

## Truth and the Limits of Ethical Thought: Reading Wittgenstein with Diamond

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### 1. Introduction

Wittgenstein's treatment of the notion of the limits of thought is picked up and given a new significance in Cora Diamond's recent reflections on ethical truth. Diamond's starting point is a distinction between two kinds of truth. Whereas ordinary, descriptive propositions can be either true or false, Diamond draws our attention to propositions that can only be true, and whose denials would be unintelligible. Such truths can be found, according to Diamond, both in the domain of theoretical thought and in the domain of practical thought. Thus three of her central examples are: "someone' is not the name of someone", "five plus seven equals twelve", and "slavery is unjust".<sup>1</sup> In Diamond's view, the truths expressed by these propositions are so deeply embedded in our manner of thinking that they may seem utterly trivial to us. But for the same reason, anyone who purports to deny them or behaves in ways that seem to contradict them would no longer seem to engage in thinking; rather, their thought would seem to us to have "gone off the rails".<sup>2</sup>

Diamond makes a compelling case that her construal of the notion of undeniable truth is compatible with Wittgenstein's early thought, and in so doing, she draws on the Tractarian idea that philosophy is not a theory but an activity whose aim is the clarification of thinking.<sup>3</sup> For in Diamond's view, undeniable truths are not informative, and they do not convey the content of

theoretical observations. Rather, they are one of the devices by means of which we engage in the activity of clarification of thinking: we use them to set “path marks” and “path blockers” for ourselves and for other thinkers, and thereby avoid confusion.<sup>4</sup> By deploying these undeniable truths, we thus fulfill the task Wittgenstein sets for philosophy—namely, to “limit the unthinkable from within through the thinkable”.<sup>5</sup>

There are certain aspects of Diamond’s account that go beyond the ideas propounded in Wittgenstein’s early work and trace to his later work. Thus one particularly important feature of her view is the idea that the manner in which we think may be subject to historical processes of transformation. But as Diamond demonstrates, it is illuminating to consider this later-Wittgensteinian idea, too, in light of the Tractarian construal of the limits of thought.

It is the way in which Diamond extends her account of undeniable truths to the ethical domain that demonstrates most clearly that the resources of Wittgenstein’s thought have yet to be exhausted. One of the essential characteristics of our ethical lives, in Diamond’s view, is the fact that we often find ourselves in persistent disagreement with others concerning the validity of our values, and hence concerning the truth of claims we hold to be undeniable. Disagreements about ordinary, deniable truths are normally resolved by one side indicating to the other which state of affairs counts against their view or which arguments refute it. But disagreements about undeniable truths involve such differences in each party’s understanding of the basic terms involved that no such easy resolution is possible. Indeed, just as we would not be able to understand those who deny our own undeniable truths, it seems that we should not expect them to be able to understand us and to recognize our truths as true.

Making room for possible disagreement about undeniable truths might therefore seem to lead to relativism. But Diamond resists this conclusion: on her view, undeniable truths can justify us in criticizing others, and motivate our expectation that they will ultimately abandon their confused ways of thinking and acting. While we may not be able to get our interlocutor to acknowledge such truths by means of argument, we may hope that their ways of thinking will eventually undergo the appropriate transformation that will allow them to acknowledge the truth, and we may even help them achieve such a transformation.

I will argue that in construing ethical truths as undeniable truths, and in taking such truths to express the shape and limits of ethical thinking, Diamond succeeds in striking a middle course between realism and relativism. My argument proceeds as follows. In Sections 2 through 4 I

examine the connection between Diamond's idea of undeniable truth and the Tractarian treatment of the task of drawing the limits of thought. In Section 5, I turn to Diamond's discussion of truth in ethics, and I consider the idea that our ethical thinking is shaped in the context of cumulative historical processes, and hence that the limits of what we may coherently say and think about ethical matters may shift with time. It is this idea that seems to open the door to relativism, and in Sections 6 and 7, I offer arguments in defense of Diamond's view. In particular, I argue that there is no symmetry between the truths that we hold to be undeniable and the claims made by those who deny them. The account of undeniable truths that I take Diamond to propose thus has a disjunctivist form: in claiming that some proposition is undeniable, one is either recognizing truth, or one is under the mere illusion of having recognized truth. But the fact that one may sometimes be deluded about such matters does not cast doubt on the very idea that one may also, at least sometimes, obtain the truth.

## 2. Truth and the Clarification of Thought

Diamond traces the distinction between deniable and undeniable truth to the manner in which in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* a distinction is drawn between descriptive propositions, whose aim is to represent what is the case, and expressions that serve as "aids to representation" (4.242) but do not themselves say anything which may be either true or false. This category of expressions includes, according to Diamond's reading of the *Tractatus*, logical propositions (6.1264), definitions (4.241), identity statements (6.2322, 5.5533, 4.242), mathematical expressions (6.211), and the first principles of natural science (6.341–6.35). By attending to the various roles served by these kinds of expressions, Diamond argues, the *Tractatus* teaches us to draw a distinction between the *engaged* use of language, through which we state factual truths, and a *preparatory* use of language, through which we introduce and clarify our ordinary, engaged use of it.<sup>6</sup> Expressions that belong to the preparatory use are in principle redundant, for not only do they not possess any descriptive sense, but as soon as one has mastered the use of the fragment of language they help introduce, one no longer needs to bother with the expressions which led to the acquisition of such mastery. From within the practices they help introduce, these expressions, therefore, seem trivial. Moreover, preparatory expressions do not form an indispensable part of the inferences through which we establish truths of the engaged kind – for instance, in inferring one senseful proposition from another, we do not need to cite any logical propositions as premises (5.131–2). And yet to the

extent that we do not always have full mastery of our language, to the extent that our language lacks the perspicuity of artificial symbolisms—ultimately, in so far as we are finite, historical creatures who speak a natural language (cf. 4.002)—these preparatory expressions serve a real need. They inculcate, give voice to, and promote the know-how which is required for using language meaningfully.

The *Tractatus* itself does not call any of the preparatory expressions enumerated above, apart from the propositions of logic, ‘truths’, yet Diamond takes the Tractarian distinction between preparatory and engaged uses of language to illuminate the distinction she wants to draw between descriptive, deniable truths, and clarificatory, undeniable truths. This is a point worth considering more closely.

