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Conant, Diamond and *Tractatus* 6.54

Bernard A. Worthington, Urbino

Abstract

The Schopenhauerian interpretation of the mystical passages supports the Conant/Diamond interpretation in its rejection of Engelmann and “ineffabilism” without claiming, as they do, that the *Tractatus* is to be construed as “irony”. The Schopenhauerian interpretation holds that resistance to metaphysical reflection derives from a general resistance to reflective thought, which resistance is the means to eliminating metaphysical anxiety and securing “the solution of the problem of life”. This shares with Conant and Diamond the view that, as against Engelmann, silence is an end in itself (and not preparatory to intuition). The two interpretations differ over “useful nonsense”. But this notion has been adequately defended by Geach. “Showing” can also be rescued.

No supposition of irony is needed. Hacker’s arguments against it are valid. Conant and Diamond have, moreover, entirely ignored all the mystical passages except 6.54. Their interpretation can be supported only if they are able to provide an alternative exegesis of these passages.

1.

In the course of the nineteen eighties I published, in stages, an analysis of the mystical passages of the *Tractatus*, which attempted, successfully I believe, to derive a clear and elaborated theory of ethics and the mystical held by Wittgenstein and expressed in those passages.¹ Its primary aim was however to offer an explanation of 6.54 and the nonsensicality of the *Tractatus*. The main target was the Engelmann interpretation of ‘showing’ and the associated suggestion, now known as ineffabilism, that the *Tractatus* calls for more than silence. This target gives it much in common with the Conant/Diamond interpretation of the *Tractatus*.² At the same time, as I hope to show, my own interpretation is able to resolve some of the difficulties of their work. This is the aim of the present article.

1 Worthington 1988.

2 Diamond 1995, cp. 6.; Conant 2000.

The essence of my claim was that the resistance to metaphysics derives from a general rejection of reflective thought. This rejection rests in turn on the belief that only through eliminating reflective thought will it be possible to eliminate metaphysical anxiety and so achieve the 'solution of the problem of life.' (The relation between the nonsensicality of metaphysics and its propensity for metaphysical anxiety at once becomes a central question. I shall attend to it later.)

Before returning to questions of language and semantics I shall briefly outline the exegesis of the mystical passages which supports my interpretation of the inexpressibility doctrine. The relevant passage opens at 6.4 with "All propositions are of equal value". This does not assert that value is beyond the reach of language but that no proposition (fact or possible fact) has any more value or importance than any other. At 6.41 this is justified on the grounds that all facts are "accidental" or contingent. 6.41 can most naturally be understood as an echo of the intense and exalted passages in the *Notebooks* which call on us to renounce "influence on happenings" (11.6.16) and to be "happy in spite of the misery of the world" (13.8.16). This attitude is proposed in the *Notebooks* on the grounds of the independence of world and will and the consequent impossibility of arranging the world as one would wish it. Likewise the word "accidental", central to 6.41, is used at 6.3 "...outside logic everything is accidental" from which it follows that "...The only necessity that exists is logical necessity." (6.37) and finally that (in the exact words of the *Notebooks*, 5.7.16) "The world is independent of my will." The theme of renouncing influence on happenings in turn derives from Schopenhauer who likewise recommends acceptance of the world because "the course of the world is independent of my will."³

I am able to show, I believe, that in both the *Notebooks* and the *Tractatus* acceptance of the world or life "in the present" will be the source of "the solution of the problem of life" and of the "sense of the world". The explanation of this becomes clear when we note that for Schopenhauer "the suffering and misery of life", which we can escape by acceptance of the world, is itself the source of the urge to metaphysics. I conclude that life in the present will achieve "the solution of the problem of life" (6.521) by making us "happy in spite of the misery of the world" (13.8.16) and so cutting off our metaphysical urge at source. This I believe is the core of Wittgenstein's rejection of metaphysics. This is not all there is to say about the nonsensicality of metaphysics. For the moment,

3 Schopenhauer 1966, vol. 2, 157.

however, note how neatly this emphasis on the 'accidental' dovetails with the explanation of the nonsensicality of metaphysics: that whatever is sayable is contingent whereas whatever is metaphysical or transcendental is necessary.

