The Moral Value of Literature: Defending a Diamondian Realist Approach

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This work examines the relationship between moral philosophy and literature. I start by exploring a dialectic that exists between “prevalent view” theorists (i.e., D. D. Raphael and Onora O'Neill), who argue that the moral interest of literature lies in explicit deliberative arguments modeled in literary texts, and Diamondian realist theorists (i.e., Alice Crary, Cora Diamond and Iris Murdoch), who argue that the “prevalent view” is too narrow. Rather, the ways in which literature affects us emotionally can make ineliminable contributions to fully rational moral thought. In Chapter Two, I explore potential challenges to this position, drawn from the works of Simon Blackburn. He argues that there are epistemological concerns (it relies upon a faulty view of language), and moral concerns (specifically relativism) with Diamondian realism. I respond to these challenges in Chapter Three and conclude that Crary, Diamond, and Murdoch have given us a better picture of literature's moral value.
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This work aims to clarify the relationship that exists between literature and moral philosophy. That such a relationship can be drawn should not be surprising; literary works often take as their starting point human situations or, more generally, can reflect the moral thoughts of their author(s). However, as will become clear in this work, exactly how this relationship is drawn can have far-reaching consequences for moral philosophy.

Indeed, it will be the business of the First Chapter to discuss two conflicting interpretations of this particular relationship. It is not my claim that these are, by any means, the only two possible interpretations, but I think the debate that can be drawn between these two camps raises extremely interesting philosophical and moral issues. One of the interpretations, the “prevailing view,” will chime with a great many of our inclinations about how literature and moral philosophy relate. Theorists who fall into this camp argue that literature can contain examples of moral situations, or it can contain explicit moral argument (a speech made by a central character, for instance); both of which are, obviously, of moral importance. The hallmark of these prevailing views is that fully blown moral philosophy depends upon argumentation, and more specifically, argumentation which is objective, by which these theorists mean that our subjective sensibilities do not play an essential role in our seeing things as they are. As a consequence, for example, the ways in which literature engages us emotionally do not in and of themselves contribute to a fully developed moral philosophy on this view; in fact, their emotionality may even sway us, and this can be dangerous (rhetorical devices can be used to corrupt as

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1 This term is borrowed from Alice Crary (2007, especially pg. 132-133). Broadly speaking she sees “prevailing view theorists” as those whose views of literature and moral philosophy develop “against the backdrop of the assumption that a fully developed instance of moral philosophy is moral doctrine ‘presented as the outcome of carefully structured argument.’” More will be said about this in Chapter One of this work.
This “prevalent view” will then be contrasted with one advocated by Alice Crary, Cora Diamond, Iris Murdoch, and others. This uniquely realist view argues that the ways in which literature engages us emotionally provide us with an ineliminable component of moral philosophy. This is because our sensibilities form an essential part of objective descriptions, allowing literature to make legitimate contributions to morality insofar as it can engage us emotionally; for instance, coming to share in the author's sense of humour will shape the world we see. We can summarize this point (and this can help to clearly illustrate where I see morality and emotion overlapping) as follows: Coming to share in a sensibility (a sense of humour or so on) is a legitimate or fully rational part of moral philosophy. This, obviously, would mean that much moral philosophy can be criticized as having overlooked something basic.

It will be the central goal of this work to strengthen the arguments for this latter relationship. After briefly setting out each of these positions, I will discuss the ways in which Crary has advanced this dialectic against the prevalent view. We will see that she forcefully argues that whole stretches of our lives become muddled and incomprehensible unless we reject the prevalent view. Seeing the dialectic at this stage will form the conclusion of the First Chapter.

However, this is not the end of the discussion. In the Second Chapter, we will see the ways in which these realist theorists are further threatened by critiques levelled by Simon Blackburn. His quasi-realist position is that even though realist theories are compelling (which means the world, unreflectively, seems to be the way realists describe it), they are nevertheless mistaken. Thus, the realist is wrong in claiming that there is no distinction between “fact” and “value.” It may not be an easy

\[2\] It can be categorized as “elementary realism,” which will be referred to as “Diamondian realism” (since Cora Diamond is a strong proponent). This position can be contrasted with an attempt at realism called “philosophical realism” (which Diamond associates with Sabina Lovibond). This will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Three of this work (for more on this distinction see Diamond, 1996a, pp. 254-256).

\[3\] See Crary, 2007, p. 132 for a succinct discussion of this point.
distinction to see, but, Blackburn argues, it is there. Because of his attack on the Diamondian realist, it is necessary to address his arguments; if not, the advancements made to this controversial position by Crary will remain, at best, suspect.

As we will see, the particularly stinging critique Blackburn delivers is that the supposed normalcy of realist positions can be accounted for within the prevalent view. This is the case since we are trained to respond to certain facts in the world in a certain manner and then over time this develops into an attitudinal disposition. To put this in another way, when we come across something in the world, we respond in an evaluative manner immediately; they (the descriptive and the evaluative) seem to come bound up together, and it becomes very difficult to see how a separation between fact and value is possible. This, of course, does not mean that such a distinction is not possible. Additionally, we will see, that this allows us to treat things such as a sense of humour (which Crary sees as important for moral discussion) as morally significant within the prevalent view.

Blackburn's theory presents two reasons for such a distinction. One reason is epistemological and claims that if we treat differences in sensibility as conceptual differences, then language, for the most part, becomes too idiosyncratic. If I approve and you disapprove of a quality it does not follow that we are using two different concepts. Indeed, if the realist is correct it would seem to follow that you and I might not even be able to understand each other and this seems false. Rather, Blackburn argues, if I treat “intelligence” as something praiseworthy and you treat it as a slur, we still share enough in common (“the fact” part of conceptual employment) to understand each other, even though our evaluative attitudes towards the concept differ.

This may strike us as a strange move, going from discussions of moral judgements and sentiments to the realm of language, but such a move is actually essential for the Diamondian realist. One of the central points of this work is that we ought to reject the “prevalent view” theorists (Raphael, O'Neill and so on) because their view of moral judgements depends upon an incoherent view of
language (we can look at the argument in reverse as well: Because our language is a certain way, our moral judgements must, accordingly, be expressed in a certain way). This will be argued for, in depth, in Chapter Three of this work. Thus, Blackburn's criticism that the Diamondian realist herself has a faulty understanding of language completely undercuts all of her arguments and, for this reason, must be addressed.

Blackburn's second concern is moral; he worries that a realist scheme destroys the area necessary for serious moral philosophical debate. If I see something to be the case (i.e., I see intelligence as a horrible thing) and you see it differently (i.e., as a good thing), then, if I am a realist, I can immediately reject your attempts at criticizing my position. Blackburn claims this is so because I can simply contend that your critique starts from a misdescription and this alone gives me grounds to reject any further claims you make. For this reason genuine moral philosophical discussion cannot occur within a realistic framework.

Why, though, does this affect thinkers like Crary? The point is that since it seems that we can account for all that Crary claimed was important for moral philosophy (non-argumentative deliberation such as sharing in a sense of humour) within the prevalent view and, additionally, if moving into the realistic framework is fraught with epistemological and moral worries, then Crary's position becomes not only superfluous, but morally dangerous.

At this point, we will move into Chapter Three. The main purpose of this chapter will be to strengthen the realistic position. Turning to Diamond's “realistic spirit” (an attempt to be realistic, while avoiding empiricism), we will be able to see not only that Blackburn's epistemological and moral worries are unfounded, but, furthermore, his position rests upon an impossible vantage point and, thus, must be rejected.
Part Two: Importance

Why is this project an important one? First of all, as should be clear from reading the above overview, a great deal of this work is exegetical. When dealing with thinkers like Diamond, simply being able to represent their theories without distortion represents no small achievement. In particular, when it comes to Diamond, bringing her work into conversation with contemporary ideas in moral philosophy is fulfilling a need which has been, for the most part, greatly overlooked. One need look no further than Andrew Gleeson's recent re-reading of her paper “Eating Meat and Eating People” for proof of this claim. In his discussion of the ways in which Diamond's work addresses how we learn morally important concepts such as “human being” and “animal,” he was “saddened by how badly it [her work] had been ignored by the philosophical mainstream” (Gleeson, 2008, pp. 158-159). If only to redress such omissions in mainstream philosophy, the exegetical component of my work has value in and of itself.

This exegetical contribution cannot be undervalued. As we saw above, I hope to undermine the traditional fact/value distinction. Turning to Hilary Putnam we can see that this view has specific consequences for any future exegesis: “in a significant sense, the exegesis/commentary distinction cannot be drawn. Any exegesis that is nontrivial must, to that extent, be commentary-laden” (Putnam, 1990, p. 213). The idea is that in setting out Diamond's arguments I will be either explicitly (through counterarguments) or implicitly (through putting it in its best light) be making her controversial arguments surrounding morality, which encompasses arguments about sensibilities or emotions and human language, as sturdy as possible. This alone gives us what is uniquely important about this work.

Of course it should also be clear that there is a more argumentative strain in this work as well. Particularly addressing potential counter-objections drawn from the work of Simon Blackburn, in order to strengthen the position argued for by Crary in Beyond Moral Judgment. Although Crary does have
an awareness of Blackburn's position, a great deal of her argumentation only deals with Blackburn's position in an indirect manner (and, as I mentioned above, Blackburn's arguments about language directly undercut any attempt by the Diamondian realist to secure her position). Indeed this point can be taken further, as Christopher Grau argues in his review of her work. He claims that not enough has been done by Crary to explicitly address potential counter-arguments, which means that there is still controversy regarding such a position. For this reason the argumentative component has work in that it can be seen as a necessary continuation of Crary's worthwhile project.

The above represent the two major values of this work. There is, I think, an additional value which is also worth mentioning. This one relates to the cross-disciplinary nature of this work, by which I mean the discussion and clarification of the ways in which literature and moral philosophy intersect. Now, of course, within the analytic tradition it is considerably more common today to see discussions of literature than, perhaps, it was in the 1950s when Murdoch wrote “Vision and Choice in Morality;” one need look no further than Martha Nussbaum's recent works for evidence of that conclusion. Even still this work aims to remind moral philosophers of the wide reaching scope of morality, a focus solely on argumentation as the product of, say, practical syllogisms or Utilitarian calculations is too narrow; moral philosophy can make use of a large number of other resources, literature being one discussed here. We, as moral philosophers, would do well to remind ourselves of the range of components that are relevant to moral growth.

Finally, I would like to remind the reader that this work (and, indeed, all philosophical treatises) have value not simply in virtue of what they contain, but also in the discussion they invite long after the last sentence is read. I hope that this work could serve as a jumping off point for a variety of different projects, some of which will be hinted at in the concluding remarks of this work.

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5 See Chapter Two of this work for the full quotation and citation.
Overall, at this point we have seen what this work will talk about and what value there is in such a discussion. This leaves only the actual discussion to accomplish and, thus, it is time that I turn towards that.
Chapter One: Introducing the Context of Argumentation

Introduction:

In this chapter I will examine a specific context of argumentation, about two ways we can define the relationship between literature and moral philosophy. One side of this particular dispute can be described as the prevalent view,\(^7\) which is the argument that literature can contribute to moral philosophy insofar as it is a vehicle for the presentation of moral thought (it contains complete or incomplete extractable arguments), or a “direction of fit” can be found between moral philosophy and literature (i.e., an idea in moral philosophy gives rise to a situation in literature or the reverse).

After presenting D. D. Raphael as an example of the prevalent view, I will introduce the views of Cora Diamond, who criticizes such a position. She endorses a very specific type of realism, that she employs to argue that thinkers like Raphael have an overly narrow view when it comes to the ways literature can contribute to moral philosophy. She argues that he focuses exclusively on the philosophical merit of explicit deliberative arguments modeled in literary texts, whereas she wants to point the way to a philosophical interest wherein literary works model forms of moral deliberation that are not argumentative. Furthermore, this interest cannot be captured in arguments with which the prevalent view theorist concerns herself. Throughout this work I argue that the Diamondian realist has painted us a much better picture of the moral philosophical importance of literary works; this will be done through both exegetical means (presenting her theory in the best possible light), but also in terms of argumentation, as potentially crippling counterarguments will be addressed.

After discussing the ways in which Diamond and the prevalent view theorists disagree, I will then present direct counter-arguments against Diamond's position. For instance, arguments that her

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\(^7\) As Alice Crary calls it (See Crary, 2007, Chapter Four).
position is both relativistic and impractical will be examined. These twin moral concerns, the opponent
will claim, give us reason to be suspicious of Diamondian realism and, furthermore, this alone licenses
a return to a theory in keeping with the prevalent view.

In the second part of this chapter the ways in which these criticisms have been addressed, at
least in part, will be discussed. This will be done through an examination of Alice Crary's *Beyond
Moral Judgment*, which argues that many of the criticisms that the prevalent view offers are the result
of misunderstanding. To anticipate future developments in this work, although I do think the
Diamondian realist needs to examine some potential criticisms that Crary does not, by the end of this
chapter we will, at least, see how she has advanced the context of argumentation outlined in Part One in
favour of the Diamondian realist.

Part One: The Context of Argumentation

Section 1: D. D. Raphael's “Can Literature Be Moral Philosophy?”

D. D. Raphael, a prevalent view theorist, argues that the relationship between literature and
moral philosophy has four facets. To help clarify them (which will also help us better understand what
a prevalent view theory is), it is helpful to split them into two categories. The first two facets represent
the ways in which literature can be a vehicle for moral philosophy; that is to say, first of all, that moral
philosophy can also be a work of literature (facet one), and that works of literature can also be works of
moral philosophy (facet two). These two facets tend to deal with the ways in which we can represent
arguments in a literary context. The other two facets are best summed up as “directions of fit” between
literature and philosophy; in other words, beliefs and ideas in one field can influence beliefs and ideas
in the other. Thus, the third represents the ways in which we can move from ideas in moral philosophy

to ideas in literature, and the fourth represents the ways we can move from ideas in literature to ideas in moral philosophy. Since these claims are still vague at this point it is worthwhile to examine each facet in turn.

As was mentioned above, the first facet is Raphael's argument that certain works of moral philosophy can also be works of literature; he takes Plato's *Phaedo* as an illustration. His analysis of the arguments contained in this work are divided into two parts; one he takes as uncontroversial, while the other presents us with something novel. It is worth noting, as Diamond does, that his distinction is roughly in keeping with one made by A. J. Ayer, who claimed that there is a difference between moral philosophy proper, wherein we carefully examine “structured argument,” and moralism, which Diamond uses to refer to “*Mere* preaching of moral doctrine,” or the attempt to persuade without structured argument. Raphael argues that the *Phaedo* contains moral philosophy as structured argument, presented within the overall literary context (this is his uncontroversial claim). For instance, the arguments Socrates presents about the immortality of the soul (a moral matter for Plato) take the form of a structured argument (Raphael, 1983a, p. 2). Thus, we can see works of literature as a vehicle for structured moral arguments.

The above analysis is a relatively uninspiring connection between literature and moral philosophy. All that we are saying here is that deliberative arguments can take advantage of literary conventions in their presentation. In other words, philosophers can use forms of rhetoric to present arguments. This is obviously true, but Raphael, in his examination of moralism and literature, then presents a much more novel component of the relationship. In this component the ways in which literature can have a moral dimension beyond “the outcome of carefully structured argument” are explored. He wants to examine how literature can illustrate a new perspective on a moral issue which goes beyond *mere* moralizing (or preaching), but it is not yet fully structured argument (Raphael, 8

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8 See Raphael (1983, p. 3) and Diamond (1991a, p. 368).
He finds evidence of a “new perspective” within Plato's attempt to demonstrate the importance of Socrates' virtues for the morally good person in the *Phaedo*. In particular Plato challenges traditional Attic drama, in which the audience felt pity for the dying hero and was brought about to fear death, by having his Socrates face death with a sort of “happy stoicism.” This is because Plato wants us to see that we should not pity the dying Socrates, he is, after all, blessed in dying. Thus, Raphael argues, we can see Plato undertaking a different sort of moral education than that found in previous Greek tragedies and, this is the important point, his illustration of this new perspective does not proceed via fully structured arguments. It is, granted, a moralistic aim, but it is a *rationally* moralistic aim. Overall, literature, Raphael argues, can be a vehicle for rational moralism.

Raphael makes the distinction between rational and irrational moralism clear by contrasting Plato's moralism with the moralism of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Martin Buber. He argues that the latter three sometimes rely, as a means to convince their readers, on *purely* irrational persuasion; they simply present how they see the world and do not provide any argumentation for their particular vision. Their visions of morality are emotionally charged, and this may or may not sway us. On the other hand, Plato's attempts at persuasion are rational as “they refer, albeit obliquely, to common human experience” (Raphael, 1983a, p. 5). Even though the *Phaedo* may not contain explicit argumentation for Plato's conclusions about human nature (and the importance of a “happy stoicism”), an argument showing how his view squares with common human experience could, theoretically, be provided. Simply put, we can show how this perspective of Plato's transcends his personal likes or dislikes, and, by doing so, we can see how literary works may contain, either directly or indirectly, moral argumentation.

This brings us to Raphael's second facet, which is his argument that literary works can also be

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9 This discussion as a whole draws on Raphael, 1983a, pp. 3-5.
works of moral philosophy. Just as moral philosophy can be written in a literary style, literary works can also be vehicles for rational moral thought. Of course, a brief examination of this facet will suffice since, as Raphael notes, the *Phaedo* is as much a literary work as a philosophical one, and as a result, it can be used to present both facets (Raphael, 1983a, p. 4). This facet can be fleshed out, though, by examining other works. We may look at works which contain explicit argument, Raphael suggests Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* as an example. In particular, the fact that Butler includes a treatise on the subject of determinism as a part of the novel (Raphael, 1983a, p. 11). Similarly, we can think of extractable deliberative moral arguments within a work of literature as examples; for instance, a character justifying her actions through explicit argumentation. Or we can think of the contrasting of characters, as is the case in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, where Fielding brings characters who espouse a rationalistic moral philosophy into argument (directly and indirectly) with characters who espouse a sentimentalistic moral philosophy. An argument could be extracted from their interactions (Raphael, 193, p. 9-10).

