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Cora Diamond on “Wittgenstein’s ‘Unbearable Conflict’”

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RESUMEN

Este artículo es una respuesta a “Wittgenstein’s ‘Unbearable Conflict’” de Cora Diamond. Amplío y elaboro el diagnóstico de Diamond sobre la ruptura en el pensamiento de Wittgenstein, descrito en la *Investigaciones filosóficas*, §§ 106-107. Estoy de acuerdo con Diamond en que esto ocurrió inmediatamente después de su vuelta a la filosofía, al final de los años veinte del pasado siglo, y que esto incluyó un rechazo liberador del dogmatismo metafísico que el propio Wittgenstein se había impuesto. Argumento a favor de que la ruptura que Diamond describe ocurrió en una fecha posterior, en noviembre de 1929, y la conecto con los pensamientos de Wittgenstein sobre la ética, tanto en sus cuadernos de notas manuscritos como en la “Conferencia sobre ética”.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Wittgenstein, Cora Diamond, Tractatus, forma lógica, ética.*

ABSTRACT

This paper is a response to Cora Diamond’s “Wittgenstein’s ‘Unbearable Conflict.’” I expand and elaborate on Diamond’s diagnosis of the break in Wittgenstein’s thinking described in *Philosophical Investigations*, §§ 106-107. I agree with Diamond that this occurred soon after his return to philosophy in the late 1920s, and involved a liberating rejection of a self-imposed metaphysical dogmatism. I argue for a later date for the break she describes, in November 1929, and connect this to Wittgenstein’s ethical thinking at the time, both in his manuscript notebooks and in the Lecture on Ethics.

KEYWORDS: *Wittgenstein, Cora Diamond, Tractatus, Logical Form, Ethics.*

Cora Diamond begins her paper with a puzzle about a remark in the middle of the famous metaphilosophical passages of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, roughly §§ 89-133. In these sections, Wittgenstein both developed a general critique of his work in the *Tractatus*, and thought about the relationship between his earlier approach to philosophy and his later philosophizing. The passage which Diamond finds puzzling occurs in § 107: “The more closely we examine actual language,

the greater becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not something I had *discovered*: it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is in danger of becoming vacuous. — We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction, and so, in a certain sense, the conditions are ideal; but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!”¹

Diamond’s puzzlement about this passage stems from the fact that on the one hand, Wittgenstein seems to be recounting here a struggle occasioned by his earlier philosophical thoughts; yet at the same time there is no trace of such a struggle, such an intolerable conflict, in the *Tractatus* itself. Diamond suggests a way to resolve this puzzle in several stages that I will discuss in course. Since I find much of what Diamond has to say in her paper to be both congenial and convincing, my comments will not take the form of criticism of her paper, but will instead attempt in various ways to both strengthen and extend her argument. The one thing that I will say that may appear to be criticism concerns the “imaginative biography” which she presents of the moment at which Wittgenstein found himself trying “to repair a torn spider’s web with his fingers” — but as she makes no claim to be presenting the actual historical sequence of events this is not really a criticism. However, I do hope to show that attending in more detail to what we know about the details of Wittgenstein’s biography can actually bring her “imaginative biography” closer to unimagined biography, and at the same time strengthen the case for her speculations.

Diamond thinks that there is indeed a conflict in the *Tractatus*, but one that Wittgenstein was unable to see at the time of his writing that work. This conflict, she says, arises from “the demand that there is a logical ideal of what language is — an ideal that must be present within actual language, although hidden from view.” In § 107, Wittgenstein — or more properly his translators — speaks here of a “requirement.” The German word rendered “requirement” is “*Forderung*,” and this same word occurs in the *Tractatus* at 3.23: “The requirement — *Forderung* — that simple signs be possible is the requirement — *Forderung* — that sense be determinate.” Here I am quoting the later, Pears and McGuinness translation, where Ogden and Ramsey in the original translation had “The postulate of the possibility of the simple signs is the postulate of the determinateness of sense.”² I suspect that Pears and McGuinness chose to render “*Forderung*” as “requirement” in order to mark the connection between this passage of the *Tractatus* and § 107 of the *Investigations*, in which Anscombe had rendered “*Forderung*” as “requirement.”³ Be that as it may, if we put these passages

together we get the following as requirements: the crystalline purity of logic; the possibility of simple signs; the determinacy of sense. From Wittgenstein's point of view these are the *same* requirement, and identical to the demand of which Diamond speaks, namely that there be some logical order that can be revealed by analysis – an analysis which *must* end in elementary propositions that are concatenations of simple signs, names.⁴

