

*Adrian Moore's Wittgenstein:  
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ABSTRACT. In this paper, I respond critically but sympathetically to Adrian Moore's treatment of the early and the later Wittgenstein in his book *The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics*. With respect to the later work, I utilize Cavell's reading of the status of the first-person plural in Wittgenstein to undermine Bernard Williams's interpretation of it, and thereby to question Moore's skepticism that the later Wittgenstein can accommodate the possibility of radical conceptual innovation (the Novelty Question). With respect to the early work, I utilize a resolute reading of the Tractarian treatment of value to contest Moore's understanding of the way in which transcendental idealism is woven into that treatment, and so into the book's more general treatment of sense-making.

I'm sure that I won't be the first participant in this symposium to express my admiration for Adrian Moore's achievement in finding a framework that is at once sufficiently precise and sufficiently flexible not only to accommodate the sheer variety of his selected contributors to the evolution of modern metaphysics,<sup>1</sup> but also to present their contributions in ways that bring out the extent to which each can be

seen to form part of a number of overlapping conversations—about metaphysics, philosophy, and modernity.

Despite the awe-inspiring range of Moore's reference and the even-handedness of his treatment of every author falling within it, however, the figure of Wittgenstein stands out as at least *primus inter pares*. For not only is Wittgenstein the only author to whom two chapters are devoted; Moore also declares that, of all his protagonists, it is the later Wittgenstein whose views he finds most compelling (*EMM*, 267); and (to my ears at least), Moore's way of characterizing metaphysics as an intellectual enterprise—namely, as “[the attempt] to make sense of . . . the sense that one makes of things” (*EMM*, 7), call it trying to make sense of our ways of making sense—has a decidedly Wittgensteinian ring to it (think, for instance, of Peter Winch's decision to entitle a collection of his essays *Trying to Make Sense*<sup>2</sup>).

I propose to respond to this relative preeminence of my assigned author by addressing both of the chapters devoted to him; by addressing them in reverse order, I hope to bring out more clearly certain points of specific difference between Moore's way of making sense of Wittgenstein, both late and early, and my own—differences that nevertheless seem to me to disclose a single underlying issue of more general significance, and in so doing confirm rather than undermine the fruitfulness of Moore's interpretation.

## I. “WHO ARE WE?”: THE LATER WITTGENSTEIN

I don't imagine for a moment that Moore would deny that his treatment of the later Wittgenstein is importantly shaped by what he has learned from Bernard Williams. For chapter 10 pivots from exegesis to critical engagement by raising the worry that its subject is committed to a version of transcendental idealism—a claim that Williams influentially advanced; and although Moore claims that Wittgenstein can avoid the charge, it is only at the price of entangling himself in another problem (or set of problems) which arise because of “how self-consciousness about our sense-making can militate against self-confidence in it” (*EMM*, 272)—a problematic that is also strongly associated with Williams, most explicitly in his book *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*.<sup>3</sup> From this Moore develops what he takes to be the most fundamental objection to Wittgenstein's views: that he faces a difficulty in distinguishing between our everyday ways of making sense and our (no less common or pervasive) ways of mischaracterizing or perverting those ways, a problem connected with his hostility to what one might call metaphysically driven conceptual innovation, and ultimately with his ‘restrictive’ conception of what philosophy (both good and bad) can be. In terms of the book's overarching framework, this amounts to an expression of skepticism on Moore's part about Wittgenstein's implicit answer to the Novelty Question: “Is there scope for our making sense of things in a way that is radically new, or are we limited to making sense of things in broadly the same way as we already do?” (*EMM*, 9).

In my view, the view that Wittgenstein faces a difficulty here is not compulsory; and its non-compulsoriness relates to an issue that is central to Williams's mistaken suspicion that Wittgenstein's later work threatens to crystallize into a form of transcendental idealism of the first-person plural—what Williams calls the “curious and unsatisfactory” use that Wittgenstein makes of ‘we’ (WI<sup>4</sup>, 153). In other words, I agree with the assumption implicit in Moore's dialectical derivation of this objection to Wittgenstein's later work (namely, that it is rooted in his way of using the first-person plural); but I would contend that a different interpretation of that origin will show that, and why, the objection in fact carries no force. This contention draws on criticisms of Williams's interpretation of Wittgenstein that I published a few years ago<sup>5</sup>; but I hope that its reiteration in this context will cast new light on argument and context alike.

