Post-Analytic *Tractatus*

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Contents

Chapter 5

'Making Sense' of Nonsense: Conant and Diamond Read Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

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I ought to be no more than a mirror, in which my reader can see his own thinking with all its deformities so that, helped in this way, he can put it right.[1]

Introduction: The Debate over TLP 6.54[2]

This paper focuses on the debate over Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, specifically the question as to why Wittgenstein would have written a book which, by its own lights, has to be considered largely nonsensical. For not only is the *Tractatus* a book that closes by acknowledging that it is nonsense, it makes recognizing that it is, a requirement of 'understanding' it. Or rather, it makes such recognition a criterion of having understood its author:

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
> He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright. (TLP 6.54)

Not surprisingly, this remark has occasioned much controversy amongst the book's readers. For how can nonsense be interpreted? What must be grasped in order to do so? Indeed, if it is nonsense, can there be anything *to* grasp? Until recently, interpreters tended to dilute the force of this paradox: the book's propositions may be nonsense, but they are 'illuminating' all the same. They are a special kind of nonsense that results when philosophers 'violate the logical syntax of language' in

a misguided attempt to 'say what can only be shown'. Following James Conant, I shall call this the orthodox account and I will take P.M.S. Hacker's *Insight and Illusion* as representative.[3]

The debate I focus on here began when Cora Diamond rejected the idea of 'deep' nonsense underpinning such accounts. Diamond argued that this is an incoherent notion that fails to do justice to the *Tractatus*.[4] When Wittgenstein urges his readers to recognize his propositions as nonsense, he wants us to see them for what they are – that is, plain, unvarnished nonsense. The test of this reading is whether it can make sense of the book without collapsing back into the positivist reception from which its orthodox commentators had sought to rescue it. In addition, it will owe us some explanation of what Wittgenstein might have hoped to *achieve* by knowingly writing a book of nonsense. More recently, Diamond's argument has been taken up by James Conant, who has added a perfectionist dimension to her reading. Between them, they have sought to contest all *Tractatus* scholarship to date. Moreover, by doing so, their work calls for a re-evaluation of what we might call Wittgenstein's 'philosophical authorship' as a whole, particularly the standard view of the *Philosophical Investigations* as a critique of the discredited 'doctrines' of the *Tractatus*. For only if Wittgenstein really was advancing a metaphysical theory about the relation between language and world in the *Tractatus* does such a view make any sense.[5] If not – and this is the perfectionist wager – the *Tractatus* may yet turn out to have more in common with the therapeutic aims of his later work than is generally realized. Hence two very different views of Wittgenstein's philosophy as a whole turn upon whether or not the Conant–Diamond reading of the *Tractatus* goes through. Whether it does is what I examine in this paper.

I begin by outlining the relevant aspects of the orthodox account, focusing on Hacker's exegesis of the distinction between saying and showing. I pay particular attention to Hacker's claim that this distinction gives rise to a special kind of nonsense that explains Wittgenstein's remarks in TLP 6.54. In the latter half of the paper, I consider the account put forward by Conant and Diamond. Against Hacker's view that the *Tractatus* attempts to communicate ineffable metaphysical truths about the relation between language (or thought) and the world, Conant and Diamond focus on the self-reflexive realization to which they believe Wittgenstein's book is intended to bring in its readers. Thus, unlike orthodox interpreters, Conant and Diamond argue that the *Tractatus* is motivated by Wittgenstein's abiding belief that philosophy consists in unwittingly taking nonsense for sense. On this view of the *Tractatus*, it is Wittgenstein's first attempt to bring his readers to existentially appropriate this insight; and it is the book's failure to do so that has the most fundamental implications for the method of his later philosophy.

The Background to the Debate: Sense, Senselessness and Nonsense in the *Tractatus*

Faced with Wittgenstein's consignment of his propositions to the realm of nonsense at TLP 6.54, it is necessary to clarify what Wittgenstein means by 'nonsense'. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein distinguishes three kinds of proposition: genuine propositions with a sense; senseless but nonetheless well-formed propositions; and nonsense. Genuine propositions are bipolar. They are either true or false depending on how things stand in the world. They picture a possible state of affairs. They do not require that the state of affairs depicted exist, only that it could exist. False propositions are false because they fail to depict how things stand in the world. Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning entails that all propositions show what they say.[6] Their articulation represents the articulation of elements in the world. Wittgenstein calls this the pictorial form of the proposition. A proposition may not appear to be a picture of the state of affairs it represents, but that is because its apparent (grammatical) form need not be its real logical form and, generally, it isn't. Nonetheless, underpinning the theory is the notion of a hard and fast correlation between language and world. This may be disguised by grammatical form, but it is there all the same, and may be brought out by analysis.

Unlike meaningful propositions, senseless propositions are propositions constructed in such a way that they annul their own content – by either asserting *and* denying it simultaneously ($p. \sim p$) or asserting that it either is *or* that it isn't the case ($p \vee \sim p$). As a result they fail to pick out a particular state of affairs from a range of possible states of affairs in the world. They say nothing. Unlike genuine propositions, their truth or falsity is not left open for the world to determine. They are unconditionally true or unconditionally false. Senseless propositions are either tautologies or contradictions: the former are necessarily true and the latter are necessarily false regardless of how things stand in the world. Nonetheless, the picture theory of meaning entails that they too *show what they say*. However, given that senseless propositions are constructed in such a way as to cancel out the meaning of their constituent parts, claiming that they show what they say amounts to claiming that they *show that they say nothing*. They exhibit their own internal structure, and it is in virtue of this structure that they say nothing.

Finally, the *Tractatus* holds that nonsense is all that lies on the far side of meaningful discourse. Nonsense is simply the failure to express a sense. Wittgenstein claims in the book's preface that his aim is to draw a limit to the expression of thoughts working outwards through what can be said. This is possible, according to the *Tractatus*, because the realms of what can be said and what can be thought are coextensive.[7] The point is not to *impose* a limit on what can be thought, but rather to find some means of locating it. Such a limit should not be understood as a limitation: it must encompass everything that can be said, excluding nothing.[8] If Wittgenstein's book succeeds in drawing such a limit it will have thereby demarcated what is neither thought nor proposition – that is, what is nonsense. Wittgenstein takes himself to have achieved this in the 'general propositional form': 'This is how things stand' (TLP 4.5). This is a variable whose

values are *all* propositions: 'a description of the propositions of *any* sign language *whatsoever*' (TLP 4.5). If what *appears* to be a proposition does not, on analysis, conform to the form of all possible propositions, then it cannot really be a proposition and so does not really express a sense.[9]

Hacker on Nonsense as the Attempt to Say What May Only be Shown

Nonsense, then, is a failure to say how things stand in the world and thereby express a sense. Departing from what is said in the *Tractatus*, Hacker attempts to reconstruct Wittgenstein's understanding of nonsense in the light of TLP 6.54. This results in a more elaborate account of nonsense than is to be found in the text itself. Hacker distinguishes between 'overt' and 'covert' nonsense. Philosophy consists largely of the latter, which Hacker divides between a 'misleading' and an 'illuminating' variety.[10] The latter is Hacker's version of the notion of 'deep' nonsense that characterizes the orthodox account. Hacker maintains that, despite its nonsensicality, 'illuminating' nonsense is nonetheless able to convey insights into the relation between language and world that cannot be put into words. As such, it is able to transport its attentive recipient to what he calls a 'correct logical point of view'.[11] Once such a view is attained 'we shall apprehend what can and what cannot be said, and cease the futile attempt to say what can only be shown.'[12] This is Hacker's gloss on TLP 6.54. It is an attempt to explain how Wittgenstein could reject his text as nonsense, yet speak of understanding its point nonetheless and, as a result, of coming to 'see the world aright'.

Hacker maintains that philosophical nonsense arises when we 'try to say what can only be shown.'[13] What cannot be said is anything pertaining to the 'logical form' of the world: this shows itself in the logical form of legimately constructed propositions. Logical form is what language and world have in common: the fact that the logical form of language mirrors that of the world is what allows language to depict the world in the first place. But any attempt to frame propositions *about* logical form results in nonsense. As that by virtue of which propositions are able to picture reality, it cannot itself be pictured *in* propositions – or captured in thought: '[p]ropositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it – logical form' (TLP 4.12). This is impossible since it would entail that we 'station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world' (TLP 4.12). Nonetheless, whilst it cannot be *represented by* language, Wittgenstein maintains that logical form *displays itself through* language:

> Propositions cannot represent logical form; it is mirrored in them.
> What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent.
> What expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot represent by means of language.
> Propositions *show* the logical form of reality.
> They display it. (TLP 4.121)

