



“What?” — “I Mean Love”

Notes from the lecture inspired by the translations of LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN • by JUSTIN CARMEN



OPUSCULE 01, v.02
"WHAT?"—"I MEAN LOVE"

1. I would like to start by thinking on our title—that it is both a question and an answer. The question asks simply "What?" and the answer begins "I Mean". "Mean" is followed by "Love" which will serve as the primary example for our consideration.
2. Now, I could imagine that someone's initial response might be to admit that the investigation into love seems a bit silly. I mean, I think everyone has some idea about what is meant when another says, "I love you."
3. And in the first instance love does feel as though it requires no explanation. But what if it does? What if the question is asked, "What?" Then the answer, "I mean love" needs replacing. And probably what you have in mind is a description of some personal experience or possibly a commitment in a relationship.
4. But what if the question is asked in a scientific setting? Love could be a thing of consideration within the logic of physiology, neurology or anthropology, for example. Here the question may feel more appropriate since what is asked after is not a personal experience but instead a description or record of some observed phenomena.
5. The question of our consideration is this: does the love we express as a personal experience and the love meant in any particular science come to the same thing? And further, does love within physiology come to the same thing as love within the logic of neurology, or anthropology? There is reason to doubt this.
6. Consider when we observe love behavior in a lab. We might be able to say this-or-that chemical within the brain produces this-or-that physiological change—maybe increased heart rate, deeper breathing, etc. Certainly this is not what one means to say when one says, "I love you." Just thinking that one could mean "my heart rate is increased" when one says "I love you" feels ridiculous.
7. Consider another lab situation. A neurologist might attempt to find tokens in the brain which correspond to love behavior—that is, brain states when a loved one enters the room or when one is testifying love, etc. Therefore, a neurologist could map expressions of private experiences onto the brain, thereafter giving love a location in natural space. This initiative is appealing in that it closes the gap between the mind and the body.

8. However, this map cannot inform the neurologist about all that is interesting about the personal experience of love. A neurologist could say, “Look” while pointing to the brain, “There is love.” But who in everyday use would gain anything by adding a location to their meaning? In fact, they would probably refute it. Surely this is a very narrow definition of love and distraction, whatever the case.
9. Consider further the use of love as observed phenomena. What about love as treated in anthropology? If we take for our example rave culture, then there exists an expression *PLUR*—an acronym for *peace, love, unity, and respect*. Consider someone pursuing under anthropological methods. They will pool the members of this culture to find what was common among those members who meant love as part of the expression *PLUR*.

But this investigation could only result in replacing one set of words for another and, of course, the first set did the job just fine within the culture. The second set may have only helped the anthropologist understand and communicate the ‘discovery’ back to his own people.
10. Now, an anthropologist might want to take up a teleological understanding, saying that love serves to guarantee efficient human structures, whether romantic, family, or communal. Or we could apply the Darwinian revolution in thought—Charles Darwin removed teleological expressions from biology. Therefore, the language of biology became more objective. Instead of “animals experience love in order to safeguard successful parenthood” we have “animals which exhibit love are more likely to...”.
11. But let’s stop here. Where has this taken us? With physiology we have a *physical token of a testament*. With neurology a *token of the mental as physical location*. With biology, love is a *purpose or explanation*. And all of these do give us an object which replaces the answer “I mean love”—only not in the context which you probably first expected it.
12. What of love as meant in the expression of a personal experience? Psychology can ask about personal meaning beyond the answer, “I mean love” for example. However, in a psychological investigation I seem to be using *love* as a variable, like the “a, b”, or “x, y” in an algebraic equation. Psychotherapy operates with these variables by moving them around the ‘equation’ in order to reach a result. In as much as the science of psychology is comprised of methods, not the objects themselves, it will stop short of asking after meaning itself.

13. To continue the investigation at hand, we need to ask what is meant by “personal experience”, whether of love or something else.

