter believed that language use necessitated the epistemological separation of mental and physical worlds, he never lets this realization occur. Instead, it's a false promise, and one that his characters, as they exploit the gaps between mental and physical worlds, turn into a weapon. In the chapter's concluding section I argue that even though dramatic minds do have some ontological similarities to actual minds, we must understand them as meaningfully comparable to the written literary minds we encounter in novels and poetry.

Behaviorism and Dualism

In the early days of behaviorism, mind-body dualism wasn't much of a concern. Watson's "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" (1913) was largely dismissive of its relevance to psychological study—much as he was dismissive of philosophy more generally. "Those time-honored relics of philosophical speculation," he wrote, "need trouble the student of behavior as little as they trouble the student of physics. The consideration of the mind-body problem affects neither the type of problem selected nor the formulation of the solution to that problem" (166). Insofar as behaviorism was only interested in overt behavior, the Cartesian distinction between being "a thinking, non-extended thing" and "an extended, non-thinking thing" (*Selected Philosophical* Writings, 114–15) was beside the point.

But by the time *Behaviorism* was published in 1924, Watson's attitudes toward dualism had changed. It was also in *Behaviorism* that we see behaviorism's epistemological critique of dualism begin to distinguish itself from materialism's ontological critiques of dualism. In Judeo-Christian religion, Watson explained, believers are taught that

> there is a fearsome God and that every individual has a soul which is separate and distinct from the body. This soul is really a part of the supreme being. This concept has led to the philosophical platform called 'dualism.' All psychology except behaviorism is dualistic. *That is to say we have both a mind (soul) and a body. This*

dogma has been present in human psychology from earliest antiquity. No one has ever touched a soul, or has seen one in a test tube, or has in any way come into relationship with it as he has with the other objects of his daily experience. (4)

There's a lot to be suspicious of in Watson's reasoning here—particularly the claim that "all psychology except behaviorism is dualistic." By the twentieth century, substance dualism—the idea that minds and bodies are made of different substances or materials—had largely disappeared from psychology. The introspective psychologists that Watson attacked in "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" were no exception. In *Principles of Physiological Psychology* (1874), Wilhelm Wundt argued against metaphysical conceptions of "mind" and "spirit" explicitly. "Mind, in popular thought," he explained, is "a substance, a real being" (17). In contrast, physiological psychology would understand "mind" as "the logical subject of internal experience . . . freed of all those accretions of crude metaphysics which invariably attach to concepts" (18). Wundt's, of course, were not the only arguments against Cartesian dualism. In *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), William James attacked what he perceived as the substance dualism of Herbert Spencer.[6] And in his later essay "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" (1904), James made his own version of neutral monism more explicit. "My thesis," he wrote, "is that we start with the supposition that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff 'pure experience,' then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation . . . into which portions of pure experience may enter" (170).

It would therefore be hard to criticize either James or Wundt for believing in mind-body dualism. But that is precisely what Watson tried to do. Far from establishing a truly "scientific" psychology, he claimed, modern psychology was merely the translation of quasi-religious doctrine into a more technical vocabulary. "All that Wundt and his students really accomplished," Watson suggested, "was to substitute for the word 'soul' the word 'consciousness'" (5). As a concept, "consciousness" was no more scientifically useful or precise than "soul." "To the behaviorist," he wrote, "the two terms are essentially identical, so far as concerns their metaphysical implications" (5). Therefore, when Watson accused Wundt and others of mind-body dualism, he wasn't necessarily criticizing them for believing that mind and body are made of different substances. Instead, he was criticizing them for *conceptual or epistemological dualism*—that is, for having concepts of "mind" or "mental state" at all. When Watson suggested that behaviorism was the

only nondualist psychology, what he meant was that behaviorism was the only psychology that dispensed with the myth of consciousness itself.

As I mentioned in earlier chapters, many of Watson's claims provoked controversy. But at the same time, Watson's formulation of mind-body dualism as an epistemological problem set an important precedent for logical behaviorism later on. The phrase "logical behaviorism" first appeared in Carl Hempel's "The Logical Analysis of Psychology" (1935). Hempel's logical behaviorism attempted to synthesize aspects of Watsonsian behaviorism with the epistemology of the Vienna Circle—particularly the sociological behaviorism of Otto Neurath and the translational reductionism of Rudolf Carnap.[7] "We find in [psychological] behaviorism," Hempel explained, "an attempt to construct a scientific psychology which would show by its success that even in psychology we have to do with purely physical processes" (16). But there were key differences between Watson's doctrine and Hempel's. First, logical behaviorism wasn't a psychological theory. Instead, it was a logical theory about the kinds of statements that psychological language could make. Therefore, Hempel abandoned many of psychological behaviorism's methodological claims. From the perspective of the Vienna School, introspection was no less reliable than behavioral observation, such that there was no reason for "psychological research [to] restrict itself methodologically to the study of the responses organisms make to certain stimuli" (20). Second, Hempel dismissed Watson's wholesale rejection of consciousness as a misunderstanding of the concept involved. "Logical behaviorism," Hempel wrote, "claims neither that minds, feelings, inferiority complexes, voluntary actions, etc., do not exist, nor that their existence is in the least doubtful. It insists that the very question as to whether these psychological constructs really exist is already a pseudoproblem" (20).

Nonetheless, what emerged from Hempel's logical behaviorism was a critique of mind-body dualism that converged with Watson's, even as they disagreed on the epistemological value of psychological concepts. For Watson, such concepts were a distorting representation. The term "memory" denoted not a stand-alone mental action but rather the "verbal part of a total habit." Conversely, Hempel claimed that such substitution was precisely the value of psychological language—a way of referring to, and knowing about, more fundamental physical phenomena. But neither psychological language nor psychological phenomena were of any value on their own. Insofar as psychological descriptions are necessarily translatable to physical descriptions, Hempel explained, "the meaning of a psychological statement

consists solely in the function of abbreviating the description of certain modes of physical response characteristic of the bodies of men or animals" (19). Hempel's logical behaviorism was the first of many—from Wittgenstein's comments on psychology in *Philosophical Investigations* to Wilfrid Sellars's Myth of Jones, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Few of these philosophers were as committed to physicalist reduction as Hempel. But each advanced the project of logical behaviorism, attempting to strip philosophy of mentalistic assumptions and redefine the epistemological relations between physical and psychological phenomena. For the purpose of analyzing logical behaviorism's critique of mind-body dualism, my focus here will be Ryle's discussion of these topics in *The Concept of Mind*.

As I mentioned earlier, Ryle claimed that one aspect of Cartesian dualism was the belief in two worlds: one physical (which was public) and one mental (which was private). This belief in two counterpart worlds was the product of a category-mistake—of assuming that minds and bodies are comparable and the same types of concept. But that doesn't mean that Ryle believed only in a purely physical world. Instead, he argued that "mind" and "body" couldn't be understood as representing different types of concepts, actions, or worlds. "Mind" and "body" were incorrectly isolated aspects of the same persons, processes, and actions. "When we characterize people by mental predicates," he explained, "we are not making untestable inferences to any ghostly processes occurring in streams of consciousness which we are debarred from visiting; we are describing the ways in which those people conduct parts of their predominantly public behavior" (39). If I say that someone is happy, Ryle's reasoning goes, I am not merely making a statement about that person's mental states; rather, I am making a statement about that person's bearing or comportment as a whole. In effect, mental predicates can't be applied independently of behavioral predicates, particularly if I've used the latter to deduce (or isolate) the former. What we think of as mental phenomena, Ryle claimed, are actually implied logical relations among observed phenomena.

Ryle's most influential proof for this claim was his attack on the distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that." "Both philosophers and laymen," he explained, "tend to treat intellectual operations as the core of mental conduct; that is to say, they tend to define all other mental-conduct concepts in terms of cognition" (15). As a result, when we talk about intelligent behavior (i.e., doing something intentionally), we tend to separate it into two parts: *knowing how* and *knowing that*. This separation follows, Ryle

explained, from the Cartesian separation of body and mind. Let's imagine I want to play chess. In order to play chess, I must first possess factual knowledge about the rules and conventions of chess. I must know which pieces have which names and the different abilities each piece has. That is all factual knowledge that I can acquire before I sit down to play my first game. In short, I think before I move. Ryle called this process "the intellectualist legend": the belief that performing a single intelligent action actually involved two distinct actions (*knowing that* followed by *knowing how*). First, you "consider certain appropriate propositions, or prescriptions"; then, you "put into practice what these propositions or prescriptions enjoin. It is to do a bit of theory and then do a bit of practice" (18). This sounds reasonable enough. But Ryle maintained that the intellectual legend comprises something of a conundrum. "If," he wrote, "for any operation to be intelligently executed, a prior theoretical operation had first to be performed and performed intelligently, it would be a logical impossibility for anyone ever to break into the circle" (19). To return to the example of chess: I want to move my pawn to square K4 (much as Murphy began his final match against Endon). In order to do that, I must first successfully "perform" my factual knowledge in my head. But in order to perform that factual knowledge successfully, I must first perform a different piece of factual knowledge, which must be preceded by another performance, and so on. By this reasoning, the intellectualist myth invariably leads to an infinite logical regress.

Therefore, Ryle concluded, "When I do something intelligently . . . I am doing one thing and not two. My performance has a special procedure or manner, not antecedent" (32). *Knowing how* and *knowing that* comprised not separate consequential activities but, like body and mind, inappropriately separated aspects of the same phenomenon. As an example, Ryle offered the performances of clowns:

> The cleverness of the clown may be exhibited in his tripping and tumbling. He trips and tumbles just as clumsy people do, except that he trips and tumbles on purpose and after much rehearsal and at the golden moment and where the children can see him and so as not to hurt himself. The spectators applaud his skill at seeming clumsy, but what they applaud is not some extra hidden performance executed "in his head." It is his visible performance that they admire, but they admire it not for being an effect of any hidden internal causes but for being an exercise of a skill. . . . The traditional theory of mind has misconstrued the type-

distinction between disposition and exercise into its mythical bifurcation of un-witnessable mental causes and their witnessable physical effects. (22)

When we see someone excel at clowning, Ryle claimed, we don't say they have an encyclopedic knowledge of clowning's rules, techniques, and history. Instead, we praise the clown performance as a whole. But to be fair, clowning is an excellent and convenient example for Ryle's point. It's hard to be a good clown; it takes a lot of effort and practice. However, there are also conventional associations between clowning and performing physical actions stupidly—that is, with an implied lack of thinking, awareness, or planning. In order to make a point about the absence of antecedent mental operations, Ryle has chosen an activity where those kinds of mental predicates are less likely to appear anyway. If we don't generally describe clowns as possessing lots of clowning knowledge "in their heads," it's not just because *knowing that* and *knowing how* are parts of the same process. It's also because we're talking about *clowns*: figures whose humor is precisely that of a person being overwhelmed by physicality. In contrast, if we were to talk about an actor on the stage—someone who assumes a new identity and speaks memorized words likely written by another person—Ryle's arguments against mind-body dualism would not work so well.