What is thereby shown '*cannot* be said' (TLP 4.1212). So what does Wittgenstein take himself to be doing when he *tells us* what cannot be said but only shows itself? Hacker maintains that he is trying to 'intimate', as it were, those 'ineffable metaphysical truths' about language and the world which, according to his own theory, cannot be directly communicated.[14] This leads to nonsense, but a peculiarly *philosophical* kind of nonsense. Hacker's distinction between two varieties of such nonsense is crucial at this point. 'Misleading' nonsense results from the failure to understand the principles of logical syntax, principles determining how the elements that make up propositions may be legitimately combined.[15] These rules for constructing propositions are governed by the combinatorial possibilities internal to the elements of which the world is composed, the form of which is mirrored by the logical form of the proposition. Hence the legitimacy of a proposition is ultimately determined by ontology. Any proposition put together in a manner that violates these principles will result in a nonsensical pseudo-proposition, the structure of which is not allowed given the way in which the elements in the world can be combined. 'Illuminating' nonsense also looks as if it is trying – but failing – to say something about the essence of the world. Yet it does so in a manner that guides the acute reader to 'apprehend' what is shown by other, *non-philosophical*, propositions: 'Illuminating nonsense will guide the attentive reader to apprehend what is shown by other propositions which do not purport to be philosophical; moreover it will intimate to those who grasp what is meant, it own illegitimacy.'[16]

Thus Hacker takes Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing to be a way of guarding against the counter-syntactic nonsense produced when we try to describe the logical form of language as revealed by philosophical analysis; and he takes Wittgenstein's self-destructing illuminating nonsense to be a means of guiding us see what such attempts *try* to say, and why they are bound to fail. This way of formulating the distinction between what can be shown but not said gives the impression that there is *something* we would like to say but cannot, because the rules of logical syntax prevent it. Wittgenstein's philosophy shows us both that we cannot say it, and why, and teaches us to abstain from our misguided attempts to do so. As Hacker puts it: 'The task of philosophy in this respect then is twofold, to bring one to see what shows itself, and to prevent one from the futile endeavour to say it.'[17] But to understand Hacker's point, it is necessary to consider what Wittgenstein says about 'formal' properties, concepts and relations immediately after formulating the distinction between saying and showing.

Hacker on 'Formal' Concepts, Properties and Relations

The formal properties and relations of propositions manifest the 'internal' properties and relations of the objects or states of affairs they depict, those that it is unthinkable the object or states of affairs should not possess (TLP 4.123). But that such properties obtain of a given object or state of affairs is not something that can be asserted in a well-formed proposition. Rather, this 'makes itself manifest' in

propositions describing the object in question (TLP 4.122[iv]). Given that an object could not *not* possess any of its internal properties, it is as nonsensical to attribute a formal property to an object as it is to deny it. So, whilst it makes sense to say that 'the book is red', it is nonsensical to say that 'the book is an object', or that 'red is a colour'. Only the former is a genuine, bipolar, proposition saying something that might be otherwise; the other two try to say what could not possibly be otherwise – that is, what is shown by the former. Being an object and being coloured are internal properties of the concept 'book'. Hence, *that* the book 'is an object' or *that* red 'is a colour' would be *shown* through the signs by which 'red' and 'book' would be represented in an adequate notation: whereas a proposition attempting to *assert* that 'red is a colour' could not even be constructed. But it would also be unnecessary. For what it was trying to say would be apparent from the way in which a variable representing a colour-name could be combined with other signs to express a sense.

Hacker argues that such combinatorial possibilities are governed by the 'principles of logical syntax'.[18] In the last analysis, these principles are themselves dictated by the ontological type of simple objects picked out by logically proper names.[19] An object's 'ontological type' is determined, in turn, by its internal properties: 'for it is they that determine with what kinds of other objects it can combine to constitute a fact'.[20] Thus a spatial object, but not an auditory one, *could* combine with a colour. The basic idea, then, is that the logico-syntactical form of a name mirrors the ontological form of the object it picks out: 'just as the combinatorial possibilities of an object constitute its ontological type, so too the grammatical combinatorial possibilities of a name constitute its logico-syntactical category.'[21] Hence, the totality of ways in which it is possible to combine a sign, x, with other signs to form a legitimate proposition, where x represents a book, would show the formal properties of what it represented – that is, that a book *can* be so-coloured, so-extended, but not so-pitched. The combinatorial possibilities of the sign itself would *show* what the illegitimate proposition tried to *say* – namely, that a book 'is an object'.

One problem with this way of reading the *Tractatus* is that it gives rise to what appears to be a substantial realm of the ineffable; a realm in which there is something to be apprehended – that is, *that* the book is an object, *that* red is a colour – only it cannot be said, because the rules of logical syntax preclude its coherent formulation. Indeed, this much would seem to be built into the very idea that one *can* 'violate the logical syntax of language' by trying to say what may only be shown. Moreover, this would appear to rebound on the *Tractatus* itself: in so far as it attempts 'to say what may only be shown' it must, according to its own theory, be almost entirely nonsensical. Indeed, any attempt to explicate the saying/showing distinction puts the commentator in the similarly uncomfortable position of saying what can and what cannot be said, and why, thereby transgressing the fundamental requirement of meaningful discourse, the bipolarity of the proposition. Now, this might be taken to explain why Wittgenstein urges his reader to recognize his book as nonsense; but it begs a question as to what he could have hoped to achieve by writing such a book. Wittgenstein claims that climbing

the ladder it provides will bring the reader to 'see the world aright'. But how could a book of nonsense – of all things – achieve such a feat?

'Illuminating' Nonsense – A Solution to TLP 6.54?

This is the question that leads Hacker to differentiate two varieties of philosophical nonsense – a distinction that he acknowledges is not only confusing but cannot be found in the text itself. The question is whether Hacker's distinction can do the work required of it. Hacker's claim, remember, is that illuminating nonsense 'guide[s] the attentive reader to apprehend what is shown by other propositions which do not purport to be philosophical' whilst 'intimat[ing], to those who grasp what is meant, its own illegitimacy'.[22] Hence, although the book is indeed nonsense, 'strictly speaking', once we have worked our way through it we may nonetheless emerge – if we 'grasp what is meant' – with an ability to discern what everyday propositions manifest about the essential nature of whatever they picture. Of course, we will not be able to say what this is, since 'what *can* be shown, *cannot* be said' (TLP 4.1212), but nor will we wish to, since we will have grasped the illegitimacy of trying to do so (this being what distinguishes illuminating from misleading nonsense). But how are we to 'grasp what is meant' when this is conveyed by nonsense and nonsense means nothing at all? However the problem is turned, Hacker's account of TLP 6.54 entails that *what nonsense 'means' be somehow understood.* But how can what is empty of content be understood? Nonsense makes no sense. It communicates nothing. If it communicates something it has a sense after all and therefore isn't nonsense.[23]

The problem with Hacker's idea that we may grasp what is meant by illuminating nonsense whilst being unable to say what is meant, is that the latter half of the formulation effectively denies what is asserted in the former. Why, if we can grasp what is meant, can we not say what we have grasped? Surely if we *have* grasped it, we must be cognisant of *what* we have grasped – and if we know what we have grasped, then why can't we *say* what we know?[24] Hacker's reason is that the syntactical rules for the construction of legitimate propositions preclude its coherent formulation. But this requires attributing to Wittgenstein the view that there is such a thing as having an insight which, *in principle*, cannot be expressed, when, according to the *Tractatus*, this would have to be wrong. The *Tractatus* holds that 'a thought is a proposition with a sense' (TLP 4). Only what would constitute a meaningful proposition could constitute a thought. But this does not mean that thought is *constrained* in some way; it means that a linguistic string without a sense does not present anything to think about. Should we find that whatever it is we want to say cannot be articulated in a meaningful proposition, then we cannot be trying to express a thought at all. Quite simply, whatever we *think* we have in mind here, it isn't a thought at all. Moreover, given that a thought is simply a 'propositional sign, applied and thought out' (TLP 3.5), it would be nonsensical to claim one had a thought in mind which couldn't be expressed. As far as the *Tractatus* is concerned, what can be thought is coextensive with what can

be said. It is what is sayable. Everything that can be said can be thought, and nothing that can be thought is incapable of expression.

The question that this might be thought to leave open is whether there is anything out there, so to speak, which cannot be captured in either thought or language. Is there something – like getting hold of the ineffable metaphysical truths underlying our words – which we simply cannot do? Again, not according to the *Tractatus*. Moreover, *realizing this*, according to Conant and Diamond, is a precondition of understanding Wittgenstein's peculiar authorial strategy. One way of getting at what is at stake here is as follows. The *Tractatus* holds that the world may be completely described in meaningful propositions (TLP 4.26). Everything there is to say may be said. There is nothing our words are prevented from capturing in principle. It is not that doctrine of showing versus saying is false, but that it makes no sense. Or, rather, it is not a 'doctrine' at all. It cannot even be coherently stated. Every attempt to do so undoes itself. This is what Diamond means when she asserts that '[i]n so far as we grasp what Wittgenstein aims at, we see that the sentence-form[s] he uses come apart from his philosophical aim'.[25] The point is not to squint after what his sentences seem to be saying, but to realize that what looks like it is carrying meaning is actually vacuous. But the point is not solely deflationary. As a result of seeing this, we may also see that 'when we go in for philosophical thinking, the characteristic form of such thoughts is precisely that the sentence-forms we use come apart from what we have taken to be our aims'.[26] To respond by maintaining that, whilst the book's propositions may be 'strictly speaking' nonsense, they are nonetheless gesturing at truths that cannot be captured in words, is to block the very possibility of seeing what – according to Conant and Diamond – the *Tractatus* is designed to bring its readers to see. Moreover, it begs a question as to why the book takes the form that it does. From this perspective, if what is 'meant' by illuminating nonsense cannot be expressed in propositions, then it cannot be 'grasped' in thought. If we are unable to say what is meant – whether we realize it or not – we cannot have thought it either. Moreover, if it cannot be grasped in thought then, so far as the *Tractatus* is concerned, 'it' isn't out there to be grasped. Given the relation between language and world in the *Tractatus*, there is nothing for such nonsense to gesture towards.