The paradigmatic bearers of truth in the *Tractatus* are propositional expressions that represent what is the case (4.5). Such propositions have sense insofar as they have determinate truth conditions: to understand the proposition is to know what states of affairs it affirms and what it excludes (4.463; 4.0621). Senseful propositions, being either true or false, are thus “bipolar”.<sup>7</sup> Alongside such bipolar propositions, there is a further group of expressions that Wittgenstein is sometimes inclined to call true or false—namely, the propositions of logic, tautologies and contradictions. Since they do not contribute to the representation of what may be the case and are not bipolar (tautologies being always true, and contradictions always false), Wittgenstein treats logical propositions as senseless. Even though logical propositions, like all senseful propositions, are constructed by means of the truth-functional combination of elementary propositions that do have sense, their specific modes of combination yield tautologies—that is, a cancellation of all relation to reality. There is therefore something misleading in speaking of them as true propositions, for they do not fit the way in which, at 4.5, Wittgenstein characterizes the general form of the proposition.

The question whether logical propositions should be called true *at all* is an issue that Wittgenstein changes his mind about in the years leading up to the *Tractatus*, and this indecision can be taken to indicate an acknowledgment on his part of the different senses in which an expression may be called true. In the earlier *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein completely refrains from ascribing truth to logical propositions, saying that they are “neither true nor false”.<sup>8</sup> And even in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein indicates that there is something misleading in treating tautologies as truths since on his view (and contrary to Frege’s and Russell’s views), they do not convey any

content, let alone substantive content (6.124); logical propositions should not even be taken to state facts of a very general, abstract, or primitive sort (6.127), or of a self-evident sort (5.4731). But while the *Tractatus* tells us that we could in principle get on without logical propositions (6.122), Wittgenstein also acknowledges that in practice, logical propositions are useful: by means of them we can make clearer the logical relations that hold between other, meaningful propositions, and thereby simplify our proofs and inferences (6.1264). This is what justifies calling logical propositions “true”, according to Diamond, namely not their theoretical content (of which they have none) but the role they play in the context of an activity of the clarification of thought. They deserve to be seen as truths (and more specifically, as *practical* truths) because they belong in the activity through which we maintain what Diamond, following Anscombe and Aristotle, calls the “business” (*ergon*) of thinking.<sup>9</sup> Diamond proposes that this applies also to the other aids to representation that the *Tractatus* singles out—they too are to be seen as truths.

Whereas the true propositions deployed in the engaged use of language are symmetrically opposed to their equally meaningful but false negations, preparatory expressions do not contrast with intelligible but false expressions, but with mere confusion and muddle. This is the sense in which they are undeniable: negating them does not result in an indication of an alternative, coherent way of using words. And it is precisely in order to counter confusion and muddle that we deploy reminders that take the form of such aids to representation. In such contexts, preparatory expressions serve as “guides” for our use of language and thereby contribute to the shaping of thinking itself.

It is worth underlining the idea that our thinking assumes its specific shapes through the clarification of our use of language, which is a descendant of the Tractarian idea that we draw the limits of thinking by means of drawing the limits of language. To be precise, it is Diamond’s manner of articulating what remains of the notion of the limit of thought once we have climbed up the Tractarian ladder and overcome the temptation to construe this idea in an incoherent way. This is the issue to which I turn next.

### 3. The Undeniability of Logical Truth

To better understand the asymmetry of the truths we deploy in the context of the preparatory use of language vis-à-vis their putative negations, consider the notion of affirming the negation of a logical proposition. This, according to the *Tractatus*, is impossible, as it would require one to

“think illogically” (3.032). That is, it would require one to think in a way that violates the very form of thinking, and thus transgresses the limits of thought.<sup>10</sup> But it is crucial to see that the impossibility of transgressing these limits is not meant by Wittgenstein to count as a substantial claim. It is the key dialectical gesture of the *Tractatus* to create the appearance that something is being excluded by what Wittgenstein asserts, only then to reveal that what we thought was being excluded was an illusory, incoherent idea. The gesture is on display already in the Preface to the book, where the idea of drawing a limit to thinking is first mooted:

The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather – not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

The limit can, therefore, only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense.<sup>11</sup>

To come to see the incoherence of the idea of transgressing the limits of thought (and therewith to come to see the nature of the asymmetry of undeniable truths vis-à-vis their putative negations) is to overcome the temptation to think of such limits in what Diamond, following Peter Sullivan, calls a “contrastive” manner.<sup>12</sup> A limitation or constraint is contrastive insofar as it distinguishes two sets of objects that in some sense belong to the same genus. But the limits that are at issue for Wittgenstein are meant to spell out the essential form or nature of thinking. So nothing that is excluded by those limits could count as a species of thinking.

Wittgenstein says in the Preface that even if all we aim to do is to set limits to the expression of thought, rather than to thought itself, all we would thereby exclude would be “simply nonsense”. This is meant to bring out the point that the limits of language that Wittgenstein recommends that we draw would not be contrastive either. To see why, we need to attend to Diamond’s construal of the Tractarian idea of nonsense.<sup>13</sup>

Traditional readings of the *Tractatus* assume that there can be different kinds of nonsense, some of which are completely meaningless, whereas some are philosophically significant. Philosophical nonsense, on this approach, is the result of the philosopher’s attempt to say things that cannot be said, and Wittgenstein is taken to propose, as a remedy, a theory of meaning that would determine in advance which expressions can and which expressions cannot make sense. Such a theory would be constructed in a way that is sensitive to the distinctions between different

logical categories and would mark as illegitimate those expressions that denote combinations of ideas that these distinctions render impossible.<sup>14</sup> Note that the traditional approach thereby attributes to Wittgenstein the endeavor to draw limits of the contrastive kind. But when Wittgenstein spells out his conception of nonsense, it is a very different picture he presents:

Frege says: Every legitimately constructed proposition must have a sense; and I say: Every possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and if it has no sense this can only be because we have given no *meaning* to some of its constituent parts.