Several points of contact with Conant and Diamond can already be discerned. First and least importantly, the ethical or existential significance of talking nonsense is commented on by Conant.

The premise underlying the procedure of the *Tractatus* (and this is connected to why the point of the work is an ethical one) is that our most profound confusions of soul show themselves in – and can be revealed to us through an attention to – our confusions concerning what we mean (and, in particular, what we fail to mean) by our words.⁴

It will be clear that I am in agreement with Conant, but I have a more elaborated account of ethics in the *Tractatus*. Secondly, like Conant and Diamond I stress that throwing away the ladder is central to the whole aim of the *Tractatus*. It is worth spelling out what is involved here in some detail. The view of the *Tractatus* which we both attack sees the real value of the *Tractatus* in the semantic doctrines expressed in the main body of the book and sees the inexpressibility doctrine as an awkward contretemps at the end. On such a view the value of the *Tractatus* as a part of science must surely lie in the theories which it propounds about the structure of language. Here, it would be supposed, we have something which belongs to the piecemeal accumulation of knowledge: Russell expressed certain views on the theory of semantics, Wittgenstein refined them. The important thing is to know what these theories are. On this view, 6.54 might be compared to the famous note which Frege appended to his *Grundgesetze*, in which he acknowledged the devastating implications of Russell's paradox. If one were asked why Frege had thought it worth publishing his now refuted theories a reply might go like this: "Well it shows that there's something wrong somewhere so he can't have said the last word on the subject but nobody would have imagined that he'd done that anyway, so in practice it doesn't really make any difference." This was the sort of line which Russell implicitly took on 6.54 when he wrote that it suggested, "to the sceptical reader that possibly there may be some loophole through a hierarchy of languages"⁵ (and went on, two paragraphs later, to devise one). This, I believe, is an approach which would be quite appropriate to the Frege case but which dis-

4 Op.cit., 196.

5 *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p. xxi.

astrously misunderstands the *Tractatus*. To find a way by which Frege's theories could avoid Russell's objections would be to do a service to Frege. To show that the system of the *Tractatus* did not lead inexorably to 6.54 would be to demolish the *Tractatus*. 6.54 is, so to speak, the point of the *Tractatus* or at least a very large part of the point. To treat 6.54 as simply the honest confession of a technical blemish is to miss that point. By treating the semantic doctrines of the *Tractatus* not as the main point of the *Tractatus* but as irony Conant and Diamond have managed to avoid this mistake.

Closely linked to this (but worthy of separate mention) is the third point of contact. We both reject the idea that either 'showing', as in Engelmann, or (except provisionally) the language of the *Tractatus* is to be seen as a makeshift substitute for sensical language. Diamond for example describes any such view as "chickening out."⁶ Certainly the language of the *Tractatus* has to serve as such a substitute until Wittgenstein's point has been made. From then on, however, we are to remain silent – not to console ourselves (as in Black's unhappy suggestion, discussed below) that the language of the *Tractatus* should continue to be used as a substitute for sensical language.

Conant writes,

The *Tractatus* aims to show that (as Wittgenstein later put it) 'I cannot use language to get outside language.' It accomplishes this aim by first encouraging me to suppose that I can use language in such a way, and then enabling me to work through the (apparent) consequences of this (pseudo-) supposition, until I reach the point at which my impression of there being a determinate supposition (whose consequences I have throughout been exploring) dissolves on me.⁷

I similarly see the *Tractatus* as a progression from reflective thought, by means of reflective thought to the repudiation of reflective thought. What seems to have happened is that while there is agreement that the point of the *Tractatus* is to enjoin silence we have two different views as to why silence is enjoined. The real core of my differences with Conant and Diamond is the question of the nature of nonsense. It might seem

6 "To read Wittgenstein himself as not chickening out is to say that it is not, not really, his view that there are features of reality that cannot be put into words but show themselves. What is his view is that that way of talking may be useful or even for a time essential, but is in the end to be let go of and honestly taken to be real nonsense, plain nonsense, which we are not in the end to think of as corresponding to an ineffable truth."? Op.cit., 181.