For those of you unfamiliar with the relevant Williams essay, here is a passage from it in which he characterizes the mode of idealism that supposedly underpins the later Wittgenstein's philosophical enterprise:

Under the idealist interpretation, it is not a question of our recognizing that we are one lot in the world among others, and . . . coming to understand and explain how *our* language conditions *our* view of the world, while that of others conditions theirs differently. Rather, what the world is for us is shown by the fact that we can make sense of some things and not of others: or rather—to lose the last remnants of an empirical and third-personal view—in the fact that some things and not others make sense. Any empirical discovery we could make about our view of the world . . . would itself be a fact which we were able to understand in terms of, and only in terms of, our view of the world; and anything which radically we could not understand because it lay outside the boundary of our language would not be something we could come to explain our non-understanding of—it could not become clear to us what was wrong with it, or with us. (WI, 152)

Williams assumes throughout that there is a single, fundamental or determining pattern of use of ‘we’ to be found in Wittgenstein's later work: and since he thinks that use cannot be taken to refer to one human group as opposed to another, it can only refer to the plural idealist ‘we’ to which there is no contrasting subject, whether individual or collective. But why assume that Wittgenstein's ‘we’ has a single, fundamental pattern of use throughout his later writings, or indeed within the *Investigations*? The sheer variety of phenomena referred to by such concepts as ‘language-game’, ‘practice’, and ‘form of life’ rather suggests a correspondingly various range of reference for his ‘we’—from picking out the participants in highly localized and specific language-games (whether real or imaginary) from those who do not so participate (e.g., those who pray, or those whose concept of pain yokes together internal pains and those engendered by external injuries, as opposed to sharply distinguishing them; cf. *Zettel* 380<sup>6</sup>), to picking out patterns of linguistic activity that appear to be constitutive of anything we could recognize as part of a human form of life at all (e.g., those capable of describing an object or state of

affairs, or of giving expression to their pain). Examples of the former kind speak against assuming uniformity of meaning and use across contexts—the “I’ll teach you differences” aspect of Wittgenstein’s method; examples of the latter kind show us that some aspects of our life with language are far less easy to imagine otherwise than might at first appear—the “the river-bed is not the river” aspect of his method. I know of no obvious reason why it should be illegitimate for Wittgenstein to deploy the term ‘we’ right across the spectrum of such examples. And if so, then careful attention to the specific context of the pronoun’s employment will be vital in understanding its specific philosophical significance.

That said, however, Williams’s resonant way of imagining the later philosophy’s first-person plural investigation of the limits of sense—as a matter of “moving around reflectively inside our view of things and sensing when one began to be near the edge by the increasing incomprehensibility of things regarded from whatever way-out point of view one had moved into” (WI, 153)—does, I think, cast important light on a central aspect of Wittgenstein’s use of ‘we’. For it depicts grammatical investigation as essentially experimental, a matter of trial and error, a procedure which leaves the exact point at which intelligibility runs out as an open question, not to be settled in advance of testing specific claims to have located those points.

This vision of Wittgenstein’s later thinking patently conflicts with other ways of imagining grammatical investigations—ways which think of the grammar under investigation as having always already set limits to which our investigations can at most and at best recall us, as if returning us to the details of a book of rules, submission to which is a condition of responsibility as a member of the linguistic community. We might think of this as tending to transform the personal force of Wittgenstein’s ‘we’ into the essentially impersonal ‘one’; more precisely, one might say that the limits of this ‘we’ are imagined as having been determined prior to any use of it in grammatical remarks. It is the transitional moment captured in Williams’s remark, purportedly uttered from within the developing perspective of transcendental idealism, that “what the world is for us is shown by the fact that we can make sense of some things and not of others: or rather—to lose the last remnants of an empirical and third-personal view—in the fact that some things and not others make sense” (WI, 152).