(Even if we believe that we have done so.) (5.4733)

Nonsense, as Wittgenstein presents it here, can result only from the speaker's failure to assign their words meaning, not from there being some impossible combination of meanings that our theory can specify and then exclude. Our failure to assign meaning to words may occur, moreover, "even if we believe that we have done so", meaning that in uttering nonsense we might be subject to an *illusion* of sense. So in distinguishing sense from nonsense, Wittgenstein is not drawing a distinction between two kinds of propositions; he is distinguishing between propositions and merely apparent propositions, between sense and the mere appearance of sense.

This is the only kind of nonsense that is at issue for Wittgenstein, according to Diamond; nonsense is to be understood solely as the failure of a speaker to determine the meanings of signs they purport to use.<sup>15</sup> The indeterminate use of signs that nonsense involves results, Diamond argues, in a complete failure to convey any content, either directly or indirectly. Nonsensical expressions cannot count as attempts to say things that cannot be said since they cannot even count as being *about* anything in particular. This is so since according to the Tractarian context principle, which Diamond stresses, only in the context of a working proposition does a sign have a determinate meaning (3.3), and only determinate combinations of signs can be said to form a representation (3.14). So in the indeterminate context of a nonsensical expression, there is no telling what any of the signs that make up the would-be proposition stand for. Moreover, the defective use of language that creates the appearance of sense, but fails to amount to sense, is *parasitical* on the proper use of language. And even though it may resemble it to the point of indistinguishability, it cannot be explained in the same terms – just as an illusion is parasitical on the veridical perception it purports to be, while having a completely different source.<sup>16</sup> Finally, as a term of criticism, "nonsense" does not serve to point out propositions that fail to make sense, but

to address persons who fail to utter propositions. This is what drawing the limits of sense comes to – not a theory, but an activity of clarification.<sup>17</sup>

With this in mind, let us return to consider the asymmetry of undeniable truths vis-à-vis their negation. In particular, consider the case of the purported denial of logical truth. Since anyone who truly understands the negation of a logical truth should be able to recognize that it says nothing, purporting to affirm it cannot but reflect a lack of understanding. Indeed it is only by equivocation, by means of an inconsistent use of signs, and by failing to assign them determinate meaning, that one can purport to affirm a contradiction. One may certainly be under an *illusion* of succeeding in making sense by means of expressions that lack determinate meaning, but what one utters, when one is under such an illusion, is simply nonsense. This is yet another appearance of Wittgenstein's signature gesture, and another way in which he expresses his noncontrastive conception of the limits of thought: in failing to think logically, one does not think *illogically*, one simply fails to think.<sup>18</sup> One thing we can do, when faced with such failure, is offer our interlocutor reminders of the shape of coherent thought, and this clarificatory activity is the context in which, despite their triviality, undeniable truths serve a crucial role.

There is, to be sure, one thing that Wittgenstein does intend to exclude in putting forth the idea of limits of thought that do not exclude any thoughts; namely, he means to exclude the philosophical misconceptions of the nature of the limits of thought, of the nature of the truths that express those limits, and of the nature of nonsense – namely, those misconceptions that treat limits as contrastive, construe undeniable truths as substantial claims, and make room for the incoherent idea of illogical thought.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. Truths and Apparent Truths

Something similar to what we just observed in the case of the purport to deny a logical truth holds for purported denials of the other kinds of aids to representation that Diamond singles out. Mathematical equations and identity statements, for example, serve as aids to representation in the sense that they provide rules for thinking, by means of which we can move from meaningful and true propositions to other, meaningful and true propositions. Suppose someone denies “ $5 + 7 = 12$ ” and adopts “ $5 + 7 = 11$ ” instead. Adopting this as a rule of calculation does not amount merely to having a false belief; it would ultimately lead them to affirm claims that contradict one another and would thus prevent them from assigning determinate meanings to their words.<sup>20</sup> Imagine, to



take another example, what would happen if a thinker took the denial of a true identity statement as a guide for their use of language. The result – apart from giving rise to a comedy of errors – would not consist simply in their having a few more false beliefs. The very determinacy of what is said in their language would be undermined (cf. 5.5303), and this would ultimately render their expressions nonsensical.

One must be careful in articulating this point, however, since it is misleading to say that one *can* give a guiding role to expressions, such as incorrect equations, which in fact fail to aid our thought. In other words, whether a seemingly undeniable expression that seems useful to us is or is not deserving of the name of truth depends not on the psychological role it plays – what it *seems* to us to do – but rather on whether it does *in fact* bring about clarity. With this remark, I seek to respond to a worry raised by Balaska<sup>21</sup> and Kuusela,<sup>22</sup> who argue that if Diamond were to construe her undeniable truths in terms of their usefulness, as she seems to them to do, this would lead to a relativist conception of truth. After all, usefulness is always relative to arbitrary ends such that for different people, different things might seem to be useful. But promoting the clarity of thinking, as Diamond conceives it, is not *mere* usefulness, and just because they *seem to* does not mean that merely apparent contributions to the clarity of thinking have the same status as genuine contributions.<sup>23</sup>

The disjunctivist strategy that I will introduce in the following sections will enable us to see how Diamond avoids this apparent consequence. To anticipate what I say there, expressions that do not promote the clarity of thinking are not, by her lights, truths at all, even if they might appear to someone to be true, or useful, or even undeniable. Conversely, the fact that even we may sometimes be under an illusion of sense and take a confused way of thinking to be ineluctable does not mean that we may not, sometimes, also think clearly, and that what we hold to be undeniable in such cases is not deserving of being called true.