7 Ibid.

that the rejection of Engelmann and associated writers might seem inevitably to leave only a minimal role, or no role, for "important nonsense". This, however, as I hope to show, is not correct. Conant and Diamond's mistake is to fail to see the importance of ethics in the *Tractatus*. Implicitly they still see the latter as primarily a work in the philosophy of language. Instead it is in the broadest overview, an account of the 'solution of the problem of life'. This solution lies in the area where the semantic and the existential overlap and only through appreciating the link between semantics and the solution of the problem of life can we appreciate the importance of silence. More importantly, by seeing this connection we can explain the importance of silence without resorting to the 'resolute' view of nonsense⁸. Underlying Conant and Diamond's failure to appreciate the importance of the 'solution of the problem of life' is a tendency to consider 6.54 in isolation from the passages leading up to it. There will be more of this in my final section. For the moment, however, consideration of "nonsense" as seen by Conant and Diamond and as seen by myself has to be our next step.

2.

In his 1976 paper⁹ Geach found the key to 6.54 in the word 'elucidation' which is used by Frege in his controversy with Kerry. In a passage cited by Geach and by Conant, Frege responds to Kerry's objection to his doctrine that a concept cannot be an object and an object cannot be a concept. He writes: "The word 'concept' is used in various ways; its sense is sometimes psychological sometimes logical."¹⁰ Frege records that in formulating the doctrine attacked by Kerry, "What I decided was to keep to the strictly logical use..."¹¹. For the activity of conveying some sort of sense with language which is logically defective Frege uses, as Conant notes, the word "elucidation" used by Wittgenstein in 6.54. Conant maintains that Geach has observed only one of two strands of thought in Frege and that to understand 6.54 we will find it necessary to distinguish them. Conant quotes some passages from Frege. For example:

8 Goldfarb's suggested antithesis to "chickening out" (Goldfarb 1997, 64).

9 Geach 1976, 55.

10 Conant 2000, 335.

11 Ibid.

So language brands a concept as an object, since the only way it can fit the designation for a concept into its grammatical structure is as a proper name. But in so doing strictly speaking it falsifies matters ... In the same way, the word concept itself is, taken strictly, already defective, since the phrase 'is a concept' requires a proper name as grammatical subject; and so, strictly speaking, it requires something contradictory ... or perhaps better still [would be to say that], it requires something nonsensical¹²

and

language with an almost irresistible force, compels me to use an inappropriate expression which obscures – I might almost say falsifies – the thought.¹³

Conant notes that in such a case the nonsense does appear to be regarded by Frege as expressing a "thought" (He also notes that Frege, like Wittgenstein, uses the term "elucidation"). In other cases, Conant argues, the term "nonsense" is used more strictly with a sense of "mere nonsense". In an attempt to resolve this ambivalence in Frege, Wittgenstein, he argues, opts for the view that the nonsensical is merely nonsensical.

There is no mystery as to whether or why Wittgenstein should reject the implication that a 'thought' can be communicated by the 'nonsensical'. It is utterly incompatible with proposition 4 of the *Tractatus*, "A thought is a proposition with a sense." But no more seems to be involved here than a difference about how the word "thought" ought to be used. In no way does it follow that Geach's interpretation of elucidation is unsound. The latter's interpretation provides a clear way of reconciling the illegitimacy of the propositions of the *Tractatus* with their communicative efficacy. It offers students of the *Tractatus* precisely what they have been looking for. What I suspect informs Conant's position is the fear that admitting the possibility of important nonsense will undermine the commitment to silence. But, again, silence is demanded by more than semantic theory alone. Silence is the means to the solution of the problem of life. The provisional adoption of the elucidations of the *Tractatus* is the means to understanding as much; there is no contradiction. To say, as Conant and Diamond do, that the alternative to Wittgenstein's model is pure nonsense fails to explain why adopting the alternative will preclude the solution to the problem of life. To say, as I do, that Wittgenstein's model of language is proposed because it permits "the solution of the problem of life" may leave one unclear why it is the alternative to "nonsense". One way, I think the only way, out of the problem is to