Such an impersonal use of ‘we’ might well appear both curious and unsatisfactory to a commentator—to the point of forcing upon him the conclusion that its apparently ungrounded claim to authority could only be imagined to be justifiable if it is thought of as registering the existence of a plural subjectivity whose limits are fixed independently of experience and in such a way as to include all possible language-using creatures. Williams’s construction of a first-person plural form of transcendental idealism would then amount to an attempt to envision the kind of linguistic subject who would be constituted by subjection to such a rulebook. His retention within that vision of an element of exploration, experimentation, and imagination may threaten its internal coherence; but it shows an admirable

awareness on his part of an aspect of Wittgenstein's use of 'we' that is not only absent from, but importantly repressed by, those who envisage grammar as an impersonal determination of sense.

This aspect is captured in Cavell's characterization of the philosophical 'we' as entering a claim to community:

Someone may wish to object: "But such claims as 'We say . . .', 'We are not going to call . . .', and so forth, are not merely claims about what *I* say and mean and do, but about what *others* say and mean and do as well. And how can I speak for others on the basis of knowledge of myself?" The question is: Why are some claims about myself expressed in the form "We . . .?" . . . Then suppose it is asked: "But how do I know others speak as I do?" About some things I know they do not; I have some knowledge of my idiosyncrasy. But if the question means "How do I know at all that others speak as I do?" then the answer is, I do not. I may find out that the most common concept is not used by us in the same way. And one of Wittgenstein's questions is: What would it be like to find this out? (AWLP<sup>7</sup>, 67–68)

On Cavell's reading, then—surely not unfamiliar to Williams, who dedicated his book on Descartes to Cavell—the first-person plural form of grammatical remarks is not meant to presuppose agreement on the part of some given range of interlocutors, but rather to test the extent of such agreement by articulating the philosopher's individual judgments about the points at which sense runs out, and inviting the other or others to disclose or discover whether their individual judgments match, and so whether a community of speakers exists (in this specifiable respect). This aspect of his method is what gives the question of interpersonal relations so prominent a place in his philosophical writings—as if his interest in that field is in part to be understood as an acknowledgment of what is controversial in that method, and an expression of a desire to reflect philosophically upon it (to make the sheer possibility of doing philosophy his way a central topic within its work—the medium as the question rather than the message).

Elsewhere, Cavell explicitly aligns this reading of the Wittgensteinian 'we' with Kant's distinction between reflective and determinant judgment, as if grammatical remarks were akin to aesthetic judgments; and he thereby makes patent the internal relation between this conception of grammatical investigation and the imagination. The point of this alignment is not, of course, that grammar is made up as we go along—Humpty Dumpty's theory of meaning, as it were; it is rather that sense can be made wherever two competent speakers find that they can make it, which means finding that they can make sense of each other, and can go on together from their findings. On this picture of the limits of sense, they do not fence us in, because they are not so much fixed as to be fixed.

Wittgenstein's 'we' thus devolves an ineliminable moment of responsibility upon every speaker who undertakes to employ it—an accountability for one's ways of going on, and refusing to go on, with words that cannot ultimately be sloughed off on anyone or anything outside the interlocutory relationship within which that

'we' is employed. It thereby returns us to an implication of Wittgenstein's repeated disavowal of any body of distinctively philosophical expertise—his conception of philosophical authority as finding its ground in the capacities of any competent speaker. For so understood, a philosopher's judgment of what makes sense has no less, but also no more, authority than that of any speaker; and so his interlocutor has just as much authority to contest or revise that judgment. The philosopher's claim to community can only be shown to be justified insofar as his interlocutor acknowledges it—recognizes himself in the other's expression of his own sense that sense is no longer being made, here and now. This is the reverse of the idea that certain things just make sense, and certain other things don't; and its conception of linguistic community is one which demands not the subordination of individual judgment but its full and free expression. What turns out to be ours is both, and can only be, yours and mine. But who exactly 'we' may be is itself at issue in every philosophical exchange; it is neither transcendently nor empirically predetermined, but rather to be worked out in the work of philosophy.