There is a related worry that may arise regarding the connection between usefulness, truth, and nonsense. Notoriously, the *Tractatus* considers it to be useful, for the purpose of overcoming nonsense, to deploy elucidations that are themselves nonsensical. This activity of deploying nonsense, like the preparatory use of language, serves our theoretical ends by leading us from confusion to clarity (6.54). But it would be wrong to conclude, from the fact that the deployment of Tractarian nonsense (like the deployment of preparatory expressions) serves to further the goals of thinking, that the nonsensical expressions deployed in such a context may count (like

preparatory expressions) as truth. That would be to confuse the two very distinct roles that expressions have in each of these contexts of deployment. As Diamond puts it, whereas preparatory propositions can be said to *lead us* in thinking, Tractarian nonsense is merely meant to *lead us on* – that is, whereas the former are meant to help us think straight, the latter are meant to exacerbate the illusion of sense, tempting us to fail in thinking in such a colossal manner that the sources of our failure – our indeterminate use of language – would thereby become manifest to us.<sup>24</sup>

Diamond, by contrast to many traditional readers of the *Tractatus*, maintains that elucidatory nonsense can have this therapeutic function despite its not conveying any content—that is, despite its being *simply* nonsense, devoid of all meaning. And if Diamond is right that nonsense can do this by virtue of its merely *seeming* to make sense, rather than by virtue of its putative capacity to indirectly communicate an ineffable sense, then the criticism advanced by Hacker,<sup>25</sup> that Diamond's reading of the *Tractatus* leaves it a mystery why the *Tractatus* consists of these specific words and not any other arbitrary piece of nonsense falls flat. Tractarian nonsense is designed to fit the shape of the philosophical illusions of the interlocutors that it addresses, and its entire importance consists in how well it is able to do that. The deployment of preparatory truths, too, is meant to address the confusions of our interlocutors. But whether or not the expressions we deploy are truths has to do with what clear thinking actually is, not with what it seems to our interlocutors to be.<sup>26</sup>

Preparatory truths, by contrast to elucidatory nonsense, do not involve an indeterminate use of signs and do not purport to bring about clarity by amplifying the interlocutor's tendency to misuse language. Nonetheless, they are related to nonsense in two important respects. First, by contrast to bipolar truths, the *denials* of preparatory expressions lack sense, and though they may evoke the illusory appearance that they do make sense, this appearance collapses under closer examination, revealing that the meaning of the signs that make them up has not been fully determined. Second, like elucidatory nonsense, the role of our deployment of preparatory truths is not to inform but to transform the interlocutor's use (or misuse) of language. But as we have seen, the manner in which the use of preparatory truths achieves this is altogether different.

## 5. Truth and the Shaping of Ethical Thought

One of the most original respects in which Diamond extends Wittgenstein's reflections on the task of drawing limits to thought is her proposal that this is something we also do in the ethical context: maintaining the shape of thinking is an activity that is needed in the realm practical reasoning, too. As Diamond points out, one central way in which we maintain the clarity of ethical thinking and indicate its limits is by putting forth claims whose denial would be unintelligible to us. Take for example the claim that friendship is a virtue. This might seem *prima facie* to be a bipolar proposition, which says how things are and thereby excludes an intelligible alternative—namely, how things are not. But if we attempt to think through its putative negation, we risk falling into incoherence, for so little would be left of the notion of friendship once we deny its connection to the good.<sup>27</sup> Indeed if the negation of such an ethical truth seems to convey a thought at all, this must be because the determinacy of the meaning of the words that make it up has been sacrificed. It seems, then, that in the sense in which Wittgenstein says that we cannot think illogically (5.4731), we cannot think unethically either – namely, insofar as in denying ethical truths we cease to be engaged in ethical thinking. In other words, ethical truths spell out the noncontrastive limits of ethical thought.

Diamond articulates her notion of undeniable ethical truths in close dialogue with David Wiggins. Drawing on the later Wittgenstein, both Diamond and Wiggins take such truths to emerge in the context of the historical, cumulative process of the shaping and refinement of our thinking.<sup>28</sup> Wiggins himself is the one who provides Diamond with the two examples “ $5 + 7 = 12$ ”, and “slavery is unjust and insupportable”, of which Wiggins says that they are not only true but that “there is nothing else to think” except that they are true. According to Wiggins, the asymmetry of these undeniable truths vis-à-vis their negation speaks against what he calls the relativist's “insidious presumption of *symmetry*”, – that is, against the assumption that on any ethical matter, there is always more than one plausible view to take.<sup>29</sup> For as Wiggins sees it, for anyone to deny or deviate from ethical truths would deprive them of a “workable scheme of moral ideas”.

There seems to me to be an important difference between Diamond's view and Wiggins's on this matter, however. Wiggins does not seem to think that denials of such truths would not constitute thoughts at all. We are able to consider, according to Wiggins, whether the denied proposition is true; his claim is that if we do that, we will sooner or later realize that too much speaks against them:

What the moral cognitivist has to make plausible is this. That, by drawing upon the full riches of our intersubjectivity and our shared understanding, such a wealth of considerations can now be produced, all bearing in some way or other upon the question of slavery, that, at some point in rehearsing these considerations, it will become apparent that there is *nothing else to think* but that slavery is unjust and insupportable. Of course some may think something else – just as some may think  $7 + 5 = 11$ . But this is not to say that there is anything else to think. At some point in running through these considerations, the cognitivist claims, it will appear that the price of thinking anything at variance with the insupportability of slavery is to have opted out altogether from the point of view that shall be common between one person and another.<sup>30</sup>

Wiggins does not place the same emphasis as Diamond does on the internal connection between undeniable truths and the shaping of thinking, and he allows that denials of ethical truths might nonetheless count as acts of thought. This can be seen in his saying that “some may think something else – just as some may think  $7 + 5 = 11$ ”.<sup>31</sup> For Diamond, by contrast, the asymmetry of undeniable truths vis-à-vis their negation is to be explained in terms of the very notion of thought; indeed, as I have argued, on her account, it is not at all clear that some *may* think that  $7 + 5 = 11$  or that slavery is not unjust. One may certainly *say* these words, but no determinate meanings can be ascribed to them; they are ultimately to be discarded as nonsense.

In considering the debates about the injustice of slavery in the 19th-century English-speaking world, Diamond cites several cases of people who not only purported to assert the opposite of the claim that slavery is unjust but also engaged in publicly debating their view and so seem to have had ample opportunity to run through all the relevant considerations. And yet despite this, they seem to have denied that which, according to Wiggins, can be considered but cannot be denied by anyone who thinks things through.<sup>32</sup> This fact does not undermine Diamond’s own construal of the idea that these truths are undeniable. What these people were up to, according to her, was not genuine thought at all, but rather the mere *illusion* of thought: “those who defended slavery were not able genuinely to keep hold of the notion of justice, although they took themselves to be able to do so”.<sup>33</sup> Their purported thought, as Diamond construes it, was in fact an indeterminate use of words that cannot be taken to say anything about justice – that is, it was nonsense. Indeed, their denial of the ethical truth of the injustice of slavery is to be seen as thought gone astray, as a loss of touch with ethical reality, and as a kind of moral blindness, rather than as the mere absence of sight.<sup>34</sup>

The authority that ethical truths have in our lives derives, according to Diamond, from the role they play in shaping our ethical point of view. For this reason, ethical truths, like other asymmetrical truths, are inherently first-personal – they are *our* truths, and they are ours because our minds have already gone through the relevant transformations by means of processes of education and socialization. In case of disagreement, which propositions each of us acknowledges as true and takes to be undeniable is a measure of the distance that separates us; the difficulty for others to acknowledge our truths may involve not merely a lack of information about the facts, but a different understanding of the facts.