This requirement surfaces in the various points at which Wittgenstein speaks in the *Tractatus* of what *must* be — for example "It is obvious that in the analysis of propositions we must come to elementary propositions, which consist of names in immediate combination." [*Tractatus* 4.221] Here again we have the requirement of simple signs tied to a requirement of analysis. The same requirement shows up in Wittgenstein's description of the "general propositional form" which is to represent what *all* propositions have in common. Wittgenstein initially says that this form can be expressed as "this is how things stand" (in the Pears and McGuinness translation of "*Es verhält sich so und so*" at *Tractatus* 4.5), but later he expresses it as a propositional variable obtained by taking truth-functions of elementary propositions, through repeated application of his N operator, which is a generalization of joint denial. [*Tractatus* 4.51–4.53, 6] Here again is the presupposition that there *be* elementary propositions to which the calculus of truth-functions can be applied. That these propositions *are* elementary is tied, in the *Tractatus*, to their logical independence — if two propositions stand in logical relationships to one another, then this logical relationship must be revealed, on analysis, to be a consequence of the way in which the propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions (and thus the original propositions cannot themselves be elementary).

This consequence is famously drawn by Wittgenstein in his discussion of the exclusion of colors at *Tractatus* 6.3751, where he writes that "For two colours ... to be at one place in the visual field, is impossible, logically impossible, for it is excluded by the logical structure of colour. ... It is clear that the logical product of two elementary propositions can neither be a tautology nor a contradiction. The assertion that a point in the visual field has two different colours at the same time, is a contradiction." According to the *Tractatus*, it must be possible to reveal this contradiction as truth-functional through an analysis of colour-attributions to points in the visual field into other, more elementary propositions. But *in the Tractatus*, notoriously, his only suggestion of such an analysis ("Let us consider how this contradiction presents itself in physics...") simply reproduces the problem since it reduces the claim about colours to the contradiction of one particle being in two places at the same time.

There is some irony in Wittgenstein's appeal at *Tractatus* 4.221 to what is "obvious." Elsewhere in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein took Frege and Russell to task for appeals to "self-evidence" in logic: "... it is remarkable that so exact a thinker as Frege should have appealed to the degree of self-evidence as the criterion of a logical proposition" [6.1271] and "Self-evidence, of which Russell has said so much, can only be discarded in logic by language itself preventing every logical mistake" [5.4731]. The latter quotation comes as a comment on the fundamental thesis of the *Tractatus* that "Logic must take care of itself." [5.473] In the *Tractatus*, however, there is a strong suggestion that logic in some sense depends on *something* — though not something that the user of logic can provide. What logic depends on is that there *be* elementary propositions, and names of simple objects for those propositions to be built up out of. "The logical propositions," Wittgenstein tells us at *Tractatus* 6.124, "describe the scaffolding of the world, or rather they present it. They 'treat' of nothing. They presuppose that names have meaning, and that elementary propositions have sense. And this is their connexion with the world." This presupposition is the existence of simple objects, which Wittgenstein argues at *Tractatus* 2.02-2.0212 is necessary for the determinacy of sense. Similarly, at *Tractatus* 5.552, Wittgenstein claims that "The 'experience' which we need to understand logic is not that such and such is the case (*das sich etwas so und so verhält*), but that something *is*; but that is *no* experience. Logic *precedes* every experience — that something is *so*. It is before the How, not before the What." This non-experience-experience, which does not have the general propositional form, "such and such is the case," is identified at *Tractatus* 6.54 with "the mystical" — "Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is."