To do so, I want us to consult the primary text which has motivated this consideration. The work is *Zettel*, a collection of Wittgenstein’s notes translated into English by G.E.M. Anscombe. Wittgenstein’s method promotes the activity of philosophizing. Excerpts from his work are perfect for guiding a thinker. In Wittgenstein’s *Culture and Value*, there is one note which reads, “Anything your reader can do for himself leave to him.”¹ For the rest of this consideration we will be Wittgenstein’s *reader*. Quotes from this work will direct our thoughts on love as meant in the expression of a personal experience.

14. Love is usually considered a feeling. So I would like to consider a passage from *Zettel* on love as feeling, then move on to explorations of other personal experiences.

Love is not a feeling. Love is put to the test, pain not. One does not say: “That was not true pain, or it would not have gone off so quickly”.²

¹From Peter Winch’s translation of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Culture and Value*, page 77e.

²*Zettel*, section 504, page 89e

15. If we understand love and pain by the same category, then consider how widely we apply the word *feeling* and how imprecise that meaning is. Consider,

If anyone asks whether pleasure is a sensation, he probably does not distinguish between reason and cause, for otherwise it would occur to him that one takes pleasure *in something*, which does not mean that this something produces a sensation in us.³

16. Here we have a more precise word *sensation* to replace *feeling*. Yet, we can additionally question this description in the passage which follows,

It is quite possible that the glands of a sad person secrete differently from those of someone who is glad; and also that their secretion is the or a cause of sadness. But does it follow that the sadness is a *sensation* produced by the secretion?⁴

17. The description as *sensation* comes into question. But further, consider the physiology referred to here by “secretion”. Does it even make sense to search for a ‘love secretion’ in the body of someone who is in love? There might be a secretion when love is felt—but

³*Zettel*, section 507, page 90e

⁴*Zettel*, section 509, page 90e

what of the rest of the time, every day, all day long? This seems absurd.

Consider the duration of *dispositions*,

How do I observe my knowledge, my opinions?
And on the other hand an after-image, a pain. Is there such a thing as uninterrupted observation of my capacity to carry out the multiplication...?⁵

18. Think of the similarity and differences not only between sadness and love, but also love and *knowledge* or *having an opinion*. Is there, in any of these cases, genuine duration?

I whistle and someone asks me why I am so cheerful. I reply "I'm hoping N. will come today".—But while I whistled I wasn't thinking of him. All the same, it would be wrong to say: I stopped hoping when I began to whistle.⁶

19. In addition to this temporal aspect of love, we can ask about location. Consider this reflection on grief,

"Where do you feel grief?"—In the mind.—What kind of consequence do we draw from this assignment of place? One is that we do *not* speak of a bodily place of grief. Yet we *do* point to our body, as if the grief were in it. Is that because we feel a bodily discomfort? I do not

know the cause. But why should I assume it is a bodily discomfort?⁷

20. Compare the discomfort of grief to the pain of a physical wound. And then think of the pains of love, and compare them to the pain of a physical wound.

21. I find it revealing that we use the expression, "my heart aches" when talking about the pains of love. We feel the pain in our heart when we are in love. We could say that the *feeling* in the heart is a *symptom* of being in love, but not that the love is located there itself. And this seems the best expression we have for describing the spatiality of love. Consider,

"After all, you *feel* sadness—so you must feel it *somewhere*; otherwise it would be a chimera". But if you want to think that, remember the difference between seeing and pain. I feel pain in the wound—but colour in the eye? If we try to use a schema here, instead of merely noting what is really common, we see everything falsely simplified.⁸

22. Still, to make the point, we need not even answer these questions regarding the temporality or spatiality of love. Remember the question put

⁵Zettel, section 77, page 16e

⁶Zettel, section 64, page 13e

⁷Zettel, section 497, page 88e

⁸Zettel, section 510, page 90e

forward in number 5.: Does the love we express as a personal experience and the love meant in any particular science come to the same thing? And further, does love within physiology come to the same thing as love within the logic of neurology, or anthropology?