This might seem to bring Diamond quite close to construing the limits of ethical thought in the kind of contrastive terms that she rejects in her discussions of Wittgenstein’s manner of approaching the limits of theoretical thought. However, the first-personality of undeniable truths, as Diamond construes them, need not entail symmetry and relativism. On Diamond’s account, the shaping of thinking is something that can be done well or badly, resulting in differences in what we take to be ethical truths. But by contrast to the insurmountable distance that the relativist assumes there to be between incommensurable ethical outlooks, Diamond proposes that different ethical viewpoints are to be understood in terms of their place in an overarching teleology:

Thinking has a teleology that is shaped (and may be shaped *well*) in what we come to be able to recognize as failures of thought; and there are ways of apparently thinking about justice, which are central in pro-slavery thought, and which we have come to be able to recognize as non-thought, failed thought. Some such idea as this underlies, I think, Wiggins’s criticism of the “presumption of symmetry”. A presumption of symmetry in ethics involves failing to see that thought has a teleology, and that although what belongs to that teleology is shaped by us, we may get the job of such shaping done well or badly. Losing hold of justice, as pro-slavery thought did, was shaping thought badly. Here we can see a Wigginsian response to the question “What about Aristotle? Doesn’t he illustrate that there isn’t just one thing to think about the injustice of slavery?” The answer is that it *can become clear* (though it may not always have been clear) that there is only one thing to think here.<sup>35</sup>

In this rich and difficult passage (to which I will devote further attention in the next section) Diamond proposes that despite the historical, perspectival and first-personal nature of the undeniable truths that give shape to our thinking, we may nonetheless be justified in criticizing those for whom our truths do not seem to play such a role. Such criticism would presuppose that

they and we do share quite a lot – only so can their view and ours seem to occupy the same teleology. What we would be criticizing them for, however, is not just their failure to recognize truth and act well, but their failure to shape their capacities for recognizing truths and for acting well.

It might seem, however, that Diamond's appeal to the teleology of thinking merely pushes the bump in the rug – can't those with whom we deeply disagree similarly understand themselves to occupy the top of the teleology, and hence see the manner in which we shape our thinking as defective and theirs as correct? I now turn to develop a response to this objection on Diamond's behalf.

## 6. Neither Realism nor Relativism

Both cases Diamond considers in the paragraph just cited, that of the 19th-century proponents of slavery and that of Aristotle, the eminently rational person who nonetheless failed to acknowledge the injustice of slavery, approximate to the idealized scenario of deep disagreement – a situation in which no amount of rational argument is enough to convince either side that there is a mistake underlying the other's view.<sup>36</sup> Given their irresolvability by rational means, it is natural to assume that deep disagreements should be construed as symmetric in form. But this would only be correct if all parties to the disagreement are in fact equally confused, whereas the cases Diamond is concerned with are those in which one side possesses the truth and the other side expresses defective thought.

The difficulty Diamond faces (and if I am right, successfully overcomes) is that the notion of defectiveness appealed to in moral critique, as she envisages it, must on the one hand be distinct from the notion of a mere mistake – otherwise, we could not explain the difficulty of overcoming differences in the shaping of ethical thinking. On the other hand, the relevant notion of defectiveness must not imply exculpation, and hence relativism.

Diamond rejects the kind of realism that treats ethical truths as something available for affirmation and denial independently of the shaping of anyone's mind, of any language, and of any form of life.<sup>37</sup> That the realist view makes it impossible to recognize the real difficulties of understanding that our ethical lives involve is illustrated by an observation Diamond makes: in the context of the modern debate over slavery, it was not for lack of argument that the opponents of slavery failed to convince its proponents. In fact, the proponents of slavery, too, thought that their

opponents' thought – the thought that there are universally valid human rights – is thought that has gone off the rails.<sup>38</sup> Their inability to convince one another indicates that there is no single, objective moral reality that is accessible to both sides of such debates; indeed, what is at stake in debates such as this is the shaping of the participants' abilities to recognize what is real. While the realist assumes that anyone can take in the brute deliverances of ethical reality, Diamond reminds us that in debates of this sort, reality itself is being contested.<sup>39</sup> For this reason, reasoned argument is not of much help in such contexts; Diamond suggests that there are other means of engagement, such as literature, which may bring about the clarification of our interlocutor's way of thinking and open their eyes to the reality of the situation.<sup>40</sup>

The relativism that Diamond aims to avoid, on the other hand, takes the fact that some ethical truths may be undeniable for us but may not seem undeniable to others to imply that for each of us there are different limits to what we may each think, though for each of us, these limits are equally insurmountable. According to the relativist, what we hold to be undeniable truths cannot justify any moral critique since such truths only hold valid within the limits of our own thought. As Diamond sees it, however, even if there is no neutral space given in advance, of which our thought and the thought of our opponent form two coordinate parts, this does not mean that we are not entitled to judge their thought to be corrupt or confused. In such encounters, the other's thought may indeed be judged to fail to amount to thinking, but that in which it is thereby judged to fail is nonetheless *thinking*. To refuse to criticize such an interlocutor, as the relativist suggests we do, would be no longer to recognize the interlocutor as our fellow human being. In fact, the relativist's refusal to criticize would cast doubt on their own claim to be able to discern a disagreement between us and our interlocutors in the first place: for if an interlocutor's thinking is truly so different from ours that we can neither see it as mistaken nor even as defective and corrupt reasoning, what entitles us to treat it as a form of thinking?