So, in the *Tractatus*, logic is said to presuppose something. While this presupposition fails to have the form of a proposition as given by the *Tractatus*, and so ends up as unsayable nonsense, the author of the *Tractatus* nonetheless feels compelled to state this presupposition several times. The presupposition I have here identified is the obverse side of the demand of the crystalline purity of logic. The general propositional form is constructed recursively: names and their concatenations into elementary propositions (mirroring objects and their concatenations into atomic facts) provide the basis, and logic provides the "scaffolding" used to generate the rest. But this conception, in which logic presupposes the possibility of an analysis that can be carried out to reach the bedrock of simple names combining into logically independent elementary propositions, seems to conflict with the *Tractatus*'s insistence that "logic must take care of itself."

What I have been trying to do so far is to bring out in another way what Diamond was pointing to when she said that Wittgenstein's early work was self-stultifying. This surfaces also in a remark made in the *Investigations* shortly before Diamond's focal passage, in § 93: "Why do we say that a proposition is something remarkable? On the one hand because of the enormous importance attaching to it. (And that is correct.) On the other hand, this importance, together with a misunderstanding of the logic of our language (*ein Mißverstehen der Sprachlogik*), seduces us into thinking that something extraordinary, even unique, must be achieved by propositions. — A *misunderstanding* makes it look to as if a proposition *did* something strange." There is deliberate irony here in Wittgenstein's talk of "a misunderstanding of the logic of our language" — for the *Tractatus* had aimed to show that "the method of formulating [the problems of philosophy] rests on the misunderstanding of the logic of our language (*dem Missverständnis der Logik unserer Sprache*)" [*Tractatus*, Preface] and that "Most questions and propositions of the philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language (*wir unsere Sprachlogik nicht verstehen*)." [*Tractatus* 4.003] Thus in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein accuses himself, in the *Tractatus*, of having generated the same kinds of misunderstandings and attendant problems, through the requirement of the possibility of logical analysis, that he had claimed to find at the root of past philosophers' questions and claims in that same work.

Diamond suggests that we can understand Wittgenstein's self-criticism better through a comparison with a case of psychoanalysis described by Jonathan Lear: his patient Ms. A., who lives her life with a constant expectation of disappointment, "over and over again." In therapy, Ms. A. comes to realize that she has been *imposing* this expectation on her life, through a kind of *repetition* of what amounts to an *injunction*, "that life shall be disappointing." All of the episodes of her life have come to share a "timeless structure" which shapes and frames her life. In this role, the expectation that her life should be a disappointment becomes unquestionable. Moreover, this structure is imposed as kind of defensive mechanism, which protects her against real disappointments by "getting there first." The realization that she is the source of this seemingly timeless injunction, and the recognition of its function as a defense against vulnerability, has an ethical significance for Ms. A.: it allows her to live "more realistically and truthfully." But this is not a matter of a moment of conversion; rather Ms. A. is called to the work of taking apart "the world that hitherto held her captive" which will require recognizing the continuing attraction to her of the "structure of disappointingness" which had governed her life.

Diamond brings up this example of Lear's in order to use it as a model for understanding the "unbearable conflict" described by Wittgenstein in § 107 of the *Investigations*, and the transformation in his philosophizing brought about through his recognition of this unbearable conflict. Once again I would like to add some remarks to reinforce this story. As I have tried to argue above, Wittgenstein at § 107 was rejecting a "requirement" present in the *Tractatus* – the requirement of the crystalline purity of logic, but with it the requirement of analysis into elementary propositions. I think we can see that he himself understands this requirement as self-imposed, when he contrasts it, *as a* requirement, with "something I had *discovered*." Its origin lies within himself and it takes the form of an injunction, expressed through the word "must." It *must* be possible to carry out analysis, so that all logical connections can be revealed to be truth-functional: do so!