A Dualistic Space

This isn't to say that dramatic actors necessarily assume a hard distinction between *knowing how* and *knowing that* when performing. But like pretense and dishonesty, or thinking one thing and saying another, certain theatrical conventions do seem to entail the separation between mental states and physical actions—even though the former are typically visible only through the latter.[8] And we know this from the kind of language we use to describe actors onstage. As audience members we expect that the people onstage are neither making factual statements nor acting like themselves. As Ryle points out, spectators are different from people who have been deceived by liars, as spectators have "paid to see people act who advertise themselves as actors" (154). We realize that an actor's performance onstage is not necessarily the same as their conduct as a person. Indeed, the very concept of "conduct"—which Ryle uses to signify the inherent inseparability of mental and behavioral predicates—doesn't apply during a theatrical performance the way it might before or after the show. There is no apparent

contradiction in the following sentence about a hypothetical production of *Waiting for Godot*: "Lucky is unhappy but the actor performing Lucky is not unhappy." (Let's assume for the moment that Lucky and the actor, and their respective mental predicates, are actually comparable in that way—a point I will return to later on.) Even though Lucky and the actor necessarily share the same physical properties—that is, if one has red hair and jumps, then so does the other—the concept of "performing" allows two different sets of mental predicates to be applied to the same individual at the same moment. It does this without indication that these sets are mutually exclusive or that each set has a corresponding phenomenal experience. Instead, these sets of mental predicates have different logical and psychological relations to the behaviors we see onstage. One set, that of Lucky, corresponds to these visible behaviors and is therefore public. The other, that of the actor, is private—submerged beneath the performance. Even if we grant that the offstage separation of mental and physical worlds is a mistake, many actors onstage have little choice but to live "two collateral histories, one consisting of what happens in and to his body, the other consisting of what happens in and to his mind" (2).

This is less of a claim about mind-body dualism generally than it is about dramatic convention. Many performance theorists and critics, however, would disagree with my assertion of these dualistic entailments. For while some modern theater traditions have made a point of separating the actor's mental and physical processes—Brecht's epic theater is an important example[9]—most have rejected any possibility of either complete ontological or epistemological separation. In *An Actor Prepares* (1936), Constantin Stanislavski made the inseparability of mind and body, of mental and physical phenomena, a cornerstone of his method. "The bond between body and soul," he wrote, "is indivisible. . . . Every physical act, except purely mechanical ones, has an inner source of feeling. Consequently we have both an inner and outer plane in every role, inter-laced" (136). In *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938), Antonin Artaud made a parallel point, asserting both physical and mystical unities between mind and body. "The soul," he wrote, "can be physiologically summarized as a maze of vibrations. . . . Belief in the soul's flowing substantiality is essential to the actor's craft. To know that an emotion is substantial, subject to the plastic vicissitudes of matter, gives him control over his passions" (90).

More recent performance theorists, however, have taken even more acutely anti-dualist positions. Some, such as Stanton Garner and William Demastes,

have suggested that the theater is itself the space where ontological and epistemological divisions fall away entirely. In *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama* (1994), Garner casts the theater as "a non-Cartesian field of habitation which undermines the stance of objectivity and in which the categories of subject and object give way to a stance of mutual implication" (4). Demastes reaches a similar conclusion in *Staging Consciousness: Theater and the Materialization of Mind* (2002). "Theater," he writes, "is phenomenologically complete . . . that place where 'mind-stuff' and 'physical-stuff' intermingle in a manner precisely parallel to our growing sense of material consciousness" (53). And in making the case for the importance of Descartes on seventeenth-century French theater, R. Darren Gobert emphasizes the inseparability, rather than separability, of the Cartesian mind and body. As he writes in *The Mind-Body Stage: Passion and Interaction in the Cartesian Theater* (2013), "Descartes teaches us that the passions united mind and body and that, whatever his commitment to substance dualism, the material and immaterial are inextricable" (6).[10]

   Broadly speaking, the critical expectation today is that theater is a thoroughly anti-dualist enterprise. It's presumed that, once onstage, most distinctions between mental and physical concepts dissolve.[11] And this is why it's important to see how a play such as Beckett's *Eleutheria* so explicitly takes epistemological dualism as a principle of its mise-en-scène. During the first two acts, the stage itself is split in half. On one half of the stage we have more traditional theatrical representation, as the Krap family discusses the social withdrawal of their son Victor. On the other half of the stage Beckett compiles silent, repetitive actions into a different kind of theatrical representation—something like a composite picture of private mental life. *Eleutheria* is therefore something of a prototype for a play like *Krapp's Last Tape*, which also features a shut-in named Krap/Krapp and a divided mise-en-scène. Jean-Michel Rabaté sees *Eleutheria* as inheriting material from yet another Beckettian text about a shut-in: *Murphy*. "The central issue" in these texts, Rabaté explains in *Think, Pig!* (2016), "is the dead end created by the insistence on the free possession of one's self—thus Murphy between his mind and body, his sexual desire and his regressive wish to become a psychotic. Victor's autistic refusal leads him to a strange levity, as a sort of levitation over the world of social contracts, which describes his freedom of the void" (108). Indeed, the word "eleutheria" itself means liberty or freedom in ancient Greek. Much as Murphy sought freedom from bodily sensation, we might speculate that Victor seeks freedom from other people.[12]

But I think it would be a mistake to see *Eleutheria* as less concerned with mind-body dualism, or the nature of mental states, than *Murphy*. Victor isn't the student of Descartes or Geulincx that Murphy is. His physician Dr. Piouk, however, has strong feelings about the separation, or lack of separation, between mind and body. Like Lucky and Pozzo in *Waiting for Godot*, Dr. Piouk (pronounced "puke") maintains that nothing is lost when mental phenomena are described in strictly physical terms. For him, mental illness is just a kind of physical illness. When Henri Krap worries that he has become "incapable of reflection myself, it is my organs that have taken over," Dr. Piouk reassures him that this statement is "meaningless":

> M. KRAP. Wait a minute! Meaning what?
> DR. PIOUK. You are your organs, Monsieur, and your organs are you.
> M. KRAP. I am my organs?
> DR. PIOUK. That is so.
> M. KRAP. You are frightening me.
> MME. MECK. [Sniffing out free medical advice] And me, Doctor, am I also my organs?
> DR. PIOUK. Without the least bit left over, Madame. (*Eleutheria: A Play in Three Acts*, 28–29)

Dr. Piouk doesn't distrust "reflection" or introspective knowledge. Instead, what Dr. Piouk identifies as "meaningless" is the conceptual distinction between people and their organs—as if the epistemological distinction between mental and physical phenomena were unnecessary. Similarly, when Dr. Piouk is trying to goad Victor into suicide, physicalism is once again marshaled as an excuse to avoid mentalistic language. The relation Dr. Piouk sees between consciousness and dermatology, however, goes unexplained. "The purest act of consciousness," Piouk explains to Victor, "is howlingly [he takes his head in his hands] physical, howlingly, you know it as well as I do, it's engraved on your comedones" (180). We can only speculate as to what Dr. Piouk finds so philosophically significant about Victor's acne.

As we might infer from his sudden appeal to dermatology, Dr. Piouk shouldn't be taken too seriously. Instead, he is a foil to *Eleutheria*'s own dualistic epistemology and staging. As I mentioned earlier, *Eleutheria* was never staged during Beckett's lifetime—in no small part because its stage directions required "un espace dualiste," or "dualistic space" (3). Moreover, this demand for a dualistic space had an outsized effect on literary history. In 1950, Beckett submitted two French-language manuscripts to the direc-

tor Roger Blin: *Eleutheria* and *En Attendant Godot*. Blin said he didn't understand *Godot* and that he was inclined toward *Eleutheria*, which was more classically theatrical. Financial considerations, however, prevailed. As Blin explained to Beckett's biographer Deirdre Bair, *Eleutheria* had "seventeen characters, a divided stage, elaborate props, and complicated lighting. I was poor. I didn't have a penny. I couldn't think of anyone who owned a theater suitable for such a complicated production. I thought I'd be better off with *Godot* because there were only four actors and they were bums. They could wear their own clothes if it came to that, and I wouldn't need anything but a spotlight and bare branch for a tree."[13]

Blin's comments, however, give only a limited sense of the technical challenges posed by *Eleutheria*'s mise-en-scène. By itself, the divided stage— split between Victor's bedroom and the Kraps' morning room—wasn't much of a problem. The real difficulty lay in the movement of the stage itself, as the bedroom and morning room switched sides between acts. According to the stage directions, "In each act Victor's room is presented from another angle, with the result that, viewed from the house, it is to the left of the Krap enclave in the first act, to the right of the Krap enclave in the second act, and that from one act to the next the main action remains on the right. This also explains why there is no marginal action in the third act, the Krap side having fallen into the pit following the swing of the scene onstage" (4). These stage directions lack the detail and precision characteristic of Beckett's later plays. It's unclear whether "fallen into the pit" is a figure of speech or not (for the purposes of my discussion here I have chosen to take it literally).[14] Either way, the proposed mise-en-scène could be tough to manage, particularly during performances. Unless the stage itself were built on a rotating platform (which would be expensive, per Blin's concerns), stagehands would have to "rotate" the stage at the end of act 1. In addition to switching stage left and stage right, they would have to rotate props and furniture so the audience perceived them from "another angle." At the end of act 2, Victor's bedroom would be rotated again, while the Kraps' living room would be either removed from the stage or dumped into the orchestra pit. Figures 6–8 are approximate renderings of the stage's appearance in each act of the play.