As we have seen, Diamond holds that our disagreements with apparent deniers of undeniable truths might go so deep that we become unable to take their words as an expression of coherent thought. This inability to understand our interlocutor seems to invite the symmetric construal of such disagreements and to raise the question of whether it might be the case that we, and not our interlocutors, are the ones who are confused about these matters. Indeed, if we were the ones who are confused, we would not be able to tell that we are—especially if our confusion amounted to a full-blown illusion of sense. So, to restate the question I here aim to resolve, doesn't this mean that

in rejecting realism Diamond, like the relativist, must avoid speaking of ethical truths as truths or at least admit that such truths cannot justify criticism?

I believe that the relativistic slide to symmetry can be resisted and that Diamond's view has the resources to prevent it. To begin with, we must recognize that even in our own philosophical theorizing about ethical disagreement, we cannot be alienated from what we ourselves take to be undeniable, and yet still count ourselves as coherently thinking. If we truly hold that there is nothing else to think about a certain matter, how could we at the same time think the possibility of not thinking that, and yet count this as a possibility of thinking? It is only by indeterminacy and equivocation that one can pretend to make sense of the possibility of that which one is not able to make sense of.

We can be helped here by what John McDowell writes in commenting on the lessons of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations, namely that we must "give up the idea that philosophical thought, about the sorts of practice in question, should be undertaken at some external standpoint, outside our immersion in our familiar forms of life".<sup>41</sup> When we avoid the view from sideways-on, relativistic claims such as "they have their truths, and we have ours" would not make full sense, since they imply that that which we take to be unthinkable is in fact thinkable by others. The apparent symmetry that the relativists seek to affirm can be seen as an expression of their alienation from their own truths, a mere pretense to be able to deny truths that they do, in fact, hold to be undeniable. The relativist's construal of the limits of ethical thought is contrastive, and this results in demoting ethical truths to the status of merely optional, subjective convictions.

## 7. Disjunctivism in Ethics

To avoid the contrastive construal of the limits of ethical thought requires that we tread carefully when we confront the kind of disagreements that seem *prima facie* to involve transgressions of such limits. Diamond's treatment of Aristotle's views on slavery is exemplary in this regard. She is extremely careful in choosing her words when she says that "it *can become clear* (though it may not always have been clear) that there is only one thing to think here". An entire philosophy of history is folded into the tense and mood structure of this sentence. The reason why Diamond puts the point in such a cautious way is twofold; first, she implies that there is no space which is accessible independently of our own perspective, in which criticism could be grounded. Secondly,



Diamond does not rule out that we ourselves might sometimes be on the deluded side of such ethical disagreements. Aristotle's failure to recognize the injustice of slavery is to be seen as an example of the kind of situation in which we ourselves might be found.<sup>42</sup>

But isn't this acknowledgment of our own fallibility precisely what the relativist most desires; that is, doesn't it exacerbate the skeptical doubt that we do not occupy an asymmetric position vis-à-vis others? If "it may not always have been clear" that there is only one way to think about slavery, how can we tell whether it is now clear that there is just one way to think about it? In raising this doubt, the relativist draws inferences from the possibility of error to the impossibility of recognizing truth and from the possibility that critique may fail to convince certain interlocutors to the immunity to criticism of any ethical viewpoint. This relativist line of reasoning is distinctively skeptical, and the response that I wish to offer here, on Diamond's behalf, consists in showing that her position can be construed along the lines of the disjunctivist strategy that McDowell identifies in Wittgenstein's response to skepticism.<sup>43</sup>

Consider the kind of skeptic who takes the fallibility of our perceptual capacities to indicate that even in the most favorable case, it can merely *seem* to us that our perception provides us with knowledge; we must, according to such a skeptic, always hedge our inclination to assert such claims with the proviso that we might be suffering an illusion. In consequence, such a skeptic argues, we must forgo all claims to have knowledge. But this move, McDowell objects, rests on an unfounded assumption. There is no reason to think that the *mere* appearing that is experienced when we suffer an illusion amounts to the highest common factor that is present both in the defective experience and in the experience that constitutes knowledge, and so there is no reason to construe the very notion of knowledge on the basis of this notion of mere appearance. That would be to get things backward. For we do possess a conception of knowledge that does not presuppose the notion of mere seeming, and in fact, it is only to the extent that we already grasp what it means to have a veridical perception that we can make sense of the notion of perceptual illusion—namely, as a defective deployment of our capacity for perceptual knowledge. The notion of illusion, on the disjunctivist approach, is parasitical on the notion of perception—it does not form part of it.

What constitutes perceptual knowledge, McDowell proposes, is our being in touch with the way things are—our being directly related to the object of perception—and this is not something that is additively built up from the mere appearance that things are a certain way, along with some further fact about how they truly are (a fact that remains, according to the skeptic, inaccessible to

us). This does not mean that we are never subject to illusions and distortions, or that when we are, we are also able to recognize them, but it does mean that there is no symmetry between cases of knowledge and cases of illusion. Any case of appearing is to be understood disjunctively: it is *either* a case of perception *or* a case of mere appearing. The two disjuncts are logically distinct, and the possibility of the latter does not imply the impossibility of the former.

In applying the disjunctivist strategy to the ethical case, we may observe that the local occurrence of failed moral thought need not be taken to threaten the intelligibility of the very idea of ethical truth and need not be taken as grounds for thinking that we are never in a position to criticize others.<sup>44</sup> For there is no need to assume that there is a highest common factor that is shared by an undeniable truth such as the injustice of slavery and the *mere* appearance, to the proponent of slavery, that they were thinking something true in upholding slavery—even if at the time it appeared to them to be undeniable. Despite the fact that under an illusion one may be misled about what is undeniable, the actual occurrence of such illusions does not suffice to cast doubt on the very possibility of possessing ethical truth, for the status of such truths as truths does not derive from and does not depend on their *seeming* to be undeniable. While the occurrence of an illusion can be fully accounted for in psychological terms, truth cannot.