Moreover, Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* explicitly recognizes the way in which *repetition* helps to bring his thought under the domination of this injunction. At §§ 114-115, he writes: "*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (4.5): 'The general form of propositions is: This is how things are.' — That is the kind of proposition one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it. A picture held us captive. And we couldn't get outside of it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably." Diamond further suggests that we can see in this self-imposed picture, a Wittgensteinian attempt to avoid vulnerability. Just as Ms. A.'s projection of inevitable disappointment allows her to avoid having to deal with real disappointment, so the point of "the imposition of the idea that there has to be an underlying logical order in thought and language" is to "provide a guarantee that thought cannot fail to be thought." And Wittgenstein's coming to recognize this fact about himself leads to the characteristic form of his later philosophy, which involves a constant awareness of the voices of temptation pulling him back to variations on his earlier ways of thinking, thoughts about "the way things *must* be," and the work of reflection needed to resist such thoughts. In this way, Wittgenstein's realization of the timeless structure he had been imposing on his thinking allowed him to come to think – and, I would like to suggest, live – "more realistically and truthfully."

However, as Diamond argues, it is beyond implausible that the moment of realization apparently described in § 107 occurred during the writing of the *Tractatus*. To resolve this issue, she engages in some "imaginative biography." She points to an image employed by Wittgenstein immediately

before § 107, in which he writes: "We feel as if we had to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers." She suggests that in these sections, Wittgenstein is describing a real intellectual struggle, but one which occurred on Wittgenstein's return to philosophy in 1929, and in particular during or immediately after the writing of his only published philosophical paper, "Some Remarks on Logical Form." Famously, Wittgenstein submitted this paper as his contribution to the joint meeting of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association in Nottingham, where it appears in the program as a separate "Address" — a quite unique distinction. However, he read a completely different paper, on infinity. Ray Monk, in his biography of Wittgenstein, says that "It is a mark of how quickly his thought was developing at the time ... that almost as soon as he had sent it off to be printed he disowned it as worthless..." [Monk (1990), pp. 272-3].

If this is correct, it lends strong support to Diamond's bit of imaginative biography. For, as she points out, in this paper, in spite of differences in execution from the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein held onto the idea that there must be an underlying logical order in our language which philosophical analysis could reveal. As in the *Tractatus*, this analysis "must come to the point where it reaches propositional forms which are not themselves composed of simpler propositional forms." [Wittgenstein (1929), p. 162]. In the *Tractatus*, the tool for this analysis was to be a *Begriffsschrift*, a symbolism that excludes the ambiguities of ordinary language which are the source of the confusions of philosophy. [Tractatus 3.323-3.325] Similarly, in "Some Remarks on Logical Form," the method was "to express in an appropriate symbolism what in ordinary language leads to endless misunderstandings" — a symbolism that gives "a clear picture of the logical structure" which is disguised in ordinary language [Wittgenstein (1929), p. 163]. But Wittgenstein now took cases such as that of color-exclusion to show that elementary propositions need not be independent of one another; and in consequence some modification was needed of the symbolism employed in the *Tractatus* to construct the general propositional form. Wittgenstein sought what he called at this period a "phenomenal language" in which attributions of color could be expressed in such a way that the syntax of the language itself would prohibit the formation of the problematic conjunction " x is red at t & x is blue at t ," so that "there is no logical product" of this kind [Wittgenstein (1929), p. 170]. The effort to construct such a language was part of a more general attempt by Wittgenstein to adjust his Tractarian views so as to resolve the problems while holding fast to the idea of an underlying logical form running through thought and language. It is this more general attempt which on Diamond's account came to feel like trying to repair a

torn spider's web with his fingers, and it is the failure of the attempt that she thinks leads to Wittgenstein's realization of the way in which he has become captive to a self-imposed requirement.⁵ She places this realization sometime in the period between when Wittgenstein sent off his paper for the meeting, and his decision to read a different paper on a different topic, that is in early July, 1929 (the paper was read on July 13).