12 Op.cit., 186.

13 Ibid.

find some area where semantics and the existential overlap so that nonsensicality and incompatibility with the solution of the problem of life are inseparable. A small step in this direction has already been made by the above quoted remark of Conant, which refers to 'our most profound confusions of soul'. A further step has already been taken by pointing out that treating the non-contingent as contingent will create both semantic and existential difficulties. What needs to be done is to put some flesh on this rather formal point. That, I think, will be easier than it may sound. First, an example of treating the non-contingent as contingent: it is sometimes asked, "If God made the world then who made God?". If I am right then this is precisely the kind of question which the *Tractatus* sets out to preclude. Its fault from this point of view (others needless to say are perfectly possible) is that it reveals conceptual confusion and a misuse of words: i.e.: it treats a necessary being as if the latter were one contingent thing among others [treats the transcendental as contingent] and at the same time may undermine the certainties of faith [may lead to metaphysical anxiety]. Here we have a clear instance, highly germane to the 6.4 s, of an overlap between the semantic and the existential. For a further example consider again Fregean elucidation. Conant quotes another of Frege's comments on elucidation: "I fully realise that in such cases I was relying upon a reader who would be willing to meet me half-way." What Frege appears to expect of his reader is a willingness and ability to twig what he is trying to say despite the infelicities of his expression. In short he is demanding insight. That elucidation relies on insight can be regarded as its semantic inadequacy. That insight may nevertheless be forthcoming explains the communicative efficacy of elucidation. At the same time insight into another person's meaning will require precisely that awareness of separate subjectivities which are precluded in the 5.6 s; it will therefore preclude those experiences or attitudes of identification of self with world which are recommended there. That exemplifies the existential dangers of elucidation. As a last example, in a famous passage of Sartre's *Nausea* his protagonist stares at tree roots and finds them nauseous. In the context of the novel this reaction is linked to narcissism and the theory of narrative. What most centrally concerns the protagonist however is the breakdown of order. The roots, like everything else in his sight, present "soft monstrous masses in disorder"¹⁴. A case could be made for calling the reaction "metaphysical anxiety" (to call it existential anxiety is if anything too easy), but at the very least it is

14 Sartre [1938] 1965, 183.

an emotional reaction with a metaphysical dimension. What needs to be noticed is that it also concerns semantic problems. "Words had disappeared, and with them the meaning of things, the methods of using them, the feeble landmarks which men had scratched on the surface."¹⁵ Here again we have an area in which the semantic and the existential overlap.

3.

What can be shown cannot be said. We have dealt with what cannot be said so what is "showing"? The instance of "showing" which gives greatest encouragement to intuitionists is of course ethics and that is also the case which is most misunderstood. According to Engelmann and Janik and Toulmin for example (I caricature slightly) the first stage is to realise that matters of value cannot be put into words, the second is to apprehend them by the supposedly alternative means of showing. An extreme version of this view is often heard and is represented by the following quotation from the Guardian where Anthony Powers, who has followed Elizabeth Lutyens in setting the *Tractatus* to music, is reported as saying:

...there are so many dimensions of life and experience that are beyond the capability of language to explain or even adequately express ... According to Wittgenstein, there are huge things – the whole areas of moral and religious philosophy and aesthetics – that cannot be 'said' but can be 'shown'¹⁶

One difficulty is that "can be shown" can easily suggest that somebody is to show them. Nowhere, however, in the *Tractatus* does Wittgenstein speak of anything being shown unless it is shown by language itself. Wherever there is mention of showing what is shown is some aspect of language and it is shown, in one way or another by language. Two kinds of case only could be claimed, unavailingly I believe, as exceptions. First, whatever is shown by language can be pointed out by a human being¹⁷. There are two places where Wittgenstein uses "show" in this sec-

¹⁵ Sartre 1965, 182.

¹⁶ Eyres 2001, 7.