23. To reach a conclusion, consider *logic* generally. Heidegger makes an exposition of the Greek *logos* in the introduction of *Being and Time*. In this introduction he seeks to qualify phenomenology.

This expression [phenomenology] has two components: "phenomenon" and "logos"... Taken superficially, the term "phenomenology" is formed like "theology", "biology", "sociology"—names which can be translated as "science of God", "sciences of life", "science of society"...⁹ ...Thus the term "phenomenology" is quite different in its meaning from expressions such as "theology" and the like. Those terms designate objects of their respective sciences according to the subject matter which they compromise at the time. 'Phenomenology' neither designates the objects of its researches, nor characterizes the subject-matter thus comprised. The word

merely informs us of the "*how*" with which *what* is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled.¹⁰

24. The thought here gets us closer to answering the questions of number 5.. Ask yourself: can we separate the method by which we know entities and the entities themselves?
25. Refer again to 11. and the meanings of love presented there. With physiology, we have a *physical token of a testament*. With neurology a *token of thought as location*. With biology love is a *purpose or explanation*.
26. Can love as a *biological purpose* be stripped from biology? And can love as a *physiological observation* be stripped from physiology? It is hard to imagine what this might even mean.
27. Yet, we do feel as though the many uses of love share some relation—that there is one common entity, *love*. After all, language has always 'worked' on this assumption. And this is simply another way of saying "I have never been asked the question, 'What?' before—it has never been needed."

⁹From John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson's translation of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, *Introduction II*, section 7, page 50.

¹⁰From John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson's translation of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, *Introduction II*, section 7c, page 58.

28. Consider that there is, after all, some real and unified entity in which each science only describes a property of? If this were the case, then what could this entity be and to what logic could it belong?—if not to one of the science we might expect and have already covered here.
29. Or is it that this undescribed entity is sheltered behind unclarity which accompanies a feeling that there is some real thing “out there”? To me it seems the ‘real’ entity is an artifact of an ancestry. And I assume this unclarity could be removed by constructing various genealogies of love.
30. Consider the talk of “love between animals.” This can only be done on the basis that we have already come to interpret love behavior—a mare attending to her foal, for example. This ascription of love would not be possible except on the basis of love behavior in humans. First a hypothesis is made which admits love behavior as an expression of the personal experience of love. Once the ‘love behavior’ is identified in animals, the second hypothesis is made which extends the personal experience of love to the animal. Or instead of a behavioral observation, the personal experience of love might be extended to the animal on account of a physiological observation—neurological, or other.
- However, this is not to admit that these extensions share anything with the root entity,
- the *personal experience of love*, other than a shared and hypothetical ancestry, and we should not expect anything otherwise.
31. I am certainly not arguing that any articulated love has no meaning or that animals do or do not love. It is my understanding that love is more **primordial** than what any logic in anthropology or biology could mean by it.
- Furthermore, I don’t have to abandon love to something like a “disciplinary relativity” just because I have dissolved love into many different families of logic. Remember the ancestry and the primordial entity: *the personal experience of love*.
32. Finally, I hope not to be mistaken: I’m surely not suggesting to reduce love to something merely culturally or individually relative. This would be to abandon everything **I have** because any meaning could be constructed. But talk of “cultural relativism” or “individual relativism” undermines the spirit of experiential language. Here as elsewhere I have made my preferred language clear.
- After all, each entity love that I have analyzed here is an entity which I do use and this exercise you can then do for yourself with your uses of love.

—Justin Carmien, 02.08.14

A LITTLE LOVE STORY

IT HAD BEEN A WHOLE YEAR SINCE HAL AND I AGREED TO TEST OUR LOVE BY NOT SEEING EACH OTHER. NOW, I WAS IN HIS ARMS. BUT THE WORDS HE SPOKE WERE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED. WHAT HE WAS SAYING WAS THAT THIS WAS...