The point of this dualistic stage was that it allowed two different scenes to be performed at once: the "main action," which was always stage right, and a "marginal action," which was always stage left (or in the pit). But these "main" and "marginal" actions had less in common than their names might
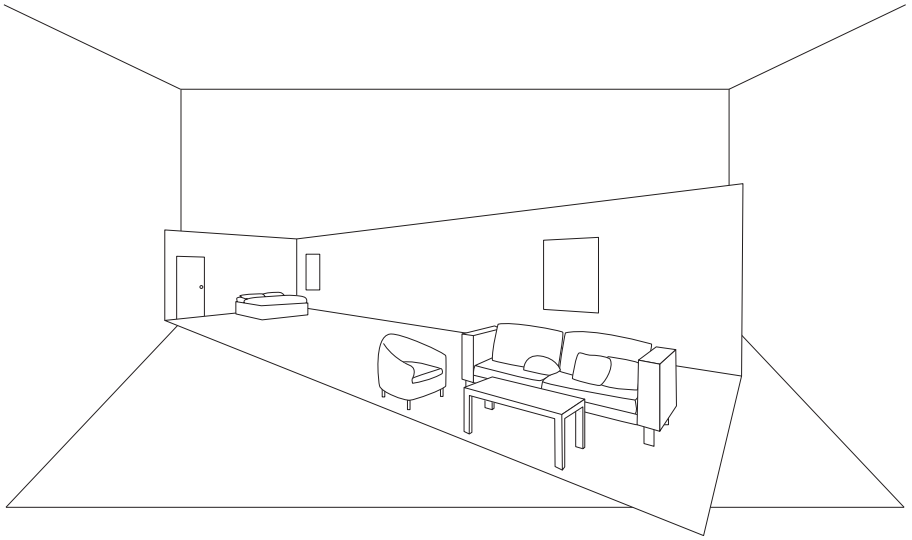
Figure 6. *Eleutheria*, act 1: The morning room (upstage, stage left) is the main action; it faces the audience. The bedroom (downstage, stage right) is the marginal action. Drawing courtesy of Julia Gang.

imply. The main action included all of the play's dialogue, as well as any other observable interactions between characters. The script of *Eleutheria*, we're told, "concerns the main action exclusively" (2). In other words, the main action comprises what we typically expect from plays—monologues, dialogues, choreography, and so on. The marginal action, however, follows a different set of rules. According to the stage directions, the marginal action would be "silent apart from a few short sentences and, as regards non-verbal expression, reduced to a vague attitude and movements of a single character. Strictly speaking less of an action than a site" (4). As the main action drives the play's plot forward, the marginal action behind it is just an endless loop of repeated behaviors. In that way, the marginal action is "less of an action than a site"—a backdrop comprising "vague attitude[s]" and emotions. In act 1, the gathering of Kraps and Piouks in the morning room is set against a backdrop of Victor alternating between motionlessness and listless movement. The stage directions describe "Victor in bed. Motionless. He moves this way and that, sits up in bed, gets up, goes back and forth . . . slowly and vaguely, often stops, looks out the window, toward the audience, goes back to sit on the bed, gets back in bed, becomes motionless,
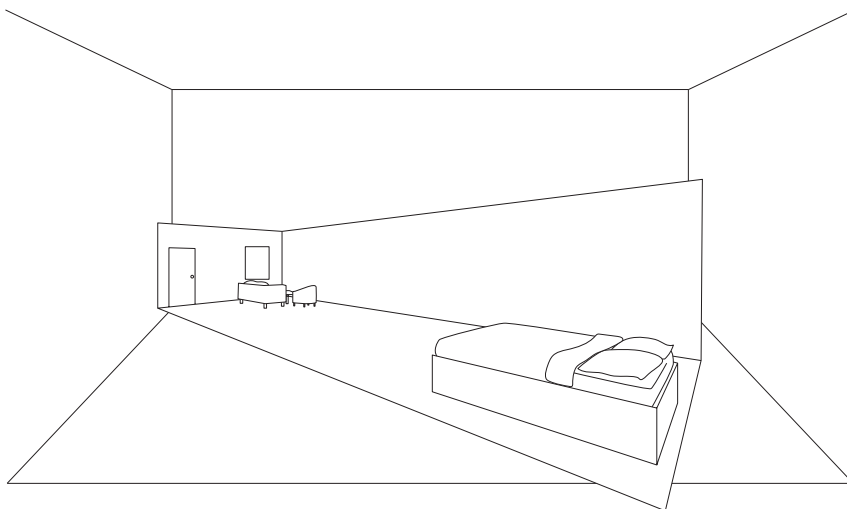
Figure 7. *Eleutheria*, act 2: The bedroom (now downstage, stage left) is the main action; it faces the audience. The morning room (now upstage, stage right) is the marginal action; it now faces away from the audience. Drawing courtesy of Julia Gang.

gets up again, resumes his walk etc." (5). Repeated untold times throughout act 1, these individual observable behaviors blur together as a larger image of Victor's "vague attitude"—which, while composed of physical behaviors, is hardly reducible to them. The picture of this vague attitude serves as the actual backdrop for the conversations happening in the morning room. But while the audience can see this psychological backdrop, the Kraps and the Piouks cannot.

So while Victor's marginal action is still an "action" in the technical sense, it entails a different concept of action than the main event in the morning room, which is why I think Beckett likens it to a "site." Yes, it has a physical presence onstage, but by virtue of its regularity and repetitiveness, the audience learns to know these actions through inference rather than sensation. Indeed, depending on where they happen onstage, given behaviors by a given actor assume different epistemological functions and values. In the main action, the movements and utterances of the characters comprise the play's plot. When Victor rises from his bed in act 2, as Victor's bedroom is the site of the main action, this rising is meaningful as an observable behavior. It is meaningful, in part, because other characters can see it; the Kraps and the Piouks have gathered because of Victor's lethargy, and several other
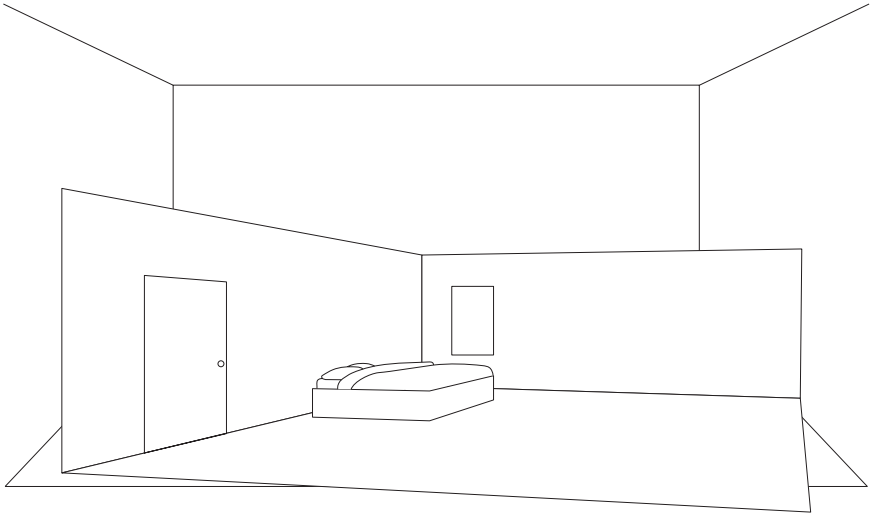
Figure 8. *Eleutheria*, act 3: The bedroom is the main (and only) action. The morning room has fallen into the pit. Drawing courtesy of Julia Gang.

events will occur because Victor has now gotten out of bed. But when Victor gets out of bed in act 1, when his bedroom is the site of the marginal action, this behavior has a different epistemological value. Visible only to the audience and Victor himself, the stage directions tell us that this rising from the bed is separate from the play's plot. And yet we'd be hard-pressed to say that it's not a crucial aspect of Victor's characterization. Repeated throughout act 1, this action is meaningful not because of what it entails physically or narratologically but because it amounts to a composite of mental life.

In act 3, however, the audience loses the ability to view this mental life. Both physical and mental actions occur onstage, but the marginal action has been "swallowed up by the pit" (125).[15] Victor's observable behaviors function to remind us of what we can no longer see, as well as Victor's general inability to function in the physical world. In the play's final moments, Victor tries to minimize his own physical presence onstage:

(Victor seated on the bed. He looks at the bed, the room, the window, the door. He gets up and undertakes to push his bed to the back of the room, as far from the door and the window as possible, that is, toward the side of the footlights

> with the Audience member's stage-box. He has a hard time. He pushes it, pulls it, with pauses for rest, seated on the edge of the bed. It is clear that he is not strong. He finally succeeds. He sits down on the bed, now parallel to the footlights. After a while, he gets up, goes to the switch, turns it off, looks out the window, goes back and sits down on the bed, facing the audience. He looks perseveringly at the audience, the orchestra, the balcony (should there be one), to the right, to the left. Then he gets into bed, his scrawny back turned on mankind.) CURTAIN. (191)

In a certain way, Victor succeeds where Murphy failed. As he turns his back on the audience, he seizes the eleutheria he has sought throughout the play. But even more importantly, Victor's actions here reaffirm the importance—and even necessity—of the prior acts' dualistic mise-en-scènes. In earlier acts, we might have had access to Victor's private mental world. At the end of the play, we have no reason to believe that this mental world has ceased to exist; if anything, Victor's physical weakness implies that he has chosen this mental world over the physical world. But the play's medium for representing that mental world—the divided set—has fallen into the orchestra pit. As a result of this, and of Victor turning away from the proscenium, the audience is left with no means of inferring Victor's mental actions. In effect, *Eleutheria* concludes by forcing the audience to experience the *loss* of Victor's mental life—affirming not only their onstage existence but also the necessity of that which it can no longer represent.

It is tempting to think of *Krapp's Last Tape* as providing us with some of the mental actions obscured at the end of *Eleutheria*. After all, Krapp and Victor Krap differ by only one letter. It's easy to imagine the misanthropic teenager adding another *p* to his name and becoming the misanthropic pensioner. Unfortunately, there's no evidence to support this, similar-sounding names aside. Moreover, we must be careful not to overlook the key logical and epistemological differences between these plays. For all its scenographical complexity, *Eleutheria* only imputes mental properties to human beings. In *Krapp's Last Tape*, however, both mental and physical properties are attributed across logical categories. The issue isn't merely a "tension . . . between the physical immediacy of the live performance (actors and tangible sets) and the cerebral, otherworldly implications of its heightened language," as Sidney Homan suggests (*Beckett's Theaters*, 97). Instead, like so many other literary texts in this book, *Krapp's Last Tape* is grounded in a sequence of category-mistakes—both the attribution of mental properties to objects and the attribution of physical properties to mental concepts. And it is through

these category-mistakes, as well as its set and lighting design, that *Krapp's Last Tape* is able to present mental actions as being extractable from the mind—and therefore stageable in their own right.