This is the point at which we need to return to what Wittgenstein says in the preface. There, remarking on what he takes to be the point of book, he claims: 'Its whole meaning could be summed up somewhat as follows: What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent'.[27] Taken together with the identification of language and thought, and the assertion that what lies beyond the expression of thoughts will simply be nonsense (*wird einfach Unsinn sein*), this entails not only that Wittgenstein does not recognize, but that he precludes, distinctions of the kind Hacker's interpretation of the *Tractatus* requires. So, although illuminating nonsense is one obvious way of trying to make sense of the seemingly contradictory claims of TLP 6.54, not only is it internally inconsistent, but it cannot be rendered compatible with the text as a whole. This latter is important as it is would otherwise be credible to maintain that Wittgenstein had unwittingly burdened himself with a metaphysical picture of the precisely the

kind his later work unceasingly sought to dissolve. The alternative, then, is to take Wittgenstein at his word when he specifies nonsense plain and simple. This is the crux of Conant and Diamond's response.

Conant and Diamond on the 'Frame' of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

According to Conant and Diamond, the reasons why Hacker's interpretation is incoherent can be found in the book's preface. But Hacker does not take Wittgenstein at his word. As a result, he attributes to Wittgenstein the very belief his preface diagnoses as philosophy's characteristic illusion. The belief that we can lever ourselves into a position – what Hacker calls the 'correct logical point of view' – from which we may spectate upon the world as if from outside it. Hacker maintains that this is the position from which the text claims to speak and to which it aims to bring its readers, despite noting that this 'could not possibly make sense'.[28] That Hacker reconstructs the text in a way that he concedes cannot make sense, and for reasons that the book itself adduces, suggests that he takes the *Tractatus* to be irredeemably confused. Yet it is Wittgenstein who provides Hacker with this argument: Wittgenstein who warns us against thinking we may peer beyond the limits of what can be said and thought; Wittgenstein who encourages us, in the preface and TLP 6.54, to understand him by recognizing his propositions as simple nonsense:

> [T]he aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather – not to thought but to the expression of thoughts; for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought).
>
> It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense. (TLP preface, iii–iv)

To maintain that Wittgenstein wanted his readers to hold on to some ineffable metaphysical insights which his philosophical nonsense was trying to gesture towards therefore begs more questions than it answers. According to Conant and Diamond, it turns the *Tractatus* inside out by taking what the text *diagnoses* as an archetypical philosophical illusion as either a doctrine it espouses or a position to which it is implicitly committed. It is what Conant calls 'mistaking the target of the work for its doctrine'.[29] It attributes to the text what the text anticipates, and seeks to dispel, in its readers. If there is one conclusion that the Conant–Diamond reading suggests above all others, then, it is that we need a different perspective on the book as a whole, rather than a new interpretation of a particular stretch of remarks (although this is often true).[30] That is, a perspective through which it becomes possible to view the *Tractatus* as a 'work', in a sense normally reserved for literary works and works of art, conceived and written by a philosopher with a more acute sense of authorship than is generally found in the analytic canon – so raising a question as to how easily it can be accommodated within that canon, given its dominant self-understanding. Hence, although Conant and Diamond

proceed by taking issue with text's orthodox commentators through a close reading of the book's 'frame' (essentially, though not exclusively, the preface and TLP 6.53–57), given that they see this frame as providing 'instructions for reading' the text as a whole, such a reorientation is what their account seeks to precipitate.[31] Hence, despite originating in little more than a subtle displacement of the orthodox interpretation of TLP 6.54, Conant and Diamond's reading ultimately stands the orthodox account of the text as a whole on its head.

'Throwing Away the Ladder': Conant and Diamond versus Hacker on TLP 6.54

Where Hacker's interpretation of TLP 6.54 requires that nonsense be understood, Conant and Diamond stress that Wittgenstein asks that *he*, and not his *propositions*, be understood. Both maintain that Hacker's determination to understand the book's propositions – despite their nonsensicality – rather than the author who tells his readers that they are nonsensical, is a refusal to 'throw away the ladder' and, so too, a refusal to 'see the world aright'.[32] Given that the debate pivots upon extrapolating the consequences of what Wittgenstein says at TLP 6.54, it will be helpful to remind ourselves at this point of what Wittgenstein himself says about 'throwing away the ladder':

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
> He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright. (TLP 6.54)

Hacker's account of grasping what such nonsense, albeit obliquely, 'means' ends up treating nonsense as if it were propositional when, according to the *Tractatus*, nonsense is not a type of proposition – that is, a linguistic string with a sense – at all. Wittgenstein does not speak of 'viewing the world aright' by means of his propositions, but rather by 'transcending' them.[33] Of course, this is highly ambiguous: the more so since Wittgenstein likens his propositions to the steps of a ladder – suggesting that whatever we are to see has something to do with these propositions themselves. Here it is crucial to pay attention to the letter of Wittgenstein's text. Wittgenstein speaks of using his propositions to 'climb up beyond them'. And that, so far as Conant and Diamond are concerned, means getting beyond thinking one understands them, when, as nonsense, there is nothing to understand – except, that is, whatever can be made of the fact that they are nonsense.

Realizing this is fundamental. For only when Wittgenstein's propositions have been recognized as nonsense – that is, nonsense plain and simple – will they 'serve as elucidations'. This is why Conant and Diamond are so critical of interpretations that obscure this issue by invoking some version of what they believe to be deep

nonsense. This move blocks the question that they believe the *Tractatus* is designed to make its readers pose from getting off the ground – that is, a question about the relation between a book that declares itself to be nonsense and what happens when we go in for philosophical thinking. From their perspective, Hacker's reading forecloses the possibility of grasping the point of Wittgenstein's book. This is what Diamond calls 'chickening out'.[34] Diamond defines 'chickening out' as 'pretend[ing] to throw away the ladder while standing firmly, or as firmly as one can, on it.'[35] Hacker leaves himself open to this rather unflattering description when he remarks: '[c]ertainly, Wittgenstein did not use the phrase 'illuminating nonsense'. What he said was that the propositions of the *Tractatus* elucidate by bringing whoever understands their author to recognize them as nonsensical'.[36] This is true. But because Hacker is more concerned to explain why Wittgenstein believes nonsense can convey ineffable truths than to reflect on what else might be at stake when a philosophical text flatly declares its own nonsensicality, he forecloses any possibility of understanding *Wittgenstein* which his own insight into TLP 6.54 might have provided.[37]

Conant and Diamond's response extrapolates the destructive consequences of this remark for Hacker's account as a whole. This is not to say that Conant and Diamond want to attribute a competing theory to Wittgenstein's text. Given that they take the point of Wittgenstein's text to devolve upon recognizing its nonsensicality, they want to demonstrate that it advances no theories at all.[38] To this end, they cite Wittgenstein's claim that philosophy is an activity of clarification, not a body of doctrine (TLP 4.112), and his prefatory warning that the *Tractatus* is not a book of doctrine (*Es ist…kein Lehrbuch*). From their point of view, all interpretations that construe the *Tractatus* as an attempt to communicate an ineffable theory refuse to throw away the final rung of the ladder. So, when Hacker claims that in the *Tractatus* 'the critique itself, the description of the limits of language, lies beyond the realm of what can be said. Language can no more describe its own essence than it can describe the limits of the world', he is merely reiterating the very 'doctrines' Wittgenstein claims are nonsensical, hence no doctrines at all, to support the conclusion that Wittgenstein was trying to gesture towards those 'ineffable metaphysical necessities' that elude direct communication.[39]

For Hacker, these are the ontological features of the world which *do* obtain, but cannot be *said* to obtain, because any attempt to do so 'violates the logical syntax of the language'.[40] This is what Diamond has in mind when she claims that Hacker fallaciously ascribes a 'realism of possibility' to the *Tractatus*.[41] Hacker believes that the 'rules of logical syntax', determining what can and what cannot be said, are governed by those possibilities that the ontological form of the world allows. Diamond claims that this amounts to burdening the text with the very conception of necessity that Wittgenstein's work consistently sought to contest – that is, 'necessity imagined as a fact,'[42] necessity conceived as a constraint that could have been otherwise had the world presented different ontological possibilities than those which, in fact, it does. This way of conceptualizing necessity and possibility pictures them as fixed one way rather than another, and hence as set within a wider realm of possible possibilities. What can and cannot be said depends on *which*

necessities obtain, and the totality of what can be said is bordered by the space of what cannot – as things stand – be expressed (but which is there nonetheless).