The END OF THE AFFAIR

I REMEMBER HOW MY HEART WAS POUNDING AS I ENTERED THE RESTAURANT-- AND SAW HAL AGAIN. HAL, WHO ONCE MEANT SO MUCH TO ME.

WE PROMISED TO MEET IN A YEAR TO SEE IF WE STILL LOVED EACH OTHER. I COULDN'T FORGET THAT, LISA!

OH, HAL! YOU DID COME. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE FORGOTTEN ME!



HAL'S ARMS WERE AS SWEET AS EVER AND JUST FOR A MOMENT IT WAS LIKE OLD TIMES, BUT-- ONLY FOR A MOMENT.

JS-12

LISA, THIS IS ANNE. ANNE AND I ARE ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED.

ENGAGED?
OH!

I'D HAD SO MUCH TO SAY TO HAL. I'D REHEARSED IT A THOUSAND TIMES. BUT MY WORDS WERE NEVER SPOKEN.

LISA, I KNOW THIS IS A CRUEL WAY TO TELL YOU, BUT AT LEAST NOW YOU KNOW THE TRUTH. DON'T HATE ME.

LISA, DON'T YOU SEE? IF YOU AND I HAD REALLY MADE IT, I COULD NEVER HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH ANNE.



IT'S ALL RIGHT.

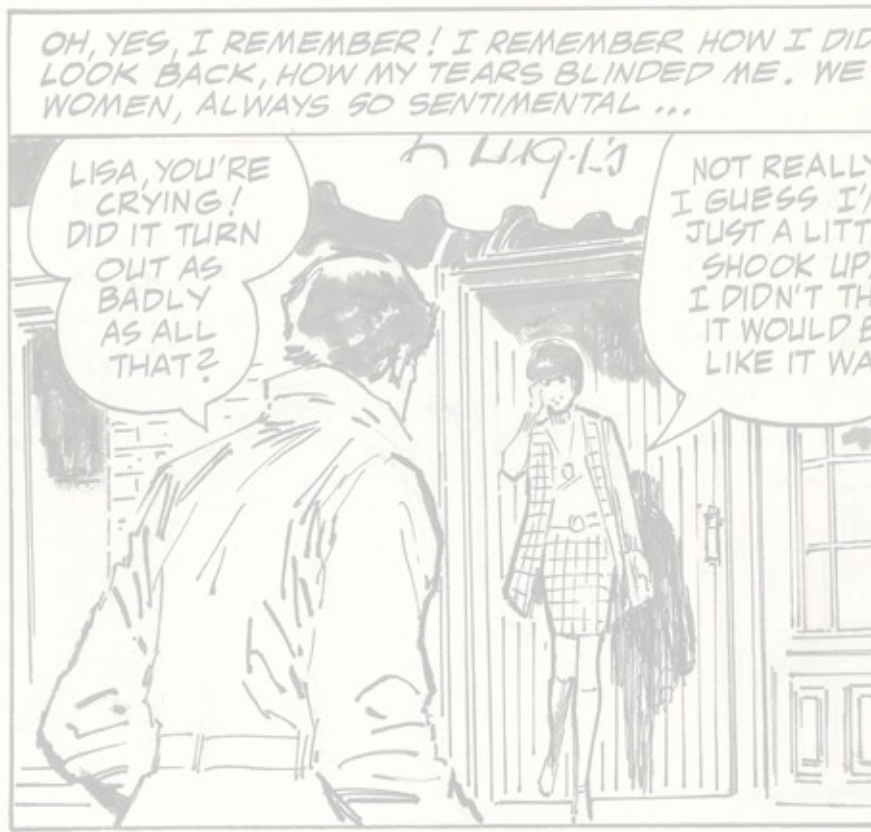


BEFORE I GO
I-I'D LIKE TO WISH
YOU ALL THE HAP-
PINESS IN THE WORLD!
DO YOU BELIEVE
THAT, HAL?