If Moore is willing to take this reading of Wittgenstein's 'we' seriously, then it might impel us to question whether Wittgenstein's many later pronouncements about the nature and limits of philosophy (what Moore calls his 'philosophy of philosophy') really have the conservative or even reactionary implications they are so often saddled with. For if the linguistic facts are as this reading would have it, then quietly weighing them will amount to something very different from a process of reaffirming given grammatical boundaries. And it's also worth noting that this reading of Wittgenstein's 'we' hangs together with a reading of the normativity of grammar according to which how the Novelty Question is to be formulated (whether or not Wittgenstein is to be rightly regarded as offering a conservative response to it) becomes a pressing matter. For example, if Wittgenstein is held to be hostile to conceptual innovation, then in elucidating that category we should not run together "the introduction of new concepts, the extension of old concepts to new cases and the fashioning of new links between concepts, whether old or new" (*EMM*, 275), as if anyone hostile to one such exercise were necessarily hostile to all. Is the extension of old concepts to new cases the creation of a new concept, or rather a (potentially misleading) characterization of what any concept must allow if it is to count as a concept at all—what Cavell would call the projectiveness of words? And can such projections be made without thereby making new links with cognate concepts, each of which thereby makes manifest its own projective powers? If such interrelated projections are part of what is mastered in mastering the uses of words, then the introduction of new concepts must be something else again; indeed, we might ask ourselves whether the apparently obvious opposition between old and new (old and new concepts, old and new cases, old and new links) around which the Novelty Question is here articulated itself succeeds in making sufficient sense for us to be confident that we understand the question, let alone that we know how the later Wittgenstein would answer it.

## II. “MAKING NONSENSE”: THE EARLY WITTGENSTEIN

My Cavellian way of understanding the later Wittgenstein’s use of ‘we’ locates philosophy and metaphysics squarely in the field of interpersonal relations; so it can sharpen our eye for an analogous dimension of the early Wittgenstein’s conception of those enterprises, and thereby at once reinforce and offer a means of extending Moore’s original and illuminating way of characterizing the *Tractatus*.<sup>8</sup>

By distinguishing between ineffable truths and ineffable states of understanding, Moore’s ninth chapter constructs a reading of the book that combines what he calls the traditional and the new ways of interpreting it, the conflict between which has dominated so much recent discussion. He claims that, whereas the idea of a truth that cannot be put into words *is* anathema to the author of the *Tractatus*, there is no textual basis for believing that the same is true of the idea that there are states of understanding that cannot be put into words (think, for example, of understanding a piece of music, or how to ride a bicycle). Consequently, when advocates of the new reading argue that there is nothing that cannot be put into words, and that the *Tractatus* conveys nothing whatsoever, we can construe the ‘things’ in question as truths; whereas when advocates of the traditional reading argue that there are ‘things’ that cannot be put into words, and that what the *Tractatus* conveys is ‘things’ of that sort, we can construe the ‘things’ in question as states of understanding.

In effect, then, Moore’s *Tractatus* aspires to impart practical understanding or know-how. Its focus is the practical, and so non-propositional, understanding that finds expression in our practices of propositional sense-making. But its aim is precisely to make sense of these sense-making practices; and this understanding is itself practical—the kind that finds expression not in words but in the practical activity of good philosophizing (that is, the clarifying of propositional sense and the resisting of illusions of propositional sense). But since illusions of propositional sense-making tend to be generated within the practice of philosophizing as well as in our everyday life with language, then part of learning what it is to philosophize well in this area will be learning how not to be seduced into thinking that the nonsense that accrues from bad philosophy is what it presents itself as being. And Wittgenstein conveys that piece of practical know-how by writing in such a way as to teach us how not to be seduced into thinking that his book is the network of truth-evaluable propositions that it presents itself as being; by assuming the role of the bad philosopher, he aims to give us a practical demonstration of why, how, and where good philosophy needs to be practiced. But insofar as such an understanding of the *Tractatus* is itself a species of practical knowledge, a matter of knowing how to read and make use of it, it is a very real question whether it can be put into words; and insofar as understanding the *Tractatus* is a matter of understanding its author (the author who says that “Anyone who understands me eventually recognizes [my elucidatory propositions] as nonsensical,” *TLP*, 6.54), then it is an equally real question whether that state of understanding Wittgenstein can be put into words.

In short, on Moore's reading, the problems involved in understanding Wittgenstein's early philosophy are essentially connected to a problem of interpersonal understanding. We must not only grasp the ineffable practical understanding of propositional sense-making that this author aspires to convey; we must also try to make sense of his deliberate deployments of nonsense in so doing. That means trying to make sense of certain kinds of nonsense-making, which means trying to make sense of someone who appears to believe that producing nonsense is the only, or at least the best, way of conveying his ineffable understanding of what it is to make propositional sense of things.