This much is built into Hacker's notion of the 'correct logical point of view' – a point of view from which we are supposed to apprehend *both* what can and what cannot be said.[43] It also manifests itself in Hacker's distinction between illuminating and misleading nonsense. Given that both, on Hacker's account, 'violate the rules of logical syntax', the only real difference between them is the degree of cunning or self-consciousness with which they are yielded. The latter naively blunders into the confusion – that 'one can say things which can only be shown'[44] – which the former aspires to illuminate as confusion. But this entails not only that the purveyor of illuminating nonsense occupy a vantage point beyond the constraints that Hacker claims the structure of the world imposes upon what can be said – from where he 'apprehends' what cannot be said (or thought) – but also that, with consummate skill, he transgresses the rules governing what can be said in such a way as to bring them into view, and thereby raises his reader to a similar vantage point. As Diamond sees it, this is merely the semblance of a point of view that Wittgenstein imagines himself into in order to explode it from within: it is what the *Tractatus* is designed to show is only the *illusion* of a viewpoint.[45]

It is an illusion because it pictures the limits of what can be thought and said as if they were limitations, imagining that in plotting their outer edge we may somehow 'grasp' what lies beyond them. Yet it is to discourage the belief that we may 'think what cannot be thought' (TLP preface, iii) that the *Tractatus* tries to draw the limits of expression from within, by means of the general propositional form. Since this variable is the form of *all* propositions whatsoever, it encompasses all that can be said, excluding nothing. Hacker's account, by contrast, entails taking the *Tractatus* to harbour a notion of the totality of what can be said as limiting: it is therefore trying to bring what cannot be said into view by transgressing the boundaries of what can. But this gets the book back to front. It throws away the 'frame', which is designed to help us understand the book, rather than the book's contents, which we are asked to recognize as nonsense. Since it entails holding on to those contents, the orthodox account fails to completely throw away the ladder.

TLP 5.473–5.4733: Nonsense as the failure to Mean What We Say

By taking seriously what Wittgenstein says in his framing remarks, Conant and Diamond provide a very different account of what Wittgenstein was doing when he wrote a book which, they claim, is devoid of any theories whatsoever. Why anyone would want to write such a book and call it 'philosophy' would require explanation enough. In the case of the *Tractatus*, this peculiarity is compounded by a text that appears to be doing precisely what its preface claims is not there to be done, thereby encouraging its readers to do likewise, only to conclude by claiming that we will not have understood its author until we have realized his propositions are nonsensical. As Hacker's way of making sense of this appears flawed, we need to know more about how Wittgenstein construes nonsense in the *Tractatus*.

The relevant remarks run from TLP 5.473 to 5.4733: they are crucial to Conant and Diamond's attempt to oppose ascriptions of a deep conception of nonsense to the text. Hacker's version of this turns upon the idea that nonsense arises when we 'attempt to say what can only be shown'. This violates the logical syntax of language determining what combinations of signs can make sense. 'A is an object' is nonsense because it employs a formal concept ('object') as if it were a genuine concept in the attempt to say what is shown by the way the sign 'a' symbolizes in statements such as 'a is red'. The resulting pseudo-proposition is 'logically mal-formed'. It violates the 'rules of logical syntax' because only a material concept can be legitimately employed as a predicate. In no conceivable situation of use, and irrespective of any intention we might have to express a meaning, could these signs, combined in this way, make sense. Combinations of signs like this produce irredeemable nonsense. Now, whilst it is true that we can, and often do, combine words in ways that fail to express a thought, this is not, according to the *Tractatus*, because such would-be propositions *cannot* express a thought. It is because *we* have failed to mean anything by our use of these words in this way, because *we* have failed to determine what we mean by them. Here is what Wittgenstein says:

> Frege says every legitimately constructed proposition must have a sense. And I say that any possible proposition is legitimately constructed, and, if it has no sense, that can only be because we have failed to give a *meaning* to some of its constituents.
> (Even if we think that we have done so). (TLP 5.4733)

Leaving aside what Wittgenstein ascribes to Frege, he claims that every possible proposition, simply by virtue of being a proposition, is legitimately constructed.[46] A possible proposition is any proposition that conforms to the general propositional form, a variable taking all propositions whatsoever as its instances – the form of all that can be said. If it turned out that something we *believed* we were saying could not be translated into a logical notation, that would be because *we* had failed to express a sense by it, and hence had uttered nonsense. It would be a result of having not meant something determinate (or at least determinately indeterminate) by our words even though, to paraphrase Wittgenstein, we *thought* that we had. It would not be because what we took ourselves to be trying to say 'could not be said'. All that would be required to make this seemingly ineffable proposition meaningful – that is, to make it a genuine proposition – would be to determine what we wanted to say by it. Wittgenstein appends the following commentary to TLP 5.4733 making this clear:

> Thus the reason why 'Socrates is identical' says nothing is that we have not given *any adjectival* meaning to the word 'identical'. For when it appears as the sign of identity it symbolizes in an entirely different way – the signifying relation is a different one – therefore the symbols also are entirely different in the two cases: the two symbols have only the sign in common, and that is an accident. (TLP 5.4733)

The problem is that one sign symbolizes in two entirely different ways. Understanding what Wittgenstein is saying here presupposes an earlier set of

remarks (TLP 3.3–3.33) in which he discusses the difference between a 'sign' and a 'symbol'. The latter refers to the sense of a proposition or, *given* that sense, the meaning of its constituent parts (TLP 3.3–3.31). The former refers to their perceptible qualities – that is, the words written down or spoken aloud (TLP 3.32). The problem with ordinary language is that the same signs are used with completely different meanings, or ways of 'symbolizing', depending up on the proposition in which they occur (TLP 3.323). The most obvious example of which is the little word 'is', which may function as the copula, the sign for identity, or of existence (TLP 3.323[ii]). But Wittgenstein makes it clear that the way to determine how a particular sign is symbolizing on a given occasion is to look at the context of use: 'In order to recognize the symbol by its sign we must observe how it is used with a sense' (TLP 3.326).[47] That is, we must ask what, in the circumstances, a speaker might mean by these words used in this way.

What is crucial when we do so is that only a proposition has a sense: individual words or phrases take their meaning from the contribution they make to the thought expressed by the whole: 'Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have meaning' (TLP 3.3).[48] In order to determine how the word 'identical' is functioning in 'Socrates is identical' we only have to look at the proposition in which it occurs to realize that it is not functioning as a sign of identity since there is nothing specified for Socrates to be identical with.[49] The sentence has the same logical form as 'Socrates is mortal', and 'identical' is here predicated of Socrates in the same way as mortality might be. Our confusion stems from having no idea what 'identical' means when it is used like this – even if, as Wittgenstein remarks, we think that we do. The sentence fails to make sense not because it is 'illegitimately constructed', as Hacker would have it, for 'any possible proposition is legitimately constructed', but because we 'have failed to give a meaning to some of its constituents. (Even if we think that we have done so.)'. The remark in parentheses is crucial. We may *think* that we know what we mean by it, perhaps as a result of what 'identical' means elsewhere, or because of its similar construction to 'Socrates is mortal,' or because of some image of fitting Socrates into Socrates that occurs to the mind's eye, when in fact we don't. We are caught between all the meanings that 'identical', used like this, could be given, but without having determined which we want to give it. This would become apparent were we to try to translate it into a good notation.[50] As yet it means nothing. It is *plain* nonsense, nothing more. However, we only need to stipulate an adjectival meaning for 'identical' and we will have solved our lapse in meaning:

> Logic must look after itself.
>
> If a sign is possible, then it is also capable of signifying. Whatever is possible in logic is also permitted. (The reason why 'Socrates is identical' means nothing is that there is no property called 'identical'. The proposition is nonsensical because we have failed to make an arbitrary determination and not because the symbol, in itself, would be illegitimate). (TLP 5.473)

Pace Hacker, the only thing that differentiates a supposedly malformed proposition such as 'a is an object' from a meaningful proposition such as 'a is red'

is that *we* have failed to assign a meaning to 'object' that fits its use in the former as a predicate-noun, and that is all that is wrong with it. Our confusion stems from what normally functions as a variable being used in a different way. Wittgenstein's point is not, as Hacker construes it, that 'a' really is an object only we cannot say so, but that 'object' is used here as a predicate-noun to which we have yet to assign a meaning. At best, we don't know what we want to say by it; at worst, no meaning we could assign it would satisfy us. The latter, according to Conant and Diamond, is endemic to philosophy.[51] It leads to the belief that the statement itself is gesturing towards something it never quite manages to say, because 'that' – whatever it is – would violate logical syntax. But statements don't express meanings – we do. Likewise it is us, not our statements, that fail to make sense. But there is nothing that prevents us from doing so in principle. Logical syntax does not prevent us from expressing what these words would say, could they be combined in this way. To maintain that it does is to contradict the *Tractatus* on two counts. First, it requires that a 'symbol, in itself would be illegitimate' (TLP 5.473); that these signs, combined in this way, *could not* express a sense. Whereas Wittgenstein maintains 'we cannot give a sign the wrong sense' (TLP 5.4732). Thinking that we can derives from the fallacy that the logical categories to which our signs belong do not fit together in this way. This contradicts the *Tractatus* on a second front. It is to imagine logic as a fact, a kind of cage, the bars of which we run up against, and sometimes even breach, in thought. But logic is not a cage; it makes thought possible. Given that the realms of what can be said and what can be thought are coextensive, it cannot retrospectively function as a limit on what we can and cannot say.[52] Wittgenstein even asserts that we cannot offend against it: 'logic looks after itself…in a certain sense we cannot even make mistakes in logic' (TLP 5.473).