I BELIEVE
IT, LISA.
WE BOTH
DO!



GOODBYE, LISA.
AND, THANK YOU
FOR UNDER-
STANDING.



OH, YES, I REMEMBER! I REMEMBER HOW I DID
LOOK BACK, HOW MY TEARS BLINDED ME. WE
WOMEN, ALWAYS SO SENTIMENTAL ...

LISA, YOU'RE
CRYING!
DID IT TURN
OUT AS
BADLY
AS ALL
THAT?

NOT REAL!
I GUESS I'
JUST A LITT
SHOOK UP.
I DIDN'T TH
IT WOULD B
LIKE IT WA

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APPENDIX A: REFLECTION ON NATURE

In number 30. I had said that we should not expect a single entity. That is, we should not expect an entity of one science to map neatly onto an entity of any other. Yet, there is one very contemporary attempt of just this in modern physics. Consider the quantum object, *wave packet*.

Physics has a logic for taking the phenomena of a light beam as a particle and another logic for taking it as a wave. Particle logic accounts for an entity determinable by location. Wave logic accounts for an entity determinable by momentum. Besides these, there is a third logic for taking account of the phenomena—as the quantum object, *wave packet*. This entity maps the wave data into a space, giving both a determinable location and momentum of the phenomena.

However, this map creates unclarity. Where before the location and momentum could be measured with precision. The more precise the location, the less precise its momentum, and the inverse.

Now, while I am no scholar or even hobbyist in physics, what I have considered here is so

obvious that I feel confident I am not the first to consider it. Therefore, if anyone today would wish to assert that the phenomena *light beam* exhibits a single *nature*—it's quantum nature—which is imprecise by the very nature of the phenomena, I feel completely justified in arguing that, after all, there must be two possibilities for the 'nature' meant here.

In one case *nature* is that which is natural, that entity which is merely discovered: a fallen tree in a forest or the personal experience of love. We simply discover its existence. If one takes up this logic then there is nothing objective about natural entities. After all, a personal experience is the last thing which we might call objective. In this case, nature is just what we discover in the entity. If this understanding is applied to the phenomena light beam, then it appears to exhibit a very mysterious nature. It appears that the light beam cannot be measured precisely "because of its very nature."

In another case, the phenomenon itself is determined by the nature used to measure it. In other words, *nature* simply means *the logic used to describe an entity*. That entity is a particle-physics entity, or a wave-physics entity, for example. In this case the mysterious nature of the quantum object disappears: wave-particle physics is a logic which demands that a mysterious entity be named. The unclarity is ascribed by the 'instrument' of man itself.

Consider if a heron stood before you at a pond. If someone were to tell me that heron speaks towards a world of natural selection I would understand them. And if another told me that heron speaks toward a divinity, I would understand that too. But in either case, it is not a sensual entity *heron*, but a theoretical entity *heron* which I am considering. After all, there will be facts enough for a theory, on either side.

It is like this with particle-wave physics. Only in reconciling worlds (whether divinity/evolutionary theory or wave/particle) do things become messy. We need a new logic, perhaps a new entity, or a new world of entities to reconcile each onto the next. But none of this is *necessary*. It is of course possible to hold open many worlds. Yet, if you do pursue reconciliation, be prepared to destroy any previous entity or world of entities which you once thought were secure and "known for certain".

—Justin Carmien, 13.08.16

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APPENDIX B: TEXT FROM THE PREPARATION
FOR "WHAT?"—"I MEAN LOVE"

In preparing for the first lecture in the fall of 2014 at Spinderihallerne, Eva Sommer Hansen had challenged me to teach a little of Ludwig Wittgenstein in order to dispose my audience to the understanding required for the lecture. After reading my notes, she posed two questions:

What problems motivated Wittgenstein?
Why is Wittgenstein relevant today?