This investment in the separation of mental actions from physical actions is apparent in the play's opening moments—well before we know that Krapp has recorded (even transferred) his mental states onto audiotapes. Much as *Eleutheria* used its divided stage to distinguish between types of action, *Krapp's Last Tape* uses lighting design to distinguish between different epistemological modes. As the curtain rises, the audience sees Krapp sitting at a small table, which has two drawers facing the proscenium:

> On the table a tape-recorder with microphone and a number of cardboard boxes containing reels of recorded tapes.
>
> Table and immediately adjacent area in strong white light. Rest of stage in darkness.
>
> Krapp remains a moment motionless, heaves a great sigh, looks at his watch, fumbles in his pockets, takes out an envelope, puts it back, fumbles, takes out a small bunch of keys, raises it to his eyes, chooses a key, gets up and moves to front of table. He stoops, unlocks first drawer, peers into it, feels about inside of it, takes out a reel of tape, peers at it, locks drawer, unlocks second drawer, peers into it, feels about inside of it, takes out a large banana, peers at it, locks drawer, puts keys back in his pocket. He turns, advances to edge of stage, halts, strokes banana, peels it, drops skin at his feet, puts end of banana in his mouth and remains motionless, staring vacuously before him. Finally he bites off the end, turns aside and begins pacing to and fro at edge of stage, in the light, i.e., not more than four or five paces either way, meditatively eating banana. (10-11)

In 1969, Beckett was invited to direct *Krapp's Last Tape* (*Das letzte Band*) at Berlin's Schiller-Theater Werkstatt. In his production notes, Beckett offered a distinctly Manichean interpretation of the play's lighting design. The stage's light and dark zones were supposed to correspond to traditional Manichean symbolism, as was the black-and-white imagery in Krapp's monologues. "Note that Krapp [*erasure*] decrees," Beckett wrote, "physical (ethical) incompatibility of light (spiritual) and dark (sensual) only when he intuits possibility of their reconciliation intellectually as rational-irrational" (141). The darkness on stage, it would seem, marks the space of the "sensual"—the space of physicality. The light area onstage, which includes the tape recorder, is "spiritual." But this arrangement is itself contingent on Krapp's realizing

the possibility of their "reconciliation," although Beckett neglects to mention when in the play this realization takes place.

In his introduction to the Schiller notebook, James Knowlson warns against taking this interpretation to heart. Following the Schiller production of *Das letzte Band*, he explains, "Beckett showed himself either to be wary of his own Manichaean reading or suspicious at least of being committed to anything as explicit as the [Manichaean portions of the notebook] seems to be" (*Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*, xxii). But even without the Manichean specifics, Beckett's notes still identify light and dark as representing different epistemological modes. And this is manifest in the opening scene's stage directions. When Krapp is in the dark, his main activity is the active, *sensuous* (if not quite "sensual") acquisition of information. Here perception and motion are tied together inexorably—fumbling, feeling, peering through the desk's contents. In the light, however, everything slows down. It's too early in the play to know whether the light—including the table, tapes, and tape recorder—is "spiritual." Krapp's conduct, however, is substantially different than it was in the dark. In the dark, his focus is on immediate perception —on empirical knowledge in the present tense. Standing at the edge of the stage, but still in the light, he eats the banana "meditatively," as if his thoughts were elsewhere, so to speak. And as Beckett's production notes show, Krapp moves between light and dark zones methodically. A diagram from Beckett's notes (fig. 9) indicates Krapp's precise movements between light and dark zones while eating the banana, where the drawer (B) and the eating location (3) are at the very edges of the lit area—as if there were carefully placed steps between light and dark.

In that way, the lighting design prepares us for the play's central conceit: that Krapp has transferred his memories to audiotapes and that he accesses these memories by listening to the tapes in the lit area onstage (which he does at location A in the diagram). As a result, much of Krapp's private mental world is now available to the audience. Several layers of category-mistakes make this possible—not only in terms of mental states being imputed to the tape recorder but also in terms of memories having sensory properties. In the previous chapter I discussed the different ways in which introspection was perceived as a kind of empirical knowledge—as if mental states have sensory properties of their own. And that is precisely what has happened to Krapp's memories. Insofar as they only exist on audiotapes, such that remembering cannot happen without hearing, Krapp's mental life has been
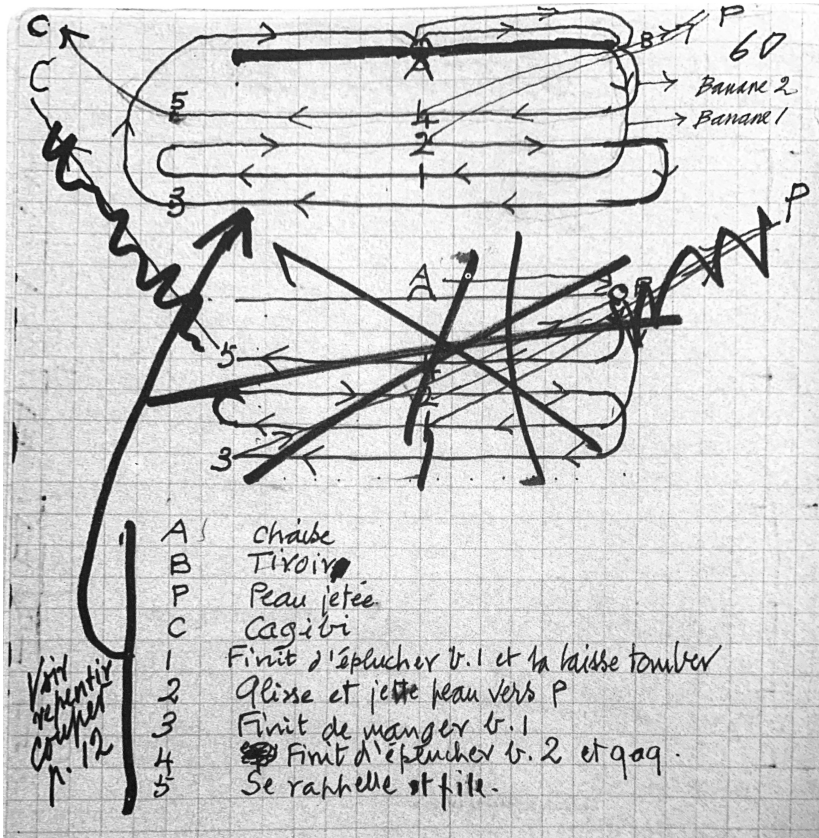
Figure 9. Samuel Beckett's Production Notebook for *Das Letzte Band*, page 60 (Beckett, *Theatrical Notebooks*, 165).

reconfigured epistemologically. Even though we typically think of memory as something private and covert, the audience has the same empirical access to Krapp's memories that Krapp does. Hearing has, somehow, become logically comparable with remembering. The language spoken by the younger Krapp acknowledges this epistemological peculiarity. Box three, spool five begins by announcing that its speaker is "Thirty-nine today, sound as a bell, apart from my old weakness" (14). "Sound" has both literal and idiomatic senses here. He is mentally sound ("sound as a bell")—but he also knows his mind *as sound*. And insofar as these literal and idiomatic meanings are simultaneous, it implies that Krapp's mental actions are both empirically know-

able and yet epistemologically distinct types from physical actions. Earlier versions of this line also sought to balance these literal and idiomatic valences. At the same time, these early versions used broken and interrupted idioms to highlight the absurdity of the relations proposed—not unlike Ryle's example of someone arriving in both a flood of tears and a sedan chair. In a 1956 draft of the play, the line read "Thirty-seven today, and sound as a . . . (hesitates) . . . whistle, apart from my old trouble" (ver 5, p2r).[16] Whether fragmented by hesitation or not, "sound as a whistle" could be literally true, although Krapp's hesitation makes the idiom feel less natural. And in the earliest version of the play, which Beckett was still calling the "Magee Monologue," the line was as follows: "This day, being in the third decade of the Ram, I enter upon my 31st year, sound apparently in wind and limb, apart from my old trouble" (segment 86, 01). "Sound and wind" is idiomatic, but it lacks the puns of whistle and bell.[17]

The catachrestic phrase most emblematic of Krapp's mental life, however, is one that the audience never hears at all. We encounter the first instance in the stage directions, as Krapp reads the description of box three, spool five:

> KRAPP. Memorable equinox? . . . [*Pause. He shrugs his shoulders, peers again at ledger, reads.*] Farewell to—[*he turns page*]—love.
>
> [*He raises his head, broods, bends over machine, switches on and assumes listening posture, i.e. leaning forward, elbows on table, hand cupping ear towards machine, face front.*] (13)

Compared to the other category-mistakes I've discussed, "listening posture" is somewhat unusual. To some it might not seem absurd at all; indeed, assuming a posture while listening presents no obvious logical or physiological difficulties. The trouble is that "listening" is an unusual sort of behavior, not unlike "hoping" or "digesting." While it's very much an action one can perform, it's not typically an overt behavior. From the outside, listening can look like—and happen at the same time as—lots of other activities. Or it can look like doing nothing. This is why Beckett has to define it; the meaning of "listening posture" is initially unclear, as it seems that "listening" has been used improperly. The implication is that Krapp's listening is logically or physiologically impossible without the physical action (i.e., his posture). But as listening is Krapp's primary mode of remembering—recalling the sensory qualities *Murphy* and *Molloy* impute to introspection—this means that Krapp's mental actions are themselves logically or physiologically impossible with-

out demonstrable physical action. Listening therefore serves as something of a gateway for Krapp's mental actions to be extracted from the mental world and given physical reality.

By misattributing physical properties to his own mental actions, Krapp's mental properties themselves become moveable and, even more crucially, attributable to what would otherwise be nonmental objects. As I mentioned earlier, Krapp doesn't merely store his memories on his tapes—he transfers them. As it broadcasts these memories, Krapp's tape recorder suddenly appears as if it had phenomenal consciousness. This was a point that Beckett made in the Schiller notebooks. The "tape-recorder," Beckett explained, is the "companion of [Krapp's] solitude. Masturbatory agent. Tendency to become what is on the tape. . . . Anger and tenderness of Krapp towards an object which through language [becomes] the 'albernen Idioten' [silly idiots] or the girl on the lake" (*Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*, 181). Indeed, the tape recorder is so successful at becoming "what is on the tape" that Krapp ceases to recognize his mental states as fully his own. Thus transferred, Krapp greets these mental states as if they originated in the tapes themselves. As he looks up the location of the memories he wants to remember, Krapp attributes a youthful impishness to the missing reel, as if the two of them were playing hide and seek: "Ah! the little rascal . . . ah! The little scoundrel!" (12). The point, of course, is that Krapp is imputing such impishness not to his younger self but rather to the mechanical object where the extracted memory of that younger self has been relocated.