Moreover, viewing syntax as a constraint obscures the distinction between symbol and sign. The connection between a sign and its meanings is arbitrary. What is important is how signs symbolize. This is what determines sense. But signs do not symbolize outside the context of a proposition with a sense (TLP 3.3), and how they then symbolize is determined by the contribution they make to the thought expressed by the whole. This has two consequences. First, given that signs do not symbolize *before* being combined to form a proposition with a sense, then, of themselves, they have no sense which could prevent their combination in any way at all. As Wittgenstein states: 'In logical syntax the meaning of a sign should never play a role. It must be possible to establish logical syntax without mentioning the *meaning* of a sign' (TLP 3.33). We cannot appeal to any meaning we believe the sign *already* has in order to say it cannot be used in a particular way. Thus, in itself, 'object' is just a sign waiting to be imbued with a meaning. Once it is, by being used in a meaningful proposition, that will determine the logical contribution it makes to the sense expressed by the whole. This is the second consequence. Words do not, of themselves – that is, outside the context of a meaningful proposition – have meanings. And any account, such as Hacker's, which claims that they do runs the risk of conflating the logical and the psychological.

Philosophical Elucidations: How to read the *Tractatus*

'Philosophy', properly understood, aims to clarify thoughts. It does not, the *Tractatus* informs us, advance theories. It is, echoing the preface, *keine Lehre* – not a body of doctrine. Rather, it is an *activity* that consists essentially of elucidation (*Erläuterungen*). Philosophy, and hence elucidation, attempts to make thoughts clear through the clarification of propositions:

> Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts.
> Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity.
> A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidation.
> Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions.
> Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and give them sharp boundaries. (TLP 4.112)

The question is how we are to square this with the claim that the *Tractatus* consists almost entirely of nonsense. For how could a book of nonsense be intended to make thought clear by clarifying propositions? The *Tractatus* is, to say the least, a highly peculiar work. It opens with a preface in which its author anticipates not only that he won't be understood but that, if he is, only someone who has already thought along similar lines will understand what he is doing: and it concludes by saying we will not have understood its author until we realize that his propositions are nonsensical. Then they will 'serve as elucidations'. In between, we are given what appears to be an elaborate theory about what can and cannot be said and why. But the theory collapses. What's more, it is meant to collapse. Consider how Wittgenstein introduces the idea of logical form that grounds the distinction between saying and showing: 'In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world' (TLP 4.12). We should have to take up a position that is not there to be taken up. That, Wittgenstein suggests, is the reason for introducing the distinction between saying and showing in the first place. Of course, the irony is that in order to make anything of this distinction, this is the very position the book's orthodox commentators have to imagine they are able to adopt. Hence, the theory does not collapse because it is internally flawed: it collapses because it is nonsense. Moreover its author, as TLP 6.54 attests, is hardly unaware of the fact. What, then, are we to make of all this? Where – if anywhere – can such a book lead us?

We are now ready to throw away the ladder. Or rather, what once looked like a ladder leading to a correct view of the world *sub specie aternitatis* now looks like so much old wood; what once appeared to be an elaborate theory about what we can and cannot say has imploded under the weight of its own nonsensicality. Not only does this ladder not lead anywhere, it would not support our weight were we to stand on it. Yet, despite leaving us exactly where we were, without a grasp of a new theory to show for our exertions, we are – if the *Tractatus* has performed its function – where we were but in an *entirely different spirit*. Thus Wittgenstein's point is far from deflationary. For his book seeks nothing less than to transform the

spirit in which we inhabit our lives, our world and our relations to others, and it seeks to do so by transforming our relation to our words. Like the *Philosophical Investigations*, the *Tractatus* is designed to show us how slovenly that relation can be, particularly when it comes to philosophy.[53] When Wittgenstein makes the same point in the *Investigations*, he expresses himself, as he does in the TLP preface and 6.54, in the first person, thereby addressing *us*, his readers, directly: 'My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense'.[54] It is essential to what Wittgenstein is trying to achieve that his point be existentially appropriated by us, which is why this reading of the *Tractatus* may be called 'perfectionist'.[55] So this realization is not filed away as just one more philosophical datum amongst others – that is, that there are some people somewhere who sometimes mistake nonsense for sense – Wittgenstein tries to lure *us*, his readers, into mistaking nonsense for sense. In doing so, he is trying to get us to see for ourselves that whatever we may have *thought* we were thinking, we were not thinking anything.[56] This is why Wittgenstein's method can, despite appearances, be called clarificatory: it separates thought from the mere *appearance* of thought, sense from the mere *semblance* of sense, by focusing on the words by which we express ourselves (TLP 4.112).

Thus, to understand *Wittgenstein* (TLP 6.54) is in part to realize why his text takes the form that it does. Why, for example, the text does *not* adopt what it declares to be the 'only strictly correct method' in philosophy: that is, 'to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science – i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy – and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions' (TLP 6.53). Generations of commentators have registered this fact, but failed to see that it is the book that puts this method in question, and not vice versa. For the book aims to bring *satisfaction*, which is what the method described in TLP 6.53 could never achieve.[57] To realize why the book takes the form that it does is thus to realize that its therapeutic ambitions are in keeping with the way it has been written and form it has been given. It is to realize that we, its readers, have been hoodwinked by nonsense masquerading as sense. And that is to grasp the authorial strategy which engenders a book that looks and reads like this.[58] Only then will Wittgenstein's propositions serve as 'elucidations' – by demonstrating that we are prone, when doing philosophy, to take nonsense for sense, to imagine we have made sense when we have failed to mean anything by our words.[59]

The insight to which the book aims to deliver us is thus an *insight into ourselves*. It is when we have come to this realization that we will have 'transcended' Wittgenstein's propositions. Then we will see the world 'aright' – that is, free from the illusion of a 'correct logical point of view'. Hence the silence to which the book's last proposition refers is not a pregnant silence guarding an ineffable truth. It is an injunction not to speak unless one means something by one's words, not because there is anything that we are debarred in principle from meaning, but because we are frequently given to meaning nothing at all. The book's final proposition – 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent'

– is thus little more than a tautology.[60] It reminds us that all there is to say can be said: if we have said, or tried to say, something we take to be 'unsayable', then we have actually said nothing at all. This is the realization that Wittgenstein wants to bring about in his readers when he claims that anyone who understands him will have recognized his propositions to be nonsense. And it is the form in which these propositions are delivered in the *Tractatus* that is designed to trigger this realization. Diamond describes this process as one in which Wittgenstein 'imagines himself' into the position from which the purveyor of philosophical nonsense thinks he speaks and, in so doing, leaves a trail that such a reader will think they can follow.[61] So, whilst all nonsense says nothing, not all nonsense *looks as if* it says nothing, and this is what Wittgenstein's strategy in the *Tractatus* depends on.[62] Given everything I have said about Hacker's explication of nonsense, it is important that this does not collapse back into a theory crediting nonsense with 'illuminating' powers – in the sense of harbouring a quasi-cognitive content. And indeed, contrary to Hacker's suggestion in his recent reply to Diamond that the idea of 'transitional' nonsense effectively reinstates the distinction she sets out to contest (between plain nonsense and 'important' nonsense), this idea does not require that *nonsense be understood*.[63] All it requires is that one bit of nonsense may bring its recipient to see that another, less self-evident, bit of nonsense *is* nonsense.[64] This is very different from claiming that nonsense may harbour an ineffable content. Hence elucidation, as Wittgenstein employs it in the *Tractatus*, entails fighting nonsense with nonsense in order to make nonsense apparent as such.[65] It is his early way of combating what he saw as the characteristic failure of philosophy, its tendency to take nonsense for sense. In the *Tractatus* this takes the form of increasing the pressure until the entire structure collapses under the weight of its own nonsensicality. In his later work it is the method employed, rather than the goal to which it aspires, that is fundamentally different.

Coda

Once the text of the *Tractatus* is seen from the perspective that Conant and Diamond's focus on its frame provides, much of what has bemused orthodox readers such as Hacker about a book which 'could not possibly make sense' falls away. For if Conant and Diamond are correct, the book is not even trying to make the kind of sense commentators like Hacker are looking for in its text. This is what is most impressive about the Conant–Diamond reading of the *Tractatus*: it grasps the *book*, rather than its contents, as a whole, without glossing over the difficulties that its apparent 'doctrines' have caused previous attempts to do so. In fact, it does so precisely by taking those difficulties seriously. As a result they succeed, rather remarkably, in showing this foundational work of analytic philosophy to be a literary achievement, leaving us in need of a different conception of tradition, and the affinities between texts, to which to return the book as it emerges. For this *Tractatus* is not just, nor even predominantly, a work of straightforward analytic argument. Indeed, whilst both have done much to show that it inherits a large part

of its problematic from Frege, Conant in particular has tried to show that its way of dealing with that problematic – that is, *how* it inherits it, has affinities with Kierkegaard's pseudonymous project as well a certain aspects of Frege's work.[66] Given this, Conant's account of Wittgenstein's strategy of 'philosophical authorship' – that is, the way in which his text addresses its readers – calls for a conception of tradition that transcends the orthodoxies of the analytic–continental divide.