In addition to explicit argumentation, works of literature can also qualify as moral philosophy insofar as they contain rational methods of persuasion. As an example, Raphael discusses *Oresteia* by Aeschylus, which presents a comparison of two conceptions of justice. One conception, wherein justice is vengeance, is presented as outdated, while the conception of justice as the outcome of judicial process is presented as a novel and much improved conception. As was the case above, the new evaluation of this conception must square with common human experience if it is to be accepted (Raphael, 1983a, p. 7).

To clarify, again, the ways in which these two facets are connected, Raphael argues that literature can be a vehicle for moral philosophy. This quite simply, as we saw, means two things: First, some philosophical works can be classified as literature and, second, some literary works can be classified as philosophical.
This, then, brings us to the final two facets of Raphael's, both of which are connected by the metaphor of “feeding.” As discussed above, this involves a “direction of fit,” or the ways we can move from philosophy to literature (facet three), or from literature to philosophy (facet four). The third facet involves writers whose literary endeavors feed off their work as moral philosophers; he cites Iris Murdoch and Jean-Paul Sartre as examples. He claims that their literary output presents moral situations and the ideas about good and evil they hold, the theory behind which has been worked out more explicitly in their non-literary philosophical works (Raphael, 1983a, p. 1-2). The fourth facet involves cases where moral philosophy feeds off literature. He cites as evidence Mary Midgley's article “Selves and Shadows,” where she argues that literary works such as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (amongst others) draw attention to a “double” or “shadow” part of our identity. We may then go on to argue that these parts have been overlooked in certain philosophical discussions of selfhood (Raphael, 1983a, p. 1).

There is a common thread running through these four facets. All four see literature as being relevant to the moral philosopher if it contains either explicit argument, or if literary content can be used to provide part of an explicit argument. To illustrate, this is seen in the first two facets as they are used to discuss the importance of explicit arguments in a literary context, whether it is a fully worked out argument, or an argument for a “novel perspective.” These perspectives can be morally relevant if argument can be supplied to prove that they are part of “common human experience” and, thus, can be accepted as rational forms of persuasion. Additionally, the final two facets, if we use the terminology of practical syllogisms, see literature as providing examples of minor premises (facet three), or in drawing our attention to an overlooked major premise (facet four), both of which can be used as part of an explicit argument about morality.
Section 2: Diamond in Conversation With Raphael

Diamond, in her reply to Raphael, “Having a Rough Story about What Moral Philosophy Is,” argues that the above view of literature and moral philosophy is too narrow. She builds her argument upon several points from Iris Murdoch's essay, “Vision and Choice in Morality.” There Murdoch argues against a certain style of moral philosophy, in which morality is the bringing to bear of evaluative moral terms onto descriptive premises (such a theory has been argued for by R. M. Hare and Stuart Hampshire, for example). Such theories are deficient as they contain an unexpressed “moral outlook;” in the case of Hare and Hampshire, it is one which weds British empiricism with Protestant-Liberalism. For this reason, these theories give rise to a world that is completely comprehensible (all we have to do is look at it, or look at the facts in it) and moral deliberation then involves bringing to bear a recommendation onto an empirical fact (Murdoch, 1956, 52). Murdoch argues that this moral outlook is taken for granted by such theorists and applied to all types of moral thought, and this ends up painting a diminished picture of what moral philosophy is capable. It “crushes,” into its narrow scheme, views of morality which emphasise the inexhaustible detail of the world, the endless task of understanding, the importance of not assuming that one has got individuals and situations “taped”, the connection of knowledge with love and of spiritual insight with apprehension of the unique (Murdoch, 1956, 46).

This results in a “universalizable” moral philosophy that excludes two metaphors which are essential when it comes to understanding the ways we think morally (an oversight which cannot but result in a diminished moral philosophy). One metaphor is our “personal vision,” which Diamond notes is illustrated in Murdoch's M and D example, which presents the case of someone trying to see the world in a just and loving manner; particularly a Mother-In-Law realizing that her vision of her Daughter-In-

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10 For a summary of this point see Diamond, 1996b, p. 84.
Law is corrupted by jealousy and how seeing things in a more loving manner would, in this situation, better represent things as they actually are.\(^{11}\) The second metaphor is the moral importance of our “texture of being,” which can include everything from our sense of humour, to our style of dress. As Murdoch puts the point, “in short, [when we judge other people we consider] the configurations of their thought which show continually in their reactions and conversation” (Murdoch, 1956, 39).\(^{12}\)

What does this tell us about Raphael and literature? This is best illustrated by turning to Diamond's discussion of *Tom Jones*. In particular she compares the above points made by Raphael, in illustrating his second facet, with an alternative reading.\(^{13}\) Diamond argues that we can see Fielding as using certain characters to represent rationalistic moral theories and using others to represent sentimentalist moral theories, as Raphael claimed above. However, literary works like this one can show us something more as they can also illustrate the limitations of relying on any “single principle” to define human nature. This is done by comparing the different perspectives and then seeing none of them as satisfactory. In this reading different demands are being made on the reader; she is expected to “look” at things which are not explicit in the text, which can be compared to Raphael's focus, which is exclusively on ideas explicit within the text. As we will see this is the sense that Diamond wants to see literature as contributing to moral philosophy (Diamond, 1991a, p. 369-370).

Why is Raphael's focus on ideas in the text philosophically concerning? This can be answered by looking at the ideas of Murdoch presented earlier in this chapter, particularly those regarding thinkers who argued (implicitly or explicitly) that the world was the same empirically understandable world for each and every moral agent. These thinkers become blind to the actually varieties of moral experience. Diamond is making a similar point; as she puts it: “Our experience is, for Raphael, the touchstone of the rationality of the perspectives they employ,” (Diamond, 1991a, p. 370) which means

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\(^{11}\) On this issue see Diamond, 1991a, p. 374 and Murdoch, 1956, p. 39.
\(^{12}\) Also see Diamond, 1991a, pp. 374-375.
\(^{13}\) She uses literary theorist Wolfgang Iser's interpretation to provide an alternative reading. Note that neither I nor Diamond is concerned with whether Iser is right, simply what may be missed by certain readings.
the way in which literature can reshape and alter our experience through non-argumentation modes is
excluded (by Raphael) from moral philosophy. This is a serious omission, as Diamond (elsewhere)
claims: “Our particular moral views emerge from a more general background of thought and response.
We differ in how we let (or do not let) moral concepts order our life and relations to others, in how
concepts structure the stories we tell of what we have done or gone through” (Diamond, 1997a, p. 250).

What, though, is Raphael excluding from his discussion of literature and moral philosophy?
Diamond puts the point succinctly: “Failure of style as philosophical failure has then [in such theories]
no place” (Diamond, 1991a, p. 372). That this is a significant concern for Raphael's moral theory can
be seen by again turning to two metaphors discussed above, the importance of our “personal vision,” on
the one hand and the “texture of our being” on the other. An examination of what our “texture of being”
is will illuminate the approach a moral philosophy ought to take.

We saw above that Murdoch defines our “texture of being” (like our personal vision) as being
related to our “total vision of life.” This is to say that when we assess people morally, we need to take
into account the way that they see the world, “as shown in their mode of speech or silence, their choice
of words, their assessments of others” and so on (Murdoch, 1956, p. 39). Diamond then illustrates the
importance of this to literature and moral philosophy. If we see as morally relevant the “limits of our
world” (and not just our experience in the world) the realm of moral philosophy will expand. Thus, in
addition to seeing questions about euthanasia and abortion as being of concern to us we will also, as
moral philosophers, start to focus on “what a person is like.” This can be shown in descriptions, such as
Henry James' use (to use Diamond's (1991a, p. 375) example) of furniture in *The Europeans*. In this
example, the starkness of the puritans' furnishings and decorations should engage us emotionally, and
through comparing them with the wild decorative tendencies of the European cousins, we are being
asked to feel that the puritanical way of life is too limiting (as there is no imagination in that life). We
can see how this is a moral point, but we can also see that it is not simply a judgement, and the
emotional component is not simply part of the vehicle of said judgement. It is the case, obviously, that we can say “puritanism limits the imaginative life and this is morally undesirable because of a, b and c,” but this is not what James is doing. The force of his argument is the emotional appeal and, what I want to show, is that this is a legitimate form of moral philosophy in and of itself, and not simply vehicle for the presentation of moral philosophy. There is nothing going on beyond the way of seeing and describing.

Further argumentation will be presented below in my detailed examination of literary examples. However, I will give a taste of some of the points to come in order to make this point more believable. The point is that when we describe certain situations in a certain way the moral action tends to follow automatically.\(^\text{14}\) Consider the abortion debate. We can see this debate as giving rise to two camps; those who see the situation as one of “choice” (pro-choice) and those who describe it in terms of “life” (pro-life). The point that is important to note here is that once a person describes the situation either in terms of “choice” or in terms of “life,” both of which are good things, the judgements that this person will make flow automatically. Thus, we can see why this way of looking at sensibility is morally important and, furthermore, since judgements depend upon such description, saying that James' description of furniture is on par (morally) with a moral judgement becomes less strange.

All of this affects the ways in which literature and moral philosophy relate. Diamond, for instance, notices three ways in which this gives rise to a different relationship from the one sketched out by Raphael.\(^\text{15}\) First, it will change where we look for the tools of moral deliberation in works of literature. The importance of, to return to Diamond's example, Henry James' uses of furniture, as being on par with an explicit discussion of a moral dilemma, within a work of literature is proof of such a change. Second, we will see that not only is action relevant to moral philosophy but the types of

\(^{14}\) This point is drawn mainly from Murdoch, 1970, p. 35 and Chapter Three of this work, where this point will be expanded upon.

\(^{15}\) These are discussed in Diamond, 1991a, pp. 376-377.
thought (our imagination) which they “express and [...] invite” (Diamond, 1991a, p. 377) are as well. A novel, to use (as Diamond does) Martha Nussbaum's example of *The Golden Bowl* might teach us about our imperfection and this “self-knowledge may be regarded as a good thing for us, irrespective of any bearing it may have on what we go on to do” (Diamond, 1991a, p. 377). Finally, even in the ways Raphael sees moral relevance in certain aspects of literature (i.e., discussions of practical problems), his view of them is too narrow. We may need to, in order to judge an argument fully, focus not just on the premises, as it can be important to “treat, let us say, a too great knowingness, a refusal to acknowledge mystery or adventure in deliberation [...] as failures of thinking” (Diamond, 1991a, p. 377). Such failures of thought are themselves worthy of moral criticism, as we will see below in my Diamondian realist influenced reading of E. M. Forster. We may not be able to grasp an argument if we do not pay attention to matters of style.

This, in a nutshell, is the central part of Diamond's disagreement with Raphael. I want to turn to ways in which he, and Onora O'Neill, go on to criticize this and, thus, advance the context of argumentation. Before discussing that there are two additional points to present which will help to fully bring out Diamond's view of literature and morality. The first is an examination of some specific examples of how we might, as Diamondian realists, read literature. The second is to briefly demonstrate that these readings are not reducible to Raphael's system.

There are two literary techniques which become important for seeing the ways literature and morality can relate for the Diamondian realist, both of which can be found in Diamond's essay, “Anything But Argument?” On the one hand, she argues, literature can provide “paradigms of attention;” and on the other hand, it can provide “warm irony,” these two, we will see, are important to the moral philosopher.16

When it comes to “paradigms of attention,” Diamond gives, as an example, Charles Dickens'
ability to show or, to use a term favoured by Murdoch (which she notes comes from Simone Weil),
attend to a child's point of view, which is a morally important act. This need not follow on from explicit arguments about the treatment of children in Dickens' works (although such arguments are there); we can see this attention in seemingly non-moral passages. Diamond quotes the following from *Great Expectations* as an example:

> I remember Mr. Hubble as a tough high-shouldered old man, of a sawdusty fragrance, with his legs extraordinarily wide apart: so that in my short days I always saw some miles of open country between them when I met him coming up the lane. (Quoted in Diamond, 1991b, p. 299)

The idea that Diamond wants to draw out from this is that we are not, in such passages, being taught facts and then told to go on to treat these facts as morally relevant. Rather what we see presented (in the above passage) is a world in which warmth, humour and so on have a certain role. We are being asked to see the world with this sort of sensibility and, furthermore, sharing in this sensibility creates our conception of “children,” a morally important move (Diamond, 1991b, pp. 300-301).

We can add an additional example, to help clarify the Diamondian realist's use of literature in this manner. This one comes from Iris Murdoch's *The Green Knight*. In this novel Murdoch presents us with an argument about the role of contingency in our lives. Now, like Dickens, this is not done through the contemplation of premises, but through examining the ways we can respond to the world (or, how to attend to the world). Consider, first of all, this passage where Murdoch expresses a view of contingency she disapproves of:

> Bellamy found simply living a task of amazing difficulty. It was as if ordinary human life were a mobile machine full of holes, crannies, spaces, apertures, fissures, cavities, lairs, into one of which Bellamy was required to (and indeed desired to) fit himself. The machine moved slowly, resembling a train, or sometimes a merry-go-round. But as soon as Bellamy got on (or got in), the machine would soon eject him, sending him spinning back to a place where he was once more a spectator. (Murdoch, 1993a, p. 22)

She asks the reader to contrast this with a section from the end of the novel, one which depicts a

transformed Bellamy:

Bellamy thought, what's happened, something's happened — I'm afraid she will collapse when she gets back, such an extraordinary girl, and I shall probably collapse too, but not for long, perhaps it's reading all those letters, no, of course not, Moy and the seals, and how on earth did Anax know, and what were they doing up there on the hill, well, I won't tell about that, how brave she is, I've got so much to do, I'll find that job he spoke of, and yes he was right about happiness, don't be miserable thinking you can't be perfect, isn't the Bhagavad Gita about that, living above one's moral station, I must ask Emil, and there was something about Christ not fading, I'll look after Moy, and Emil will help her get into an art school, perhaps we could adopt her, or sort of — (Murdoch, 1993a, pp. 471-472).

We see here, as was the case with Dickens, the presentation of a paradigm of attention. However, instead of being asked to attend to children, Murdoch is asking us to attend to the world. Specifically, it seems, she wants us to see that a perfectionist life, in which we attempt to exclude contingency out of fear, is unhealthy. She accomplishes this through the use of the machine imagery, which is an attempt to make us feel the inorganic nature of such a response to the world. This is then contrasted with the flowing, organic style of the second passage; note, for instance, the eccentric use of punctuation. By placing these two styles of thinking side-by-side we can see why the second is preferable, that is to say, this is an argument for choosing to live within a contingent, imperfect world and to see such a world as meriting a response filled with feelings of joy and wonder. Pain and fear at the sheer number of possibilities is contrasted with (and shown up by) a world that can find limitlessness joyful. “Look at the world this way (with these sensibilities),” Murdoch and Dickens are telling us, “and then see things as they are.” To make this clear, it is worthwhile to note, that this gives rise to a style of moral deliberation and, thus, is relevant to moral philosophy.

The second literary technique I want to present is that of “warm irony.” This is a technique in which (often) social criticism is presented in an emotionally engaging manner. Authors such as Jane Austen and E. M. Forster are masters of this particular technique (Diamond, 1991b, pp. 300-301). An example of this irony can be found in Alice Crary's reading of Gilbert Ryle's interpretation of Austen. Ryle argues that Austen has a fundamentally Aristotelian approach to her characters, which is
represented in her asking us to consider their qualities as one would consider wine at a wine-tasting. To elaborate on this, Ryle turns to *Pride and Prejudice*. In this novel we are asked to compare the ways in which the characters are prideful (or not prideful). Thus we see the vulgar Mr. Collins as being too prideful (he thinks far too highly of himself) and, moreover, prideful in an inappropriate (and amusing) manner. We are then asked to respond to, with equal amusement, the misplaced pride of Mrs. Bennett (we see, while she does not, that the world does not revolve around our good china). We are also asked to see, to take a positive example, Mr. Bennett as being prideful in a better sense (he actually grasps what people are worth), but also to see his failure in being completely unable to act on his right pride; he thinks the right thoughts but these do not issue the right actions.18 Crary argues that this reading has much in common widely rational moral instruction (Diamondian realism),19 although it is debatable whether Ryle would have endorsed such a reading of his work (Crary, 2007, 143). Crary points out that we are being asked to respond to these characters in a certain way, to see someone as humorous and so on, and this takes a form of moral criticism which is not based on moral judgements.20 We are being asked to discover how to respond to the world and, furthermore, the humour we respond with is a morally acceptable form of criticism (Crary, 2007, 143). It is not explicit argumentation which gives rise to this hierarchy, but it is the non-moral features of the world Austen's presents, and it is by partaking in those that we can share in her moral analysis.

Another example of “warm irony” can be seen in the work of E. M. Forster. A particular theme of his novels is the contrast between what he terms a “European” way of life and an “English” way of life. The latter is one he wants us to see as diminished, since it tries to silence the “heart” and, for Forster, a life lived without feeling and, particularly, love (“the heart”) is a life unfit for a human being.

18 This exegesis of Ryle's thought is drawn from Crary, 2007, p. 141.
19 See Part Two of this chapter for an explanation of widely rational moral theories.
20 Note that this is different from Raphael's compare and contrast model. We are being asked to partake in a world with a large number of subtle distinctions, we do not have to find one particular character correct in her moral attitude (what is of moral relevance is not explicit in the text).
He uses “warm irony” to convince us of this, for example in the following passage:

The Miss Alans were found in their beloved temperance hotel near Bloomsbury—a clean, airless establishment much patronized by provincial England. They always perched there before crossing the great seas, and for a week or two would fidget gently over clothes, guide-books, mackintosh squares, digestive bread, and other Continental necessaries. That there are shops abroad, even in Athens, never occurred to them, for they regarded travel as a species of warfare, only to be undertaken by those who have been fully armed at the Haymarket Stores. Miss Honeychurch, they trusted, would take care to equip herself duly. Quinine could now be obtained in tabloids; paper soap was a great help towards freshening up one's face in the train. (Forster, 1977, p. 190).

Again Forster, like Austen, is presenting us with a way to respond to the world. By seeing as eccentric, in a humorous fashion, the attempts of the Miss Alans (typical “English” ladies) to bring all of the world under a rational order or plan, we are being led to respond to the world in a way more in keeping with the “European” manner, a manner where rational plans are not of primary importance. Overall, we should be able to see the ways in which “paradigms of attention” and “warm irony” represent a relationship between moral philosophy and literature which goes beyond what is merely “explicit in the text.”