Now, in a sense, I am going to argue that Diamond is right about this, not just as imaginative biography, but as something more like actual biography. Only I think she has the dates slightly wrong; and getting them right can make the story even more interesting. In what follows I am in part borrowing from work by Mauro Engelmann, in his book on *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Development* and a paper subtitled "Revisiting Some Remarks on Logical Form in Its Context."⁶

As I noted above, Monk in his biography asserts that Wittgenstein immediately disowned "Some Remarks on Logical Form" as worthless and therefore read a different paper at the meeting. But the evidence for this all comes from later — from a note that Anscombe wrote for the reprinting of the paper in Copi and Beard's 1966 anthology, *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, from Wittgenstein's refusal to have a summary printed of the paper in a 1950 *Synoptic Index of the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, and from a 1933 letter from Wittgenstein published in *Mind*. In early July 1929, Wittgenstein wrote to Russell of his decision not to read the paper in quite different terms: "My paper (the one *written* for the meeting) is 'Some remarks on logical form', but I intend to read something else to them about generality and infinity in mathematics which, I believe, will be greater fun." [Wittgenstein (2011), "Von Ludwig Wittgenstein an Bertrand Russell," (10.7. 1929)]. There is no indication here that Wittgenstein, in July of 1929, had already concluded that the paper was worthless; and importantly, as Engelmann points out, he continued to work on the project of devising a phenomenal language for several more months after the meeting. Moreover, Engelmann argues, Wittgenstein gave Friedrich Waismann a copy of "Some Remarks on Logical Form." Engelmann remarks that "Wittgenstein would not give a 'quite worthless' paper to someone who was writing on his philosophy at the time" [Engelmann (2017), p. 58]. Engelmann is here drawing an inference from the fact that Schlick, in a letter of October 24, 1929, informed Wittgenstein that Waismann had given him a copy of "Some Remarks on Logical Form," which we can assume was a reprint that Wittgenstein had given to Waismann when he was in Vienna in the preceding summer, after the Nottingham meeting [Wittgenstein (2011), Von Moritz Schlick an Ludwig Wittgenstein, 24. 10. (1929)].

There is no evidence of Wittgenstein telling Schlick to disregard the paper, which (as Engelmann notes) Schlick cites along with the *Tractatus* "in a talk given in November 1930, which was published in 1932" as "Gibt es ein *Materiales a priori?*" [Engelmann (2017), p. 69]. Hence it does not seem that Wittgenstein could have disowned the paper as thoroughly and immediately as Monk suggests.

Nonetheless, as Engelmann documents, Wittgenstein came over those months to see the project of constructing one symbolism to reveal underlying logical form to be a bankrupt enterprise. Over time, he did come to feel, I suggest, as if he were trying to repair a torn spider's web with his fingers. And Engelmann locates what seems to me to be the – or at least a – crucial moment of realization as taking place on or about October 22, 1929. On that date, Wittgenstein wrote in his manuscript volume: "The assumption that a phenomenological language would be possible and that with it we could for the first time really say what we want to express in philosophy is – I believe – absurd." He continued, in words reminiscent of the ending of § 107 of the *Investigations*, "Back to the rough ground!": "We have to manage with our ordinary language and just understand it properly, i.e. we must not be induced by it to talk nonsense." [Engelmann (2013), 41, quoting Ms-107, 176.7]. Here Wittgenstein decisively abandons the project of finding a *Begriffsschrift* in which the supposed underlying logical form of the propositions of ordinary language could be revealed. As Alva Noë points out, Wittgenstein emphasizes the lesson here, that "there is no need ... to concern ourselves with the construction of new symbolisms that are supposedly more 'correct' than our own familiar language," in his conversations with Schlick, Waismann, and other members of the Vienna Circle in December, 1929, and chooses to open the *Philosophical Remarks* with the claim that there is no need to construct a phenomenological language [Noë (1994), pp. 17-18].

It is noteworthy that the passage Engelmann highlights is preceded by a coded remark in which Wittgenstein says this: "I have serious problems in me and I am so unclear that I have not been able to write down anything that is fully sound. I am supposed to give lectures in the next two terms! I am doubtful how it will go. The most important thing is that my work now advances well."⁸ [Ms-107, 175-6] This passage, in which Wittgenstein reflects on difficulties he has been facing, and expresses the hope that his work will now move forward, occurs just before he records a fundamental reorientation in his approach. And it reflects a struggle that had been ongoing for a number of days.