Hacker, not surprisingly, is unsympathetic to this endeavour, since not only does it run counter to his reading of the *Tractatus*, it takes issue with his view of the development of Wittgenstein's philosophy to which that reading gives rise and, so too, his view of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Indeed, since this paper was written Hacker has published a lengthy reply to Conant and Diamond. I cannot here do justice to the details of his response but I will give a brief overview.[67] Hacker's reply takes the form of what he calls a 'pincer movement,' drawing on internal evidence from the *Tractatus* itself and external evidence provided by Wittgenstein's remarks about it (dating from the time of its composition right through to the *Investigations*).[68] On the former front Hacker points out, not unreasonably, that the Conant–Diamond account relies on a highly selective reading of the book's remarks. More controversially, he argues that, in so far as their account relies on *any* remarks from the body of the text at all, it becomes 'methodologically inconsistent' since it must, by virtue of that fact, be predicated upon remarks they themselves claim to be nonsensical.[69] This point is not without bite: if nothing else it has forced Conant to finesse his interpretation.[70] Hence, until recently both Conant and Diamond were happy, despite leaning heavily on passages from the text (such as the remarks on nonsense (TLP 5.473–5.4733)), to make a hard and fast distinction between the book's frame and its contents – *all* of which they claimed were to be discarded. Hacker's reply has forced Conant to modify this: the frame is now said to consist of any remark – internal to the text or otherwise – that provides the framework necessary for Wittgenstein's elucidatory 'transitional' nonsense to perform its work.[71] This enlarged conception of the book's 'frame' is still said to provide meaningful instructions for reading without which the book could not hope to succeed; but the new stress on the framing remarks' *role*, at the expense of their *location*, represents a subtle shift from Conant's earlier formulations of his position.

That said, Hacker may be right in a more fundamental sense than that of the alleged 'methodological inconsistency.' This implies that Conant and Diamond are simply oblivious to the implications of their own procedure – that their interpretation, like the text itself on their account, ultimately saws off the branch on which it is sitting. But even if he is right, insofar as their account of why the text is nonsense is obliged to resort to nonsense in order to make its case and, hence, finally, to undo itself, his criticism would still fail to find its target. Or rather, it would fail to pursue the consequences of this fact to their conclusion: for the question which, if correct, his charge cannot but provoke – yet which Hacker does not ask – is what we, its readers, *are supposed make of this fact*.[72] What are we to make of a text that undermines itself and a commentary that explicates that fact, or

so it seems, only at the cost of undermining itself? What are we to make of a text, and a commentary, that unravel in such an unseemly manner? We can either conclude that the Conant–Diamond reading is as internally confused as Hacker's account would render the *Tractatus*, or we may conclude that the content of their commentary is reflexively embodied in its form.[73] Hence, if their commentary *performatively undercuts itself*, this is because they understand themselves to be engaged in a similarly therapeutic activity to that which they attribute to Wittgenstein.[74] On such an interpretation, Hacker misses both.

On the second front, Hacker argues that Wittgenstein's work, immediately following his return to philosophy in 1929, is most plausibly understood as an attempt to patch up the crumbling theoretical edifice of the *Tractatus*.[75] He also draws attention to a variety of remarks Wittgenstein made between 1929 and the drafting of the *Philosophical Investigations* that appear to reflect his dissatisfaction with the claims advanced in the *Tractatus*. Hacker argues that if Conant and Diamond are correct that Wittgenstein never intended to provide a philosophical theory in the *Tractatus*, then it is impossible to make sense of Wittgenstein's remarks, or what he took himself to be doing, during this period. This external argument is one that Conant and Diamond have as yet done little to address. They might, of course, see these remarks – gleaned from lectures, letters and reported conversations, none of which were intended for publication by Wittgenstein – as largely circumstantial, and hence as inconclusive. Given their stress on strategies of 'philosophical authorship' in Wittgenstein's work – and hence with issues of formal *presentation* in that work's address to its anticipated readers – this would not be inconsistent. They might even seek to give a similar account of what Wittgenstein was doing in this period, given his sensitivity to the psychological difficulties of tackling illusions head-on, to their account of the *Tractatus*.[76] Alternatively, like Hacker, they might point to the implications of this being a period of transition in Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical method. Finally, they could draw on manuscript remarks more congenial to their own position, or give a contrasting interpretation of some of the remarks that Hacker himself relies on.[77] Be that as it may, the evidence Hacker marshals, circumstantial though it may be, has sufficient cumulative weight to require some response if it is not to cast a shadow over their reading of the *Tractatus* – which, internally at least, does a better job of grasping the *Tractatus* as a whole, and as a work, than Hacker's. This, then, is a point that Conant and Diamond still need to address.

But I will conclude with a few, very general, remarks about resources in the *Philosophical Investigations* that might be used support their interpretation of the *Tractatus*. For, although Conant and Diamond's account of the *Tractatus* has clear implications for how one views the relation between it and his later work, redescribing that relation in any detail would have taken me beyond the scope of this paper.[78] But one upshot of the Conant–Diamond reading discussed in this paper is that it makes the *Tractatus* an even greater failure than it is generally taken to be. This is ironic given how much they have done to demonstrate that it is not the *kind* of failure, to advance a metaphysical theory about the relation between language and the world, that it is widely regarded as. Yet, if their reading of the

text is correct, the book fails to the degree that it succeeds. If the *Tractatus* is the elaborate ruse suggested by their account, then it is a highly successful one – so successful that it has failed to have the effect on its readers that their account suggests that Wittgenstein would have wanted. And that is why their reading provides an interesting slant on the later work. If one reads the *Tractatus* as they have suggested, it is a work of tremendous hubris. It presumes to know what its readers will believe and the fallacies to which they are prone: it presumes, in effect, to know its readers better than they know themselves. This might be because Wittgenstein views his readers largely in his own image, thereby refusing to acknowledge their 'separateness'[79] – suggesting that the temptation to philosophical theory-building which the Tractatus encourages is one that Wittgenstein himself felt – and encouraging in him the belief that he could, as it were, speak in advance, and without need of reply, and that, when he had spoken, the problems of philosophy would have been dissolved once and for all.[80] But not only is this a hugely overblown conception of what a single work of philosophy might achieve, it is flawed in two further respects. First, it is inadequate as a practice of 'therapy' – a term that remains remarkably ill-defined despite the frequency with which it is employed in debates about Wittgenstein – as anyone with any professional knowledge of how practices of therapy (of which there are many) actually work would attest. Second, and as a result, although the *Tractatus* clearly wants to bring about an ethical transformation in its readers with respect to their life with words, in respect of its *own* strategy of address, it is something of an ethical failure. In this regard the tireless responsiveness and moral fervour, to which Stanley Cavell has drawn attention in the writing of the *Investigations*, takes on new significance. From this perspective, it comes into focus as Wittgenstein's immanent critique – at the level of his later work's form and key methodological concepts – of the failure of the *method* of his early work and not, as is generally thought, its theories, to bring about a similarly therapeutic goal. To cite Hacker citing Wittgenstein:

> I might say: if the place I want to get to could only be reached by a ladder, I would give up trying to get there. For the place I really have to get to is a place I must already be at now. Anything that I might reach by climbing a ladder does not interest me.[81]

Notes

1   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G.H. von Wright and H. Nyman, trans. P. Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 18e.
2   I shall refer to the *Tractatus* throughout the text as 'TLP' followed by the relevant paragraph number.

3 P.M.S. Hacker, *Insight and Illusion: Themes in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). The expressions in scare quotes are summaries of Hacker's position, as set out in this work (pp. 18–22 in particular), not direct quotations.

4 See Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), specifically, 'Throwing Away the Ladder: How to Read the *Tractatus*'. Although this paper, originally published in *Philosophy*, **63**, 1988, triggered the debate around TLP 6.54 with which I am concerned here, the Conant–Diamond approach to the *Tractatus* has precedents in the work of Peter Winch and Hide Ishiguro. See, for example, their respective papers in Peter Winch (ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 1969).

5 For an interpretation of this kind see Norman Malcolm's *Nothing is Hidden: Wittgenstein's Criticism of his Early Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

6 It is important to note that, according to the *Tractatus*, only a linguistic string with a sense (including one structured so as to cancel itself out) is a proposition. Thus, unlike senseless propositions that say nothing but nonetheless show something (that is, *that* they say nothing) nonsense *neither says nor shows anything*. Nonsense, in other words, is *not propositional*.

7 There is no such thing as 'thinking what cannot be said', for 'a thought is [simply] a proposition with a sense' (TLP 4).