¹⁷ Consider, for example, 4.0641 "The negated proposition can be negated again, and this in itself shows..." It is difficult to believe that any serious misrepresentation of Wittgenstein would ensue if this were rewritten, "Having negated a proposition we can negate it again and by so doing show..." I cannot however see that anything of exegetical interest follows from the possibility of this rewriting.

ondary, derivative sense. At 6.1221 "... we see ... that q follows from 'p . q. p' " but it is also possible "to show it in this way" i. e. : to combine them as 'p . q. p : . : q' "and then show that this is a tautology". Nothing more seems to be involved than making unmistakable what is in any case already evident. In particular it does not seem that any more than this can be intended in the last sentence quoted ("show that this is a tautology") since "Every tautology itself shows that it is a tautology" (6.127). Similarly at 6.126 Wittgenstein notes that "logical propositions" can be proved by deriving them from "other logical propositions" with "operations that always generate further tautologies" out of the initial ones. This procedure is not however "at all essential to logic" since the propositions with which we begin "must show without any proof that they are tautologies" (6.126). Here again what "we" show is entirely dependent on what is shown by language itself. Secondly, at several points (4.022, 4.121, 4.461) Wittgenstein speaks of "propositions" showing. This might be (mis)interpreted as a case of people showing things by uttering propositions. There is however no need for such an interpretation. There seems no need to take it as more than an assertion that propositions reveal their own structural/semantic properties. If taken otherwise it leads to the suggestion of Black that "showing" may be done by the pseudo propositions of the *Tractatus*. Even Black makes this proposal only as a possible development, not an interpretation, of the *Tractatus*.¹⁸ If we adopt it then we entirely lose the distinction between showing and elucidation.¹⁹

18 "Now we can begin to see an escape from the nihilism of Wittgenstein's concluding remarks. His book cannot be held to 'say' anything, for it would be a howler to take it as consisting of empirical statements. But there remains the alternative of treating many of his remarks as formal statements 'showing' something that can be shown. Then they will be in no worse case than logical and mathematical statements and there will be no theoretical barrier to their use in rational communication." (Black, 381).

This is preceded by the observation that "sinnvoll" has in the *Tractatus* two opposites "sinnlos" and "unsinnig" and that only the second has a pejorative meaning. As I pointed out in *Selfconsciousness and Selfreference* (Worthington 1988, 62), however, the word applied by Wittgenstein to the propositions of the *Tractatus* is "unsinnig". The appeal of Black's suggestion is that, after all, what is shown is identical with what the pseudo-propositions of the *Tractatus* express or seek to express. Its disadvantage is that contrary to the spirit and all apparent intentions of the *Tractatus* it assimilates showing to elucidation. The pseudo-propositions of the *Tractatus* are to be abandoned. There is not the slightest hint that showing is in any way to be deplored. And again, as observed above, whereas philosophical and metaphysical propositions are uttered by people,

'Language' is the answer not only to the question of who or what shows but also to the question of what it is that is shown. What language shows evidently consists in the transcendental presuppositions of language itself. In what sense is the presupposed shown? Only, I think, in the sense that is taken for granted. It cannot, for all the familiar reasons, be said, but denying it seems if anything, even worse than saying it. We can, I think, usefully compare here an observation in *On Certainty*.

208. I have a telephone conversation with New York. My friend tells me that his young trees have buds of such and such a kind. I am now convinced that his tree is.... Am I also convinced that the earth exists?²⁰

In this remark Wittgenstein is concerned with belief (or conviction) rather than with the limits of language. An analogy with the position of the *Tractatus* is however not hard to draw. Just as the existence of the earth has evidently not escaped me, (I will not express surprise on being told it exists), but is hardly suitable for listing among my convictions, so, in the *Tractatus*, the existence of the world is likewise presupposed, likewise not to be denied, and similarly (although for reasons which, except perhaps in the very broadest overview, are peculiar to the *Tractatus*) are not a matter for explicit assertion. It is true, again, that Wittgenstein speaks of propositions as "showing" but, as observed, I see no need to see in this any more than that propositions reveal the preconditions of language

showing is everywhere, with one trivial and one merely apparent exception, done by language itself.