In the section of Wittgenstein's manuscript notebooks surrounding this passage, there are many coded remarks – many more than in his other notebooks from this period. In Ms-105 and Ms-106 there are a total of about a dozen pages with coded remarks. In Ms-107, there are almost 40 pages containing coded remarks, and for a stretch running from page 153 to page 192, there are coded remarks on about half of the pages. In addition, beginning on page 153 Wittgenstein begins to date the entries, starting with October 6, 1929, and running through the months of October, November, and December. In the month of October, coded remarks occur on ten separate days, and occupy many pages of the notebook. In these dated, coded remarks, Wittgenstein complains that he cannot work, that he is stuck, that he is looking into an abyss (October 6); that he is in the dark (October 8); that he is close to the most important problems but cannot grasp them (October 9); that he is a bad person who can only work under pressure (October 10); that he is restless inside, full of vanity and stupid thoughts (October 12). He appeals to God to keep him on the right path (October 10). [Ms-107, 156-161, 166] All of this suggests strongly that Wittgenstein was engaged in an internal struggle at this time — the attempt to repair the spiderweb. As late as October 19, Wittgenstein seems to have thought that this struggle was worth the effort; on that day he wrote to Schlick that he was working hard and had had much luck with his work, “even during the summer,” and says that he hopes that they will be able discuss things when he is in Vienna for Christmas [Wittgenstein (2011), Von Ludwig Wittgenstein an Moritz Schlick, (19. 10. 1929)] However, by October 22, he comes to see that he must give up on the project of a phenomenological language – that the web cannot be repaired. At this point he expresses the hope that his work should now go well. Yet the coded remarks do continue for a while longer. On October 28, he says that he hasn't been able to work for a week, and that he is not at home with the philosophical and logical problems; on October 30, he thanks God that he has been able to work that day; yet on October 31 he calls himself a weak beast (“ein schwaches Vieh”). [Ms-107, 179] After this, the coded remarks in the manuscript become less frequent – there are only two in November, and one in December, before Wittgenstein's departure to Vienna for the holidays — and these remarks do not contain the kind of self-criticism and self-questioning found in the October portion of the manuscript, although Wittgenstein continues to insert dates.⁹

So, it seems that Wittgenstein's internal struggle was not brought to sudden quiescence by the seeming breakthrough of October 22. Of course, assimilating this new insight took time. But this raises the ques-

tion whether some other development might have helped Wittgenstein to achieve a more stable outlook, as exhibited in his conversations with the Vienna Circle two months later. Engelmann's book proceeds to develop an account of Wittgenstein's changing methodologies after his rejection of the project of a phenomenological language as the key to solving philosophical problems. But I want to discuss another, to my mind striking turn in his thinking which I believe fits into Diamond's argument very neatly. It may also offer a possible explanation for the end of the struggle.

At some point shortly after writing the passage cited by Engelmann as showing Wittgenstein's decisive rejection of the project of "Some Remarks on Logical Form," he was invited by C.K. Ogden, the translator of the *Tractatus*, to give a talk to "The Heretics," a non-academic intellectual society. The result was what has come down to us as "A Lecture on Ethics," delivered on November 17, 1929. I think it is in general interesting that Wittgenstein's thoughts should turn to ethical matters in the proximate aftermath of the discovery that, if Diamond's use of Lear is on the right track, would have come to feel like a liberation that allowed him to think "more realistically and truthfully."¹⁰ But not only that; I think the content of the Lecture can be revealingly connected to Diamond's argument. I can only gesture at this here, and I haven't been able to think this through as clearly as I would like; I will just try to make some connections, and not attempt anything like a serious interpretation of the Lecture.