I would like to start by saying something like, "To note first is Wittgenstein's project to set philosophy straight. Grammatical confusion had led the metaphysical philosopher astray..." But to be honest, I cannot bring myself to assume the *authoritative language* which is required for proscribing ideas to Wittgenstein in order to teach Wittgenstein. Likewise, I cannot assume that excitement over his work should be demanded from anyone today. However, I hope to satisfy these questions using a more *experiential language*.

Now, when studying translations of Wittgenstein one will surely encounter explorations of this “grammatical confusion.” Consider the following taken from a translation of Wittgenstein’s *Blue Book*,

Consider as an example the question “What is time?” as Saint Augustine and others have asked it...Very often the way the discussion of such a puzzle runs like this: First the question is asked “What is time?” This question makes it appear that what we want is a definition. We mistakenly think that a definition is what will remove the trouble...The question is then answered by a wrong definition; say: “Time is the motion of the celestial bodies.” The next step is to see that this definition is unsatisfactory. But this only means that we don’t use the word “time” synonymously with “motion of the celestial bodies”. However in saying that the first definition is wrong, we are now tempted to think that we must replace it by a different one, the correct one.^{B1}

Consider if someone asks, “What time is it?” This question is similar to “Is it yet an appropriate time for...?”—diner, speaking aloud, or celebrating a birthday, for example. In any of these uses, the meaning is clearly understood. However, no one should expect any overlap in the meaning of

^{B1}From Harper Perennial’s *Major Works* of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Study for ‘Philosophical Investigations’, Blue Book*, page 117 and 118.

time in this question and the meaning of *time* in a question such as, “What is time?” This question asks for an entity named *time*—and this is of a completely different meaning than in the first use.

It is easy to see how the confusion is then generalized in another passage appearing just a few pages later in the *Blue Book*,

...the characteristic of a metaphysical question being that we express an unclarity about the grammar of words in the *form* of a scientific question.^{B2}

In itself, the critique of the misuse of our language is surely profound in the exegesis of philosophical texts. Yet, I have not made use of this practice in my life. In this, I have not found inspiration in this critique and I think the typical layman today would feel the same.

Now, in reading Wittgenstein’s *Blue Book*, I do find myself bothered by a slight annoyance. There is an explicit lack of attention to the multiple meanings which we might have for entities. Each meaning of an entity alludes to an understanding in which that entity has meaning—and this is true even in the case when someone might ‘mistakenly’ ask, “What is time?”

^{B2}From Harper Perennial’s *Major Works* of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Study for ‘Philosophical Investigations’, Blue Book*, page 129.

Each understanding gives us a way of speaking about the world, a sub-language itself which makes use of a world of entities. Undoubtedly the possible ways of defining entities are multiple—for sure, our languages are multiple. Consider the languages of the sciences. The entities that make up a particular science compose one world, the entities of another science, yet another. A physical world is one of physical entities, and a psychological world is one of psychological entities. And there is nothing which demands that love as used in physiology should map neatly on to the love in psychology, for example.

In this, the *manifest critique* of the metaphysical philosopher anticipates another—a *foundational critique* which can be read into many of Wittgenstein's published notes. (These notes rival the passion found within the translations of Friedrich Nietzsche's polemics and here I *am* tempted to ascribe a particular intention to Wittgenstein. I want to say that the critique of the metaphysical philosopher is solely a preparation.)

If one takes it, as I do, that the spirit of the physicalist has come to be the foundation of popular discourse today, Wittgenstein assumes the role of a cultural critic—concerned not with academic philosophical exegesis, but with a change of popular perspective on the entirety of experience.

Now, I want to say that whoever does not find this profound is likewise one who has not 1) awakened to the inadequacy of mechanics to explain the entirety of experience, and 2) desired to ground the multiplicity of understandings.

