

**Cora Diamond, *Reading Wittgenstein with Anscombe, Going On to Ethics*,
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In the book *Reading Wittgenstein with Anscombe, Going On to Ethics* Cora Diamond explores a wide range of topics related to Anscombe's reading of Wittgenstein: "I learned to read Wittgenstein by reading the *Tractatus* with Anscombe's *Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*" (p. 1).

The volume is divided into three parts which consist of different essays by Diamond written between 1998 and 2009. Although the essays published in this book were written individually (pp. 1-5), the author points out that there is a unity of theme within the book, since "in reading Wittgenstein and Anscombe, we can see them thinking about thinking, and about the ways we may respond to thinking that has miscarried or gone astray" (p. 2). Diamond also explains the genesis of the contributions that make up the volume, giving the reader a tool to orientate in the text. Due to the complexity of the book – and in the interest of space –, I will attempt to provide an overview of the main themes set out in the text by following the introductory sections that Diamond offers before her essays, where she adds considerations and insights that provide a deeper understanding of the contributions.

The first part of the volume is about *Wittgenstein, Anscombe, and the Activity of Philosophy*. Diamond introduces this chapter by underlining her disagreement with Anscombe regarding her *Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (Anscombe 2001). Considering this introductory part more as an "afterword" to the three essays of this section, she points out that the main disagreement with Anscombe's reading of the *Tractatus* is a different way of understanding its unRusselianism and the notion of *sense*. The main focus is the diversity between how Frege and Wittgenstein understand the latter – a difference that she touches just in the *Introduction* and not in the essays.

For Diamond, Anscombe “underestimates the significance of directionality for Wittgenstein’s conception of sense” (p. 8). Wittgenstein did not modify or highlight a different position from Frege regarding *sense*: he started from Russell’s perspective and made it different from both Frege and Russell’s positions. What does correspond to a proposition, in reality, differs “not only in respect to *what kind of thing* corresponds but even more significantly in the claim that it is the same fact that corresponds to a proposition and its negation” (pp. 23-24). In addition, Diamond underlines another difference concerning the grammatical point raised by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* related to “what kind of sign *signs expressive of sense* are” (p. 24).

Furthermore, the author points out that the disagreement regarding the kind of unRussellianism can be specified also by analyzing proposition 3.3 of the *Tractatus* related to *philosophical confusion* and the possibility of avoiding it or responding to it. While Anscombe deals with these themes (Anscombe 2001, Chapters 5-6), she “does not discuss at all in those chapters the significance of the remarks in the 3.3’s for Wittgenstein’s understanding of philosophical method” (p. 28).

Referring to the third essay, *Reading the Tractatus with G.E.M. Anscombe*, Diamond emphasizes that her disagreement with Anscombe does not concern only what the *Tractatus* is doing and what we are supposed to do as its readers, but also “the contrast between reading the *Tractatus* as a guide to philosophical activity and reading it as the setting out of a complex and powerful theory, and the spelling out of some of the implications of the theory” (p. 32). What it is at stake is “whether what Wittgenstein says about pictures and propositions *excludes* anything, puts it out beyond what we should even attempt to say” (p. 38).

Furthermore, Diamond disagrees with Anscombe’s reading of the picture theory and the context principle, while also underlining her misunderstanding firstly of the difference between “someone” and “somebody”, then regarding “names”, which the author explores in the second essay *Saying and Showing: An Example from Anscombe*. Moreover, Diamond highlights that taking the *Tractatus* as a guide of philosophical activity “can make the idea of *something out there that we might want to say* disappear. Looking closely at clarification, what it might be like, can undo the impression of there being this excluded-but-helpful thing” (p. 39).

Following Diamond, we glimpse what she does in the first essay, *Finding One's Way into the Tractatus*, and how she clarifies and changes the angle in disagreeing with Anscombe in the afterword. Her reflection does not involve only the theme of Russellianism and unRussellianism, but also the way of understanding the “limits of language” in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, if as limits or limitations. Diamond argues that “what Wittgenstein held is that clarifications (in which we concern ourselves with what is within language) help to bring the ‘limits of language’ into view – from within” (p. 40). While Diamond thinks that Anscombe understands the limits of both language and thought as *limitations*, she also underlines that some elements in her reading pull in the opposite direction. These elements are crucial in what she discusses in the first essay, especially regarding the “Tractarian criticism of sentences as not expressing a thought, and about her having two incompatible accounts of such criticism” (p. 41).

In the second part of the volume, *Wittgenstein, Anscombe, and What Can Only Be True*, Diamond starts by addressing the important role of the publication of the collection of Anscombe’s essays *From Plato to Wittgenstein: Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe* (Geach and Gormally 2011), which raised crucial questions in Diamond’s work by shaping the rest of the volume – going on asking different questions from the ones in the first section.

The fourth paper, *Wittgenstein and What Can Only Be True*, focuses on “the propositions that do not have an intelligible negation” (p. 161) from the perspective of both Wittgenstein and Anscombe and addresses the theme related to responses to confusion.