8 Hence, any thought that appears to fall outside it can only be a *semblance* of thought, for there is no thought that cannot be thought.

9 On the centrality of the general propositional form to Wittgenstein's aims in the *Tractatus* see Cora Diamond's 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*', in R. Heinrich and H. Vetter (eds), *Bilder der Philosophie, Wiener Reihe*, **5** (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 1991), section 1. This is reprinted in A. Crary and R. Read (eds), *The New Wittgenstein*, (London: Routledge, 2000).

10 Hacker, *Insight and Illusion, op. cit.*, n. 3, pp. 18–19. See also pp.18–26.

11 Ibid., pp. 22 and 26.

12 Ibid., p. 22.

13 Ibid., p. 18ff.

14 Defending the *Tractatus* from its appropriation by the Vienna Circle, Hacker claims 'Wittgenstein did think, when he wrote the Tractatus, that there were ineffable metaphysical necessities', (ibid., p. 54). Peter Geach also maintains that language manifests 'necessities founded deep in the nature of things' in 'Saying and Showing in Frege and Wittgenstein', in J. Hintikka (ed.), *Essays on Wittgenstein in Honour of G.H. von Wright, Acta Philosophica Fennica*, **28** (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1976), pp. 54–70.

15 'Philosophers try to say what may only be shown, and what they say, being nonsense, does not even show what they try to say' (Hacker, *Insight and Illusion, op. cit.*, n. 3, p. 18).

16 Ibid., pp. 18–19.

17 Ibid., p. 19.

18 Ibid., pp. 19–22.

19 Ibid., p. 20. The relevant background on the picture theory and the apparent 'logical atomism' of the *Tractatus* may be found in Hacker's *Insight and Illusion, op. cit.*, n. 3, or Malcolm's *Nothing is Hidden*, op. cit., n. 5, or Anthony Kenny's Wittgenstein (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973). For a contrasting view, see Hide Ishiguro's 'Use and Reference of Names' in Winch, *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein (op. cit.*, n. 4), p. 35.

20 Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, op. cit., n. 3, pp. 19–20.

21 Ibid., p. 20.

22 Ibid., p. 18.

23 One of the ironies of the debate between Hacker and Diamond is that Diamond has done far more than Hacker to show how nonsense can be 'illuminating' *despite being devoid of cognitive content*. Her claim is not that one may *understand* nonsense, but rather that nonsense can carry the *semblance* of an argument that allows one to *think* one is following it and so can deliver a reader from the beginning to the end of a text. See Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op. cit.*, n. 4, Introduction II, p. 34; the account of 'Riddle-Reasoning' in ch. 10; and the discussion of imaginatively entering into the nonsense another takes for sense in 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method', *op. cit.*, n. 9.

24 Hacker claims that we may 'apprehend' that there is something which such nonsense is trying, but failing, to say. On this point see James Conant's 'The Search for Logically Alien Thought: Descartes, Kant, Frege and the Tractatus', *Philosophical Topics*, **20** (1), 1991, pp. 101–80, especially pp. 136–46. This is an analysis of what is wrong with the idea that we may somehow 'apprehend' what we cannot 'comprehend'. Conant argues that this ultimately relies on the incoherent and psychologistic notion that we can *think that* there is something we cannot think – that is, that there is something which *we* cannot think because it eludes *our* thought (and not because it simply isn't a thought at all).

25 Diamond, 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method', *op. cit.*, n. 9, p. 198.

26 Ibid., 198–99.

27 This is Ogden's translation of the German '*Was sich überhaupt sagen lässt, lässt sich klar sagen; und wovon man nicht reden kann, darüber muss man schweigen*' (TLP, preface, ii). Pears and McGuinness render this as: 'what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence'. I have used Ogden since Pears and McGuinness tend to load the translation with a greater sense of there being *something* substantive which is 'passed over' than is present in the German.

28 Hacker, *Insight and Illusion, op. cit.*, n. 3, p. 25.

29 See James Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense in Frege and Early Wittgenstein' in Crary and Read, *The New Wittgenstein, op. cit.*, n. 9, p. 177.

30 One danger of speaking of *the* 'Conant–Diamond reading' is that it risks collapsing the differences between them. Whilst they are substantially in agreement, Diamond's interests in the *Tractatus* might be characterized as more ethical than Conant's, and Conant more focused on philosophical authorship than Diamond. Nonetheless, I shall employ this shorthand unless a clear difference would be obscured as a result.

31 On this 'frame' see Diamond's 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method', *op. cit.*, n. 9, pp. 55–59; and James Conant's 'Throwing Away the Top of the Ladder', *Yale Review*, **79**, 1991, especially pp. 344–47.

32 See Diamond, 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method', *op. cit.*, n. 9, pp. 194–98.

33 Cora Diamond has pointed out to me, in correspondence, that this now standard translation of '*überwinden*' in TLP 6.54 (*Er muss diese Sätze überwinden*) as 'He must 'transcend' these propositions' is inadequate in so far as it robs the word of any hint of struggle (and hence of any suggestion of a need to struggle with Wittgenstein's propositions). This would be apparent were a more literal, everyday translation of '*überwinden*', such as 'overcome', employed.

34 'Throwing Away the Ladder: How to Read the *Tractatus*', originally appeared in *Philosophy*, **63**, 1988. This paper now forms Chapter 6 of Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit, op. cit.*, n. 4. All references will be to the latter.

35 Diamond, 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method', *op. cit.*, n. 9, p. 194; see pp. 194–201 in particular.

36 Hacker, *Insight and Illusion, op. cit.*, n. 3, p. 26.

37   After this remark Hacker immediately asserts – presumably expressing what he takes Wittgenstein to have believed: 'the pseudo-propositions of the *Tractatus* lead one to see the world aright, from a correct logical point of view' (ibid., p. 26).

38   This already suggests the kind of consequences that Conant and Diamond's reading of the *Tractatus* will have for reconsidering its relation to the *Investigations*. See, for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. R. Rhees and G.E.M Anscombe, trans. G.E.M Anscombe, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), § 109: 'We may not advance any kind of theory ... We must do away with all explanation and description alone must take its place .... The problems are [dis]solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known.' Whilst the method described is clearly very different, the aspiration to *dissolve* philosophical problems by making our relation to our words perspicuous is substantially in accord with the *Tractatus*.

39   Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, *op. cit.*, n. 3, pp. 23 and 54.

40   Thus Hacker writes: 'Metaphysical necessity is *ineffable*, but is *shown* by empirical propositions, namely by *features* (logico-syntactical forms) of their constituent symbols' (ibid., p. 51).

41   Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, *op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 194.

42   Ibid., p. 195.

43   Ibid., pp. 194–96.

44   Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, *op. cit.*, n. 3, p. 19.

45   Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, *op. cit.*, n. 4, p. 195. See also 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method', *op. cit.*, n. 9, in which Diamond discusses this notion of imagining oneself into the position which the utterer of philosophical nonsense believes they occupy and from which, as it were, they try to peer back at the world as if from outside it.

46   Charting Wittgenstein's relation to Frege is beyond the scope of this paper. The most relevant orthodox account of this is Geach's 'Saying and Showing', *op. cit.*, n. 14. For the Conant and Diamond reply see Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, *op. cit.*, n. 4, chs 2–4 and Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense', *op. cit.*, n. 29.

47   Of course, this is one slogan traditionally employed to express Wittgenstein's views on meaning in the *Investigations*, further indicating a generally underplayed concordance between the two works.

48   This is a reworking of Frege's 'context principle' from the *Grundlagen*: 'never [...] ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition.' See Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, trans. J.L. Austin (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1980), p. x. In the *Tractatus* this entails that the meaning of words cannot be determined in advance of the sense of the proposition as a whole in which they occur. For an early, 'anti-orthodox', discussion of the relation of Wittgenstein's conception of propositional sense and the reference of names in the Tractatus to Frege's context principle see Ishiguro's 'Use and Reference of Names', *op. cit.*, n. 19, pp. 20–25.

49   If we wanted to know what, if anything, it does mean we would have to begin by considering the context that prompted a speaker to give voice to it. That is, what might someone uttering these words, combined in this way, mean in this situation?

50   For an account of how logical notation becomes, in Wittgenstein, a tool of philosophical therapy which may be used to free ourselves from the hold that sentences, by which we have failed to mean anything, have upon us, see James Conant's 'Must We Show What We Cannot Say?', in R. Fleming and M. Payne (eds), *The Senses of Stanley Cavell*, Bucknell Review (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989), pp. 258–60.

51   See, for example, Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, *op. cit.*, n. 4, pp. 195–98.

52   See James Conant's genealogy of this conception of logic in 'The Search for Logically Alien Thought', *op. cit.*, n. 24.

53   The realm in which, according to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, *op. cit.*, n. 38, problems arise when our language 'idles' (§ 132) or our words have been divorced from any context of *significant* use (§ 116). Or, as § 38 puts it: 'philosophical problems arise when language goes *on holiday*'.