By the end of the play this transference is so complete that it's hard to say where Krapp's mind is actually located. Indeed, insofar as the tape recorder has a "tendency to become what is on the tape," it has the tendency to replace Krapp himself, leaching away not only his memories but his mental properties as well. This is borne out by textual revisions Beckett made to the play for the 1969 production at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt.[18] The revisions were maintained for the 1973 production at the Royal Court Theatre and the 1975 production at théâtre d'Orsay but are not reflected by most printed editions of the play. In the original text the play ends with "*Krapp motionless staring before him. The tape runs on in silence*" (28), after which the curtain closes. In the revised version, however, Beckett added a stage direction that emphasized the tape recorder's approximation and relocation of Krapp's phenomenal consciousness: "*Slow fade of stage-light and cubby hole light till only light of that 'eye' of tape-recorder*" (*Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*, 10). In a 1972 letter to James Knowlson, Beckett referred to this

dimming of the lights as "originally an accident—heaven sent."[19] Earlier in the play, of course, darkness is associated with Krapp's physical actions; his mental actions, his memories, are restricted to the light. Now, however, as the entire stage goes dark, there is no longer any light area onstage—as if to suggest that all of Krapp's memories have been moved to the entity with the glowing red "eye." The separation of mental actions and physical actions— the extraction of mental actions from the character's body—would seem complete.

Word Spoken versus Thing Known

As I will show, there are a number of important similarities between the ways Beckett and Pinter register mind-body dualism onstage—from divided mise-en-scènes and voices emanating from objects to broken idioms and catachrestic metaphors. Beckett's influence on Pinter is well known, so these similarities aren't that surprising.[20] At the same time, only so much of this influence can be attributed to Beckett's *drama*. By 1955, Pinter's primary exposure had been through *Murphy*, *Watt*, *Molloy*, and *Malone Dies*.[21] After reading a fragment of *Watt* in the magazine *Poetry Ireland*, Pinter sought out a copy of the novel at the Battersea Reserve Library. He didn't find one. But he did find a copy of *Murphy*, which he borrowed and never returned.[22] *Murphy*, he explained, was like "walking through a mirror to the other side of the world which was, in fact, the real world. What I seemed to be confronted with was a writer inhabiting his innermost self. . . . It was Beckett's own world but had so many references to the world we share."[23] I'm not sure if I would agree with this characterization of *Murphy* allowing Beckett to inhabit his "innermost self" (and we might ask whether this innermost self is known by introspective or sensory means). But it's not hard to imagine how *Murphy*'s fixation with mind-body dualism—with inner selves and private, nonphysical worlds—might have shaped Pinter's first years as a playwright.

There is, however, an important difference between how Beckett's and Pinter's characters experience empirical problems of mind. In Beckett such problems are frequently solitary affairs—Murphy and Victor withdrawing from the physical world, Moran's unchecked *cogito*, Krapp's memory apparatus (even if the tape recorder does become something of a companion). In Pinter, however, problems of mind are frequently the results of interpersonal politics and violence—with characters using psychiatry and even philosophy to hurt and control each other. In Pinter's plays, *The Hothouse* (1958) and *The Caretaker* (1962), electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) ceases to

be a treatment for mental illness. Instead, it's a punishment, even a weapon. Pinter's biographer Michael Billington speculates that Pinter himself might have been subjected to ECT in the 1950s, when he volunteered for psychological testing at Maudsley Hospital, Oxford.[24] Set in a psychiatric hospital, *The Hothouse* shows hospital staff using ECT as an instrument of humiliation, interrogation, and torture. After covering up a murder and sexual assault that happened in the hospital, the corrupt administrators Gibbs and Cutts use ECT to silence a young orderly, Lamb, permanently. Early in the play, Lamb describes himself as having "tremendous mental energy. I'm the sort of chap who's always *thinking*—you know what I mean? Then, when I've thought about something, I like to put it into action" (32). As I will show below, it is precisely the disjunction between mental and physical actions that's so central to Pinter's conception of language use and mise-en-scène. Gibbs and Cutts, however, trick Lamb into volunteering for electrical "experiments" (63)—which leave him catatonic. The representations of ECT in *The Caretaker* are no less harrowing. Aston, who is somewhat aloof and erratic, is slowly renovating a home and has invited an unsheltered man, Davies, to be its caretaker. Eventually, Aston explains that he was institutionalized for hallucinations and then given ECT unsafely and without his consent. It's also implied that Davies, whose behavior is even more erratic than Aston's and whose identity can't be confirmed, might also have been institutionalized. At the end of act 2, Aston describes the night when he was subjected to ECT. Some of the patients, he explains, put up a fight:

> But most of them didn't. They just lay there. Well, they were coming round to me, and the night they came I got up and stood against the wall. They told me to get on the bed, and I knew they had to get me on the bed because if they did it while I was standing up they might break my spine. . . . And then suddenly this chief had pincers on my skull and I knew he wasn't supposed to do it while I was standing up, that's why I . . . anyway, he did it. So I did get out. I got out of the place . . . but I couldn't walk very well. I don't think my spine was damaged. That was perfectly alright. The trouble was . . . my thoughts . . . had become very slow . . . I couldn't think at all . . . I couldn't . . . get . . . my thoughts . . . together . . . uuuh . . . I could . . . never quite get it . . . together. (*Caretaker and the Dumb Waiter*, 57; ellipses in the original)

In *The Birthday Party* it's Cartesianism itself that's turned into a weapon, despite the disdain for philosophy we see in *The Homecoming*. As they mock Stanley's assertions of his identity, thereby encouraging the audience to doubt

what they know about any of the characters onstage, Goldberg and McCann subject him to a particularly Cartesian style of interrogation:

> GOLDBERG. Do you know your own face?
> MCCANN. Wake him up. Stick a needle in his eye.
> GOLDBERG. You're a plague, Webber. You're an overthrow.
> MCCANN. You're what's left!
> GOLDBERG. But we've got the answer to you. We can sterilize you.
> MCCANN. What about Drogheda?
> GOLDBERG. Your bite is dead. Only your pong is left.
> MCCANN. You betrayed our land.
> GOLDBERG. You betray our breed.
> MCCANN. Who are you, Webber?
> GOLDBERG. What makes you think you exist?
> MCCANN. You're dead.
> GOLDBERG. You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour! (52)

My point here isn't that this moment from *The Birthday Party* is a precise representation of Descartes's claims (even though by 1955 Pinter had read some of Beckett's most Descartes-haunted titles).[25] Instead, what matters is that Goldberg and McCann are able to beat Stanley into submission by doubting his claims of personal identity and self-knowledge—and in so doing they echo some of the ideas we encounter in the second *Meditation*. There Descartes proved both his own existence and the existence of his soul ("not even some thin vapour which permeates the limbs—a wind, fire, air, breath") through thinking. But what was good enough for Descartes isn't good enough for Goldberg and McCann. Stanley can't be saved through thought alone. Goldberg and McCann are able to doubt his existence to his face (albeit a different sense of "exist" than in *cogito ergo sum*) and insist that nothing of him exists except a foul, ghostly "pong." Even if Stanley knew his identity or could prove it to himself (a point his attackers also dispute), he couldn't prove it to anyone else.

My focus on the separation of mind and body, of mental and physical concepts, amounts to an unconventional approach to Pinter's particular brand of ambiguity and uncertainty. In *The Peopled Wound* (1970), Martin Esslin postulated that such ambiguity and interpretive uncertainty originated in the "solecism and tautology" of Pinter's dialogue, and that Pinter's

language could be "likened to nonsense-poetry and the literature of the absurd" (50). More recently, David Z. Saltz has observed that Pinter's dialogue features comparatively little "embedded diegesis"— which would preclude, perhaps, the success of Goldberg and McCann's interrogation. "Pinter," he explains, "reifies drama's generic impulse, untethering drama from its diegetic ties to the past and restoring to it its radical presence" ("Radical Mimesis," 226). The most influential account of Pinter's language, however, remains Austin Quigley's *The Pinter Problem* (1975). Drawing on Wittgenstein's idea of language-games, Quigley suggests that Pinter's plays are an occasion for literary criticism to re-evaluate its assumptions about language use. Reference, he explains, is only one of language's functions— and not every language use is a function of reference. When Goldberg asks Stanley, "What makes you think you exist?" he isn't making a propositional statement about Goldberg's existence. Instead, he's using this peculiar Cartesian language to *do something* to Stanley. As Quigley explains, Pinter hasn't "transcended the boundaries of language. . . . What has been transcended is the limitation of a method of describing how language works" (46–47).

I don't dispute these claims. But I think there's another aspect of Pinter's language use that might explain both the uncertainties we encounter in his plays and what I will show to be the peculiarities of his mise-en-scène. In his essay "Writing for the Theatre" (1962), Pinter explained,

> So often below the word spoken is the thing known and unspoken. My characters tell me so much and no more, with reference to their experience, their aspirations, their motives, their history. Between my lack of biographical data about them and the ambiguity of what they say lies a territory which is not only worthy of explanation but which is compulsory to explore. You and I, the characters which grow on a page, most of the time we're inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable, elusive, obstructive, unwilling. But it's out of these attributes that a language arises. A language, where under what is said, another thing is being said. (*Various Voices*, 22–23)

Like real people, Pinter tells us, characters don't say everything they think. For every "word spoken" there is necessarily some "thing known" that isn't spoken. This has nothing to do with its content or ontological composition. Before we speak, the future "word spoken" and "thing known" might appear interchangeable. But once we start speaking, these actions become differentiated epistemologically and become different types of concepts. The dif-

ference between "word spoken" and "things known"—between speech and thought, between text and subtext—is the same type of distinction between physical and mental actions. What were once seemingly interchangeable terms now follow different sets of rules and are known by different means by different individuals and/or sets of people. Pinter's characters find themselves in the position of needing or wanting to discuss "the thing known but unspoken"—and yet find themselves always in possession of thoughts that can't be realized through language. The conclusion of "Writing for the Theatre" speaks to this point precisely, as Pinter quotes from Beckett's *The Unnamable*. "The fact would seem to be," Beckett's narrator tells us, "that I shall have to speak of things which I cannot speak" (*Various Voices*, 25). And yet in a way Beckett and Pinter are referring to different kinds of problems. In Beckett's fiction, the differences between thinking and speaking—or between real voices and hallucinated voices—are often ambiguous. The simultaneous inability and yet compulsion to speak in *The Unnamable* follows from language being both constitutive of and produced by thought. In Pinter's plays, however, there is a strict epistemological distinction between thinking and speaking—between the physical "word spoken" and mental "thing known." The challenge is how to make this "thing known" a force onstage but without sacrificing the epistemological distinction that gave the "thing known" so much mystery and significance.