Moore's view is that transcendental idealism is deeply implicated in the various kinds of nonsense-making we have so far distinguished. This is because we are addressing the limits of logic, and the temptation to treat these limits as limitations is something that can infiltrate not only our attempts to characterize them, but also our attempts to expose those misbegotten attempts as nonsensical: as Moore puts it "if 'thinks greenness' is nonsense, then so is 'There is no such thing as thinking greenness'" (*EMM*, 244). In other words, transcendental idealism is exactly the kind of nonsense that is produced when we attempt to express in words our ineffable understanding of what it is to make propositional sense of things.

But Moore also thinks that the author of the *Tractatus* believes that the same holds true when we try to express in words our understanding of other ways in which we make sense of things—ways other than propositional sense-making. Focusing particularly on evaluative matters (articulated in the *Tractatus* by talk of feeling the world as whole, experiencing its beauty, coming to grips with the problem of life and its meaning, and so on), Moore characterizes them as ways of sense-making that extend beyond the deployment of nonsense but that "sometimes find apparent or attempted expression there" (*EMM*, 250); and when they do so, transcendental idealism plays a central and positively insightful role. For we cannot do justice to such evaluative sense-making without upholding a fundamental separation between fact and value; and transcendental idealism gives us a way of construing this separation in terms of the world's exclusion of value, or more generally of whatever can be affected by acts of the will (as opposed to thought). Endorsing such a construal, Moore says, frees us to see the whole of the world in each of its parts, to reflect on the possibilities that each thing affords, and on their relation one to another and each to all, thereby increasing the sense we make of things, the meaning that the world might be said to possess, the value it might be said to have, and our own happiness as willers (*EMM*, 252). "The[s]e are, for Wittgenstein, genuine insights that lead us to construe the world's limits as limitations . . . , [and so] to endorse this version of transcendental idealism. They are ineffable insights into what it is to think, into what it is to exercise the will, and into what separates these" (*EMM*, 251). In short: according to Moore, the early Wittgenstein's endorsement of transcendental idealism is as tightly woven into his attempts to make sense of evaluative sense-making as it is into his attempts to make sense of propositional sense-making (and indeed gives us additional reason thereby to believe that transcendental idealism is ineliminable in the latter case).



I have a great deal of sympathy with Moore's conviction that the ethical dimension of transcendental idealism is deeply significant for the author of the *Tractatus*; but I fear that the precise nature of that significance risks being missed if (as Moore does) we regard transcendental idealist pseudo-expressions as having an essentially parallel role in our attempts to make sense of evaluative sense-making on the one hand, and our attempts to make sense of propositional sense-making on the other. The best way I can see to clarify this anxiety is to utilize a point of reference that Moore himself adverts to, both in his book and in an article on the same issues that was published after that book. In that article, he tells us in a footnote that the *Tractatus* treatment of ethics runs parallel to that advanced in Wittgenstein's 1929 lecture on ethics, and that an article by Cora Diamond—which addresses both book and lecture—"includes ideas that are very much in line with what I am arguing" (ATTI, fn 39<sup>9</sup>). I want to suggest that, although those ideas do support Moore's reading in certain ways, they also diverge from them in ways that might be of real significance.

Diamond begins by underlining the distinction Wittgenstein draws in his between two kinds of evaluative judgment—the relative and the absolute. If I say that this lectern is good, I mean that it serves its specific purposes well. I am thus judging its merits relative to that purpose; so you can always reject the evaluation if you have no interest in that purpose, and such judgments can always be recast so as to bring out their implicit, internal relation to matters of fact ("this is the right lectern to choose if you happen to have a certain desire—that of giving a smooth and efficient talk"). Judgments of absolute value are very different: they make no reference to a goal or purpose that you might intelligibly reject, and are not grounded in some desire that might be otherwise (and so might permit you to reject it). We do not, for example, regard it as legitimate for someone to defend herself against criticism for telling a lie by saying that she has no desire to behave well; on the contrary, we think she should behave well whether she wants to or not. So we cannot clarify the sense of such judgments by recasting them so as to bring out their relation to psychological matters of fact; how, then, should we understand them?