In the Lecture, Wittgenstein famously distinguishes between absolute and relative judgments of value, and argues that ethics can only be concerned with the former, absolute judgments. Yet he also argues that such judgments cannot describe any state of affairs — "such a state of affairs is a chimera" [Wittgenstein (1993), p. 39]. To speak of "the absolute good" is to stretch language to the breaking point — for "good" is normally relative, as when we speak of a "good pianist" or a "good runner," implicitly drawing on "a certain predetermined standard" [Wittgenstein (1993), p. 38], but if we deprive "good" of any such relation, we no longer have such a standard to appeal to. Wittgenstein mentions two experiences that he says are familiar to him and which help to fix what might be meant by "absolute or ethical value" [Wittgenstein (1993), p. 41]. The first of these he calls "my experience *par excellence*," and it is what he would express in the words "*I wonder at the existence of the world.*" Wittgenstein says that the attempt to express this experience runs into the same kind of difficulties as the attempt to express judgments of absolute value. Wondering is in the ordinary sense directed at a particular marvelous state of affairs within the world, but to speak of wonder at the existence of the world is to deprive

the verb of this needed kind of object. Wittgenstein's second experience has a similar structure: it is "what one might call, the experience of feeling *absolutely* safe," "in which one is inclined to say 'I am safe, nothing can injure me whatever happens'." Once again, language is stretched here, since in the ordinary sense, safety refers to some danger or other that has been avoided [Wittgenstein (1993), pp. 41-43].

Now note the connection of these two experiences to the aspects of the *Tractatus* highlighted above, and to what Diamond draws from Lear. The first experience seems closely related to that which is called "the mystical" at *Tractatus* 6.44 – *that* the world is – and to the experience which is "no experience," which *Tractatus* 5.552 says "we need to understand logic" – "that something *is*." That is, this experience seems to link to the experience of what the *Tractatus* conceives of as the presuppositions of logic. And the second, the experience of absolute safety, is strikingly reminiscent of the invulnerability that Lear's patient seemed to have achieved through imposing on her life a structure of disappointment, and of the safety of thought as protected from failing to be thought that Diamond saw as apparently secured by Wittgenstein's imposition of the demand of analysis in the *Tractatus*. We can now see, I suggest, that these two seeming invulnerabilities are themselves illusory. Lear's patient is not really protected from disappointment through her expectation that everything will disappoint — for disappointment in the ordinary sense is related to some or other specific hope or desire that is not met, but the expectation of disappointment that structures Ms. A.'s life is absolute and comes in advance of any hope or desire she might have. And while specific attempts to think in some particular way can fall short of thinking, through some or other specific form of confusion, and we can avoid or correct such confusions on a case-by-case basis, there is no way for our thinking to be absolutely protected from all sources of confusion at once.

As noted, Wittgenstein wrote the Lecture on Ethics almost immediately after abandoning the project of constructing one language in which the true logical form of our propositions could be revealed, and accepting that we must instead "manage with our ordinary language and understand it properly." It is striking that in the Lecture, he engaged in a reflection on ethics in which he took up two examples connected to the project he had just abandoned and the sense of invulnerability he had sought through that project. This is what we would expect, I submit, if Engelmann has helped us to correctly locate the moment of discovery postulated in Diamond's imaginative biography.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein continued to bring an ethical dimension to his thinking about the nature of philosophy over the next several years, culminating in §§ 86-93 of the 1933 “*Big Typescript*,” titled “Philosophy.” These sections, which constitute Wittgenstein’s most sustained discussion of the nature of philosophy prior to the metaphilosophical stretch of the *Investigations* on which Diamond focuses, are also the source for many remarks in that later discussion. But they begin on an explicitly ethical note: Wittgenstein states that “philosophy does require a resignation, but one of feeling, not of intellect” and that “work on philosophy is actually closer to working on oneself” [Wittgenstein (2005), p. 299]. This conception of philosophy comports well with Diamond’s understanding of the significance of the discovery she attributes to Wittgenstein, and her modeling of this on Lear’s case of Ms. A. Just as she has to reshape her life over time, resisting and working through the continued attractions of that which had held her captive in order to achieve psychic harmony, so Wittgenstein has to continue to “work on himself” to achieve the necessary “resignation of feeling.” He has to give up illusory thoughts that something *must* be thus and so, and the illusory comforts they provide. This ethical dimension of his metaphilosophical thinking is more muted in the *Investigations*, but it surfaces more explicitly in § 131: “... we can avoid unfairness or vacuity in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison — as a sort of yardstick; not as a preconception to which reality *must* correspond. (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy.)” This dogmatism is the sin of which Wittgenstein convicts his earlier work; it is the dogmatism of imposing requirements. Diamond’s essay has helped us both to understand this criticism, and to locate the point where Wittgenstein came to see its force, and the significance this had for the development of his philosophy.