Of course, it is worth asking why ought we see the moral lessons of literature in these wide terms? Below I will discuss the difference between “a planned garden with some space left wild” and “dark forest” and how this cuts off any attempts to capture the widely objective merit of literature in narrowly objective terms, but I do want to, at this point, say something about why the interpretation Crary has of Ryle is morally interesting. Reading *Pride and Prejudice* can furnish us with the tools to go on morally. This can be accomplished through a sort of training. The act of reading invites us to share in the sensibility that finds Mrs. Bennett silly, so when we are confronted with someone like her we have a response. This is not a particularly shocking claim, we know literature can influence us; indeed, Onora O'Neill, a critic of such a position, can admit of literary persuasion as a means to “go on” in circumstances when moral discourse has completely broken down (O'Neill, 1986, p. 15). What

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21 A good discussion of Forster along these lines is presented in Crary, 2007, Chapter Four.
becomes controversial is why should this count as rational? The argumentation for this will be presented below in Part Two (and reinforced in Chapter Three). Basically it will be claimed that rationality, as defined by the narrowly objective theorists, is incoherent. This does not mean we can make no claim of being rational (such a claim would form part of a narrowly objective theory), but it means we must redraw what rationality means.\textsuperscript{22} Hopefully, at this point, what I find morally interesting in literature has been made a little clearer.

Why is it not possible for this view of literature and moral philosophy to be “crushed” into a view like Raphael's? What is there to stop us from taking a view like Forster's and representing it in terms of part of an appeal to “common human experience”? After all, we could read him as simply saying “people ought to have an emotionally varied life, they ought not be slaves to plans” and we could go on to provide premises to support that conclusion.

This, though, would be problematic as a reading of Forster. Diamond's illustration of John Rawls and D. H. Lawrence demonstrates why. She starts her discussion by noting Rawls' arguments for “rational irreproachability,” which is his view that a good human life will leave room for spontaneity, or to put it in his terms, it is rational to allocate some space for spontaneity in your life. This would be an approach Raphael could draw upon in order to claim that “European”-esque spontaneity is in keeping with “common human experience.” Such a grounding would make it rational for us to be persuaded by the claims in \textit{A Room with a View}.

Diamond argues that D. H. Lawrence provides a criticism of such a grounding. Lawrence argues that seeing one's life as a planned garden, in which some space is left for wild vegetation to grow, can be seen as equivalent to a life-plan where some space is rationally left for spontaneity. However, Lawrence asks us to compare this planned garden with a wild area to an unplanned garden (“a 'dark forest', an 'Hercynian Wood'”); doing so will make us aware of an important difference (Diamond, \textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} This point is Crary's. See Crary, 2007, especially p. 190.

How, then, does this give us an answer to the possible challenge from Raphael? The idea can be seen by going back to Forster's discussion of the Miss Alans. To read Forster's point as one about a rational argument (or part of one) for what “common human experience” is, is to miss the point of his criticism. Consider that the Miss Alans themselves are in keeping with Rawls' “rational irreproachability;” they have a certain rational plan for their life, but they have left some planned room for spontaneity. They may plan trips to the point of absurdity, but the fact that they take continual excursions to the continent is evidence of a love for adventure (albeit carefully controlled adventure). Such an interpretation would have us miss the point Forster wants to make, since if his aim is to criticize an overly rational (“English”) way of life, where there is too much reliance on rational thought or plans (i.e., arguments for “common human experience”), then capturing his point within this “English” type of thought is simply to confuse the issue. His point can be read as a challenge to the way we make decisions or plans (or the way we think generally).

Section 3: O'Neill and Raphael Respond

At this point we have seen the core of the argumentation between Diamond and Raphael. This, however, is not the end of the debate. Raphael and O'Neill both provide reasons for thinking that Diamond's arguments are disconcerting, in particular they see her theory as relativistic, conservative, and impractical.

I see the criticisms O'Neill and Raphael discuss as based around the idea of “persuasion.” The basic argument, as O'Neill presents it, is that Wittgensteinian ethical theories, like Diamond's, require an understanding from within a “form of life.” Wittgenstein, for instance, argues in *On Certainty* that “[t]he child learns by believing the adult. Doubt comes after belief” (Wittgenstein, 1972, §160). What
we see in this quotation is the idea that to understand and, more importantly, to evaluate particular judgements requires understanding the world in which they are made; first we believe in order to enter into that world, and then we understand enough we are able to cast doubt on that particular world and so on.

O'Neill argues that this is a problem for Diamondian theories. Wittgensteinians argue that in order for any moral discourse to be possible there must be a “shared framework of moral traditions and practices” (O'Neill, 1986, p. 13). This requirement, O'Neill claims, reduces moral communication to one of two possibilities: either communication between parties breaks down (we do not see what their world is like), or we are converted to share in their moral world, which brings about moral agreement (O'Neill, 1986, p. 13). Such agreement is, of course, reached by coming to share in the sensibilities which the other has and this gives rise to moral concerns. However, if we reduce moral philosophy to conversations (that proceed via “education of the heart”), then we are committing ourselves to a groundless moral philosophy, as, on this picture, we will have nothing except emotional persuasion and, it seems, we can have our hearts swayed in any direction. Of course, we can be swayed towards greater sensitivity and moral improvement, but we can just as easily be swayed towards violent and discriminatory moral practices (O'Neill, 1986, p. 15).

Does the Wittgensteinian, like Diamond, have any answer to this worry? Not according to O'Neill. This is because the Wittgensteinian rejects any neutral point of view. Such a theorist “sees all justification as relative to locally accepted practice,” which means “locally accepted practice[s]” cannot be judged from the outside, and thus “[t]here is no neutral standpoint from which to discern who is the missionary and who is seducing missionaries into 'going native’” (O'Neill, 1986, p. 15). When we are within a framework it will feel and appear correct. This leads not only to relativism, but also to conservatism, since if my world-view feels correct, then critiques can be rejected as the product of poor description. “If you felt as I did,” I might say, “then you would understand.” As a result I cannot be
forced to examine my prejudices. Furthermore, it is also not even clear how we would go about converting others to our way. How much does one need to understand before she is “under our pale”? Would our convert need to understand everything? Half of everything? Exactly how much? There is no easy answer to this question (O'Neill, 1986, p. 15).

This is not the end of O'Neill's criticism. In addition to this relativism-conservatism concern, she also lays a charge of impracticality at the Wittgensteinian's doorstep. Here, in particular, we can see how these criticisms connect to the overarching theme of literature and moral philosophy. O'Neill notes that within the Wittgensteinian context there is a certain privileging of literary examples, as “it is the authority of the text which imposes a largely shared interpretation of examples” (O'Neill, 1986, p. 14). A literary text provides all the context we would need to be brought within the author's “form of life.” To put it in other terms, everything is right there in front of us, we simply look at the texts and reflect on them. This, though, is where the impractical charge stems from, as the Wittgensteinian wants “reflection” to become central in moral thought. This is not enough for O'Neill, for whom a moral philosophy must have the solving of practical problems as its centre. Additionally, we must be able to see a connection between an example and a real life situation, and simply looking at examples does not provide this important step (O'Neill claims that literary examples, for instance, are often elaborate making it difficult to create a connection between such an example and real life) (O'Neill, 1986, p. 18).

What we see, overall, in this criticism of Diamond's is that simply looking at examples, which is all that the Wittgensteinian can offer, will not give us answers to the moral dilemmas we must face in our lives.

Before leaving this section to see the ways in which Diamond and, especially, Crary address these concerns, we can also see how Raphael has similar concerns to O'Neill when it comes to Diamondian realism. Raphael asserts that he sees value in what Diamond is trying to do, although he would hesitate to call it “moral philosophy” (Raphael, 1983b, p. 171). This is because the “difficulties of description” with which Diamond preoccupies herself “are not the deepest difficulties of my world”
(Raphael, 1983b, p. 173). To put the point in another way, Diamond presents a theory which is shallow in that persuasion is given the same status as “deep” argument. To be fair, Raphael does see how “novel perspectives” (a new way of seeing something) are of moral value, but these have to be compatible with structured argument (at least theoretically), as we can see in his argument about literary value and philosophy. There, he argues that philosophers who are also gifted literary artists, he cites Hobbes and Plato as such examples, may be more appealing to listen to, “but I do not think it [their literary skills] enhances or deepens the truths about ethics which we may learn from [them]” (Raphael, 1983b, p. 175). Indeed, he takes this point even further in a discussion of Plato's Republic. He notes that its “brilliant images” add to the “persuasive power” of the work, but this can actually be opposed to the philosophical value of the work “precisely because some of those images cloud the perception of rational considerations” (Raphael, 1983b, pp. 174-175).

Overall, it can be seen, looking at the work of O'Neill and Raphael, that there are concerns with resolving this dialectic in favour of the Diamondian realist. After all, it appears that Diamond presents a theory which has a mistaken view of rationality, as she sees impassioned persuasion as equal to structured, rational argument, and this gives rise to serious moral concerns.

Part Two: The Dialectic Advances

By turning to Alice Crary's Beyond Moral Judgment, and considering some additional points made by Diamond, we can see the ways in which the criticisms of O'Neill and Raphael can, at this stage, be met. Our investigation starts with the distinction Crary makes between theories like O'Neill's and Raphael's and realist ones like Diamond's. Once we have established these claims, and explored some argumentation for Diamond's theory, we will be better equipped to see how the above criticisms are not as stinging as they may seem.
Crary structures her discussion around a distinction between narrowly objective theories and widely objective theories. To understand this distinction, though, it is necessary to first to examine her discussion of subjectivity. She claims that properties are considered, traditionally, to be subjective if we cannot conceive of them independently of a mental response to the object which has the properties in question (Crary, 2007, p. 15). Such properties can be further bisected. On the one hand there are what can be termed “merely subjective properties,” or ones which are associated with an object only insofar as a mental response is triggered by our interactions with said object. For example, we may say “this tastes good to me,” “that seems beautiful” or even “those flowers look like they are orange-y, yellow-y” simply by virtue of coming into contact with a certain object. All that needs to happen for some property to qualify as “merely subjective” is that we need to have a mental response triggered by the object in question. Crary then examines another class of subjective properties, which she refers to as “problematically subjective properties;” these properties give rise to a response under “appropriate conditions.” To see what Crary means, consider her example of such an affective property, “amusement,” and this can be augmented by turning, briefly, to John McDowell's discussion of “comic.” Finding something amusing can only be done within the conceptual framework of which “amusement” is a part. After all, we cannot understand why something ought to be funny from outside an appreciation of “funny,” so “funny” can only arise under “appropriate conditions” (McDowell, 1998, pp. 157-160). Now more will be said about this in Chapter Three, but we can also think of Crary's other example (of “red”) if the case is not that convincing at this moment. If I say, for example, “my sweater is red” this, on the hand, can be interpreted in merely subjective terms (there simply is the mental response of “redness”). However, we can also give a story that shows how we can interpret “this sweater is red” as referring to the problematically subjective property of “red.” This can be accomplished by discussing the ways that we cannot understand red without the accompaniment of certain circumstances, such a working colour-sensing faculty, or a certain training in colour-labeling
(i.e., I know how to differentiate “pink” from “red”). In this manner we can also see “red” in problematically subjective terms (Crary, 2007, pp. 15-16).

How, though, does this relate to a discussion of objectivity? Crary's argument is that objectivity has traditionally seen progress in achieving an understanding of an objective reality (which she defines as coming to see things as they are and not just as they appear to be) as progressively excluding all, or most, subjective endowments; regardless of whether they be merely or problematically subjective. Crary labels this the “narrower conception of objectivity,” a conception of objectivity which she contrasts with the “wider conception of objectivity,” which allows problematically subjective properties to play an essential role in discerning reality (Crary, 2007, pp. 18-20). It is also important to note that these conceptions (“narrower” and “wider”) have correlates beyond objectivity; Crary argues that we can also speak of “narrower” and “wider” conceptions of rationality. The former conception attempts to remove everything which is not structured argument (all unbounded subjective properties) from contributing to something being fully rational, while the latter allows more than just structured argument to have a role in legitimately rational thought (Crary, 2007, pp. 130-131).

What does all of this have to do with O'Neill, Raphael and Diamond? The answer to this question is that we now have the tools to better evaluate and understand their theories. O'Neill and Raphael present theories which are narrowly objective, while Diamond's can be classified as widely objective. We can see this, in the case of O'Neill and Raphael, by referring back to their statements about literary merit versus philosophical merit. They are suspicious about anything subjective playing an ineliminable role in rational and objective thought. Raphael argued, for instance in his analysis of The Republic, that these subjective feelings can cloud rational perceptions (and thus must be rejected). Additionally O'Neill based her moral concerns for Wittgensteinian theories around worries that if we let the subjective play a role in objective or rational spheres, then it would follow that we would be saddled with relativism (among other worries). Literary works with the sensibilities they encourage, if
they are to play a role in rational discourse, must be accompanied by principles which will help us separate what is essential from what is “trivial” (O'Neill, 1986, p. 18). This requirement is a demand that moral philosophy must and, for the most part, can only be done in narrow terms. Diamond, conversely, insists that problematically subjective properties do play an ineliminable role in our rational thought.

Crary, after setting out this distinction, goes on to illustrate the limitations of operating within narrowly conceived conceptions of objectivity and rationality, with the goal of providing reasons for rejecting it. Crary, taking her cue from Diamond, demonstrates that we can see why we ought to reject such theories if we consider the worry of moralism. Moralism, in the sense I want to discuss it, is what Bernard Williams would label as “efforts to bring feelings within morality 'from the beginning’” (Crary, 2007, p. 206). This applies to O'Neill and Raphael, as their theories hold that uncontrolled emotions constitute a threat to securely grounded knowledge. This, though, is seen as a conceptual as well as a moral problem for Crary. It is conceptual insofar as it requires an impartial “vantage point” and this seems quite strange. On one level, bringing to mind McDowell's arguments on the comic, it seems to allow for a point of view from which we can judge our emotional life that does not in any way draw on our emotional life. This seems contradictory and will also result in creating a false impression of what our moral disagreements with others are actually like. We do not all work within the same world, indeed, we can see proof of this if we cast our minds back to the potential Rawlsian reading of Forster. The imperative “a spontaneous life is a good life” must be separated from “a spontaneous life is in keeping with a good and rational life.” The two imperatives are not equivalent. This gives us Crary's first point about the limitations of narrowly conceived conceptions of objectivity and rationality: They

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23 It is important to note that O'Neill does argue that literary works (and storytelling generally) can have a nonrational role in moral discourse (i.e., as an attempt to resurrect discussion once it has broken down); see O'Neill, 1986, p. 15. But, as Crary points out, this insistence that this is a nonrational role simply presupposes the narrow conception of objectivity and rationality. See Crary, 2007, p. 130 n 3.

24 This point is summed up nicely by Diamond. See Diamond, 1997b, p. 227.
represent a very strange view of our moral life, a charge which widely objective views, with their insistence on the legitimacy of emotions playing an ineliminable role when it comes to fully formed rational thought, avoid.²⁵

This outlines the conceptual worry of a narrowly objective theory, but there is also a moral worry. Crary is concerned that restricting ourselves to a moralistic narrowly objective life will result in our life becoming dangerously confusing. As she puts the point, “we run the risk of finding ourselves in a position (like that of the emotionally handicapped and muddled Mr. Wilcox [in *Howards End]*) in which we are incapable of grasping connections that are partly constitutive of the fabric of our lives” (Crary, 2007, p. 162). As we can see from the above quotation, Crary provides a literary example of the confusion of putting our emotional life under the pale of morality “from the beginning,” and I would like to add another literary example which should illustrate why the narrow conception of objectivity is morally troubling. Turning to Murdoch's *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* we find a character, Axel, who provides us with a particularly striking example of what can happen if we attempt to bring our emotional (subjective) life under the pale of morality “from the beginning.” We can see this at play in the beginning stages of his romantic relationship with Simon:

He analysed the weaknesses of Simon's character. Simon was by nature frivolous, inconstant, evasive, impulsive, irrational, shallow. 'Then how can you love me?' cried Simon. 'Love has nothing to do with merit,' said Axel irritably. 'Then you *do* love me, Axel, you've just admitted it!' According to Axel however nothing followed from that. (Murdoch, 1972, p. 202)

This passage illustrates an example of narrowly rational moralistic thought. Love which is not in keeping with the dictates of merit (which seems to be defined in moral terms) is dangerous and suspect (“nothing followed from that”). Axel, feeling that this emotional life of Simon's is a concern, places strict limitations on their relationship as a means by which he will turn Simon into someone who may be loved safely. These include specific rules governing Simon's behaviour, such as forbidding the

²⁵ This paragraph as a whole draws on Crary, 2007, pp. 206-207. See Chapter Three of this work as well.
telling of any untruths (even white lies)\(^{26}\) and Axel expects this will bring about a meritorious love, one which will be safe, loyal, and monogamous (Murdoch, 1972, p. 202). However, what is the moral concern caused by this? Murdoch asks the reader to see that Axel actually undermines his central goals because of a narrow focus. A central theme in the novel as a whole is the importance of open communication for healthy human relationships to flourish. Axel with his strict imposition of rules, however, creates a fear which becomes dominant in their relationship and nearly undermines it. Additionally, this atmosphere is cemented in his failure to see Simon's love (and love generally) as anything more than flighty and unreliable, resulting in him being unable to appreciate that Simon is also fighting for a loyal relationship.\(^{27}\) Indeed, it is Murdoch's overall point that a failure to see how a limiting (in advance) of our emotional life can be a factor in creating moral confusion (whether it is a failure to see the problems being created or a failure to see the way out). A point Murdoch reinforces by having Axel remark, at the end of the novel, that the main cause of their problems “was a failure of love” (Murdoch, 1972, p. 434), one which could more easily been avoided in a widely objective and rational moral theory as such a theory does not systematically fear our subjective endowments.

These points, overall, allow us to see why narrowly conceived moral theories are problematic in ways which widely conceived ones are not. However, there are still the moral worries made by Raphael and O'Neill which require an answer before we move on. After all, even if we accept most of what has been said in favour of widely conceived theories, the worries of relativism and impracticality remain. The concern about relativism, expressed by both Raphael and O'Neill, will be addressed first. It is worth noting that a large component of Chapter Three will be a discussion of how related moral criticisms, leveled by Simon Blackburn, can be addressed, however, I will, in order to suggest how Crary and Diamond have furthered the dialectic, briefly address this point.