In *Eleutheria* and *Krapp's Last Tape*, we saw Beckett construct divided mise-en-scènes that allowed him to at least theoretically attribute mental and physical properties across category lines. Pinter's plays demonstrate a similar approach to the stage. But whereas Beckett divided the onstage area into different epistemological zones, Pinter drew a mind-body type-distinction between onstage and offstage.[26] Indeed, both *The Birthday Party* and *The Dumb Waiter* draw attention to the ways they use onstage props to mediate voices or personalities offstage—as if the objects themselves were speaking. Even more importantly, these speaking props mark the difference between onstage and offstage as both a spatial and categorical difference. Different sets of predicates apply to offstage and onstage; different kinds of actions happen, and different rules are followed. At the beginning of *The Birthday Party* this happens so subtly as to be overlooked. In the opening scene, Petey is in the onstage dining room while Meg asks him questions from the offstage kitchen. But Meg's voice doesn't just ring out; instead, the stage directions dictate that "*MEG's voice comes through the kitchen hatch*" (19). Later, their

mysterious lodger Stanley hears a conversation through the front door that seems to confirm his fears: a couple of strangers have come to take him away in a wheelbarrow. In reality, it's just Lulu dropping off a package for Meg (which is actually a toy drum for Stanley). But Stanley doesn't know that:

> *A sudden knock on the front.* LULU's *voice: Ooh-ooh!* MEG *edges past* STANLEY *and collects her shopping bag.* MEG *goes out.* STANLEY *sidles to the door and listens.*
> VOICE *(through letter box).* Hullo, Mrs. Boles . . .
> MEG. Oh, has it come?
> VOICE. Yes, it's just come. (24)

If Stanley knew what "it" denoted, then the tension and ambiguity of this scene would be reduced considerably. But I would say that the definition of this "it" matters less than the set of epistemological relations it represents. At the moment when Stanley most evidently projects his paranoid fantasies onto the unseen offstage area, Pinter also draws our attention to how those fantasies are mediated by physical objects onstage—as if to suggest that such fantasies, lacking physical properties, could never be realized on their own. Made available only by vague, disembodied voices speaking through the letter box, Stanley's mental world somehow feels real and yet both indescribable and unstageable.

This becomes clearer in the third act, after Stanley has been interrogated by Goldberg and McCann, and after he has been stopped from attacking Lulu during the blackout. Goldberg and McCann take Stanley upstairs, which is offstage, and torture him for the entire night. It is still not clear who they are, who Stanley is, or what information they extracted from him while upstairs. But they've managed to ensure that Stanley will never speak about any of it:

> GOLDBERG. What's your opinion of such a prospect? Eh, Stanley?
> *Stanley concentrates, his mouth opens, he attempts to speak, fails and emits sounds from his throat.*
> STANLEY. Uh-gug . . . uh-gug . . . eeehhh-gag . . . (*On the breath.*) Caahh . . . caahh . . .
> *They watch him. He draws a long breath which shudders down his body. He concentrates.*
> GOLDBERG. Well, Stanny boy, what do you say, eh?
> *They watch. He concentrates. His head lowers, his chin draws into his chest, he crouches.* (84)

The key verb here is "concentrates." Typically, concentrating is neither a reflexive verb nor an observable one. Instead, it's often used as a secondary verb that describes or modifies the way a primary verb is performed (i.e., "I concentrated on answering the question"). But in Stanley's case it stands on its own, as he is unable to execute the actions it would otherwise modify. Indeed, from Stanley's noises and shudders, it's not even clear if he's still capable of intelligent or intellectual action at all, or if he's trying to answer the questions posed to him or not. In effect, Pinter hasn't just rendered Stanley mute and still; he has limited, even at the level of grammar, the logical *type* of actions that Stanley can perform as well. "He concentrates" isn't so much a representation of someone thinking as a gesture toward a different universe of actions and concepts—a belated and futile effort to bring the "thing known" onstage and into language.

This division of *The Birthday Party* into mental and physical worlds becomes clearer when we look at "A View of the Party," which Pinter wrote around the time of the play's premiere in 1958. This is not to overlook the ontological and epistemological differences between poems and plays. Nonetheless, the category-mistakes implied by the play's mise-en-scène become more readily accessible through the poem's language. It is worth quoting in its entirety:

> The thought that Goldberg was
> A man she might have known
> Never crossed Meg's words
> That morning in the room.
>
> The thought that Goldberg was
> A man another knew
> Never crossed her eyes
> When, glad, she welcomed him.
>
> The thought that Goldberg was
> A man to dread and know
> Jarred Stanley in the blood
> When, still, he heard his name . . .
>
> The thought that Goldberg was
> Sat in the centre of the room,
> A man of weight and time,
> To supervise the game.

> The thought that was McCann
> Walked in upon this feast,
> A man of skin and bone,
> With a green stain on his chest.[27]

Like Beckett's revisions of "sound as a bell," Pinter uses broken idioms and catachresis to register the difficulty of "thought" moving between mental and physical worlds. But each time "thought" is manifested in the physical action we encounter a category-mistake—as if the category-mistake itself, the impassable boundary between mental and physical categories, were the point. After defining Goldberg as a "thought"—giving him the logical properties of a mental concept—we're told that this thought never "crossed Meg's words." In English idiom, of course, *eyes* cross while *words* do not. Moreover, the cross in "cross-eyed" is not the same as the "cross" in "Why did the chicken cross the road." A doubly broken idiom separates Meg's "words" ("the word spoken") and the thought "she might have known" ("the thing known but unspoken"). And while the second stanza features the crossing of eyes rather than words, it still uses the wrong sense of "cross" as it reasserts Goldberg's identity as "thought." The poem's remaining stanzas are less reliant on idiom and cliché, but perhaps even more explicit in attributing physical properties to mental concepts. After the third stanza suggests that the "thought" of Goldberg "jarred Stanley in the blood"—such that the mental predicate "jarred" now has a precise physical location—the fourth and fifth stanzas attribute physical actions to the "thoughts" of Goldberg and McCann. Even though Goldberg is described as "a man of weight and time," it's still the "thought" of that man that "sat in the centre of the room." Similarly, McCann is a man of "skin and bone," but it's his "thought" that "walked in upon this feast."[28] By calling Goldberg and McCann "thoughts," and yet emphasizing their physical properties, the effect is to make these characters themselves seem like logical absurdities—entities whose appearance and motives defy explanation and whose actions can't quite be put into language.

In many ways, we might expect a similar arrangement from *The Dumb Waiter*. Like *The Birthday Party*, *The Dumb Waiter* aligns physical actions ("word spoken") with the area onstage and aligns mental actions ("thing known") with an unseen upstairs area. Ostensibly these areas are connected by the eponymous prop, which connects the basement onstage with the upstairs area offstage. As hitmen Gus and Ben sit in the basement waiting for their

instructions, the dumbwaiter starts delivering food orders from the dining room—even though the rest of the house is supposed to be empty. In that way, the dumbwaiter is not unlike the kitchen hatch or letter box in *The Birthday Party*: in order to register onstage, offstage content must be physicalized and then mediated by a prop. At the same time, the dumbwaiter appears to be an apt metaphor for Gus and Ben themselves. Like the machine in the wall, they can execute physical tasks assigned to them, but they can't choose or refuse any tasks themselves. So while they're in the basement waiting to learn the identity of their target, they nonetheless do their best to fulfill the food orders they receive, including those for "Macaroni Pastitsio" and "Ormitha Macarounada" (*Caretaker and the Dumb Waiter*, 108). They don't know what these dishes are (the first is similar to moussaka; the second appears to be made up), but they send up what they have. As they send the dumbwaiter back upstairs, Gus yells the order up the shaft like a short-order cook ("Three McVittie and Price! One Lyons Red Label! One Smith's Crisps! One Eccles cake! One Fruit and Nut!"). Ben, however, scolds him for doing this (in a moment that I will return to later on): "You shouldn't shout like that. . . . It isn't done" (108). As in *The Birthday Party*, there is the sense that the information Gus and Ben need is beyond reach—a point only reinforced by the inexplicable messages delivered by way of the dumbwaiter. Therefore, despite being a means of coordination between mental and physical worlds, the effect of the dumbwaiter is actually to emphasize the inaccessibility of the offstage person who nonetheless controls the physical action onstage.

In *The Dumb Waiter*, however, Pinter adds a new element to this dualistic arrangement. In *The Birthday Party*, it's implied that many of Stanley's stories might be lies. But no one ever doubts that the house has a second floor. *The Dumb Waiter*, however, asks us to consider that dualistic separation of upstairs and downstairs might actually be a ruse, or at least a malicious instrumentalization of the split between "thing known" and "word spoken." In emphasizing the inaccessibility of the "thing known" offstage, and in making onstage-offstage communications so absurd, the dumbwaiter distracts both Gus and the audience from the possibility that the "thing known"—the knowledge that Gus is the target—might already be onstage and in Ben's possession. For that reason, the issue in *The Dumb Waiter* isn't just one of characters trying to bring the "thing known" onstage—that is, finding out who's upstairs, what they actually want, whom Gus and Ben are supposed to kill, and so on. There is also a concerted effort to convince both charac-

ters and the audience that the "thing known" *couldn't* be known by anyone onstage—drawing a categorical distinction between the empirical actions onstage and the covert ones offstage. So while the dumbwaiter offers some coordination between the basement and upstairs, its real function is to make the "thing unknown" appear *less* stageable and to mask the epistemological asymmetry between Gus and Ben.

There are clues to this asymmetry, however, from the very beginning of the play. For while Gus and Ben comprise the "body" in the house's setup, there is an additional mental-physical split in their relationship. This split appears to correspond not only to their dispositions and abilities but also to the power differential between the two. We see this in the opening scene as Gus tries to tie his shoes and Ben reads the morning paper aloud and explains what it means:

> GUS *ties his laces, rises, yawns and begins to walk slowly to the door, left. He stops, looks down, and shakes his foot.*
>
> BEN *lowers his paper and watches him.* GUS *kneels and unties his shoe-lace and slowly takes off the shoe. He looks inside it and brings out a flattened matchbox. He shakes it and examines it. Their eyes meet.* BEN *rattles his paper and reads.* GUS *puts the matchbox in his pocket and bends down to put on his shoe. He ties his lace, with difficulty.* BEN *lowers his paper and watches him.* GUS *walks to the door, left, stops, and shakes the other foot. He kneels, unties his shoe-lace, and slowly takes off the shoe. He looks inside it and brings out a flattened cigarette packet. He shakes it and examines it. Their eyes meet.* BEN *rattles his paper and reads . . .*
>
> BEN. Kaw!
> *He picks up the paper.*
> What about this? Listen to this! (85)

Throughout the play Gus is identified with physical actions while Ben is identified with intellection and judgment. As Quigley remarked in his essay "*The Dumb Waiter:* Undermining the Tacit Dimension" (1978), "What we have here is not just two minor employees getting on each other's nerves, but two sets of complementary and conflicting attitudes toward the necessary correlations between knowing and doing" (4). But the mental-physical split between them is actually far more nuanced and, perhaps, insidious. For while Gus is identified with physical actions, it's also implied that he's not in tune with his body. He fails to remember that he's placed his cigarettes and matches in his shoes. He only realizes this after he has put on each shoe, tied it (with difficulty), and then walked around. Moreover, when "their eyes

meet," it's implied that Ben knows precisely what Gus has done, and that Ben knows how to avoid such problems himself. Throughout the play Gus demonstrates that he has neither factual nor procedural knowledge—neither "knowing that" nor "knowing how," to return to Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*. Instead, he relies on Ben for both the facts at hand and the practical know-how needed to execute those facts.