Diamond's rejection of the insidious presumption of symmetry is a denial of there being a highest common factor shared by sense and nonsense, or by thinking and merely confused thinking, and it is in this respect that her approach can be seen as a form of disjunctivism.<sup>45</sup> Consider again what an analogous disagreement in the domain of theoretical thought would look like—for instance, the difference between someone whose thinking is guided by a true mathematical statement and someone who is guided (or rather, appears to be guided) by a merely apparently true one. Following the latter would ultimately lead one to contradict oneself, to utter words that (given everything else one is committed to) cannot be made sense of—even if the person who is thus misled might find it hard to recognize that their words no longer carry determinate meanings. Rather than describing what is going on in such cases as the person's thinking being guided by something other than the truth, it would make more sense, from Diamond's perspective, to say that they are no longer thinking and are no longer being guided; there need not be a highest common factor that is common to the illusion of sense they undergo and to the senseful deployment of signs that we ordinarily engage in when we think truly.

It is worth noting that on this disjunctivist approach, the worries raised by Kuusela and Balaska (discussed in Section 4) do not even get off the ground. Though deniers of our undeniable truths might *seem* to be guided by undeniable truths of their own, and they might be under the impression that these are useful, or helpful, this is neither enough to confer the status of truth on the expressions that appear to guide them, nor is there a clear sense in which they can be said to be guided or helped by these expressions, for they are in fact misguided and harmed by them.

When deniers of ethical truth – for example, the historical proponents of slavery – purport to be framing a thought in support of their practices, they might be using some of the same signs that we do, and in doing so, they might superficially make it seem as if what they say makes sense. But a careful diagnosis of their situation should reveal that they are under the mere illusion of making sense. Given that they seem to deny what we recognize to be undeniable truths, we would not be able to assign all their words determinate meanings – for as far as we can see, there are no such determinate meanings to be ascribed. To say that there could be such meanings, which we might not have access to but they do, would be to pretend to be able to think beyond the limits of thought – an idea that, following Wittgenstein and Diamond, we have equipped ourselves to recognize as incoherent.

As we have seen, unlike Wiggins, Diamond resolutely refuses to cede the notion of thinking to the relativist and denies that it can be properly applied in contexts in which the truths that constitute our own thinking are no longer recognizable. Proponents of slavery, on her account, were under the mere illusion of making sense, whereas our thought on these matters (unless we ourselves are still confused) amounts to our actually being in touch with the realities of ethical thinking. Since on this approach there is no highest common factor that guidance by ethical truth shares with merely apparent guidance, there is no reason to infer from the inability to tell that one is under an illusion (when one is confused) to the conclusion that there is no such thing as not being under an illusion, and hence no such thing as apprehending an ethical truth. Hence we may, at least some of the time, be justified in criticizing those whose thoughts fail to be guided by our ethical truth.

## 8. Conclusion

The task of drawing the limits of ethical thought is not the exclusive purview of the professional philosopher; whenever we appeal to ethical truths and express their undeniability, we take part in

the activity through which such limits are drawn, and as a result of which our ethical thought assumes its shape. Just like Wittgenstein, Diamond leaves room for the possible realization that we are the ones who were confused about something that we took to be undeniable. But this does not lead her to embrace a view from sideways-on and to conclude that our intellectual practices are never fully justified. In construing the limits of thought in terms of the distinction between thought and the mere illusion of thought, Diamond shows us how to immunize ourselves to the tendency to think of our situation as symmetrical to the situation of those whom we fail to understand. It is in this disjunctivist spirit that Diamond invites us to appreciate the phenomenon of ethical truth and, through reflection on it, to recognize our place in the context of a historical teleology of the shaping of thinking. Diamond's disjunctivism comes out most clearly in the following words, with which I will conclude. Referring to deniers of the injustice of slavery, she writes, "Here there are not two opposed thoughts, *p* and *not-p*, but failed thought, on the one hand, and what we hope is a kind of thinking that guides thought well, on the other hand".<sup>4647</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The main text by Diamond with which I will be concerned is the recent Cora Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein with Anscombe, Going On to Ethics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2019). Diamond takes the first example from Elizabeth Anscombe (Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 197–8); she takes the second and third examples from David Wiggins (see Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 231–306). Anscombe herself says of her example that any attempt to think otherwise “peters out into nothingness” (G.E.M. Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1959), 85–6 and 162), whereas Wiggins says that in the cases he considers, “there is nothing else to think” (David Wiggins, “Moral Cognitivism, Moral Relativism, and Motivating Moral Beliefs”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 91 (1991): 70).

<sup>2</sup> Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 287.

<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden and F. P. Ramsey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 4.112. Citations of the *Tractatus* within the main text are made by referring to section numbers, except for the Preface, pp. 26–7.

<sup>4</sup> Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 197.

<sup>5</sup> Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 40. Cf. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 4.114.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 174. The later Wittgenstein draws a similar distinction in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (New York: Wiley, 2009), §§49–50.

<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914–1916*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe and ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), 94; cf. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 5.2341.

<sup>8</sup> Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 108.

<sup>9</sup> Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 262. Diamond describes her approach as “An Anscombean-Aristotelian but Not Entirely UnWittgensteinian Approach” (ibid., 303). And see G. E. M. Anscombe, “Practical Truth,” in *Human Life*,

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*Action and Ethics: Essays by G. E. M. Anscombe*, edited by Mary Geach and Luke Gormally (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 26.

<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Cora Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 40; cf. Peter Sullivan, “Synthesizing without Concepts,” in *Beyond the Tractatus Wars: The New Wittgenstein Debate*, edited by Rupert Read and Matthew Lavery (London: Routledge 2011).