\(^{26}\) See, as an example, Murdoch, 1972, p. 30-31.
\(^{27}\) Indeed, Axel comes to see such a distorted picture of reality that he cannot see any other reason that Simon would be with Julius than in order to have an affair, even though he himself (later) admits that Julius' reputation as a “mischief-maker” would allow of other interpretations. See Murdoch, 1972, pp. 433-434.
We can see a response to O'Neill's concerns over Wittgensteinian moral theories by turning to several of the points Crary makes in relation to Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. Wittgenstein does, as O'Neill rightly points out, speak of certain judgments “standing fast' for us,” as well as the role of conversion in moral thought, seen for instance in passages like the following:

> Men have believed they could make rain; why should not a king be brought up in the belief that the world began with him? And if [G. E.] Moore and the king were to meet and discuss, could Moore really prove his belief to be the right one? I do not say that Moore could not convert the king to his view, but it would be a conversion of a special kind; the king would be brought to look at the world in a special way. (Wittgenstein, 1972, §92)

The essential part is the last sentence. What we see there seems to be the “inviolability thesis,” which states that we cannot judge the limits of our world and, furthermore, any moral change will take the form of a “special kind” of conversion (the irrational persuasion), all of which would be in keeping with what O'Neill claimed. The ground from which we can judge competing moral claims has, it seems, fallen away.

Crary rejects this interpretation. She claims instead that idea that there are judgments which “stand fast” for us does not commit us, as O'Neill would argue, to the inviolability thesis. This is seen, for instance, in considering Wittgenstein's cases which we might be tempted to describe as someone seeming to be make a judgment, but really we would do better to describe what is going on as “a mental disturbance.” Wittgenstein uses the example of a man who says “I'm a woman,” however since we do know the ways in which this statement would be understandable as a judgement (in the case of a transsexual), we would do better to consider a person saying “I am a squirrel” or “I am an orange.” The point that Crary wants us to take from this is that there is not enough continuity between these statements and “judgments we already recognize.” It follows that the activity of making judgements, then, rests on these “judgments we already recognize” and these do stand firm for us. To challenge these judgements via other judgements (a narrowly objective approach) we would need to compare

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them in a vacuum and the existence of such a “view from nowhere” seems impossible (it would be like understanding the “comic” from the outside). All of this, however, does not have the implications that O'Neill thinks it does. Crary wants us to see these firm judgements are not beyond the pale of criticism; they are only beyond the pale of criticism that proceeds via narrowly conceived means (i.e., other judgments). Crary expands on what she means:

Wittgenstein only appears to be a relativist if his remark about how certain cultural gulfs need to be bridged by persuasive methods are construed as remarks about how certain such gulfs can only be bridged by non-rational means. (Crary, 2007, p. 118)

Crary claims that this assumption is not at all obvious. Widely conceived theories allow for persuasion (“special kind of conversion”) that is not relativistic and yet is rational. To see this further, I want to briefly turn back to Diamond.

In Diamond's article “Anything But Argument?” she argues that persuasion is only non-rational if it proceeds as a matter of cause-and-effect (as O'Neill would assert) (Diamond, 1991b, pp. 291-292). However, persuasion can be a much more serious matter than O'Neill allows for, as it can be directed towards the thought (or mode of response) an agent has. Returning to our example of Axel, his failure is one of “love,” or of responsiveness, and an understanding of what has been robbed from him cannot proceed via traditionally conceived rational argumentation. Since his “muddledness” is the result of placing restrictions on subjective sensibilities, any narrowly objective argument will have similar restrictions and, thus, will not get at the heart of the problem. It needs to address the way he conceives he ought to see the world to get him to see that a different mode of response is possible.

It should be clear that this is not a matter of being swayed by every criticism directed at our modes of response. After all, if we attempted to convince Axel about his “failure of love” via overly sentimental means, he would have reason to reject our attempts. An emotional appeal which strikes a false tone ought to be rejected (regardless of whether or not it is or not). Should the reader not yet be

29 This whole paragraph draws on Crary, 2007, pp. 116-119.
30 This paragraph draws on Diamond, 1991b, p. 294 and Diamond, 1988, pp. 276-277.
convinced additional arguments will be made in Chapter Three's discussion against the relativism charge.

The above point about relativism ties together with the previously discussed point about the importance of widely conceived notions in making sense of our lives. This provides Crary with her conclusion regarding this worry. It also brings us back to our main concern, moral philosophy and literature. Even though, and this is obviously the case, we may confront potentially harmful literature that may try to sway us towards “violent or mean” outlooks, it does not follow we should reject our approach wholesale. As she claims:

The point here is that we also have no a priori grounds for insisting that sensitivities a literary work instills must in every case be vulnerable to challenge and, furthermore, that we are accordingly obliged to acknowledge that, if we antecedently reject any tutelage they offer, we run the risk of finding ourselves in a position [...] in which we are incapable of grasping connections that are partly constitutive of the fabric of our lives. (Crary, 2007, p. 162)

Thus, the conclusion is that the dangers of rejecting all types of widely conceived “tutelage,” out of fear of corruption by poor works of literature, are simply too great. We would risk finding our lives incomprehensible and we may say that this concern outweighs (or at least balances) the concern of corruption.

This leaves the charge of impracticality. I do not think it necessary to say too much about this charge; the claim can be answered that while widely objective theorists want to extend the realm of moral philosophy beyond explicitly deliberative arguments, there is still a practical or deliberative side to their theory. Since the theory affects the boundaries of our world (our mode of response) it can alter what practical actions available to us. For instance, we can come to see a particular action as possible, while before it was hidden from view or “impossible.”

A literary example can serve to illustrate here, namely Forster's *A Room with a View*, particularly Mr. Emerson's confrontation with Lucy at the climax of the novel. At this point we have seen Lucy,
after rejecting both Cecil (whom she did not love) and George (whom she did), imprisoned within a certain mode of response. Love, it seems, must be brought under the control of proper behaviour. She ends up so “muddled” that she, in a sense, drops out of life: “She gave up trying to understand herself, and joined the vast armies of the benighted, who follow neither the heart nor the brain, and march to their destiny by catchwords. [...] They have sinned against passion and truth, and vain will be their strife after virtue” (Forster, 1977, p. 174). She is trapped by this vision of the world.

The particularly responsive Mr. Emerson is able to diagnose her illness: “Do you remember in that church, when you pretended to be annoyed with me and weren't? Do you remember before, when you refused the room with the view? Those were muddles—little, but ominous—and I am fearing that you are in one now” (Forster, 1977, p. 201). He is then able to give her a different way of responding to the world, one in which love does not have to be subservient to “proper” behaviour when he argues the following:

“I only wish poets would say this, too: that love is of the body; not the body, but of the body. Ah! the misery that would be saved if we confessed that! Ah for a little directness to liberate the soul! Your soul, dear Lucy! I hate the word now, because of all the cant with which superstition has wrapped it around. But we have souls. I cannot say how they came nor whither they go, but we have them, and I see you ruining yours. I cannot bear it. It is again the darkness creeping in; it is hell. [...] What nonsense I have talked—how abstract and remote! And I have made you cry! Dear girl, forgive my prosiness; marry my boy. When I think what life is, and how seldom love is answered by love—marry him; it is one of the moments for which the world was made.” (Forster, 1977, p. 202)

It is on the strength of this that Mr. Emerson is able to bring about a change in responsiveness in Lucy and, furthermore, it is a change which allows her to see marrying George as a possibility, undoubtedly a practical achievement.

The above instruction was widely objective. Forster himself makes this quite clear when he describes Lucy’s frame of mind after her conversation with Mr. Emerson:

He [Mr. Emerson] gave her a sense of deities reconciled, a feeling that, in gaining the man she loved, she would gain something for the whole world. [...] He had robbed the body of its taint, the world's taunts of their sting; he had shown her the holiness of direct desire. She
“never exactly understood,” she would say in after years, “how he managed to strengthen her. It was as if he made her see the whole of everything at once” (Forster, 1977, p. 204).

The change did not take place within her understanding but was a change in her understanding. The boundaries of what she saw in her world were shifted. She now responds to the world with certain subjective endowments which, furthermore, are not required to be brought under the pale of morality from the beginning. Thus we can see how a widely objective theory can have very important practical implications.

Conclusion:

At this point we have seen several things. In particular, we have seen a context of argumentation which exists between Diamond, on the one side, and O'Neill and Raphael on the other. We have also seen that moral concerns govern much of O'Neill's and Raphael's fears surrounding Diamond's theory. In the second part of this chapter, however, by turning to Crary's work we can see how these worries can be addressed and this gives grounding to the Diamondian realist side of the debate.

However, this is not the end of the story. It seems that there is something missing from Crary's account that needs to be addressed if we are going to be convinced of her success in resolving the dialectic. This counterargument can be found in the work of Simon Blackburn. We will see that his theory is based around the idea of attitudinal dispositions. Now, if we incorporate these into a moral theory it seems we can account for all that is valuable in widely objective theories without making the philosophically controversial move away from the narrowly objective framework. After all, grasping a disposition allows for us to account for the importance of description. Blackburn argues that realism is attractive because it seems to be in keeping with experience, but reflection will show that this is not the case. We can keep a distinction between evaluative and descriptive premises. Illustrating Blackburn's
theory further, and then addressing how it fails to provide us with a real alternative to Crary's interpretation will occupy the remaining two chapters of this work.
Chapter Two: Blackburn's Alternate Explanation

Introduction:

At this point we have seen a certain way in which literature and moral philosophy relate. Literature can present a *Gestalt*, a practical orientation towards the world, and moreover one in which the descriptive and evaluative elements are inseparable (Diamondian realism). In the first chapter we compared this relationship with objections and an alternate interpretation from Onora O'Neill and D.D. Raphael. Furthermore, it was then shown how Alice Crary has advanced the dialectic in favour of Diamondian realism.

In this chapter I want to introduce another set of objections that could prove troublesome for Diamond's position. This will be done through a comparison with a non-cognitivist view of the literary works, one which can account for the moral ideas of the examples previously discussed within a narrowly objective framework. For instance, Simon Blackburn, the non-cognitivist in question, can reinterpret my claims surrounding literature and moral philosophy; while he would agree that description in literature is important for moral philosophers to consider, he would go on to argue that I am claiming too much. Henry James' interest in furniture in *The Europeans* may serve as a critique of the puritan world-view, but this can be interpreted as evidence of an attitudinal disposition. James is presenting us with a picture of someone who, because of training, tends to respond with disapprobation to puritanical world-views and this will be presented in all of this person's description (including those of furniture). As noted above, what is unique about Blackburn's position is that this can be accomplished without a turn towards the wider conception of objectivity; there is still, for Blackburn, a theoretical distinction between description and evaluation, even if we find it hard to pinpoint exactly where the separation would be. To see how this is the case, I will now turn to examine Blackburn's
view of the relationship between moral philosophy and literature and the underpinnings of this theory. After setting this out, I want to make it clear that Crary's project does not have any easy replies to these criticisms, setting the stage for Chapter Three, where I will reinforce her position.

Part One: Summary of Blackburn's Position

First of all, Blackburn agrees that there is a need to pay attention to traditionally non-moral topics in making sense of someone's moral views. As he claims: “A conversation drawn by Jane Austen or George Eliot can reveal volumes about the characters' ethics, although no overtly moral language is used and no moral opinions are delivered” (Blackburn, 1998, pp. 1-2). This represents a similarity between what the Diamondian realist has been claiming and Blackburn's own view of literature and moral philosophy. Both accounts argue that ethics needs to reflect on more than just moral judgements. There is a need to consider the way “non-moral” topics are described, which will mean that the moral philosopher ought to see it as important to consider, for example, Forster's sense of irony and humour.

This, though, is where the agreement between a widely objective theorist and Blackburn ends. Blackburn argues that we can see these traditionally non-moral features as morally relevant within a narrowly rational and objective framework, and thus avoids the philosophically controversial move towards the wider conceptions of objectivity and rationality. As a result, moral philosophy can (and indeed, as we will see, ought to) function within a framework where there is a separation between the evaluative and descriptive elements.31 This may strike the reader as shocking, since I have been arguing that it is the wider conception's melding of the evaluative and the descriptive that illuminates the moral status of the traditionally non-moral features in literature, and thus it is worth asking: How exactly is it

31 He puts the put succinctly: “we take in a fact about our situation, and our desires are functional states manifested in the relationship between the fact we apprehend, and the tendency towards action which results.” From Blackburn, “The Majesty of Reason” in Blackburn 2010a, p. 16.
that a narrowly objective theory can capture these features? Blackburn argues that when someone provides a description in “value-laden” terminology what is happening is that

[s]he is in fact taking some features of a situation, usually identifiable in a more neutral way, and in their light entering into a practical state: admiration for the bravery of whatever deed was done, contempt for the person who enjoys mathematics and computers, condemnation of the man whose actions were not those of a gentleman, or disgust and fear at the mode of motion of the snake. (Blackburn, 1998, pp. 6-7)

At this point we can see how Blackburn would reinterpret, say, Forster. The humour which pervades *A Room with a View* is the result of the author conveying a “practical state.” This means that Forster, or the imagined narrator of this work, is the sort of person who would generally respond with approbation to a “European” way of life and with disapprobation to an “English” way. Such responses are the result of training and we become so used to responding in a certain manner that we cannot easily see where the separation of fact and value would lie. To put the point in another way, we have been trained to respond nearly automatically when a certain “fact” presents itself to us. Thus, within the realm of narrowly objective moral philosophy there is reason to be interested in Forster's humourous descriptions of traditionally non-moral fields.

This, though, does not mean, as the widely objective theorist would claim, that the sensibilities are themselves of moral importance, in the sense that they cannot be prised apart from our understanding of moral concepts. Rather, these sensibilities simply express our feelings of approbation and disapprobation towards the facts of the world, which is of moral importance. As Blackburn puts the point: “[J]ust as the eye is not part of the visual scene it presents, the sensibility responsible for the emotional impact of things is not part of the scene it takes for material” (Blackburn, 1994, p. 176). This provides the groundwork for an interpretation of literature and moral philosophy, one that can account for the importance of “traditionally non-moral topics” in moral philosophy without making the controversial step towards the wider conception of objectivity.
At this point we have seen a brief outline of how Blackburn would resolve the debate presented in the first chapter. Although I argued that he would agree with the Diamondian realist that it is important to pay attention to our sensibilities in moral philosophy, he differs in that he is able to paint a picture of their importance which does not rely on their having an explanatory role when it comes to concept-acquisition. In this section I want to explore the two types of arguments upon which he bases his view of attitudinal dispositions. One argument will be moral in nature (we ought not see things as the Diamondian realist asks us to) and the second will be epistemological (things are not as the Diamondian realist tells us they are). In the next part of this chapter I will argue that Crary, who, as we saw in the first chapter, was able to advance the cause of Diamondian realism, does not have obvious and completely satisfactory answers to some of these worries. Before addressing that I will first, in the context of introducing Blackburn's arguments, present one other argument of his which I think Crary is able to adequately address.

Essentially, Blackburn's argument, unlike Diamond's, asserts that if we want to understand concepts like courage or justice, it is no good “looking” at them. He provides an analogy: If we want to understand what money is, we do not take a dollar bill and start to poke and prod at it, rather, we approach this situation by learning about “human economic behaviour.” Thus when we turn to the ethical sphere, the appropriate approach is to examine valuing behaviour and move out from there (Blackburn, 1998, p. 50).

The above view can be contrasted with a widely objective one. Diamond, for instance, agrees that our uses and our practices are important when it comes to understanding our concepts, but is able, working from that thesis, to present a different view. Working with her example of “humanity” she explains that it is by engaging in shared practices such as naming (all humans are those which are
named) and mourning activities (funeral rites etc...) that we construct what Blackburn would call an “amalgamated” concept, one where the our sensibilities or affective state play an ineliminable role in our beliefs (Blackburn, 1998, p. 100). To put it simply, we learn what a human being is in the process of learning to value humanity (the two cannot be prised apart) (Diamond, 1991h, p. 62). As Crary points out, there is a kind of circularity that emerges, one in which “the question of whether something merits the attitudes internal to a given moral concept is a moral question, [as a result] it follows that [...] our moral judgments are governed by standards that essentially reflect our substantive moral beliefs” (Crary, 2007, p. 32).

Yet Crary claims that there is nevertheless a difference between the perception of colours and the perception of moral ideas in the world and, furthermore, a widely objective theorist can hold this view. The analogy is useful for seeing the similarities, but can be taken too far. It is important to note that many of Blackburn's arguments against “amalgamated” concepts deal, rightly, with some of the weaknesses of this analogy. Indeed, the limitations of such analogies can be seen by considering his argument that whereas the perception of colours is not in any significant way culturally conditioned, morality, to some degree, seems to be. Thus, we may argue about colours but not, to an extreme degree, about what colours are. That is to say, I may argue with my Vietnamese friend about whether it is inappropriate to bring her white flowers on a whim, but we would be unlikely to argue about whether the flowers in question were actually white. Of course, we may be able to argue about whether a flower is cream or eggshell, but it is very rare to encounter someone who, unless they suffer from a physical impediment, will deny that they can see colours at all (that is who would deny that the flowers in question are white-ish); whereas, and this is Blackburn's crucial point, it is surprisingly common to find people who will deny the existence of any (or at least certain) moral values. Again, what needs to be

32 See, for instance, Blackburn, 1994, p. 60 for a very good discussion of this issue.
33 The obvious counterargument would be “What about people who are colourblind? They may treat blue and green as the same colour.” However, we have tests to address whether this is or is not an issue in the specific case. Argument can be cut off here as well.
taken from this is that while Blackburn is right that an analogy that sees the perception of colours as exactly the same as the perception of moral properties may be suspect, Crary is still able to point out that, and this will hopefully become convincing as we go along, we can find the perception analogy useful without taking it as far as the position Blackburn criticizes. As we saw, she argues that we can see moral values as meriting not just being seen, but meriting certain “appropriate attitudes.” Colours may occasionally merit certain attitudes (red for danger, say), but often they are just there and this is not quite what Crary and the other realists are arguing.\textsuperscript{34} This provides us with a distinction between perceiving colours and perceiving moral properties.