In a recent paper (*An elucidatory interpretation of Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A critique of Marie McGinn's reading of 6.54 in International Journal of Philosophical Studies* Vol. 13 (4)) Read and Hutchinson write, "If Wittgenstein's propositions are comparable to 'reminders assembled for a particular purpose' as McGinn understands them ... then it may be the case that one would be prepared to allow them to *fall* away once they have shown one whatever they were meant to show one. But why would one want to actively *throw* them away? To *overcome* them." (*online edition*, p. 14) This insistence on the force of the wording of 6.54 is directed against McGinn but its spirit could be equally well directed against Black.

19 I cannot produce a smoking gun but suspect that confusion of these is fairly common. The two are often mentioned in the same breath. There is good reason why this should be so, which is why I lack proof. But, whether or not writers are guilty, it would be surprising if readers were never confused. As I have remarked elsewhere, though with specific reference to the inexpressibility of ethics, there is an oral tradition of *Tractatus* exegesis and it is a good deal more confident and simplistic than anything to be found in the literature.

20 Wittgenstein 1969, 28e.

(which, of course, are evident but unsayable in the way and for the reasons given.)

Kremer offers a similar argument. After asking why Wittgenstein would not accept 'All $x(fx)$ ' as a more perspicuous version of ' $(x)fx$ ' Kremer observes,

This is Wittgenstein's version of Ockham's razor: 'If a sign is useless it is meaningless.' (3.328) Here Wittgenstein would claim that 'All' is useless, that it adds nothing to what is already present in the rules for the use of the sign ' $x(fx)$ '

and in the following paragraph,

Any vocabulary which is introduced in the attempt to depict the logical features of language will therefore be assigned no function in language and will be meaningless. Thus ultimately what can be shown cannot be said because it need not be said.²¹

The picture Kremer draws of the showable as something inherent in and evident from language bears an obvious resemblance to my own view of the showable as the structure inherent in language.

4.

Advocacy of a 'resolute' approach to nonsense has given rise to a wider question of whether the *Tractatus* does in fact contain the metaphysical doctrine of a world independent of language whose structure determines that of language. This is a further aspect of the question of what is shown. Language shows its own presuppositions but is this a matter of metaphysics: is the structure of the world and the corresponding structure of language as Hacker would presumably argue, the means by which we come to see "a certain order in the phenomena of language"²² or is the whole

21 Kremer 1992, 424. Kremer's remarks add to the contingency of the sayable a further semantic rather than existential reason for rejecting the language of the *Tractatus*. It is only a surmise of Kremer, not a clear affirmation of the *Tractatus* and may therefore perhaps be legitimately ignored. I feel however that it does not present a problem for my interpretation and might even be used in support. First, like all other purely semantic arguments it will not in itself draw the paradox of 6.54. Moreover, like the contingency of the sayable the rejection of the superfluous is a position with at least potential existential overtones, witness my remarks above on Sartre's Nausea.

22 McGinn 1999, 505.

notion of showing an ironic prelude to the abandonment of metaphysics (Diamond)? My interpretation has here a certain flexibility (or offers such flexibility to the exegete of the *Tractatus*) and appears to be compatible with more than one of these positions. It is admittedly very doubtful whether my interpretation could, in the present connection, be made compatible with that of Conant and Diamond (despite its similarity in other respects). The sticking point here is that I do not admit the need for their insistence on the 'austere' interpretation of the metaphysical doctrines. Since I have already presented my arguments against Conant and Diamond this need not be a problem. My interpretation is easily compatible with McGinn, but it is also on this point equally compatible with the traditional metaphysical interpretation. For McGinn,

his elucidatory remarks are ones that are used, as he puts it later, with the sole purpose of clarifying, 'for a particular purpose' (PI 127) something that 'lies open to view' (PI 126).²³

As her references to the *Philosophical Investigations* might suggest McGinn believes the *Tractatus* foreshadows the later doctrine that, "It is by means of the investigation of grammar that we achieve an understanding of the form of the phenomena that our language describes." And so, "Looked at in this way the whole of Wittgenstein's later philosophy can be seen to have its roots in the *Tractatus*."²⁴ This last point has an important similarity to a claim I made at the end of *Selfconsciousness and Selfreference*. Here I was concerned not with the current controversy over whether the *Tractatus* contains metaphysical doctrines, but instead (an earlier vocabulary but the same substance) of whether the form of language is determined, according to the *Tractatus*, by the form of the world. On this controversy I wrote,