<sup>13</sup> See Cora Diamond, “What Nonsense Might Be,” in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991) and “Throwing Away the Ladder,” in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> A representative of the substantial approach is Peter Hacker, “Was he Trying to Whistle it?,” in *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> It is in this sense that Diamond’s conception of nonsense is “austere”, rather than “substantial”. On this distinction see James Conant, “Elucidation and Nonsense in Frege and Early Wittgenstein,” in *The New Wittgenstein*, ed. Alice Crary and Rupert J. Read (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> The approach to the distinction between sense and nonsense that Diamond propounds can in this sense be seen as a form of disjunctivism; this is a point the importance of which will emerge below, in particular in Section 7. For similar suggestions see Silver Bronzo, “Wittgenstein, Theories of Meaning, and Linguistic Disjunctivism,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 25, no. 4 (2017); and James Conant, “Wittgenstein’s Critique of the Additive Conception of Language,” *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* 9 (2020). A. W. Moore argues that the *Tractatus* advances a disjunctivist conception of sense, though he does not entirely accept Diamond’s approach to the distinction between sense and nonsense; cf. A. W. Moore, “The Bounds of Nonsense,” in *Wittgenstein and the Limits of Language*, ed. Hanne Appelqvist (New York: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> This can be seen in the fact that in spelling out the “only strictly correct method of philosophy” (TLP 6.53), Wittgenstein does not propose that it involves putting forth any theory, but rather spells out the shape of an activity of clarification that aims to address the confusion of particular interlocutors. This activity proceeds by uttering sensible empirical propositions and inviting the interlocutor to compare what she says with them, in the hope that she will eventually realize that her own expressions cannot be given sense.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of this topic that is consonant with Diamond’s approach, see James Conant, “In Search of Logically Alien Thought: Descartes, Kant, Frege, and the *Tractatus*,” *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1) 1992. I discuss Wittgenstein’s exclusion of logical mistakes in Gilad Nir, “‘In a certain sense we cannot make mistakes in logic’: Wittgenstein, Psychologism and the So-Called Normativity of Logic,” *Disputatio* 10, no.18 (2021).

<sup>19</sup> So part of what is excluded is the substantial conception of nonsense that underlies the traditional readings.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 188; and see Michael Kremer, “Mathematics and Meaning in the *Tractatus*,” *Philosophical Investigations* 25, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Maria Balaska, “Review of Cora Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein with Anscombe, Going On to Ethics*,” *Philosophical Investigations* 43, no. 4 (2020): 399.



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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Oskari Kuusela, “The Asymmetry of Truth and the Logical Role of Thinking Guides in Ethics,” in *Morality in a Realistic Spirit: Essays for Cora Diamond*, ed. Andrew Gleeson and Craig Taylor, (London: Routledge, 2020), 164–5.

<sup>23</sup> A similar response to Balaska’s and Kuusela’s worry is suggested by Duncan Richter, “Path Indicators and Correspondence to Reality, or General Truths and the Danger of Relativism in Contextual Ethics” (unpublished manuscript, presented at the UEA Wittgenstein Workshop, 13 Oct. 2021).

<sup>24</sup> See Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 199.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Hacker, “Was he Trying,” 111.

<sup>26</sup> I therefore find no reason to worry, as Kuusela does (cf. Kuusela, “Asymmetry,” 165), that Diamond’s account of preparatory propositions might relativize truth to the confusions that the deployment of preparatory propositions helps us avoid.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 244.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 301.

<sup>29</sup> Wiggins, “Moral Cognitivism,” 78; cf. Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 252.

<sup>30</sup> Wiggins, “Moral Cognitivism,” 70.

<sup>31</sup> Diamond (*Reading Wittgenstein*, 291) also cites a later text by Wiggins in which his view is much closer to hers; see David Wiggins, “Reflections on Inquiry and Truth Arising from Peirce’s Method for the Fixation of Belief,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, ed. Cheryl Misak, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 289–96.

<sup>33</sup> Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 244.

<sup>34</sup> It is illuminating to compare Wiggins’s and Diamond’s views on these issues with Cavell’s discussion of the morality (or lack thereof) of slave owners (cf. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 375–80). On the one hand, in characterizing the slave owner’s attitude in terms of “avoidance”, Cavell seems to share with Wiggins the intuition that what is going on is not an utter failure of thinking, but a form of thinking that one may choose to maintain, albeit at a great cost. On the other hand, in speaking of it in terms of “soul-blindness” Cavell recognizes, like Diamond, that what it amounts to is a defective cognitive state, a mere semblance of being in touch with the actual reality of the situation.

<sup>35</sup> Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 305.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Robert Fogelin, “The Logic of Deep Disagreements,” *Informal Logic* 25, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 213; and Cora Diamond, “Realism and the Realistic Spirit,” in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 289–290, citing texts by William Harper and James Hammond.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Cora Diamond, “Criticising from ‘Outside’,” *Philosophical Investigations* 36, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>40</sup> Cora Diamond, “Anything but Argument,” in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991); and Cora Diamond, “‘We Are Perpetually Moralists’: Iris Murdoch, Fact, and Value,” in *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness*, ed. Maria Antonaccio and William Schweiker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For discussion see Christopher Cordner and Andrew Gleeson, “Cora Diamond

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and the Moral Imagination,” *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* 5, no. 1 (2016). It is worth recalling that Wittgenstein’s Tractarian elucidations, on Diamond’s interpretation, are also to be seen as a method for the transformation of the interlocutor’s thought, rather than as attempts to frame reasoned arguments; see, e.g., Cora Diamond, “Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*,” in *The New Wittgenstein*, ed. Alice Crary and Rupert J. Read (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason,” in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 63; and see the discussions in Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 213; and Diamond, “Realism and the Realistic Spirit,” which construes Wittgenstein’s “realistic spirit” in terms of the rejection of the view from sideways-on.

<sup>42</sup>See also Cora Diamond, “Wittgenstein and Religious Belief: The Gulfs Between Us,” in *Religion and Wittgenstein’s Legacy*, ed. D. Z. Phillips and Mario von der Ruhr (London: Ashgate, 2005), 113–4; and Diamond, “Criticising,” 128. It is worth recalling here a similar moment in Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*, in which such a possibility is acknowledged: “I can’t be making a mistake, — but some day, rightly or wrongly, I may think I realize that I was not competent to judge” (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe and ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), §645).

<sup>43</sup> See John McDowell, “Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge,” in *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* (Harvard University Press, 1998).

<sup>44</sup> McDowell applies the disjunctivist not only in the context of skepticism about perceptual knowledge and about knowledge of other minds but also in clarifying the asymmetry between the state of an akratic agent and the state of the virtuous agent; see McDowell “Virtue and Reason”.

<sup>45</sup> Diamond herself does not draw a connection between her view and disjunctivism. But as I mentioned, I am not alone in taking her approach to the distinction between sense and nonsense as a form of disjunctivism (see endnote 16). And it is this approach that underlies the way Diamond understands the asymmetry between undeniable truths and their negation.

<sup>46</sup> Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein*, 304.

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