Thus, we need to see what other arguments are offered by non-cognitivists like Blackburn if the widely objective theorist is to feel threatened by his critiques. He does have arguments that meet this challenge, and furthermore arguments which I do not think have been answered completely by thinkers like Crary. To start with Blackburn argues that we would be better off to interpret the moral importance of the traditionally non-moral aspects of literary discourse within his system, since it has an epistemological advantage over the competition. Indeed, he wants us to see that widely objective theories simply cannot account for certain aspects of our language.

The background to Blackburn's epistemological argument is well presented in his discussion of “fat” and “fat↓”.\textsuperscript{35} He argues that when “fat” is accompanied by the downward arrow it refers to it being said with a pejorative tone. In this example, there is a community of people who use this term pejoratively (“fattists” as Blackburn terms them), and this is evidence of a shared sensibility amongst the “fattists.” They are the sort of people who perceive fatness and respond to it with disapprobation.

What we will see in exploring this is that the existence of “fattists” and “non-fattists” is best captured

\textsuperscript{34} John McDowell notes that this argument of Blackburn's probably draws on a confusion. He argues that Blackburn sees the realist as arguing that the moral features that are there in the world are the “parents of our sensibilities.” McDowell denies that this is his position, rather the realist sees the moral features of the world and our sensibilities as coming into being together (which in and of itself shows the difference between this perception and the perception of colours). See McDowell, 1998, p. 159.

\textsuperscript{35} The following draws on points made in Blackburn, 1998, pp. 95-7 and Blackburn, 1992, pp. 290-291 and p. 299.
by a theory which endorses a version of the separability of fact and attitude model (which, of course, is a model in keeping with the narrow conception of objectivity), where we have concepts (i.e., “fatness”) and we bring various attitudes to bear on them.  

The point in presenting this distinction is that Blackburn feels this offers a challenge to the Diamondian realist. Such a realist would be committed to representing the “fattist” and the “non-fattist” in a specific fashion; instead of being seen in terms of possessing one concept and two descriptions (a split between fact and value), they must possess two distinct concepts. Part of what defines a kind-concept like “fatness,” for such a realist, is a non-formal component; which is to say that the sensibilities which accompany the “fattists”’ way of seeing something immoral cannot be prised apart from their concept of “fatness.” Thus, if we are to understand their use of the word “fat,” we must be able to, in some sense, share in that sensibility; in other words, we must see the world as they see it, or communication risks breaking down. It is worthwhile to point out that this forms not only the basis of his epistemological worries (the world is not like that), which we are currently exploring, but also, as we will see, his moral worries (the world should not be like that).

Regarding the epistemological worries, Blackburn makes it clear that it seems very odd to think of the world in terms of a Diamondian realism. He notes that

[w]e certainly would not be likely to say, for example, that there is a distinctive property of fat[ness] and that the [...]“fattists”] shared reactions now enable them to detect it, discovering a new kind of truth. On the face of it, there are just fat people, and the teenagers' expression of their disgust at them. (Blackburn, 1998, p. 95)

This, of course, appears quite reasonable. To use another one of Blackburn's examples, do we not find it odd to think of the fashion elite at a fashion show seeing “divinity” and “grossness” as real properties

36 Part of what I see as particularly impressive about Blackburn's account is that although he is committed to a fact/value distinction he is able to, through the use of attitudinal dispositions, make the distinction between the two less sharp which I think better characterizes our experience (See Blackburn, 1998, p. 319). After all it does not seem to be the case that we encounter the world in the following manner: “Ah! There is a neutral fact. Now, what value shall I bring to bear on it?”

37 “Immoral” may seem to be an odd choice of word here, but I think it is justified. After all the “fattists” as I imagine them probably have a specific background which makes “fatness” disgusting (i.e. a person with a puritanical disapproval of laziness may see fatness as evidence of sin).
that are actually there in the clothes? Surely it makes more sense to see these evaluations as reactions to the clothes (which are just there) (Blackburn, 1998, p. 97). This view has a certain intuitive appeal, as our use of language does seem to be like this. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that “seeming like this” does not always entail “is like this,” so what evidence does Blackburn provide for this conclusion? One of his arguments is that if we attempt to represent language use as the widely objective theorist does then we end up with a situation where our languages are so idiosyncratic as to become incommunicable.38 In the case of fatness, the users of “fat↓” could not be understood (or could only understood with extreme difficulty) by the users of “fat (with no arrow).”

Blackburn’s point is that we do not, in our day to day lives, find ourselves crippled by such an incommunicability. This very fact casts a shadow of improbability over widely objective theories. He goes on to claim that we understand exactly what someone is saying when they say “fat” with a disapproving tone, even if we are the sort of person who is excited (in a positive manner) by the thought of fatness. Blackburn argues that this means that our concepts are best represented by allowing that, at some level, the fact and value portions are (theoretically) separate. As proof of this he invokes the following comment of Wittgenstein’s: “You might say that certain words are only pegs to hang intonations on” (Quoted in Blackburn, 1998, p. 95), by which Blackburn wants us to see that the use of a concept may very well be mixed in with a whole variety of attitudes, but our concepts still have some “semantic anchors.” This is to say that we can remove our sneer from the sentence “He is so fat↓” without “semantic rupture;” consider that the resulting sentence (“He is so fat (no arrow)”) is equally understandable. To be clear, Blackburn is obviously not saying that the two resulting sentences are equivalent, he does note that we can replace “fat↓” with “gross!” but we are not able to do a similar replacement when it comes to just “fat” (Blackburn, 1992, p. 297). The point is that even if we have

38 He is not being uncharitable in asking for an answer to this strange consequence of such realist theories. After all, Iris Murdoch herself speaks of the “unavoidably idiosyncratic and inaccessible” nature of moral language. See Murdoch, 1970, p. 33.
never heard either “fat (no arrow)” or “fat↓” before we, upon first encountering them, can still get the
gist of what they are intended to convey. To take this point further, if we live in a fat-loving society and
we encounter, for the first time, Blackburn's fattists we would then be able to tell from their sneer and
their tone that they find something wrong with fat, even if we do not have a full picture of what is
going on. This is something which the widely objective theorist will not have access to, since they use a
framework in which the “fact” side of our concepts cannot be separated off from our sensibilities, this
epistemological claim result in “fat” and “fat↓” becoming two distinct concepts and the failure to grasp
the sensibility at work in each constitutes a failure to grasp the concept. 39

This connects to a further point Blackburn makes about how this “description+tone” model
better captures the ways we actually use language. Using the example of “lewd,” Blackburn argues that
we tend to see something as “lewd” if the thing in question “involves some kind of transgressing of
normal boundaries on accepted sexual display or reference, and if as a result [...] we] find it shocking or
disapprove of it” (Blackburn, 1998, p. 103). This is important to note since it is possible, in the
“description+tone” model, to incorporate these transgressions into our lives in a variety of ways: we
may find them disturbing, or funny, or we may find it acceptable for private, but not public, enjoyment
and so on. The point that we need to draw out from this is the following: “The reason that it is hard to
identify such a thing as the attitude associated with regarding something as lewd is that there is no such
ting as the attitude” (Blackburn, 1998, p. 103). This, then, provides us with further support of the
theory that concepts are best seen as “pegs” upon which we “hang intonations,” since if there are
multiple attitudes to associate with “lewd” (or “fat”), which seems to accord with our intuitions, then a
model which allows us to bring multiple tones to bear on a single description is more sensible than the
alternate model, where the description is bound up with only one sensibility.

In addition to thinking that the Diamondian realist fails to see language as we use it, Blackburn

presents a second criticism, which focuses on the moral concerns he sees inherent in such a position. To illustrate this criticism, he asks us to consider the example a group of people and their use of the word “cute,” which they tend to direct towards certain women. Blackburn argues that if we turn away, as the Diamondian realist asks us to, from an “eighteenth-century picture of our mind,” or one in which the inputs (perceptions and descriptions) are separated from the outputs (attitudes) (Blackburn, 1998, pp. 4-5 and pp 100-101), then we end up with a morally troubling picture. He argues that we tend to think that it is not acceptable for these “cute-seers” to “react to [women who possess] an infantile, unthreatening appearance [...] or [display] overt indications of willingness to be subservient to men” (Blackburn, 1998, p. 101) with feelings of approbation. Cuteness is an attitude which we may be justified in bringing to bear upon teddy bears, but it is not justified in the case of adult human beings. It is an attitude of dismissal, and we must criticize the “cute-seers” accordingly.

This should strike us as non-controversial. However, Blackburn argues that widely objective theories cannot give us a satisfying way to criticize these “cute-seers.” The problem is that by combining inputs and outputs into a completely amalgamated entity we lose “an essential specifically normative dimension of criticism” (Blackburn, 1998, p. 101). If the “cute-seers” in question take themselves to be widely objective theorists, then they can see the “obvious” cuteness of women as meriting certain responses. They may even attempt to convince others that their “texture of being” is the proper one; indeed, they may even form the majority of people in our society. The problem that Blackburn sees at this point is that widely objective theories become “disguises for a conservative and ultimately self-serving complacency” (Blackburn, 1998, p. 102). We lose the ability to have a genuine moral debate if criticisms can easily be rejected before they are even considered.

On the surface of it this could seem unfair, we can imagine that the widely objective theorist could answer such a charge. Diamond's work provides a potential example. She finds that a certain “deadness or falseness” in our moral thought can emerge “if our judgments do not issue from full
imaginative life” (Diamond, 1993, p. 133). For example we, through reading Charles Dickens, become engaged by the descriptions of children therein. As we saw in the last chapter, she cites the following passage from *Great Expectations* as an example: “I remember Mr. Hubble as a tough high-shouldered old man, of a sawdusty fragrance, with his legs extraordinarily wide apart: so that in my short days I always saw some miles of open country between them when I meet him coming up the lane” (Quoted in Diamond, 1991b, p. 299). Diamond argues that this engagement can influence our conception of human life. We are not learning facts about children, but we are learning that theirs is a life full of fragility, a feeling that becomes part of our conception of children (and even humanity). Though this assumes that Dickens does not strike a false tone though sentimentiality, which, we saw, would give us reason to criticize and reject his descriptions (Diamond, 1991b, p. 300). For instance, if Dickens asks us to see childhood as a time only of fragility, we could say that this springs from a limited style of thought and for this reason reject his claim. Thus we can see how the widely objective theorist can criticize certain moral thoughts (“they are sentimental and thus false...”) and this could serve as a reply to our supposedly widely objective “cute seers.”

If this is so, do we not have a reason to challenge Blackburn's fears of “conservative complacency”? He would not be convinced. If we argue that the “cute-seers” are striking a “false tone,” then we are saying that they provide a poor description of what is going on. But Blackburn wants us to see that this cannot be a completely satisfactory answer to his worry. While we can break down the mental states of the “cute-seers” in Blackburn's theory in order to criticize their components, this cannot be accomplished by the Diamondian realist. Her mental states “resist decomposition” and thus cannot be criticized in the Blackburnian fashion. Therefore the “cute-seers” will always have a “perfect defence” against criticism from the widely objective theorist. This defence involves them saying that the opposing view springs from a texture of being which is false (or the product of deadening thought). It is, to put it in other terms, the product of misdescription. If I, as a “cute-seer,” feel that it is the
anti-“cute-seer”’s Gestalt that springs from a poorly imagined life, then what exactly can be said to convince me I am wrong? Remember that there is no neutral ground to choose between competing Gestalten for the widely objective theorist, so if a critique does not appear (or feel) compelling, then it can quite easily be rejected. To put the point in another way, a critic is free to say my thought is “dead,” but if she felt what I feel than she would understand why she is wrong. Diamond's answer, at this stage, seems unsatisfactory. Of course, this worry can be avoided if we take up the sort of non-cognitivism that Blackburn endorses, since the non-cognitivist “critique starts not from a misdescription but from an essential insight” (Blackburn, 1998, p. 102).

This leads us to the major problem Blackburn sees with such externalist theories. He does admit that they are correct in seeing that reasons for behaving in moral ways are, in some sense, just there. For instance, the fact that scratching my nails on the blackboard distresses someone in the room should be ample reason for me to not scratch the blackboard. However, he sees this as “a hollow victory,” since it is only an internalist who can account for why this reason (that is just there) should matter to us. Only if we are the sort of person who is disposed in a certain way can we feel the force of this reason. In other words, only insofar as I am the sort of person who cares about the suffering of others can I feel the force of a person's discomfort at my scratching the blackboard. This again is reason that only a theory that separates (on some level) fact and value can give us a working and practical morality.

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40 I will, of course, be expanding on it in Chapter Three.
41 This draws from Blackburn, 2010a, p. 11. For the blackboard example see Blackburn, 2010a, p. 7.
Part Three: Why is it Necessary to Address Blackburn?

The preceding moral conclusions should remind us of other thinkers discussed in the first chapter: Onora O'Neill and D.D. Raphael. We saw O'Neill's discussion of the particular type of moral conversion championed by Diamondian realists. O'Neill argues that they see a type of “education of the heart” as all that is left for non-rational moral thought. Her view is that such Wittgensteinians have no justification in saying who, in a moral conflict, is the missionary and who is the seductive native (O'Neill, 1986, p. 15). Similarly in Raphael we saw his concern that works that could not show how the attitudes presented within were connected to “common human experience” were nothing more than merely idiosyncratic. Both of these views do seem quite close to Blackburn's moral worries about widely objective theories being a cover for conservative ideas.

We saw in the previous chapter how it is that Crary has furthered the debate between Diamondian realism and narrowly objective theorists like O'Neill and Raphael, but if she has, as I think so, given ammunition to the Diamondian realist, why exactly are these moral concerns still in need of an answer? If we look back to her answer about works of literature which embody an overly conservative sensibility and how widely objective theories can respond to them, we will see that more still needs to be added to her argument.

She presented several points that are worth mentioning. First, she argued that even though there are certain literary works that can depict a Gestalt which is conservative and corrupt, it does not follow that every literary Gestalt will be so “vulnerable to challenge.” This leads to the second, closely related, point that there are risks to rejecting wholesale all widely objective readings. For instance, we

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42 See, for instance, Crary, 2007, p. 130 n 3 for a good summary of O'Neill's position. See also O'Neill, 1986, p. 15.
43 See Raphael, 1983a, p. 5 as well as Diamond, 1991a, p. 368.
44 See Crary, 2007, p. 162. It should be noted that even though Blackburn's above critiques do not directly address the notion of literary discourse what he would say can easily be extrapolated (i.e. reading a work of fiction written by the “cute-seers”).
may run the risk of becoming unable to see the connections that make up the texture of our beings, as Crary saw well represented in the characterization of Mr. Wilcox in Forster's *Howards End*. He, she argues, falls into Foresterian trouble of being “muddled,” that is to say (to use Crary's example) his life is organized around a fascination for automobiles and all things mechanical, but he cannot see this and, furthermore, he cannot see how this affects his “connections” with other people (Crary, 2007, p. 162). If, indeed, he were able to see this he would have the tools necessary to confront his obtuseness and adopt a more passionate stance towards the people in his life.45

The third point Crary provides us with is an additional argument directed mainly against O'Neill. In noting that she identifies Diamondian realism with a non-rational moral philosophy, Crary argues that O'Neill has simply taken the narrow conception of objectivity for granted. Diamond is, after all, not arguing for a non-rational strategy for deciding between moral world-views but a rational one.46 Since O'Neill does not see how strategies beyond the narrowly objective can be rational, she cannot address Diamond's points as they deserve to be addressed (Crary, 2007, p. 130 n 3).

However, Crary's arguments still are not sufficiently convincing. Her first and third counterpoints, as presented above, do present us with an answer to the moral worries of O'Neill, Raphael and, by extension, Blackburn. However, it does seem that more work is needed to establish which works are “vulnerable to challenge” and which are not. How, after all, are we to decide which falls into which category? It is not unrealistic to say that we should be able to provide something of an answer. And, furthermore, what happens in the case of debate? That is to say, what happens when we are left with works like *Huckleberry Finn*, where there is debate about whether it is a corrupting work or a work that would lead to moral improvement? Similarly, in the third case, we can still see the

45 See, for instance, Margaret's passionate thoughts on this subject: Forster, 1991, p. 214.
46 Diamond puts the point as follows:

*Argument* is the way in which we make such connections clear; to make a moral assertion rationally acceptable is to show such connections by argument. If we hold that view, the answers to the questions I asked at the beginning are indeed clear. *But it is important to note that ‘if’* (Diamond, 1991b, p. 307, emphasis mine). Her conclusion is that we need not restrict rationality to “connections by argument.”
concerns that would be raised by Blackburn with his example of the “cute-seers.” If we open up the
ground for types of persuasion to count as rational, do we not feel the power of Blackburn's that we
would lose the space for normative criticism? After all, how can we discredit the “cute-seers” attempts
to persuade the world of the correctness of their Gestalten? Crary does present us with answers to these
two worries, but they could stand to be reinforced further.

This leaves us with Crary's second argument, which I think is her most interesting. If it could be
argued that our lives were impoverished by failing to see the connections that a widely objective theory
would make clear, then we would have good grounds for seeing a moral imperative in turning towards
such interpretations and this in itself would present us with reasons to feel that the moral risks of
widely objective theories are justified. This is where Blackburn's potential counter-arguments become
particularly threatening to the Diamondian realist, as his theory allows us to account for the
“muddledness” of Mr. Wilcox within a narrowly objective theory. Blackburn can look at the stretches
of discourse in which Wilcox describes his apartment in mechanical terms and claim that this is
evidence of a certain attitudinal disposition. He would say that Wilcox is the sort of person who has
been trained to treat efficiency as his primary motivator and this, then, comes out in his descriptions.
The very fact that this is a trained response (which probably started when he was very young) may
make it hard for him to see. Furthermore, if he could realize this, he could take this as evidence of his
inability to appreciate the mystery and emotion of humanity; that is to say, he could start to understand
his “muddled” nature.

At first glance it may seem that Blackburn has not given us any particular advancement in the
debate, since it seems we could, just as easily, claim that Blackburn's Wilcox could come to recognize
his disposition, why should he be bothered to change it? Blackburn, though, does provide an answer to
this worry. He argues that we can see our “values” as an expression of our attitudinal dispositions and,
as such, a particular one can be criticized by taking the whole of our dispositions and comparing the
particular one with the others to see whether it conflicts. If it does, then we have been provided with a reason to reject it. Thus a sort of coherence theory of truth gives us the ability to criticize specific attitudes, which allows us to build up a moral theory where sensibilities play an essential role in an obviously non-relativistic theory (Blackburn, 1998, p. 90). Such a theory requires an external vantage point from which to compare the one attitude with the whole set, making this escape impossible for the widely objective theorist to use. Thus, Blackburn can claim that his argument is more advanced than that of Crary, with respect to this charge.