Suppose that the form of the world is determined by that of language, what revisions to the *Tractatus* model of language does this necessitate? The answer is none at all, for the subject will be among the metaphysical matters which the *Tractatus* model is intended to exclude from language.²⁵

The essence of Wittgenstein's position in the *Tractatus* is that (once we have thrown away the ladder) we are not to think about such matters. (Not at least in a way which treats them as one set of possibilities among others). Likewise, if my interpretation is correct, the question

23 McGinn 1999, 499.

24 Op.cit., 513.

25 Op.cit., 66.

of whether the *Tractatus* contains a metaphysical commitment ceases to be an exegetical problem.²⁶ The *Tractatus* undoubtedly leads its reader through a metaphysical discussion, but whether the position it finally reaches involves a metaphysical position is hardly a coherent question. The final position of the *Tractatus* is to urge the abandonment of metaphysics. What metaphysical views one might have been led to if one had not abandoned metaphysics is hardly an urgent problem (not even, indeed, a problem which can be raised).

5.

I have shown, I think, some difficulties with Conant and Diamond's position and have suggested that my interpretation can avoid these. I will conclude with some more general arguments for preferring my interpretation. First, consider Hacker's objections to Conant and Diamond. Hacker's article *Was he trying to whistle it?*²⁷, a direct attack on the Conant/Diamond interpretation, lists a number of points which are directed against the latter but do not, so far as I can see, have any purchase on my own. It makes one point which would equally tell against my interpretation but which I think can be shown to be mistaken.

Hacker's arguments, in brief, are that Conant and Diamond are inconsistent by making use of remarks from within the *Tractatus* itself which supposedly they regard as ironic; that some of the references to what can be shown (cf. 4.123) concern cases where self evidently something is shown and Wittgenstein can hardly in such cases be thought ironic; that the pseudo propositions of the *Tractatus* differ from (Diamond's example) 'A is a frabble' in important ways which Hacker enumerates²⁸; that from certain passages used by Conant and Diamond "it is immediately evident that he did think that one can mean something that cannot

26 There is however one respect in which I am reluctant to abandon the metaphysical or semantic view of the *Tractatus*. If we exclude such a perspective we will be unable to see one of the fundamental, overreaching points of contact between the treatment of language and of the mystical. The *Tractatus*, ultimately, is about what used to be called, "man's relation to the universe." The doctrine of life in the present, or acceptance of the world, is obviously an aspect of this theme. So, too, less obviously, but still by its very nature, is the semantics.

27 Hacker 2000.

28 Op.cit., 364–5.

be said."²⁹; that Wittgenstein's "profound criticisms"³⁰ of Frege and Russell cannot plausibly be represented as ironic; that according to Conant and Diamond Wittgenstein sets out to cure the temptation to think that there are ineffable necessary truths, but "this is not a disease of which anyone had ever needed to be cured."³¹; that no support can be obtained for their view from Wittgenstein's pre or post *Tractatus* writings. How far these arguments are valid against Conant and Diamond is a question on which opinions will vary. What I think will be quite clear is that they leave my own interpretation entirely unscathed, notwithstanding that it shares the chief merit (and, as I suspect, the underlying motivation) of Conant and Diamond's interpretation. Note that all these are objections to the resolute view of nonsense. Hacker's arguments therefore support my view that Conant and Diamond produce an implausible theory of nonsense by adopting a mistaken way of stressing the absoluteness of the need for silence.

There remains an observation which would tell against my own position. "Though not a 'professional philosopher', indeed because not a 'professional philosopher', Paul Engelmann is not an insignificant witness. Wittgenstein enjoyed numerous conversations with Engelmann, both in Olmütz in 1916, when he was still writing the *Tractatus*, and in later years. He not only gave Engelmann one of the original typescripts of the book, but also discussed his work in detail with Engelmann."³² Since I am opposed to Engelmann, no less than to Conant and Diamond, this remark, if accepted, would equally undermine my own position. It should be noticed however that Engelmann rests his claim to authority not on recollection of Wittgenstein's views but on a history of insight.