54   Ibid., § 464.

55   Thus one can see Conant and Diamond's emphasis on *how to read* the *Tractatus* in the light of Cavell's writings on perfectionism and the kind of demand for transformation which perfectionist texts make upon their readers. This theme pervades Cavell's work, but see, for example, his 'Existentialism and Analytic Philosophy', in *Themes Out of School* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), especially § 3.

56   On this point see Conant's 'The Search for Logically Alien Thought', *op. cit.*, n. 24, pp. 136–47.

57   Hence the aim of the *Tractatus* – to bring one's philosophical interlocutors, and the philosopher in oneself, *satisfaction* – is consistent with that of the Investigations. See, for example, Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, *op. cit.*, n. 38, § 133: 'The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question'.

58   See Conant's 'Putting Two and Two Together: Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and the Point of View for Their Work as Authors', in T. Tessin and M. von der Ruhr (eds), *Philosophy and the Grammar of Religious Belief* (London: St Martin's Press, 1995), for a comparison of the authorial strategy evinced by Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. In particular Conant shows how what Kierkegaard has to say on the delicate handling required to disabuse a reader of an illusory point of view may be fruitfully applied to the strategy of the *Tractatus*.

59   Given that, for Wittgenstein, this means working in the tradition inaugurated by Frege and Russell's attempt to construct an ideal philosophical notation, his target is the illusory self-understanding to which we are always at risk of succumbing in such an undertaking. That not only is everyday language somehow defective but that were we able to achieve an ideal notation then the true logical form of the world would finally be looking back at us.

60   Whether or not we take it to be a tautology, according to Conant, will depend largely on *us* in the final analysis: that is, on the kind of sense we are likely to think we can perceive in it when trying to make sense of Wittgenstein's book. See Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense', *op. cit.*, n. 29, fn. 102, pp. 216–17.

61   See n. 23 above.

62   For a similar point see fn. 78 of Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense', *op. cit.*, n. 29, p. 209.

63   See Hacker's 'Was He Trying to Whistle It?', in Crary and Read, *The New Wittgenstein*, *op. cit.*, n. 9; and Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense', *op. cit.*, n. 29, p. 196.

64   Again, compare this to Wittgenstein's declaration at *Philosophical Investigations*, *op. cit.*, n. 38, § 464: 'My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense'.

65   Conant brings this out in 'The Search for Logically Alien Thought', *op. cit.*, n. 24, and 'Elucidation and Nonsense', *op. cit.*, n. 29. In both, Conant traces the minutae of Wittgenstein's response to the tensions he found in Frege's thinking. The latter article in particular suggests that Wittgenstein resolves a tension between a 'deep' and an 'austere' conception of both nonsense and elucidation in favour of an austere conception in his own work. Following Diamond, Conant singles out Frege's debate with Kerry in 'On Concept and Object' (in P.T. Geach and M. Black (eds), *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984)) as a paper in which Frege's

conflicting uses of these terms can be clearly seen. On this point see also the early chapters in Diamond's *The Realistic Spirit*, *op. cit.*, n. 4, and Joan Weiner, *Frege in Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), especially ch. 6.

66   See Conant, 'Must We Show What We Cannot Say?', *op. cit.*, n. 50, and 'Putting Two and Two Together', *op. cit.*, n. 58, and 'Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Nonsense', in T. Cohen, P. Guyer, and H. Putman (eds), *Pursuits of Reason* (Lubbock: Texas Technical University Press, 1992). These parallels between the strategies of philosophical authorship evinced by Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard – specifically, whether or not we may take their statements at face value – open on to questions about the extent to which such concerns about philosophical method and authorship also figure prominently in the writing of Frege. See n. 65 above and n. 72 below.

67   See Hacker, 'Was He Trying to Whistle It?' *op. cit.*, n. 63. Hacker's response is collected, along with essays by Conant and Diamond and related essays contesting the standard portrayal of Wittgenstein's philosophy in Crary and Read, *The New Wittgenstein*, *op. cit.*, n. 9. This collection is the best place to turn for an overview of this debate. Unfortunately it appeared after this paper was written: all references to Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense in Early Frege and Wittgenstein' above were originally taken from an unpublished draft of that paper entitled 'Elucidation in Early Frege and Wittgenstein'. There is a second instalment of Hacker's response entitled 'When the Whistling Had to Stop' forthcoming.

68   Crary and Read, *The New Wittgenstein, op. cit.*, n. 9, p. 360.

69   Ibid., pp. 360–62.

70   Evidence of this process emerges in the footnotes to Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense', *op. cit.*, n. 29. See, for example, fn. 68, 96 and especially 102. Lynette Reid raises similar worries to Hacker's about 'methodological inconsistency' in 'Wittgenstein's Ladder: The Tractatus and Nonsense', *Philosophical Investigations*, **21** (2), pp. 97–151, to which Conant may also be responding.

71   See Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense', *op. cit.*, n. 29, fn. 102, pp. 216–17. This adjustment has one further, unanticipated, benefit for the Conant–Diamond reading – namely, that if the *entire* body of the text is no longer construed as ironic 'transitional' nonsense then, presumably, the entire frame need not, *mutandis mutandi*, be construed as straightforwardly sensical. This creates greater scope to deal with remarks in the prefatory frame that might otherwise present their account with obvious difficulties – such as Wittgenstein's claim that 'the *truth* of the thoughts communicated here seems to me unassailable and definitive' (TLP, preface, viii). For an account that already departs from a hard and fast demarcation between a sensical frame and nonsensical contents see J. Floyd's 'The Uncaptive Eye: Solipsism in Wittgenstein's *Tractaus*', in L.S. Rouner (ed.), *Loneliness*, Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), p. 87.

72   That Hacker does not ask this question is all the more surprising given the weight that Conant and Diamond put on Frege's paradoxical nonsensical response to Kerry: 'The concept horse is not a concept.' See, for example, Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense', *op. cit.*, n. 29, especially pp. 185–89.

73   Hacker is ready to accept the consequences of his interpretation for Wittgenstein's text, claiming that there is no reason to assume that the *Tractatus* is an internally consistent work. See his 'Was he Trying to Whistle it?', *op. cit.*, n. 63, p. 370. One response to this is to see the *Tractatus* as Wittgenstein's response to his *own* temptations to theory-building (of the kind evinced in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Notebooks, 1914–1916*, ed. G.H. von Wright and G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969) and the more

Schopenhauerian aspects of the *Tractatus*), requiring that the text contain both what appears to be an elaborate theory and the seeds of that theory's destruction.

74   On this point see p. 191 and fn. 77 to Conant's 'Elucidation and Nonsense', *op. cit.*, n. 29 and the references to Cora Diamond's idea of imaginatively entering into another's nonsense and her conception of 'riddle reasoning' in n. 23 above.

75   To support this claim, Hacker cites 'Some Remarks on Logical Form' in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951*, ed. J. Klagge and A. Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993) and Desmond Lee's notes of Wittgenstein's Cambridge Lectures from c.1930–31 in Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930–32, From the Notes of John King and Desmond Lee*, ed. D. Lee (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980). See also 'The Colour Exclusion Problem' and 'Dismantling the *Tractatus*' in Hacker, *Insight and Illusion, op. cit.*, n. 3, pp. 108–20.

76   This is the point at which Conant, in particular, has had recourse to Kierkegaard's pseudonymous project, particularly as set out in 'Putting Two and Two Together', *op. cit.*, n. 58. See Søren A. Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, trans. W. Lowrie (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). But one hermeneutic question this appeal raises, is why we should accept *this* statement as either sincere or straightforward when such hermeneutic scepticism is levelled at the claims advanced elsewhere in his work. That is, whether, for all Conant's intense formal scrutiny of philosophical works, this appeal to the author's real – that is, truly intended – meaning falls foul of a kind of 'intentional fallacy'.

77   For example, Hacker concludes his account with the following citation from *Culture and Value*: 'I might say: if the place I want to get to could only be reached by a ladder, I would give up trying to get there. For the place I really have to reach is a place I must already be at now. Anything that I might reach by climbing a ladder does not interest me' (in *The New Wittgenstein, op. cit.*, n. 9, p. 382). Hacker takes this rejection of the ladder metaphor to support his understanding of Wittgenstein's later view of the *Tractatus*. But it is equally, if not more, compatible with Conant and Diamond's reading. For they could respond that there is, in the last analysis, no ladder in the *Tractatus* – just the *appearance* of one. Hence, when the reader finally throws the ladder away they are left where they were before but in a different spirit – that is, without a certain kind of hankering. This thought complements many of the remarks in the *Investigations* about bringing philosophy peace. Examples such as this, which can be read in two entirely different ways depending on the interpretation guiding the reading, suggest that what Conant and Diamond are after, above all, is a kind of aspect-shift with respect to Wittgenstein's philosophy as a whole.

78   But see, on this point, the essays collected in Part I, Crary and Read, *The New Wittgenstein, op. cit.*, n. 9.

79   This is to adapt a term of Cavell's. See, for example, part IV of Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

80   This may shed further light on a remark from the book's preface which ought to trouble supporters of the Conant–Diamond reading: 'the *truth* of the thoughts communicated here seems to me unassailable and definitive. I am, therefore, of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally resolved.' See n. 71 above.

81   Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value, op. cit.*, n. 1, p. 7e.