There is one more point that ought to be discussed with reference to this point: How is it that this gives us an argument that would significantly damage the Diamondian realist's position? As I mentioned above, it allows us to account for the moral importance of “texture of our beings” within a narrowly objective framework, thus allowing us to avoid making the philosophically controversial move to the wider conception of objectivity, while still accounting for what these theorists see as missing in traditional moral philosophy. This makes it significantly easier for the debate outlined in the first chapter to be overcome by a turn to Blackburn's expressivism. Consider an example of his: A bully who picks on someone because that person is shy and sensitive. Blackburn argues that, common sensically, we see the bully as identifying a property (shyness) and then going on to enjoy teasing the owner of this property. Whereas widely objective theorists (Blackburn has John McDowell specifically in mind) would be forced to claim that the bully does not know “‘what it means to be shy and sensitive' if they do not react to a shy and sensitive person's needs in the right way” (Blackburn, 1998, p. 100), this strikes us as odd, Blackburn argues, since it seems to be the very fact that the bully has an understanding of what “shy and sensitive” is that gives rise to the bullying behaviour. This means that Blackburn can capture all that the widely objective theorist thinks is important (and missing) using an attitude towards language that seems natural. This alone would make Diamondian realism seem clunky and unnecessary. Thus, for this reason, it becomes essential to address Blackburn's moral concerns with
arguments that go beyond what we can draw out of Crary's work.

Indeed, it is worth noting that I am not alone in thinking that Crary does not have an adequate answer to these moral worries presented by Blackburn. Christopher Grau, in his review of *Beyond Moral Judgment*, while finding himself favourably disposed towards Crary's claims about the wider conception of objectivity, notes that he is still concerned about her ability to address the sorts of moral problems we have been discussing. As he puts it: “we aren’t told much about how to sort out those texts that rationally move us from those that irrationally manipulate” (Grau, 2009, p. 97). This point can be applied to all three of Crary's claims. Therefore, addressing Blackburn's concerns is essential for the survival of Crary's (and my) overall argument.

This “naturalness” of Blackburn's expressivism ties in closely with his other argument mentioned above. That was his more epistemological argument, which stated that our concepts do not function as the widely objective theorist claims they do. As we previously saw, there are reasons why we might argue that the wider conception of objectivity, when it comes to this issue, has strong backing; for instance Crary's argument that her position is in keeping with points argued for by Wittgenstein. The concern, though, is that her interpretation of Wittgenstein is regarded in some circles as quite controversial.47 She draws heavily on Wittgenstein's “continuing a series” argument, which she sees as challenging the idea of conceptual mastery being like a journey along “ideally rigid rails.” This, she argues, contributes to an attack on the narrow conception of objectivity; that is to say, if we are inclined to define conceptual mastery solely in terms of “bare (or observed) behaviour,” along with a certain understanding of what would count as a successful mastery based on “bare behaviour,” then we are in the grips of a contradiction. After all, being able to produce a correct stretch of behaviour (Wittgenstein's example is counting up to 1000) is logically consistent with a faulty understanding of the rule “add one” (i.e., at 1000, our student may go “1004, 1008...” and claim she is following the

47 The same is true of her reading of J. L. Austin. As she herself recognizes. See Crary, 2007, p. 51.
rule). From this we can see that “[t]he end result is a view of our concepts as essentially integrated into, to use some of Wittgenstein's signature terms, customs or practices that instill us with the relevant sensitivities” (Crary, 2007, p. 25). This then gives us the building blocks for a widely objective moral theory. To elaborate on this, we can look at Diamond's discussion of how we gain conceptual mastery of “pets.” It is not a process which involves looking at cats and dogs and seeing some special interest within them which merits their status as “pets,” it is rather by engaging in certain “customs or practices” that we come to see them as “pets” and that we come to understand what “pet-ness” really means (e.g., we are trained not eat them and this is what sets them aside as “special”) (Diamond, 1991c, p. 324).

We should at this point be reminded of Blackburn's incommunicability concern, which was a concern that the widely objective theories would result in a breakdown in communication. If, say, I met someone who used “pet” in a slightly different fashion than I do, say they ate their pets (although in all other respects there is no significant difference between us), it does not follow that I would be unable to understand that person, even though there are differences in our sensibilities. How is it that we (within a widely objective framework) can understand this other person? Particularly how can we talk to people with corrupt conceptual world-views without having being overcome by them? This, similarly, seems to demand an answer.

Leaving this aside and going back to the points about Wittgenstein, a theorist like Blackburn also has an answer to Crary here as well, as I mentioned above. He reinterprets Wittgenstein's “continuing a series” argument as a skeptical argument with a skeptical solution similar to those made by Hume regarding causation (which was seen as the product of “habit and custom”). Blackburn cites the conclusion to Wittgenstein's arguments as evidence of this interpretation: “it is not possible that there should be only one occasion on which someone obeyed a rule” (Quoted in Blackburn, 1981, p. 183). He then draws out what he takes this to mean, and makes the connection to Hume quite clear:
“We were seduced into thinking that there was a 'superlative fact' of some sort, and there is none” (Blackburn, 1981, p. 183). Blackburn sees this as opening up the doors for an expressivist interpretation of the Wittgensteinian argument. Since the skeptical conclusion makes it impossible for us to say whether states of affairs (i.e., “I am in pain”) are true or false with absolute certainty, as there is no criterion by which we could say that the “application of pain” rule is being properly applied, it follows that “anti-realism will offer the only salvation” (Blackburn, 1981, p. 184). This will be because the sentences which we might have been tempted to see as describing something truth-conditional (such as “I am pain”), which Blackburn shows to be nonsensical, can still be treated as expressive statements. Blackburn provides textual support that such a function can still have a place for Wittgenstein: “My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the opinion that he has a soul” (Quoted in Blackburn, 1981, pp. 184-185). All Wittgenstein is claiming, according to Blackburn, is that statements like the above express an attitude. Starting from the same building blocks Crary made use of, Blackburn is able to bring about a different conclusion to Wittgenstein's argument about continuing a series, one which supports a non-cognitivist interpretation and for this reason the foundations of Crary's project become less secure.

My role in presenting this is not, at this point, solely to argue for a particular exegetical reading of Wittgenstein, but to point out a potential problem for Crary's argument. Relying on a particularly controversial interpretation of Wittgenstein may make it hard to create an argument which can withstand a counter-interpretation (in the next chapter I will return to this issue, but my primary interest will not be exegetical; rather I hope to make the conclusions about human nature that we can draw from widely objective readings of Wittgenstein seem realistic). Overall, it is for this reason that I think it necessary to attack the epistemological points Blackburn makes about language in order to add substance to Crary's claims. Otherwise, if we end up discounting much of this material on the basis of controversy we may end up with simply two descriptions of our phenomenological experience, which
will risk our debate sounding like a complaint between those who want to describe “north-east” as a vector “in its own right” and those who want to describe “north-east” as arising from two vectors (“north” and “east”).

Now this is not to say that there are not better and worse interpretations of Wittgenstein. The point that I want to draw out from this conflict is that since Blackburn has an interpretation backed up with citations from Wittgenstein himself it would be prudent to also find an argument against his interpretation of “attitudinal dispositions.”

Conclusion:

In this chapter we have seen what a non-cognitivist thinker like Blackburn would say to the context of argumentation that exists between the Diamondian realist and non-realist thinkers like O'Neill and Raphael. Although he would be sympathetic to the Diamondian realist's addition of a subjective sensibility to the moral sphere, he would go on to object to the explanatory role such realists give these sensibilities. Furthermore, he would reinterpret their role in terms of “attitudinal dispositions” and this reinterpretation would allow him to account for what Alice Crary, Cora Diamond and Iris Murdoch see as the morally important “texture of our being” (which seems overlooked by O'Neill and Raphael) while remaining within a narrowly objective and non-cognitivist framework.

This, as was made clear in the second half of this chapter, is concerning for the Diamondian realist. Blackburn provides moral and epistemological arguments presents reasons for thinking that he has gotten it right and the realist's position is, at best, confused and, at worse, morally troubling. We saw that Crary's work, although able to add invaluable arguments against thinkers like O'Neill and Raphael, does not have an obvious and completely satisfying answer to these worries. It is for this

48 The example is Blackburn's. See Blackburn, 1998, p. 100.
reason that I will now turn, with the next chapter, to provide an answer to Blackburn's arguments and thus, hopefully, further strengthen the Diamondian realist's position.
Chapter Three: Reading Literature Realistically

Introduction:

At this point we have seen Simon Blackburn's argument that there is no need to make the controversial move to Diamondian realism, since we can account for all that Diamond and myself find morally relevant in literature within narrowly objective theories. Furthermore, he offered epistemological and moral reasons to oppose widely objective theories.

This chapter will argue that Blackburn's position depends upon an impossible vantage point. To elaborate, Blackburn argues that at the base ethical knowledge is not, strictly speaking, knowledge about ethics. Moral concepts express, for Blackburn, the agent being in a practical state, where the agent demonstrates by her choices what she values as good. This involves a certain fact/value distinction, as we see in his instance that moral concepts (values) have underlying them a practical state (facts). My argument will be that this view represents a confusion regarding how humans see the world (the impossible vantage point mentioned above), mainly, as we will see, because the tools with which we think about the world (the tools essential in employing moral concepts) cannot admit realistically of this distinction. When we look at our consciousness (how we think) realistically, we see that it cannot separate fact from value (as Blackburn would require it to). The idea that I want to strengthen is that discussion of consciousness in a realistic manner involves recognizing that it is, at its heart, a value-laden entity and, thus, we cannot break down this fundamental feature of our lives into discourse that is scientific, on the one hand, and moral on the other.

Furthermore, it is important to note that this has important consequences for the debate surrounding moral philosophy and literature. In Blackburn's case, we will see, that a split between fact

49 See Blackburn, 1998, pp. 49-50 and below.
50 This paragraph draws from Diamond, 1996b, especially p. 104.
and value forces literature into a secondary position in the moral realm. Literature shows us
descriptions and provokes emotional responses; however, these on Blackburn's scheme are incomplete
in and of themselves as they can be used to reveal the underlying practical stance, and this is what
moral philosophers need to get at. Those, like me, who reject the above fact/value distinction argue that
we do not need (nor can we have) this underlying explanatory-justificatory stance, and thus can see the
moral value of literature in and of itself. Literature will have a primary role, as what it teaches us is
substantive and rationally legitimate without any additional and underlying justification.

This section will examine arguments about realism drawn from Diamond, in order to clarify the
terms of the debate. Using these arguments, I will then argue that Blackburn's theory must be rejected
as, in Diamond's terms, it is unrealistic (particularly insofar as it relies on an unrealistic vantage point).
After this, I will secure my position from Blackburn's counterarguments by demonstrating that widely
objective theories are not susceptible to claims of relativism, conservatism, or incommunicability.
Finally, I will conclude by illustrating that the widely objective theory of Diamond gives us the best
solution to the dialectic discussed in the first chapter.

Part One: The Realistic Spirit and Blackburn

The arguments that follow hinge on an important distinction made by Diamond, between
philosophical realism, the proponents of which claim that there is something beyond our perceptions
(general laws) which guide our application of concepts, and elementary realism, whose proponents see
the philosophical realist as engaged in a confused enterprise. The philosophical realist, on this view,
tries to get at how things actually are, but ends up confusing the issue by placing something
between herself and reality (whether they be Platonic Forms or “real generals in nature” (Diamond,
1991d, p. 20)). Note that what is concerning is when these explanations are taken to justify our
conceptual use (they can be referred to as “normative-philosophical explanations”) and not the explanations in and of themselves. For the elementary realist, on the other hand, there is no underlying reality that guides our application of concepts. In particular, elementary realists aim to pay “attention to the way things actually do work” (Diamond, 1991e, p. 45). Such attention will lead us to see that we can make sense of our concepts without relying on anything outside of our engagement with them; there is no need to split fact from value (Diamond, 1991f, pp. 5-6). Furthermore, this grounds the claim that attempting to, in one move, both explain and justify our conceptual usage (or split fact and value) represents a confusion as the justification that is taken to be central in normative-philosophical explanations cannot do the work philosophers ask it to do. We cannot justify a concept from “sideways on.” Thus, if we are trying to decide whether a certain situation merits description via a specific concept, the elementary realist argues that we cannot rely on an understanding of conceptual projection that ignores our sensibilities, in particular those which we gained in learning about the concept (Diamond, 1991e, pp.46-47). This, of course, still seems controversial (and one of the central goals of what is to follow is to make it less so), but these are the “bare bones” of this distinction.

Now in order to further understand this distinction, it is helpful to examine the ways in which the philosophical tradition has often divided up our concepts; traditionally we see that one group of our concepts is dependent upon another independent group. An example of this epistemological division, that of primary and secondary qualities, will help clarify what I mean. Primary qualities can be seen as the bedrock or the primary objects of knowledge upon which secondary qualities are built. We can, in discussing reality, do away with explicit reference to secondary qualities, such as colour, and instead explain these qualities in a manner which relies only on primary qualities. An example is helpful: Take the greyness of a stone. Someone who engages in the qualities (value)/objects (fact) split would be

51 On this distinction see Diamond, 1991e, p. 39.
52 The term is McDowell's, and is used to refer to understanding our concepts and practices from “a standpoint independent of all the human activities and reactions” (McDowell, 1998, p. 207).
53 See also Crary, 2007, pp. 24-25.
required to claim that the greyness of a particular stone is an effect. Thus, the stone is not really grey, it is our interaction with the stone that gives rise to a “grey-experience” in us and, furthermore, this means that we can explain and justify this “greyness” by appealing to knowledge of the interaction between ourselves as “grey-perceivers” and the objects in question (in this case, a stone) as “grey-causers” (and it is at this point, I will argue, that we get into trouble). Applying the concept “grey” in this case, though, becomes justified because of the underlying primary object and, this is a normative-philosophical explanation of grey. As a hint of what is to come, this distinction applies to the moral realm as well. What we see in Blackburn is that even though our moral judgements are about the certain “problematically subjective properties” we take a moral concept to refer to, the concept in question is justified by “the non-subjective contents that those concepts are envisioned to have as correlates” (Crary, 2007, p.36 n 47). To put the point in another way, the subjective component is not necessary for the concept to have intellectual justification.

This is all very interesting, the reader may say, but where is this getting us in the discussion? I am going to support two claims. The first is that the epistemological distinction discussed above (about how concept application is justified in a great number of cases because of the underlying substance or primary object) is a case of unreality. This will involve examining the Diamondian (or elementary) realist's position on this issue. Of course, this is only half the work. The other claim is that this criticism of unreality applies to Blackburn and, furthermore, the above epistemological distinction leads Blackburn to demote literature, as he would be forced to claim it can only provide a kind of second-rate knowledge.

Turning to Diamond's “Realism and the Realistic Spirit,” it is possible to extract an approach that can undermine theories which use normative-philosophical justification by demonstrating that they are unrealistic. We can see what this means by reflecting on the following statement of Wittgenstein's: “You do not yourself understand any more of the rule than you can explain” (Quoted in Diamond,
If we have a rule,\textsuperscript{54} then what exactly would it tell us to do? Something like the following: Whenever we encounter a certain set of circumstances, we should do x (this is a generalized form of a rule) (Diamond, 1991e, p. 63). However, we can see that this is problematic by considering the following: “\textit{whatever} we do in following that rule, we shall take that generalization to apply. Our 'knowledge' is merely a misleading way of putting the fact that in what we do, we are taking ourselves to be following a rule” (Diamond, 1991e, p. 63). To say that we should go from facts to the proper generalization misses the idea that the only support we have for our doing this is to point at the action as we are doing it. Crucially, this is exactly what anyone so questioned would do, regardless of whether the generalizations they were producing were sane or insane. Thus, to say that a rule surrounding the application of a concept is doing the explanation and justification of the concept in question is confusing, as once it arrives on the scene the decision to find it a correct or incorrect application has already occurred. Overall, the point can be summarized in another way: Anything that appears correct can be placed under a rule; so it is not the rule that is doing the explanatory or justificatory work (Diamond, 1991e, pp. 61-62).

Furthermore, the above becomes the problem with certain philosophical explanations, such as the one Blackburn gives. These explanations start by answering questions which arise from our “ordinary life;” the problem is that theorists who seek normative-philosophical explanations are then going on to create impossible philosophical requirements (they are asking philosophy to do what it cannot). Thus, to provide an illustration, we can teach a child to go on by means of an example, for instance, we show her that after “A, B, C” comes “D” (after we write the first three letters, we then follow it with the fourth and we can do this over and over again, until our learner does the same). This is an explanation of learning, in which the example is the means by which we show how to go on. A problem only arises when the philosophical realist looks for something which justifies this behaviour in

\textsuperscript{54} As moral theories that rely on normative-philosophical justifications would have; i.e., “whenever the situation is such-and-such, you should feel (or respond) with the following.”
addition to providing the above explanation. Thus, the philosophical realist starts from the examples of how we apply a concept in our lives, and then moves on to claim that there is something underlying which justifies why we go on to “D.” As Diamond puts the point, “[t]he demands we make for philosophical explanations come, seem to come, from a position in which we are as it were looking down onto the relation between ourselves and some reality, some kind of fact or real possibility” (Diamond, 1991e, p. 69).

Of course I need to unpack what this means. What Diamond is saying above is that the desire to explain and justify requires a “relation between ourselves and some reality [etc.]” and, the point is, such a vantage point is not something that is readily available or necessary for the ordinary literate and non-philosophical person. While it is certainly possible to explain what is going on when we go from “A, B, C” to “D,”55 (say an evolutionary story about how we are hardwired to follow patterns our elders tell us to follow) such philosophical explanations do not have a normative quality. If we ask an alphabet-competent individual how she knows to go on to write “D”, and she says “Well, because of certain evolutionary factors I know that I have a brain which has developed to see and continue a series, which in this case means that I will go on to 'D',' all that we have is an explanation and not a justification. The reason this is the case is that only proof that she will be able to offer that she is justified in then going from “A, B, C” to “D” is the fact that when she goes on from “…C” she then goes on to write “D.” The justificatory evolutionary explanation is then tacked on, but this is problematic, as all she can show us to demonstrate this justification is the example (the sequence “A, B, C, D”), which is also what someone who does not rely on a normative-philosophical explanation will provide. This then gives us reason to reject the normative-philosophical position, as all we have here is an individual pointing at the example. There is no outside (meaning outside of the practice) justification of what is going on. Thus, the evolutionary explanation is not doing the justificatory work the

55 Note that “A, B, C, D” is just an example. We could substitute “1, 2, 3, 4” or any different alphabet or sequence.
philosophical realist is saying it does, and nor should we ask it to.