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NOTES

¹ I follow the Hacker/Schulte revision of Anscombe's translation, and cite the *Investigations* by section number.

² In general I will quote from the Ogden/Ramsey translation, unless otherwise, as here, indicated. I cite the *Tractatus* by section number.

³ The choice of "requirement" may also reflect the influence of Gilbert Ryle. In the collection of books that Ryle left to Linacre College at Oxford, there are three copies of the *Tractatus*: a first impression of the 1922 Ogden/Ramsey translation, a 1951 fifth impression of the (slightly revised) Ogden/Ramsey translation, and a 1969 fourth impression of the Pears/McGuinness translation. According to the lecture lists published in the Oxford University Gazette, Ryle taught courses on the *Tractatus* five times, the last of which was co-taught with David Pears, in Trinity Term, 1954-5. Ryle apparently spent much time on matters of translation in his teaching, beginning each class by dictating corrections ranging from "matters of philosophical substance to some Rylean grammatical bugbears" [Harre (1999), p. 41]. In his copy of the 1951 impression of the Ogden/Ramsey translation, Ryle writes "requirement?" above the word "postulate" in 3.23.

⁴ It is noteworthy that in the manuscript where Wittgenstein is working out the ideas of "Some Remarks on Logical Form," he again refers to a "requirement of determinacy." In Ms-106, 48-49, Wittgenstein considers the question whether a proposition that says that a given square is red can be analyzed into the conjunction of the two propositions that say that the left and right halves of the square are red. He observes that such an analysis could be continued indefinitely, so that there essentially aren't any elementary propositions. He then asks whether "this system" satisfies "the requirement of the determinacy of the analysis" ("der Forderung der Bestimmtheit der Analyse"). Thus this requirement of determinacy remains in place in his thinking at the time of writing "Some Remarks on Logical Form."

⁵ Thanks to Cora Diamond for helping me to express her point more clearly than I had done in an earlier draft of these comments.

⁶ Cora Diamond pointed out to me that the period discussed by Engelmann is the topic of an earlier paper by Alva Noë, "Wittgenstein, Phenomenology, and What it Makes Sense to Say," which also includes a discussion of a crucial passage that Engelmann notes and that I make use of below.

⁷ Noë also cites this passage [Noë (1994), p. 18]. My translation diverges slightly from those of both Noë and Engelmann (thanks to Jim Conant and Malte Willer for help with this). Both Noë and Engelmann misdate the passage, however – Engelmann dates it October 18 and Noë gives October 20. That the passage is dated October 22 does matter, as will become clear.

I follow the convention of citing the Nachlass by Ms number and page number.

⁸ Thanks to Jim Conant for help with translating this passage.

⁹ Cora Diamond inspired me to look further into the coded remarks in Ms-107.

¹⁰ This is not to say that Wittgenstein did not engage in any ethical reflection earlier in 1929. Several of the coded remarks in October 1929 include reflection on his own character, which are broadly of an ethical nature. Most explicitly, on October 8, Wittgenstein writes: "I had a conversation with Moore that did me good. (about ethics)." Two days later there is a long coded entry contrasting the bad person who needs a feeling of pressure, with the good person, who possesses inner freedom due to a clear conscience. [Ms-107, 155, 159-160] However, it is only with the "Lecture on Ethics" that Wittgenstein's ethical thought makes its way out of his private, coded, journal entries.

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The Realistic Spirit



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