At the time of his first stay in Olmütz Wittgenstein suffered from a minor defect of speech which, however, disappeared later on. He used to struggle for words, especially when he was trying hard to formulate a proposition. Often enough I was able to help him find the right words by stating myself the proposition he had in mind. I could do it because I really had a sensitive understanding for what he wanted to say. More than once on such occasions he exclaimed with relief, 'If I can't manage to bring forth a proposition, along comes Engelmann with his forceps and pulls it out of me!' It is the recollection of that ability of my youth that has given me courage to com-

29 Op.cit., 368.

30 Ibid.

31 Op.cit., 370.

32 Hacker 2000, 372.

ment in these remarks, which may give little satisfaction to a philosopher, on a body of ideas that has influenced my own thinking.³³

Engelmann's mistake is however, on my reading a very slight one. Ethics, if I am right, is inexpressible because it concerns the transcendental. Engelmann's only mistake therefore has been to suppose that there is an analogy between the inexpressibility of the logical doctrines and the inexpressibility of ethics when in fact there is an identity.

Now let us look at my interpretation itself. I have argued that the *Tractatus* proposes a general rejection of reflexivity and does so on account of an association between self consciousness and metaphysical anxiety. The first claim sounds controversial but ought not to. To reflect is to pay conscious attention to what would otherwise be taken for granted. Nobody denies that Wittgenstein precludes our putting the transcendental into words or expressing philosophical theses. To do either of these things would however be an instance of reflection by the uncontroversial definition just given. No Rubicon has been crossed, nor any orthodoxy questioned, by saying that the *Tractatus* rejects reflexivity. The second part is deducible, first of all, from my exegesis of 6.4–6.53. Conant and Diamond have chosen to ignore these passages, preferring instead to concentrate their attention on 6.54 from which they derive an interpretation different from my own. These passages are nevertheless part of the *Tractatus* and cannot be set aside. To defend their position Conant and Diamond must either produce a different (and relevantly different) exegesis of 6.4–6.53, or else they must claim that though these passages offer adequate support for 6.54 they are nevertheless irrelevant to its interpretation. That would surely be a bizarre position, but it is in any case demonstrably untenable. When "he who understands me" recognizes the nonsensicality of the *Tractatus* and transcends³⁴ (in the Pears and McGuinness translation) its propositions "then he will see the world aright". In a work so carefully written as the *Tractatus* it is difficult not to see "world" as a reference to the almost immediately preceding discussion of the world in the 6.4 s. In that case even though "see" is a new word it is to be expected that seeing the world aright is to adopt the at-

33 Engelmann 1967, 94.

34 Interestingly Read and Hutchinson comment on the word "transcend" or "overcome" [überwinden] pointing out that it is the same word which is used prominently by Nietzsche and they observe, "We suspect ... that this echo is not accidental or, at least, not without resonance and potential significance." (Op.cit., online edition, p.24).

titudes recommended in the 6.4 s. Since the promise of seeing the world aright is evidently a recommendation of abandoning the *Tractatus* we can conclude that the considerations of the 6.4 s are at least part of the reasons for abandoning the *Tractatus*.³⁵ It follows that Conant's and Diamond's attempt to provide an exegesis of 6.54 without reference to the immediately preceding passages is mistaken in principle.

There remains the option of an alternative exegesis of 6.4–6.53. It is not for me to say that this cannot be achieved so I can only wait and see. If it were even attempted however, there would be the consolation (for me) that this corner of the *Tractatus* had finally entered mainstream exegesis.

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³⁵ In the absence of contrary evidence this, I think, should be accepted as a matter of methodological principle. The sceptic is therefore not entitled to reject my proposal unless he can find specific reasons for throwing doubt on it. I think the point is as strong as that. Further, it would be difficult to overestimate the importance in the *Tractatus* of "the world". This word appears in the opening sentence and again in the penultimate sentence. It is central to the mystical passages and also (whatever status is to be assigned to this dimension of the *Tractatus*) to the semantics. Wittgenstein's use of the word in 6.54 is hardly likely to be casual or colloquial.

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