I want to briefly point out that this is where we can see a challenge to Blackburn. For Blackburn, a moral concept is justified by the underlying practical state which the agent is in. The problem is that the vantage point that would be necessary for us to see this happening is not available; we can never see the practical state doing the justificatory work that it is essential for it to do.

A concern can be raised here immediately. A reason why we may turn to normative-philosophical justifications is that having such a method is a good way to weed out prejudiced, bad and/or mistaken styles of thought. The objection is that if we do away with such justifications, as I do above in the “A, B, C, D” example, then we lose the ability to rule out any obviously groundless, or purely emotive views of the world. This claim shares a lot in connection with the moral concerns discussed by O’Neill and Blackburn, and which I address below; however, in order to clarify why this is not a concern in this context it is worthwhile to say something here about this claim. Overall, what is important to note is the fact that though I want to do away with justifications that can be laid down in advance, this does not mean that I am completely giving up any attempt at justifying our thoughts. Turning to Diamond we can see an argument about how exactly we go about forming judgements. In particular, this capacity is formed “through habits of awareness, reflection, and discrimination” (Diamond, 1991b, p. 303). This forms the basis of our ability to make comparisons, which is what allows us to judge something as “real” or “fantastical,” for example. As Diamond puts her point “the shoddy thought can be shown up by being placed alongside the genuine” (Diamond, 1991b, p. 303). Thus, we learn to distinguish works or ideas of pure sentimentality from those which carry a more honest emotional tone. Diamond provides an example of such a comparison, in examining a charge that can be levelled against Charles Dickens. In particular, against his tendency (in his novels) to solve problems by having a rich man come and act as a “fairy godmother,” by scattering money around to fix problems. Diamond argues that here “[t]here is a loss of a sense of the real [...in that Dickens] has lost
hold of the idea that he has to show things being made to happen and not just say that they have been made to” (Diamond, 1991e, p. 46). We can be taught to make such comparisons; we can be asked to put a story, a thought, or a theory alongside another, and shown how we can come to see one or another as “more real,” “less real” or “unreal.” We will see more of this below in my discussion of “human being” versus “slave” or “object,” but what is important to note at this point is that here we have the means by which we can, in Diamond's scheme, justify or reject various types of thought. To avoid further confusion, I should point out that this is not a normative-philosophical justification, as we cannot settle questions of justification in advance or from “sideways on.” In the above example, for instance, there is a need to weigh the emotional tone and this cannot be done without drawing on our emotional resources. The second potential confusion relates to the use of the word “real,” in the above. If we are placing “real” and “fantastical” alongside each other to show up the latter, have we not simply returned to a verificationist scheme for deciding between competing ideas? This will be addressed next.

Now, I will address the possible misunderstanding (verificationism) and then go on to address an additional counterclaim against Diamondian realism. We would misread Diamond, going back to the stone example, if we read her as claiming that what is wrong with the philosophical realist's description of a stone is that such a description fails to be adequately empirical; that is to say, we can, using elementary realism, see what the stone is really like. Diamond, rather, wants us to see the following: “[That] the hardness of realism is in not asking [...] such questions [about meaning]” (Diamond, 1991e, p. 70). The reason why such questions are problematic is seen in the above discussion about rules. A verificationist, though, asks these questions about meaning, and about underlying justification. For instance, in the ethical realm we might expect a Humean undercurrent to run through their thought; thus, what it means to go on in these cases would involve certain psychological truths about what it is to go on correctly (i.e., understanding that “patterns of communal response” influence us in such a

56 Diamond notes that the criticism that she levels against Dickens is borrowed from George Orwell (Diamond, 1991e, pg. 46).
way) and this is what underlies some of the philosophical claims made by the verificationist. This is an expression of philosophical realism, as there is a certain underlying structure which justifies our use of a certain concept. It should be quite clear that this is exactly what Diamond is arguing against, as the verificationist, according to Diamond, is asking philosophy to supply answers and justifications it cannot supply (Diamond, 1991e, p. 70).

Second, the counterargument: Someone could claim that when we turn to the language of physics it seems to allow for such a fact/value division in our concepts. We are trained to talk of things in impersonal terms which gives certain descriptions their objective and “bedrock” status, and thus these special terms can guide our concept usage. I argue that physics is still a second language. It is confusing to say that we can move from our ordinary interactions with the world to specific sets of (impersonal) laws which justify and govern our application of concepts. Of course, we can, as Iris Murdoch points out, use science as a type of shorthand, as a linguistic construction which makes an attempt at neutrality or impersonality is useful for teamwork, and thus it allows us to make progress in certain practical areas, or helps us clarify mistakes about the world (Murdoch, 1970, p. 33). This, though, does not license science to have access to an uniquely true description of reality. McDowell argues that the claim that the only way we can respect scientific thought is to say that it lays down the exclusive evaluative tools from which we can assess whether some concept-application is of “good standing” or not is questionable (McDowell, 1998, p. 187). As I will argue below, not all knowledge needs to be reduced or forced into a scientific model to be true or real. Of course, at this point, this is only an assertion. As we will see Blackburn falls into the scientific realist camp by arguing that ethical discourse is only of “good evaluative standing” if it relies on a scientific background. One of the central claims of the following part of this chapter will be to undermine this distinction and, thus, I will leave it for now.

In order to connect the above to Blackburn, two points will be addressed. First, how is it that I
can take Blackburn to be a philosophical realist, given that he explicitly classifies his ethical project as
an instance of quasi-realism? Second, I want to connect this to literature and argue that Blackburn's
philosophical realism leads to an unacceptable demotion of literature in the moral sphere.

First, what reasons do we have for seeing Blackburn's project as an instance of philosophical
realism? An example of Blackburn's provides the groundwork: Consider the statement “'Glaciers flow
downhill' is true in English iff glaciers flow downhill.” He argues that there are two commitments at
work in this proposition. Since the proposition “'Glaciers flow downhill' is true in English”'s truth or
falsity “varies with the uses the English give their words” it is best classified as a quasi-realistic
commitment. It is not describing anything particular in the world, it only ascribes “a semantic property
to a particular sentence” (Blackburn, 2010b, p. 216). Which, to put it in other terms, means that the
sentence is aiming to convey something other than a description (Blackburn, 2010b, p. 211). The
proposition “iff glaciers flow downhill” is better described as containing ordinary descriptive
commitments as the meaning it conveys does not vary with the meaning English-speakers give their
words and, thus, we can apply truth and falsity to these statements (Blackburn, 2010b, pp. 215-217). Of
course, at base we have these quasi-realist commitments, and after this we have ordinary descriptive
commitments; what Blackburn is arguing here is that we can see quasi-realist commitments as
preparations for description (Blackburn, 2010b, pp. 211-212). Much of Blackburn's discussion on this
topic involves arguing how if much of the basis of our ordinary descriptive commitments is quasi-
realistic (i.e., rule-following), then how is it that truth and falsity can apply here? Blackburn argues that
when confronted with a dissident who claims that ice does not flow downhill we “mobilize social
dissent.” However, this, on the surface, may seem to lack the hardness of truth and falsity and thus
Blackburn expands as to what goes on: “When our eyes are shut to possibilities of reinterpretation, we
deem dissidence to be the making of a mistake, and subsequent events often prove us right, as the
dissident himself comes to share our attitude to the original saying” (Blackburn, 2010b, p. 218). Indeed,
“we only dignify a dissident as in command of a different concept when we can admit his sayings to be part of a technique—a way of classifying that has a use” (Blackburn, 2010b, p. 219). All of this is what gives rise to the hardness of ordinary descriptive evaluation, but (and this is crucial) also quasi-realistic discourse (such as ethics). As Blackburn puts his conclusion:

It may be compared to the way in which we properly treat the moral 'ought' as categorical. It is binding upon people who may have no desires on which it can catch: we say this to disallow such a defect from serving as an excuse. The comparable hardness of the rule-following 'ought'—you ought not to call that an apple; this is the wrong answer—arises because we are sure, as we often are, that no new technique prompted it. (Blackburn, 2010b, p. 219)

The above points give us the direction necessary to claim that Blackburn's position is philosophical realism. It seems to me that, in the above quotation, Blackburn is arguing that ethical truths are not subject to being justified in the same manner as scientific (or any ordinary descriptive truth) ones, as ethical “truths” cannot (in and of themselves) admit of truth and falsity. Thus, our ethical commitments, as Blackburn argues, look something like this:

Once we find ethics here, we understand the essential phenomenon, which is that of people valuing things. When they value things, they express themselves in terms of what is good, bad, obligatory, right, justifiable and so on. When they wonder what to value, they express themselves as not being sure what is good or justifiable; when they achieve a certain kind of confidence, they say they know what to value, or what is valuable. The ethical proposition gets its identity as a focus for practical thought, as people communicate their certainties, insistences, and doubts about what to value. (Blackburn, 1998, pp. 49-50)

This is where we see philosophical realism at play. For the elementary realist, a concept is justified by our engagement with it in the world. If we have learned to describe something as “courageous” we have the justification necessary to go on and claim that x is or is not an instance of “courage.”

Blackburn's above discussion presents a different picture of valuing behaviour, in that we now have something between us and the world which decides whether what we are using in the world is a matter for truth or falsity and this is an expression of philosophical realism.

This connects to literature as we can see that Blackburn shares a metaphysical commonality
with scientific realism (and it is this commonality, by the way, which allows us to claim that Blackburn is a philosophical realist). What we saw directly above was his argument that we move from appearances, when it comes to valuing behaviour, to an understanding of what is going on behind that behaviour (we are in a practical state). This practical state becomes, as a result, the centre for evaluation (are we right to value these things?). This represents a similar sort of reduction that the scientific realist undertakes. The point, though, is that the scientific realist would argue that she can only see literature as containing second-rate knowledge. Thus, a passage discussing the inner dialogue of someone experiencing a moral dilemma might be entertaining, but it is of limited value for a serious moral inquiry. Literature by using emotionally charged descriptions can only contain a crude picture of our mental states (or “folk psychology”). We could, the scientific realist argues, get at a more exact picture by moving away from these descriptions and describe the agent in terms of neurological responses, for instance.

It may seem that Blackburn is less hostile than the scientific realist to literature. I previously alluded to several passages of his which would seem to illustrate this. For instance, “[a] conversation drawn by Jane Austen or George Eliot can reveal volumes about the characters' ethics although no overtly moral language is used and no moral opinions are delivered” (Blackburn, 1998, pp. 1-2). As a result Blackburn, following Ryle, argues that an ethical picture which leaves out “the 'tempers, habits, dispositions, moods, inclinations, impulses, sentiments, feelings, affections, thoughts, reflections, opinions, principles, prejudices, imaginations and fancies’” is nothing but a diminished picture (Blackburn, 1998, p. 13). It may seem that this should give us reason to say that we should be interested in folk psychological descriptions. However, at this point, we start to see the metaphysical commonality that Blackburn shares with the scientific realist coming into view. Consider the following:

[I]t is only through understanding the activities associated with particular linguistic transactions that we understand the words used in conducting them. Amongst the activities involved in ethics are these: valuing, grading, forbidding, permitting [etc...]. When I say that
these are involved in ethics, I mean what I have already adverted to, that by describing the contours of a character in terms of doings like these, a narrator can tell us all that is important about the character's ethics, regardless of the words said. (Blackburn, 1998, p. 51)

What we see here is a turn towards the devaluing of the knowledge literary works can convey. We will see more of this below in Blackburn's discussion of evolution and fear, but a bit of foreshadowing is merited at this point. Speaking of the differences between ethical and scientific knowledge Blackburn claims the following:

The possibility of this kind of theory [...] provides the needed contrast between the general case of science, where an attempt to provide a further, background theory is transcendental, and the local particular case of ethics, where there are natural materials for such a story at hand. It also means that philosophers wanting a general realism versus anti-realism issue cannot take comfort from the local case; the materials to generate theory there exist, as it were, by contrast with anything that can be provided in the general case. (Blackburn, 1994, p. 169)

Thus, we may read literature and take advantage of the descriptions of various ethical activities it describes (as Blackburn lists above), but, it should be noted that this is still a second-rate role. Blackburn claims above that ethical commitments are not properly, at base, attitudes towards the ethical. Blackburn is claiming that we can break down ethical descriptions into a description of a practical state; this is significant as it allows Blackburn a counterargument against the charges leveled by the Diamondian realist. For instance, return to his above claims that scientific knowledge is "transcendental," this allows us to conclude that the above charges about the justification that such knowledge can partake in can be mysterious or confused (which is similar to what the Diamondian realist would claim). However, by making a distinction between scientific knowledge and ethical knowledge Diamond's attack is not relevant for the ethical side of Blackburn's theory. Ethical knowledge is, quite simply, knowledge of an attitude (a practical state we are in) and this is what underlies our ethical talk. Thus, the descriptions literature provides may help shape how we discuss ethics, but they do not get at what underlies ethical expressions (and this underlying structure is what explains and justifies our ethical assertions) and thus, literary knowledge is incomplete knowledge.
In order to be charitable to Blackburn it is important to clear up a misunderstanding. Blackburn is not, in the above, arguing for logical behaviourism (wherein we define a mental state by virtue of expressed behaviour); rather, he argues that his theory has “superseded” logical behaviourism. In his theory, learning how someone describes an ethical situation is important as it indicates their attitudinal disposition (or their practical state). But “[o]n this view a person's entire mentality forms a kind of web or force in which no single element has its own self-standing connection with action” (Blackburn, 1998, p. 52). Thus, because of this complexity, we cannot have a simple one-to-one correspondence between a behaviour and a mental state, as even though the attitude “mix” will affect action directly, since any particular mix is highly personal, such a simple correspondence will not work.

This sets the stage for the next section. Where I will address whether Blackburn's ethical theory is still susceptible to the Wittgensteinian criticism discussed above. If it is, then we will have reason to reject it and, furthermore, also reject the demoted place it gives to literature.

Part Two: Blackburn's Impossible Vantage Point

Section 1: Introduction

In this section I argue that Blackburn's theory must be rejected it relies on an impossible vantage point, one from which Blackburn can discern that scientific properties are capable of truth and falsity (or are descriptions of reality), and that the properties expressed by literature are, strictly speaking, not capable of truth and falsity. This means that any justification literature can have is at best derivative. To start with I will argue that Blackburn relies upon such a vantage point.

Consider the following claim of Blackburn's: “I hope I have said enough to show that nature and our theory of nature surround our ethical commitments in a way that gives us a place from which
to theorize about them. No thing and no theory surround our physics [...our ethical commitments are
different in] that an external explanatory story is possible” (Blackburn, 1994, p. 174). Blackburn is
claiming that we can see where our ethical commitments are dependent upon something else (the
following discussion of fear illuminates this) and furthermore, this can be contrasted with knowledge
like physics, which even though it is built on top of quasi-realist commitments, is hard and objective in
a different way (it is, without being broken down further, capable of truth and falsity). Being able to
look at, and evaluate, our concepts in this manner is looking at them from this external vantage point.
We are talking about our concepts in a way that does not draw on them.

It is important to show that this affects how we evaluate (and justify) our ethical concepts for
Blackburn, as this will show his commitment to the narrow conception of objectivity. We can see this,
for instance, in his example of fear (specifically fear of the dark). He asks:

why do human beings ever feel fear, or get as far as supposing that anything merits fear? No
doubt there is an answer to hand: one which talks of the behavioural consequences of the
emotion, and their evolutionary advantages to creatures that have it. In a similar vein we try
to place the activity of moralizing, or the reaction of finding things funny, or the practice of
arithmetic. (Blackburn, 1994, p. 163)

This is how we ground ethical knowledge. We evaluate it from an external standpoint, work outwards
from our quasi-realistic commitments and see if we can find a story adding elements from, for instance,
objective fields of knowledge (certain sciences), as Blackburn does using evolutionary claims. This
allows us create a claim capable of evaluation. This means that our ethical commitments (like fear) are
not actually ethical; in order for them to be reliable they must be classified as something else and,
furthermore, we must be able to see the world in this way. My argument will be that this divide in
knowledge (between scientific, on the one hand, and ethical, on the other) ought to be rejected;
particularly as the limits this division places on what is allowed to count as “knowledge” are simply too
restricting.
Section 2: The Impossible Vantage Point and Undermining the Scientific/Ethical Divide

Why should we see, as unrealistic, the vantage point Blackburn uses in evaluating ethical thought? The concern is that looking at, for instance, the evolutionary story about fear as completely underlying our understanding of fear is problematic. As we saw, Blackburn points out what lies behind the sensibility of fear, and this is what is objective and capable of providing justification for our application of, for instance, concepts like “fear” or “neurotic.” Of course, to be charitable, Blackburn did note (quoted above) that we can see the hardness of a moral ought in terms of societal pressure, but this cannot be evaluated in the same manner as a scientific claim, and thus, we can see the divide in Blackburn's theory.

The prioritizing of scientific knowledge in Blackburn's theory is not particularly surprising. After all, there is something “objectively special,” as McDowell puts it, about scientific inquiry (McDowell, 1998, p. 187), the impersonality allows for teamwork and, furthermore, the way in which results can be replicated is, undeniably, quite powerful.\(^\text{57}\) In order that the results may be replicated, measuring devices that can provide accurate results, such as a thermometer to measure water temperature, are used, as personal (unaided) experience will not provide accurate answers (or answers that can be replicated). This is justified in a great many cases (Diamond, 1991g, p. 1007). However, taking the “thermometer model” as laying down a groundwork for what all knowledge of reality is like is unjustified. To put it in other words, to take the kinetic energy of particles as completely exhausting what our knowledge of temperature is, is unjustified. Diamond expands on what follows from a reliance on this model of knowledge:

The model can be used to justify, for example, the idea that scientific study of phenomena like pregnancy or sexuality can be treated by you the investigator just as you would treat tornadoes [or in my example, water temperature]: just as you the scientist do not need to

\(^{57}\) On this point see, again, Murdoch, 1970, p. 33.
consider people's experience of tornadoes, you do not need to consider women's experience of pregnancy. (Diamond, 1991g, p. 1007)

We must, of course, be careful not to misunderstand what is being claimed here. Diamond notes this does not mean that we cannot see purely sentimental interpretations of our experiences as distorting (Diamond, 1991g, p. 1008), rather the claim is that we can, in understanding various concepts, draw on “knowledge which is not impersonal, which is not separable from who has arrived at it, and how it is expressed” (Diamond, 1991g, p. 1010).