For Wittgenstein, the distinguishing mark of judgments of absolute value is precisely their failure to make sense; "I would reject every significant description [of absolute value] that anyone could possibly suggest, *ab initio*, on the grounds of its significance" (LE, 44). Hence, while coming to see the absence of sense in such talk might lead me to preface any future utterance of such phrases with words like "I am inclined to say . . .," it will not remove my inclination to utter them. Such framing would mark a certain gain in self-awareness, a liberation from un-self-consciously taking nonsense for sense; but continuing to use the sentences so framed would mark my continuing to feel that just these sentences express the sense I want to make: or rather, it would show that my intentions in uttering them were essentially incompatible with making sense. In cleaving to these words because of their absence of sense, I am refusing to accept any intelligible candidate articulation of my intention as an articulation of that intention. No assignment of meaning to my utterance will satisfy me—not because I want to assign it an

ineffable meaning, but because I find satisfaction precisely in refusing to find available assignments of meaning satisfying. But why might someone find intelligibility essentially unsatisfying here?

Note to begin with that these sentences fail to make sense in a specific way. For such talk of absolute value is modeled on talk of relative value, and yet recasts it in such a way as to strip out what gives such relative evaluations their sense. Take the happy man of the *Tractatus*: we might well feel inclined to say of him that he incarnates an attitude of satisfaction with the world as a whole. Talk of an “attitude of satisfaction with the world as a whole” is patently modeled on talk of attitudes to something in particular, some way that things are within the world that might satisfy or dissatisfy us; but no sense is thereby assigned to an attitude of dissatisfaction to the world as such, however things may be within it—so that last phrase only appears to make sense. More precisely, because such talk is both modeled on and unmoored from familiar evaluative uses, it embodies a rejection of the very way of making sense of it that its own mode of construction would invite.

The kind of meaning-assignment to absolute ethical utterances that their users thereby resist is thus that characteristic of fact-stating, empirical discourse, and in particular empirical psychological discourse. Many evaluative uses of language are (as we have seen) logically tied to the natural realm, and their sense can be clarified by bringing this out; but what Wittgenstein means by ‘absolute value’ or ‘the ethical as the mystical’ is precisely given expression by his refusal of any such relative ways of assigning evaluative sense to those terms. That refusal draws a sharp contrast between two *kinds* of evil (and hence two kinds of good): “evil [that] is . . . inconsequential . . . , something close to home . . . something [not] very bad to which one might become accustomed, and [evil as] something terrible, black, and wholly alien that you cannot even get near” (EIMT,<sup>10</sup> 166).

But since Wittgenstein marks the discontinuity by means of a refusal of, call it an operation of negation upon, judgments of relative value, he simultaneously acknowledges an underlying continuity between the two kinds of evaluation. Absolute or transcendental good or evil is thereby presented as at once absolutely out of the ordinary, and yet related to the ordinary realm of good and evil that it transcends. It is essentially irreducible to everyday moral and psychological understanding, and yet capturable only by the language appropriate to such forms of understanding; however much violence we must do to their familiar modes of use, it is precisely these words (the ones we employ to talk intelligibly about intra-worldly objects of desire and dissatisfaction) to which the violence must be done if what we intend by our utterance is to be satisfactorily articulated.

In other words, it matters that the violence is done to particular words in a particular way—that this radical exploitation of the projective potential of words (their essential capacity to transcend any given range of contexts of use) takes the form of determinate negation. If it were not, we could make no sense of the idea that our cleaving to the nonsense that results from it signified something determinate (as opposed to nothing at all). And because the violence is done to evaluative

words, and because it involves doing violence to that which makes them the words they are (to their essence as evaluations), we are inclined to regard its outcome as disclosing the true essence of value. It is as if, by severing the logical ties of relative evaluation to the factual realm, we liberate what truly distinguishes the evaluative from the factual, disclosing for the first time what truly deserves the name of value—the transcendently valuable.