This asymmetry is only worsened by the apparatus of the dumbwaiter itself. Attached to the dumbwaiter is a speaking tube. Ostensibly the function of this speaking tube is to let different floors of the house communicate. But insofar as the tube has a single opening that functions as both earpiece and mouthpiece, it doesn't permit users to speak and listen at the same time. So when Ben uses the tube to ask the supposed diners how they liked their food (in this case a collection of old digestive biscuits), neither Gus nor the audience is able to hear the response directly:

> BEN (*speaking with great deference*). Good evening. I'm sorry to—bother you, but we just thought we'd better let you know that we haven't got anything left. We sent up all we had. There's no more food down here.
> *He brings the tube up slowly to his ear.*
> What?
> *To mouth.*
> What?
> *To ear. He listens. To mouth.*
> No, all we had we sent up.
> *To ear. He listens. To mouth.*
> Oh, I'm very sorry to hear that.
> *To ear. He listens. To* GUS.
> The Eccles cake was stale. (112)

On its own this conversation seems innocent enough. If you didn't know how the play ended, you wouldn't necessarily be suspicious of Ben here. But as the speaking tube separates the conversation into its constituent physical and mental (which is to say, sensory) components, it forces Gus to rely on Ben's reporting—widening the epistemological gap between them. And while there's nothing to imply that Ben is misrepresenting what he hears, we also can't rule that possibility out. When Ben mistakenly speaks while the mouthpiece is against his ear, his bumbling could be taken as a sign of his trustworthiness. At the same time, such bumbling could itself be an act to make him appear more trustworthy as he speaks to his conspirators upstairs. Indeed,

the best indication of Ben's possible guilt in this moment is from earlier in the play. After Gus yelled the names of several digestive biscuits up the shaft, Ben told him, "It isn't done." Given that Gus and Ben were not in fact working in a restaurant kitchen, and given the logistical complexity and in-efficiency of the dumbwaiter speaking tube, you have to wonder why Ben would be so keen to prevent unfettered communication between floors—why he'd be so eager to maintain the separation between onstage and off-stage.

But *The Dumb Waiter* is structured to ensure that neither Gus nor the au-dience can ever confirm what Ben knows or when he knows it. So even if he isn't aware of the conspiracy to kill Gus, either way his knowledge remains parallel to that of whoever is offstage. Irrespective of Ben's knowledge, and whether or not the division of the house was a ruse, *The Dumb Waiter* still manages to uphold the epistemological type-distinction between "word spoken" and "thing known." And for that reason the play's conclusion comes as a real shock to the audience—and, of course, to Gus. When Gus goes to the washroom offstage, Ben has a final conversation through the dumb-waiter—but without any of the discussion about food from before. After receiving his instructions, Ben responds, "Understood. Repeat. He has ar-rived and will be coming in straight away. The normal method to be em-ployed. Understood" (120). From these words alone, in particular the un-specified "he," we still don't know what Ben knows. It's possible that all Ben knows is that he will kill whomever "he" is; it's also possible that he knows that Gus is the target and is using the pronoun "he" to refer to him. Pinter never resolves this ambiguity for us. And, as Ben's knowledge remains un-defined whether he's guilty or not, it's ultimately irrelevant. Instead, Ben's statement of "Understood. Repeat" is far more telling—anticipating, per-haps, Ruth's epistemological equivocation between underwear and the metaphysical unknown in *The Homecoming*. For while Ben's ability to "re-peat" what he has "understood" implies that he's reporting his conversa-tion truthfully, it's also Pinter's dishonest promise to the audience that "word spoken" and "thing known" are epistemologically comparable and knowable by the same means. We only realize the extent of Pinter's dishon-esty when Gus enters the stage "*stripped of his jacket, waistcoat, tie, holster and revolver*" (121). But as if to uphold the mystery of the offstage "thing known," the curtain comes down before we get any explanation of what's happened.

"The rest is Ibsen"

At the beginning of this chapter I noted a key difference between types of literary minds—those constituted by language exclusively (those found in poems and novels) and those that occur onstage. By virtue of their physicality and reliance on action, plays constrain mental representation in a way that novels and poems do not. My goal here has been to show the ways Beckett and Pinter use mise-en-scène to work around such constraints—drawing an epistemological distinction between mental and physical actions and insisting that "drama" comprises not one concept of action but two. In that way, dramatic minds would seem comparable to actual minds in a way that written literary minds are not—implying, maybe, that Stanley's mind is "real" in a way that Murphy's is not. After all, people onstage and offstage are made of the same physical materials and often operate by similar means. Pinter's distinction between "word spoken" and "thing known" isn't specific to the theater—it follows from ordinary language use more generally. And as it makes sense to talk about both physical and mental actions occurring onstage, it also makes sense to distinguish between the physical and mental actions of people who aren't acting.

Ryle makes a version of this point in *The Concept of Mind*—not about the necessity of epistemological dualism, of course, but rather about the comparability of minds onstage and offstage. As he explained, the theater is more than just a source of entertainment. It's also a source of information; audiences, he claimed, imitate what they see onstage and in that way learn to behave and talk about behavior themselves. In the case of avowal statements ("I am," "I believe," etc.), "people have to learn how to use avowal expressions appropriately and they may not learn these lessons very well. They learn them from ordinary discussions of the moods of others and from such more fruitful sources as novels and the theatre. They learn from the same sources how to cheat both other people and themselves by making sham avowals in the proper tones of voice and with the other proper histrionic accompaniments" (87). Even if you share Ryle's claim that theatrical performance is nondualistic (i.e., clowning), this analysis still raises some red flags—and even maybe some category-mistakes. Given the epistemological and formal differences between plays, novels, and "ordinary discussions of the moods of others," it seems unlikely they would all provide the same information about behavior. You can't imitate a novel the same way you can a play. But it is conceivable that you might imitate a play the same

way you imitate a conversation among friends. So might it be possible that Ryle's implicit comparison between dramatic minds and actual minds holds up logically? Given the properties they share, might it make sense to think of dramatic minds and actual minds as the same kind of concept?

I don't believe so, no—and I don't think Beckett would have either. Insofar as they involve brains and bodies, it is tempting to say that dramatic minds are more realistic than novelistic or poetic minds. On the point of physical composition alone, dramatic minds might be comparable to actual minds—actors are, after all, people. But as dramatic minds and actual minds still follow different kinds of rules (i.e., conventional and formal rules vs. psychological ones), they would still constitute different kinds of concepts most of the time with different sorts of entailments. Beckett spoke to this point in a 1972 letter to the director Alan Schneider, who was directing the premier of Beckett's play *Not I* (1972). In the play, a disembodied "Mouth" hangs in the middle of the stage, giving what appears to be real-time verbalization of disembodied consciousness: " . . . all over in a second . . . or grabbing at straw . . . the brain . . . flickering away on its own . . . quick grab and on . . . nothing there . . . on to the next . . . bad as the voice . . . worse . . . as little sense . . . all that together . . . can't— . . . what? . . . the buzzing? . . . yes . . . all the time the buzzing" (*Ends and Odds*, 20). Schneider said he assumed that Mouth was "in some sort of limbo. Death? After-life?" In an October 16, 1972, letter to Schneider, Beckett made it clear he didn't know—and, even more importantly, insisted on the nonmental objects and conventions from which her mind emerged: "This is the old business of the author's supposed privileged information as when [Ralph] Richardson wanted the lowdown on Pozzo's background before he could consider the part. I no more know where she is or why thus than she does. All I know is in the texts. 'She' is purely a stage entity, part of a stage image and a purveyor of a stage text. The rest is Ibsen" (283).

lecture "The Anatomy of the Mental Personality," which was published in 1933 as part of the Hogarth Press's *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.* For a full description of Beckett's reading notes, see Engelberts, Frost, and Maxwell, *"Notes Diverse Holo."* Only limited extracts from Beckett's notes, however, are published in this volume.

14. See Woodworth, "Imageless Thought."

15. I transcribed these notes in person at Trinity College's Berkeley Library on August 16, 2016. Trinity's manuscript record is available at https://manuscripts.cat alogue.tcd.ie/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=IE+TCD+MSS+10 962-10971.

16. For more on "Murphy's mind," as well as *Murphy*'s relation to philosophy of mind and psychology more broadly, see Begam, *Samuel Beckett and the End of Modernity*; Gontarski, *On Beckett*; Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*; Van Hulle, "Extended Mind and Multiple Drafts"; Ackerley, introduction to *Demented Particulars*; Mooney, "Presocratic Scepticism"; Kemp, "Autonomy and Privacy."

17. For more on *Molloy* and different philosophical topics, see Begam, *Samuel Beckett and the End of Modernity*; Gontarski, *Revisioning Beckett*; Maude, *Beckett, Technology and the Body*. There are also those critics who, when analyzing *Molloy*, try to leave philosophy behind altogether. In *Beckett and Aesthetics* (2003), Daniel Albright reminds us that *Molloy* is first and foremost a literary object—and not merely an example of one theory or another. Are the voices of Molloy and Moran, he asks, "symptoms of paranoid hallucination in the mind of the character? Of Beckett himself? Could Dr. Freud cure the text? . . . Perhaps it is better to argue that these voices are generated by an aesthetic problem: the equivocation between the vocal and the written nature of language" (4).

Chapter 3. Mental Acts

1. When I use the phrase "mental actions," I am not suggesting that minds and bodies are made from different substances. Instead, as entailed by something like property dualism, there is a class of phenomena that are technically made of physical matter and yet, somehow, are more meaningfully discussed in terms of mental concepts and rules. I cannot stipulate how mental properties emerge from physical matter—except to appeal to Donald Davidson's claim in "Mental Events" (1970) that "mental characteristics are in some sense dependent, or supervenient, on physical characteristics" (*Essays on Actions and Events*, 214). At the same time, Davidson's essay "Agency" (1971) suggests that "action" itself is a physical concept. "We must conclude, perhaps with a shock of surprise, that our primitive actions, the ones we do not do by doing something else, mere movements of the body—these are all the actions there are. We never do more than move our bodies: the rest is up to nature" (*Essays on Actions and Events*, 59). There is therefore something of a logical mismatch between mental and physical "actions."