Proof of the above can be found by returning to the previously discussed rule following argument. We saw there that the question “How do you know you go on?” becomes confused. A consequence of this is that we do not need to reject as a priori illegitimate any resources that we can draw on in making sense of a situation.

We can see the relevance this has for ethical thought by turning to Murdoch. She argues that a “transcendental barrier” has a role in human life. We are, she argues, constantly coming up against one when we encounter, among many other examples, “the resistant otherness of other persons” (Murdoch, 1993b, p. 268). From this point Murdoch draws out what is particularly important for my argument: “Most of this effort [in trying to overcome the barrier] is moral effort. This is the sense in which morality (value) is transcendental, concerned with the conditions of experience” (Murdoch, 1993b, p. 268). There is a lot that we can draw out of this remark. In particular, we can see the personal nature of a great deal of our knowledge that is essential for making sense of our lives. This involves a rejection of fact and value. What we are interested in cannot be facts on their own in the world; to represent these facts accurately we need to pay attention to the value-laden nature of consciousness. Consider, Murdoch's claim that “[w]e are changed by love and pursuit of what we only partly see and understand,” (Murdoch, 1993b, p. 222) which means unaided experience becomes essential to grasping individual facts. An example will clarify: Coming up against such a transcendental barrier may happen
when a member of a majority group is confronted with the otherness of a persecuted minority, and exposure to the inner mystery of the person in question may result in a reorientation towards an understanding of “humanity.” If we are being drawn to care about the other's experience, then this “caring” must form the basis of why we find the other important. If we try and describe this in impersonal terms then we are falsifying what our facts actually depend upon. The point is that seeing what is there may require tools which are not obviously available from within an impersonal scientific framework.

The above presents two problems for Blackburn, both of which are related to his impossible vantage point. The first one is drawn from McDowell, who points out that if we cannot find what is being projected in a certain situation, then Blackburn's projectivist theory falls apart. Using McDowell's example, we cannot teach someone about humour by asking them to “project an inclination to laugh” on a situation; this would render our learner unable to distinguish between a variety of emotions (amusement, embarrassment etc...). The only approach that is available is to bring our learner to an understanding of humour by examples (“this is funny”) and then, over time, the learner can start to participate within these practices (she can go on without our labeling a situation for her). The problem with scientific realism, then, is that if learning about what comedy (or anything) is depends upon these subjective resources, we cannot take the concept and disregard these resources. They are the starting point in our investigation about concepts, so to make use of them (implicitly) and then to return with a grounded objective framework is simply confusing.58 Knowledge gained in a personal manner is essential for us to make sense of our lives. To go back to the central claim of this paper, here is where literature becomes central. Literature can be a source of such knowledge as it engages us in a personal manner towards seeing things in a new way, and the effect it has upon us becomes essential to make sense of our lives.

58 This paragraph draws on McDowell, 1998, especially p. 158 and p. 187.
The above argument is part of a larger one, namely, that the scientific and ethical division which Blackburn relies upon is incoherent. Arguing for this, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, is essential as it is here that we can firm up Crary's arguments. But the “incoherency” of this distinction still requires argumentation to be believable. The route I will take to prove this is that the counterarguments Blackburn would supply at this point, about the inherent relativism and conservatism, fail (and in the process I will also make Crary's arguments on this point more forceful). Thus, by showing that thought which takes this form is not rationally illegitimate (it is not relative or overly conservative, for instance) we can see how the science/ethics distinction falls apart. If other forms of thought can be demonstrated to be non-relative and so on, scientific thought will not be the only objectively special resource we have in making sense of our world.

Part Three: Answering Blackburn's Worries

Section 1: Relativism and Conservatism

In this section it is incumbent upon me to prove that a realistic theory can answer the charges of relativism and conservatism. As discussed in the second chapter, Diamond's desire to attack the thought of the theorist needs further explanation. The immoral person will always have the perfect defense within a realist theory: “Your critique starts for a misdescription of the world, hence, I will not entertain it.” Thus, if we do not have a central place in our morality for rational (in a narrow sense) argument, which depends upon a split between evaluative and descriptive premises (or ordinary descriptive and quasi-realist commitments), then we risk a relativism and conservatism. Indeed, to put it in other terms, without such a split “becoming convinced [...] is merely a matter of the operation of causes” (Diamond, 1991b, p. 293).
Such a worry, though, is unfounded. In the discussion of the realistic spirit at the beginning of this chapter, Diamond presents a criticism of a certain style of thinking wherein we confuse a “convention of description” for reality. If we really examine this approach of Diamond's we will see a sound method for rejecting certain styles of thinking. Diamond argues that Wittgensteinian critiques can go forward by focusing our attention here or there, or a critique may “places things side by side” or apart. All of this “can change [...] one's way of viewing things” (Diamond, 2001, p. 118).

As previously noted, there are challenges to this answer. Placing two articles side by side does not in any way guarantee the better will be chosen. However, this is not unique to the Diamondian realist position; we may reject a view which is rationally argued for in narrow terms, just as well as we may reject an “unargued-for vision of things.” A stubborn individual may not be cured by being presented with a practical syllogism, for instance (Diamond, 1991b, p. 295). Opponents of Diamond's would claim that rejecting “practical syllogisms” demonstrates irrationality, but there are reasons we can accept being seen as irrational on their terms. We should not structure the debate around “What (for example) O'Neill would call rational” and, on the other hand, “What O'Neill would call irrational.” There is a whole spectrum of limitations we can show in our rejection (or acceptance) of certain styles of thought. Rejecting a Diamondian view demonstrates an inability to accept that there is nothing between us and our perceptions, and I have shown above that we have reason to be wary of such arguments.

This point can be expanded on by turning to Diamond's argument in “Eating Meat and Eating People.” One of the central points of this paper is that making sense of morally central concepts, such as “animal,” “pet,” or “human,” cannot be done from a view from nowhere; which is to say, in this context, a purely biological representation of these concepts will result in an impoverished picture of our actual experience. We have already seen, above, roughly what form Diamond's arguments would take, but it is worthwhile to further clarify them. Diamond starts by referencing a well known argument
about animal rights, put forward by Peter Singer, where if beings have certain interests (specifically the
ability to feel pleasure or pain) then they merit certain special treatment (Diamond, 1991c, p. 320). This
ethical approach has much in common with scientific realism, as we are discussing “humans,”
“animals” and any other “beings” in purely biological terms, which Diamond argues is problematic.
She asks us to meditate on the fact that a purely biological discussion misses certain essential aspects of
our moral life. In particular, such a framework cannot account for why we (outside of very special and
rare situations) do not eat our dead, when death comes naturally. Why is it that we find this
objectionable? A theory like the above would be forced to consider a projected response (say, that the
living would be upset and pained at the thought of being eaten after they die). This, Diamond notes,
overlooks something essential in our experience. On the one hand it is quite correct that it causes
distress, “but it causes distress because of what it is to eat a dead person” (Diamond, 1991c, p. 321),
which means that we are not getting at what causes the reluctance here. All we have on an attempt to
discuss this impersonally is a suppressed circularity; we need to rely on what a person is to make sense
of the distress. Thus, we need to look at the concept “human being” as being irreducible to a biological
entity. The concept involves engaging in certain practices and rites (from being named, to having
certain relationships) that give rise to what a human being is and, furthermore, it is this that gives rise
to the moral imperative that we ought not eat dead human beings. Note that the concept “human” has
become thick in the same way “comic” did above, and thus, we can reject attempts to reduce this to
projection.

This still needs to be taken further to show how this relates to the concerns surrounding
relativism and conservatism. We can combine the above with another idea of Diamond's, specifically
when we cut ourselves off from our concepts and try to use a limiting one to make sense of our
experience (as happens when we replace “human being” with “purely biological entity”) we run into
problems, it is “what Vicki Hearne describes as 'a particular sort of soul-muddle', a disorientation which
she speaks of as a kind of insanity—where sanity would would be the capacity to be at home in one's language, comfortable in using it in expressing knowledge and experience” (Diamond, 1991g, p. 1008). To clarify, a “soul-muddle” refers to the suppressed circularity mentioned above, that is to say, it refers to trying to capture an aspect of our experience which depends upon description in personal terms in an impersonal framework. This provides us with a means of challenging certain styles of thought and this gives us a morality which is non-relativistic and non-conservative.

Blackburn would still object at this point after all if we start with corrupted concepts it does not seem that we would be justified in going on and using them. There is a reply to this, which we can see by returning to the discussion of “human.” If we are confronted with someone who is encouraging us to see “humanity” in extremely limiting terms (say, rejecting specific groups), then we can turn to the above quotation of Diamond's and Murdoch's point about the “transcendental barrier” as a response (and, thus, show what we would say to the person with corrupted concepts). Part of what Murdoch claimed was that we constantly encounter and come up against the otherness of people (and it is this otherness which allows us to see that another is as complex and as real as we are). We, furthermore, saw that we needed to make reference to personal aspects of our experience (love or caring) in order to make sense of certain facts. Thus, a concept which failed to do this justice (by capturing it in purely impersonal terms) would result in the insanity mentioned above; it could not be used to express our experience. This, additionally, shows the importance of literature, since it is in coming across the mysterious and only partly accessible mind of an author that we find our experience shaped in certain ways (the mystery of another shapes how we ought to experience the world). This, it should be clear, is not a relativistic or a conservative claim, we can challenge concepts and styles of moral thinking.
The other worry of Blackburn's that I want to briefly touch upon is that of incommunicability. We saw in the previous chapter that there was a worry that realist theories suffer from a bizarre linguistic consequence. Language, as it evolves, simply cannot be as Diamond claims it is. After all, recall the example of the non-fattist and the fattist discussed in the previous chapter. Blackburn argued that the Diamondian realist would be committed to seeing the person who hates fatness, and the one who does not as in possession of differing sensibilities, which means they are in possession of completely different concepts of “fatness.” This, though, Blackburn claims is sheer lunacy, since the very fact that the former can understand the latter (and vice-versa) is proof that the concept must be something beyond mere sensibility (some division between fact and value must be possible). Otherwise, communication would have broken down, and since it does not Diamondian realism must be false.

I do not think much needs to be said about this point, but I think we can show how this is a charge that does not affect the realist and, thus, does not provide Blackburn the means to undermine the Diamondian realist's charges. Stanley Cavell (1999, pp. 169-180) provides the groundwork for an answer in his discussion of “leaping.” To provide an example of his theory: While we are out for a walk in our garden, we point to and sniff our flower and then encourage our child (or language-learner) to react similarly and praise her when she does. However, this is not the end of the story; we should not yet say that our child has grasped the concept of “flower.” When later our child points to a different sort of flower, perhaps one sitting in a vase on the dining room table, we respond with similar praise (“she's getting it!” We may say to ourselves). Then when our child points to pictures which depict flowers or a floral print on a couch, we respond with similar praise (although we make sure that she knows that we treat representations differently). However, imagine that our child then errs, pointing to a rug that is
red, like the flower that we showed her in the garden, and remarks “flower.” Cavell notes that although we may be tempted to be disappointed at this stage, we would (and ought to) say to ourselves something like: “Oh, she means it's colourful like the flowers we saw today.” We then try to correct and connect for the child: “It's colourful like the flower isn't it?” This, Cavell argues, is how “avenues of speech” open up to us. We leap around and connections are formed. Over time such leaping will become more complex, allowing for metaphoric understandings to form part of the concept “flower” (say “wallflower,” for example). So, our concepts are never “locked down,” there is ongoing refinement.

Thus, when we are confronted with a fattist for the first time we, as non-fattists, do not experience a breakdown of communication. We can, after all, “leap” to find out what she means. Just like a metaphorical use of “flower” might depend upon us making connections between “colourful” and “flower,” there is no reason we cannot do this with the fattist. We can leap until we find where our interlocutor is leading us.

Conclusion:

Where does this chapter leave us? We have seen how Blackburn's position can be challenged. We saw that knowledge (following rules or writing out a sequence) cannot be grasped from outside of our participation in practices (as illustrated in the writing out a sequence example). This, I went on to show, presents problems for Blackburn's moral theory in that it relies on a similar ability to justify moral concepts from outside our engagement with them. I then defended this elementary realistic position from potential counterclaims which Blackburn could level.

This, though, may leave the reader with some questions. In particular, one may ask: How is it that all of this supports my thesis surrounding literature and moral philosophy? On one level, by
rejecting a view which I demonstrated here to be subtly hostile (or at least degrading) to the moral importance of literature, we can claim that much has been done to strengthen the relationship. Furthermore, there is a positive claim here as well. As we have seen implicitly and explicitly throughout this work, the ways in which we see (in value-laden terms) are of primary moral importance to the Diamondian realist. Thus, by strengthening this position we can see the ways in which literature can in of itself (as in the examples in Chapter One) be of primary moral importance. We now have the argumentation which lies behind those claims.
Conclusion:

What is it that we can conclude from the previous discussion? It is important to see the ways in which the argumentation in Chapter Three can be brought to bear on the dialectic presented in Chapter One. In Chapter Three reasons were presented for seeing the Blackburnian view as impossible and, furthermore, we saw how the Diamondian realist can be defended from quasi-realist critiques. This allows us to conclude that if we can undermine the distinction between quasi-realist commitments and ordinary descriptive commitments (science and ethics) we can then reject any view of literature and moral philosophy which is built upon such a system. This allows us to turn back to Chapter One and see how Crary's position has been strengthened; literature teaches us how to describe the world. This is knowledge which is secure and earned without having to be reduced to another style of thinking.

As I mentioned in the Introductory remarks being able to reach the above conclusion is not the end of this particular story. Any good philosophical work should be able to inspire considerations beyond what is presented in the work and this one is no different. In particular, now that the widely objective claims surrounding literature and moral philosophy have been placed on a more secure ground, it could be important to go back and reexamine the bare bones of the relationship presented in Chapter One. Can we, for instance, develop more thoroughly a widely objective literary criticism? By this I mean, we have seen how a certain group novels, those by Forster, Murdoch, and Austen, all of whom produce what could be classified as “classical realist literature,” can be morally relevant for the widely objective theorist, but this is not enough.

It would be interesting to see what widely objective learning can be gained from a wider spectrum of literature. Such a project is hinted at by Diamond who, for instance, discusses the way moral lessons can be learned from a non-classically realist work of literature through an analysis of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. What is particularly interesting about Diamond's analysis is that
it is this novel's lack of a “coherent narrative development,” that is morally important and, thus, what is morally interesting in this work is also the way it is directly opposed to the classically realist novels discussed in Chapter One. To expand on this, Diamond contends that this lack of coherent narrative is related to the “moral activity of the novel.” Particularly in the novel's posing questions about “how to think relatively decently [...] about our world, the world in which we massacre each other: [and thus] the problems of telling about a massacre” (Diamond, 1993, p. 138). Building upon this an examination of a wide variety of literature could lead to the development of a more complete widely objective aesthetics of literature.

Additionally, it is worth noting that this project would have value beyond merely identifying which non-classical realist works of literature are morally relevant to the widely objective theorist. By building up a more complete picture of what a widely objective aesthetic of literature would look like, we will be able to fully address the concerns of the narrowly objective theorists who worry about our ability to criticize corrupting literature. If a widely objective literary aesthetic is built up in more detail we will be better able to see what is generally morally interesting in literature (in more detail than presented in this work), this could give rise to an understanding (not rail tracks laid to infinity) surrounding what morally beneficial literature often looks like. We will have a wide variety of examples to point out what is corrupting and what is beneficial.

In addition to the above, it would be interesting to see where the widely objective theorist could go from here vis-a-vis other forms of artistic expression. We have seen the ways in which literature is important for moral philosophy, but it remains to be drawn out in more detail what the widely objective theorist would say about, for instance, the visual arts.

It is obviously the case that art can have moral importance. Murdoch, in particular, makes this point in her philosophical and her literary output. The general thrust of a widely objective aesthetic of art can be found in Murdoch's presentation of Dora Greenfield's trip to the National Gallery in The
Bell:

She marvelled, with a kind of gratitude, that they [the paintings] were all still here, and her heart was filled with love for the pictures, their authority, their marvellous generosity, their splendor. It occurred to her that here at last was something real and perfect. Who had said that, about perfection and reality being in the same place? Here was something her consciousness could not wretchedly devour, and by making it part of her fantasy make it worthless. [...] But the pictures were something real outside herself, which spoke to her kindly and yet in sovereign tones, something superior and good whose presence destroyed the dreary trance-like solipsism of her earlier mood. When the world had seemed to be subjective it had seemed to be without interest or value. But now there was something else in it after all. (Murdoch, 1962, pp. 190-191)

What can be seen in the above passage is the way that paintings can be morally relevant within a widely objective framework. A certain sensibility (a feeling of reality) becomes essential for Dora's understanding of the world she encounters.

Additionally, before it is claimed that the above example is too esoteric, we can find other ways art can, for the widely objective theorist, be morally relevant when it comes to traditional areas of practical moral concern. One example would be the feelings that looking at an Emily Carr or a Group of Seven painting can evoke. In particular a great number of these works could be used practically in the ways we think about the natural world, a moral lesson which will be of particular practical importance when we discuss environmentalism.

Thus, we can see that there are ways we can go on from here. But, it is important, in closing, to note how far we have come. This work has set out the ways in which moral philosophy can be widely objective (that is to say the ways moral deliberation can make use of non-argumentative resources), this has been the primary exegetical concern. Additionally, we have strengthened this argument in the face of non-cognitivist challenges. Neither of these are minuscule accomplishments, we now have the grounding to say, with more conviction, not what our moral life ought to be like, but what it is like. Furthermore, we can see the important role literature (in and of itself) plays here.
References