If we call this a case of seeing the logical limits of relative value judgments as limitations, then we can appreciate the extent to which Diamond's reading of the early Wittgenstein on ethics is very much in line with Moore's sense of the importance of transcendental idealism in this domain. Indeed, there is a striking parallel between Wittgenstein's inclination to think that, precisely because judgments of relative value are logically tied to the empirical realm, they barely merit the term 'evaluative', and Moore's approving presentation of Wittgenstein's inclination to claim that "the only necessity is logical necessity" ("There is a good sense in which logical possibility is the *only* possibility . . . It is the only absolute possibility. The others are relative" [EMM, 233]). But it is equally essential to Diamond's reading that such nonsensical formulations are not produced solely when we attempt—as philosophers—to make sense of our evaluative ways of sense-making, as is the case (according to Moore) when we attempt to make sense of propositional sense-making. If we want to say that something is the case, we can and do go ahead and say it: genuine propositions are intelligible, possessed of sense. It is only when we attempt to articulate what it is that makes such propositions intelligible that we find ourselves impelled to use transcendental idealist pseudo-expressions. But on Diamond's view—a view amply confirmed by the 1929 lecture whose compatibility with the *Tractatus* Moore seems happy to acknowledge and exploit—it is not just our attempts to make sense of evaluative sense-making that engender nonsense of a transcendental idealist bent; the evaluative expressions of which we are attempting to make sense—expressions of absolute value—are themselves one and all nonsense. One might say that, whereas in the case of factual discourse, we are attempting to make sense of a particular way of making sense, in the case of evaluative discourse, we are attempting to make sense of a way of refusing to make sense, a way of making nonsense; and that seems to disclose a fundamental asymmetry between the role of transcendental idealism in the Tractarian account of propositions and its role in the Tractarian conception of ethics.

It's worth drawing out in conclusion one of the implications of this distinctive aspect of evaluative (non)sense-making. For it seems to entail what I see as undeniably but incomprehensibly significant may be seen by others as utterly banal—something that, if it is not reducible to the everyday, can only be a mere illusion of transcendence. Such phenomena will thereby tend to isolate individuals, disclosing others as opaque to them and themselves as opaque to those others; reality's resistance to our understanding reveals us as essentially resistant to one another's understanding. Those to whom ethics involves transcendental good and evil will seem incomprehensible to those who find nothing within them (no

impulses, intentions, or convictions) with which such deliberately nonsensical formulations might resonate; but acknowledging that one has such impulses does not mean claiming to make sense of them, but rather acknowledging a similarly incomprehensible possibility in myself. Likewise, to intuit transcendental goodness in another, say by characterizing her as satisfied with the world as a whole, is necessarily to resort to nonsense phrases, and so to register a kind of resistance to the understanding in such goodness—the sheer incomprehensibility of its realization in the world, the utter inexplicability of such radical self-abnegation in terms of our best naturalistic patterns of moral and psychological explanation—whether it is manifest in another’s will or in one’s own.

Once again, then, we find ourselves on the ground of interpersonal relations, and more specifically in an essentially exploratory stance or attitude: this is territory in which how far we can speak for others or they for us, how far we can find it possible to make sense of one another’s attractions to and aversions from nonsense, how far the ‘I’ and ‘you’ of philosophical intercourse might constitute a ‘we’, is not so much determined as essentially open to determination. And in this case, making such a determination means attempting to regard the making of nonsense as a fundamental aspect of our practices of making sense of things. Would Moore be happy to regard such claims as further extensions of the lines of interpretation that these chapters of his book so powerfully develop? Or am I speaking only for myself?

## NOTES

1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012—hereafter *EMM*.
2. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.
3. London: Fontana Press, 1985.
4. “Wittgenstein and Idealism,” in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)—hereafter *WL*.
5. “‘Hopelessly Strange’: Bernard Williams’ Portrait of Wittgenstein as a Transcendental Idealist,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 17, no. 3 (2009).
6. 2nd edition, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).
7. “On the Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy,” reprinted in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976)—hereafter *AWLP*.
8. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. Pears and B. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961)—hereafter *TLP*.
9. “Was the Author of the *Tractatus* a Transcendental Idealist?” in *Wittgenstein’s Tractatus: History and Interpretation*, ed. Sullivan and Potter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
10. Diamond, “Ethics, Imagination and the Method of the *Tractatus*,” in *The New Wittgenstein*, ed. Read and Crary (London: Routledge, 2000)—hereafter *EIMT*.