2. Cohn, "World of Harold Pinter," 55. For more on Pinter's relation to dramatic realism and the Angry Young Men, see Bernhard, "Beyond Realism"; Stulberg, "How (Not) to Write Broadcast Plays"; Grimes, *Harold Pinter's Politics*; Silverstein, *Harold Pinter*.

3. While behaviorism created a number of "boxes"—E. L. Thorndike's lever boxes, B. F. Skinner's boxes for operant conditioning (not to be confused with the "air crib" for humans)—the metaphorical "black box" originated elsewhere. Beginning in the 1940s and 1950s, physicists, electrical engineers, and cyberneticists began using the term "black box" to describe transformational circuits that were effectively inner workings out of view. It was then picked up as a metaphor within behaviorist psychology, although some—like Skinner himself—found it unhelpful. "The organism," he wrote in *About Behaviorism* (1974), "is, of course, not empty, and it cannot be adequately treated simply as a black box, but we must carefully distinguish between what is known about what is inside and what is merely inferred" (233).

4. For more on the psychologies of Beckett and Pinter, see Kennedy, *Six Dramatists*, chaps. 3 and 4; Begley, *Harold Pinter*, introduction and chap. 3.

5. In that way, these plays differ from "psychic" dramas such as Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1920), where mental and physical events become indistinguishable by way of hallucination (see O'Neill, *Nine Plays*).

6. See James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, chap. 6.

7. One of the pillars of logical empiricism, Rudolf Carnap's "physicalist thesis" argued that all knowledge was, in theory, translatable into a fundamental language of physical description (*physikalischen sprache*). Like Carnap's thesis, Hempel's argument was technically an epistemological rather than metaphysical claim (although it's unclear how meaningful this distinction was for Carnap). See Carnap, *Logical Structure of the World*, 1–46; Carnap, "Psychology in Physical Language"; Richardson, *Carnap's Construction of the World*, 1–115. See also Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism." For more on Neurath's behavioristic sociology, see Neurath, "Empirical Sociology."

8. I am not taking the position that lying or deception is the same as theatrical acting—only that they share certain logical and epistemological similarities. In contrast, see books 3 and 10 of Plato's *Republic*, where Plato accuses not only dramatic performance but also poets of being guilty of such deceit. As Plato explains, "Imitation is surely far from truth. . . . When anyone tells us that he has met some person who knows all the arts and everything else known to man—that there is nothing he does not know better than everybody else—we must tell him he is gullible and must have met a magician and been deceived. He was duped into thinking such a person omniscient because of his own inability to test and verify the difference between knowledge, ignorance, and imitation" (10.598d).

9. Insofar as epic theater aimed to provoke rational discussion in addition to aesthetic pleasure, the separation between rationality and emotion, and between mind

and body, was logically necessary. However, it would be a mistake to call this separation Cartesian or dualist, as these terms have valences that aren't part of Brecht's theory. As he wrote in "The Epic Theatre and Its Difficulties" (1927), "The essential part of the epic theatre is that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing an experience the spectator must come to grips with things. At the same time it would be quite wrong to try and deny emotion to the theatre" (*Brecht on Theatre*, 23). See also Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 33–99.

10. While Gobert is correct that the Cartesian passions bridged body and soul, the comment that "the material and immaterial are inextricable" doesn't fit well with the *Meditations*. In the sixth meditation, Descartes offers the extricability of the soul as proof of mind-body dualism: "I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it" (115).

11. For a particularly informative and explicit example of this, see Balkin, "Monist Dramaturgy."

12. Rabaté is one of several contemporary critics who have found value in analyzing *Eleutheria*. Another is Daniel Albright, who in *Beckett and Aesthetics* (2003) asserted that "Beckett's relation to the long tradition of Western drama [can] be understood more easily in *Eleutheria* than in any of his subsequent plays" (48). Earlier critics, however, were less generous. In his touchstone work *Samuel Beckett* (1961), Hugh Kenner proclaimed that the play was a "misconceived dramatic enterprise" (140). Ruby Cohn wasn't much nicer. "Neither main plot nor subplot of *Eleutheria*," she wrote in *Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut* (1962), "are particularly well made" (140).

13. Quoted in Bair, *Samuel Beckett*, 403.

14. Beckett's original French is no help on this point: "Ceci explique aussi pourquoi il n'y a pas da'ction marginale au troisième acte, le côté Krap ètant tombe dans la fosse à la suite du virement de la scène" (4).

15. Albright presents a different interpretation of act 3—one that, in my mind, minimizes the effect of having the main and marginal actions performed simultaneously: "When the Krap household furniture is pushed to a corner of the stage, or off the stage into the pit, what sort of theatre is left? . . . Beckett arranged *Eleutheria* as a two-part parody: he first shows the incompetence of the realistic theatre, then the incompetence of the psychic theatre" (*Beckett and Aesthetics*, 40).

16. For more on the evolution of the *Krapp* manuscript, see Gontarski, "Crapp's First Tapes." See also the Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project's genetic edition: https://www.beckettarchive.org/krapp/about/catalogue.

17. Alan Ackerman offers a different reading of *Krapp*'s catachrestic language, while also drawing on Gilbert Ryle. The "bony ghost," he writes, "parodies not only

the traditional Cartesian body-mind dualism but also the metaphysical language that enables it, drawing our attention, like Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1949), to the mistake of looking for a 'Ghost in the Machine'" ("Prompter's Box," 421). My claim, of course, is that Beckett's accomplishment was in fact finding ways to put a ghost in the machine—to give mental concepts and actions otherwise impossible onstage. In my mind, *Krapp's Last Tape* doesn't parody mind-body dualism so much as make it work for the theater.

18. For more on these revisions, see Knowlson, "'Krapp's Last Tape.'"

19. Quoted in Knowlson, "'Krapp's Last Tape,'" 55.

20. In a 1961 interview with Harry Thompson, Pinter weighed in on the possibility of his work resembling Beckett's. "There is no question that Beckett is a writer whom I admire very much and have admired for a number of years. If Beckett's influence shows in my works that's all right with me. You don't work in a vacuum; you're bound to absorb and digest other writing; and I admire Beckett's work so much that something of its texture might appear in my own" ("Harold Pinter Replies," 8-9). For more on Beckett's relation to Pinter, see Diamond, *Pinter's Comic Play*, 89-109; Gordon, *Harold Pinter*, 1-48, 124-61; Taylor-Batty, *Theatre of Harold Pinter*, 1-48. See also Billington, *Life and Work of Harold Pinter*, 45-87.

21. "I had read *Murphy*, *Molloy*, and *Malone Dies* by 1955 but not *Godot*. I was acting in Ireland when *Godot* opened in London. My old friend Mick Goldstein saw the production and wrote to me about it" (Pinter, *Various Voices*, 17).

22. It was eventually returned to the library after Pinter's death.

23. Quoted in Billington, *Life and Work of Harold Pinter*, 43.

24. Billington, *Life and Work of Harold Pinter*, 366-67.

25. The philosopher John Cottingham identifies *The Homecoming* as presenting a caricature of Cartesian doubt (*Cartesian Reflections*, 276).

26. In *Empty Houses* (2011), David Kurnick makes a related point about the "Circe" section of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Joyce, Kurnick argues, "renders legible the content of interiority by lining the dialogue and narration with the properly 'offstage' information of the mind's content. The novel creates precisely the textualized 'closet drama' that *Exiles* was in the process of becoming via the more mundane process of theatrical failure: a fully discursivized space in which the contents of those recessed closets have been pushed into view" (179). My point about Pinter, however, is that these mental closets are never permitted to become the same kinds of actions as those performed onstage.

27. Pinter, *Collected Poems and Prose*, 32-33.

28. Pinter's poem "I Shall Tear Off My Terrible Cap" (1951) lends itself to a similar reading, although it predates *The Birthday Party* and "A View of the Party" by seven years. The misapplication of physical properties, etc., is less measured and artful than it would be several years later; here there are "onelegged dreams" and "walking brains," but there's nothing as grammatically awkward or logically absurd as "The

thought that Goldberg was . . . Never crossed Meg's words." Like so much of Pinter's early work, it invokes the horrors of psychiatric treatment—psychosurgery or ECT in particular.

> I in my straight jacket swung in the sun,
> In a hostile pause in a no man's time.
> The spring his green anchor had flung.
> Around me only the walking brains,
> And the plack of their onelegged dreams
> As I hung.
>
> I tell them this—
> Only the deaf can hear and the blind understand . . .
> I'll tear off my terrible cap. (*Collected Poems and Prose*, 9)

Chapter 4. The Form of Thought

1. As Coetzee acknowledges, Beckett was an important influence on his own writing and style: "Beckett meant a great deal to me in my own writing. . . . The essays I wrote on Beckett's style are not only academic exercises, in the colloquial sense of that word. They are also attempts to get closer to a secret, a secret of Beckett's that I wanted to make my own" (*Doubling the Point*, 25). For further discussions of Coetzee's relation to Beckett, see Hayes, *J. M. Coetzee and the Novel*, 33-71; Zimbler, *J. M. Coetzee and the Politics of Style*, 25-55; Tajiri, "Beckett, Coetzee, and Animals," 27-39; and Tajiri, "Beckett's Legacy." For a discussion of Coetzee's dissertation on Beckett, see Roach, "Hero and Bad Motherland"; Uhlmann, "Approaches to the (Beckett) Archives"; Rabaté, "Excuse My French"; Kellman, "J. M. Coetzee and Samuel Beckett."

2. In "Samuel Beckett and the Temptations of Style" (1973), Coetzee's position evolved somewhat, as he noted a degree of necessary resemblance between grammar and thought in Beckett's late fiction. As he wrote, there is a "deeper impulse toward stylization that is common to all of Beckett's later work. This occurs with the stylization of the impasse of reflexive consciousness, of the movement of the mind that we can call *A therefore Not-A* and that Beckett apothegmatizes in the phrase 'imagination dead imagine'" (*Doubling the Point*, 49). Insofar as *neither* thought nor language could express a logically coherent proposition, Coetzee understood them as having some necessary correlation.

3. Five years later, of course, Watson would write in *Behaviorism* (1924) that thinking was just "talking to ourselves" (237). But this was hardly an argument for correspondence between language and thinking, as Watson claimed that these were synonyms for the same phenomenon.

4. In "The Rhetoric of the Passive in English" (1980), Coetzee cites Isaac Newton's