The fifth essay, *Disagreement: Anscombe, Geach, Wittgenstein*, deals with “what is involved in taking to be true a proposition that has no intelligible negation” (p. 161), namely a problem that finds disagreement between both Anscombe and Geach and Anscombe and Wittgenstein. Another theme touched on in this paper is related to Wittgenstein’s position regarding the “recognition of how the tools of our thinking can be responsive to the realities of the world and of our nature” (p. 162). The topic of “truth” is crucial in this part of Diamond’s work, especially about propositions seen as “path-indicators” and “guides to thinking”. Discussing the notion of “truth” also allows Diamond to think further on this theme in

Anscombe's work, since she dedicates to it part of her work, especially concerning the Aristotelian notion of "practical truth".

A shared topic in both of Diamond's essays is Anscombe's "everything else is nonsense" reading of the *Tractatus* and its implications. This view, as Anscombe held it, results in the *Tractatus* allowing "only senseful propositions (that is, propositions that have the possibility of truth and falsity) and logical and mathematical propositions. Everything else is nonsense" (p. 163). Diamond criticises this argument in both her papers from different perspectives: in the former, she starts from James Griffin's writings on natural laws in Wittgenstein and Michael Kramer's discussion of mathematics in both the *Prototractatus* and *Tractatus*, while in the latter she begins from Roger Withe's investigation regarding the role of mathematics in the *Tractatus*, and "the important connection he drew between Wittgenstein on equations and on definitions" (p. 164). Her disagreement with Anscombe on the "everything else is nonsense" perspective is linked to another one, namely what Wittgenstein thinks of "saying and showing".

In the last part of the *Introduction* to section two, Diamond also introduces her view regarding Frege's notion of confusion and its relationship with both early and late Wittgenstein (pp. 166-170). She underlines that Anscombe's point of the importance of reading Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* together with the reading of Frege must be linked to both philosophers' *fil rouge* regarding "what kind of thing you are talking about in the grammar of what you say" (p. 169). Diamond argues that both Frege and Wittgenstein worry about the chance of our thought becoming chaotic "by our having an 'idea' of what we mean to be talking about, while what we say has the grammar of talk of something of a quite different kind" (p. 169). This grammatical view, the author concludes, results in both not engaging in either linguistic idealism or anti-realism.

In the *Introduction* to the third section, *Going On to Think about Ethics*, Diamond addresses the background of the sixth essay, *Asymmetries in Thinking about Thought: Anscombe and Wiggins*, starting from two questions arising from the second section of the volume. The former concerns the possible links with David Wiggins' moral cognitivism, while the latter focuses on the connection, which was not developed in the fifth essay, between Anscombe's view regarding "Someone is not the

name of someone' and her writings on ethics and action" (p. 232). In the essay, moving from her central concern related to "propositions that did not have an intelligible negation" (p. 233), Diamond discusses "what the role might be within ethics of propositions that guide thinking by being either blockers of false paths or indications of one and useful ones" (p. 233). In the essay, she gives examples of this role of propositions in ethics by discussing Wiggins' approach and by identifying some flaws in his arguments, especially regarding the debate on slavery of the nineteenth century.

Diamond goes further in her seventh essay, *Truth in Ethics: Williams and Wiggins*, where she handles the kind of asymmetry Wiggins addresses related to the theme of justice and injustice of slavery. At the same time, she also considers Bernard Williams' perspective on Wiggins' thought, since he "defends a kind of 'symmetry' between opposed moral points of view, which Wiggins rejects" (p. 235).

She does not explore all the issues on which Wiggins and Williams disagree while dealing more extensively with the topic of *truth in ethics* related to the attainability of truth regarding moral claims/questions. Starting from these debates, the idea of *natural slaves* is essential since it was extremely significant in the then-contemporary debate. She underlines its centrality in the *Cornerstone Speech* made by Alexander Stephens, the vice-president of the Confederacy, implying that the enslavement of Africans was justified by their nature. Then, Diamond suggests that stating that all men are equal and free by nature worked as a path-blocker to the attempt to search for a natural justification for slavery (p. 241). The philosophical interest in the case of slavery highlights – some of – the connections with Wittgenstein's thought: it shows the impossibility of making general philosophical claims and "how deeply the human shape of the debate, including the social institution of ethics in a slave society, was entangled with its content, with what were taken to be the considerations relevant to the question of slavery. What ethics is, was entangled in the debate" (p. 249).

My review certainly does little justice to either the complexity of the text or the large number of topics addressed. Overall, the author provides a thematic coherence to the text and guides the reader through the analysis of issues that she has dealt with over almost two decades of her career – a goal that is also pursued thanks to an effective apparatus of notes.

Therefore, I believe that the book provides an insightful overview of the author's work that starts with the reading of Anscombe and ends with the discussion of central issues in the contemporary debate.

Bibliography

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