The first difficulty is this: the mechanics of time and space do not offer rules for the entirety of entities expressed in language. Consider what Richard Dawkins has written about the nihilism which some accuse him of following a reading of his own work, *The Selfish Gene*,

Presumably there is indeed no purpose in the ultimate fate of the cosmos, but do any of us really tie our life's hopes to the ultimate fate of the cosmos anyway? Of course we don't; not if we are sane. Our lives are ruled by all sorts of closer, warmer, human ambitions and perceptions. To accuse science of robbing life of the warmth that makes it worth living is so preposterously mistaken, so diametrically opposite to my own feeling and those of most working scientist, I am almost driven to the despair of which I am wrongly suspected.^{B3}

After reading this quote, I am left with the feeling that Dawkins openly admits that the rules which he believes governs the universe cannot explain all that there is to experience. Now, physics

^{B3}*The Selfish Gene, 30th Anniversary Edition, Introduction, page xiii.*

does describe material and the mechanics of that material very well, but it seems, at least here, that Dawkins does not acknowledge any interest in describing an understanding of the “warmer perceptions” beyond this naïve expression. Nor does he even seem to want to consider the second difficulty: a more holistic understanding which could govern both.

Contrast this to a note translated and published in *Culture and Value*,

It is all one and the same whether the typical western scientist understands or appreciates my work, since he will not in any case understand the spirit in which I write. Our civilization is characterized by the word ‘progress’. Progress is its form rather than making progress being one of its features. Typically it constructs. It is occupied with building an ever more complicated structure...I am not interested in constructing a building, so much as in having a perspicuous view of the foundations of possible buildings.

So I am not aiming at the same target as the scientists and my way of thinking is different from theirs.^{B4}

To entertain multiple understandings requires something of an *epistemic modesty*—an

^{B4}From Peter Winch’s translation of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s notes as found in *Culture and Value*, page 7e.

acknowledgement of the variety of things possibly meant by a single word, and at the same time, an acknowledgment of how little is meant in each particular use. This modesty gives way to a *healthy discourse* with any friend, colleague, or lover.

I will conclude this preparation to the lecture with a passage from Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

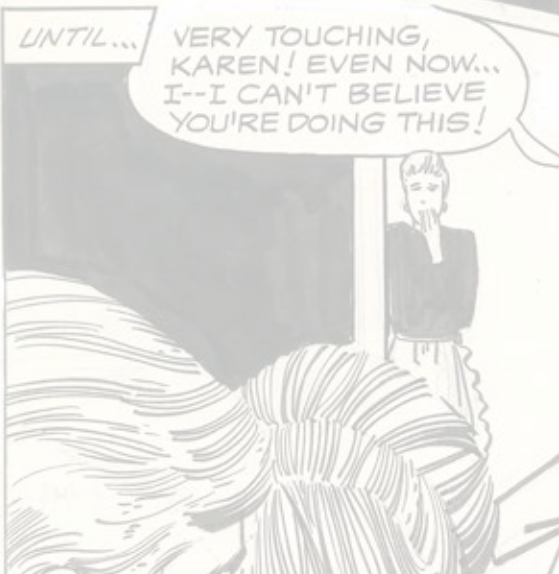
At the basis of the whole modern view of the world lies the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanation of natural phenomena.

So people stop short at the natural laws as at something unassailable, as did the ancients at God and Fate.

And they both are right and wrong. But the ancients were clearer, in so far as they recognized one clear conclusion, whereas in the modern system it should appear as though *everything* were explained.^{B5}

—Justin Carmien, 10.07.14

^{B5}From Harper Perennial’s *Major Works* of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.371 and 6.372.



I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING FUNNY... VERY FUNNY... YOU WERE NOT ONLY THE ONLY GIRL I EVER LOVED...

...BUT YOU WERE THE ONLY GIRL I EVER TRUSTED!

BUT... BUT...

...WHICH IS COMMON
TO TALK ABOUT.

H FAMILY SPENDS THE
WINTER ON THE RIVIERA.

HIM OF



OPUSCULE 1

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