

# DISMANTLING THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN SECULAR AND SACRED A Wittgensteinian Way

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**Abstract:** Human attraction toward the sacred and the secular and the consequent tension between the two in daily life are because people do not see their interrelationship in depth. Following the method of Wittgenstein, this paper attempts to understand the question of the sacred and the secular in a deeper way, neither to exclude one over the other nor to endorse a compromise between the two, but to see the meaning of both from the point of view of human person who discovers the meaning in them so that life becomes a 'lived life in the world' (NB, 73) in its depth. Wittgenstein has declared his allegiance to his faith neither in the sacred nor in the secular, rather he approached them with keen interest. He cherished the sense of the sacred and lived in the world as if it is a precious life to live. He sought the meaning of life of the world, which he called God. Dissolving the tension by discovering the sense of the sacred and the secular would be an antidote to the otherwise incompatible attitudes of the secular and the religious in the present world.

**Keywords:** *Awe, Construct, Dichotomy, Form of Life, Human, Language-Game, Sacred, Secular, World*

## 1. Introduction

If someone were to ask Wittgenstein what the sacred and the secular would mean for him, he might answer, "[o]nly from the consciousness of the uniqueness of my life arises religion -

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science - and art" (NB 79).<sup>1</sup> Religion, science, and art are three ways of life of human beings. Religion seems to be the realm of the sacred; scientific inventions seem to be the building blocks of the secular and art can depict and interpret both. But they arise and have meaning only in the uniqueness of one's consciousness. While there is a temptation to separate the secular from the sacred, the attempt is due to the inability to see the complementarity of both, and the temptation can be overcome when human person recognises that the dichotomy is against the uniqueness of one's own consciousness about life in the world. The dichotomy is not a natural development but a human construct - cultural, political and religious construct - which has grown through the ebb and flow of human history.

Any construct can be deconstructed if proper method is used as has been shown by post-modern philosophers like Derrida and Lyotard. But the deconstruction without any profit for the human persons living in the world would paralyse the rhythm of life one enjoys. Therefore, the dismantling should profit the human world than the deconstruction. Wittgenstein's method of approaching the questions on life of human person might be the guiding star in our endeavour to dismantle the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular.

Wittgenstein has not directly approached the question of the sacred and the secular but his general scheme of philosophy of life would tell us how to approach the dichotomy. We can garner from his method of philosophy the tools that would do the work for us. I shall argue with the help of Wittgenstein that the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular is a human construct built on many hypotheses. If we recognise the meaning of these language-games in the stream of life, we would probably dismantle the dichotomous attitudes from our consciousness. Thus, by dissolving the dichotomy one might develop a creative as well as constructive attitude towards the sacred and the secular.

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<sup>1</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Note Books 1914-1916*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961 (Henceforth, NB).

## 2. The Sacred and the Secular: Hypotheses

In this section, the search is for a common theme that enables one to discuss both the sacred and the secular. I suppose that considering the sacred and the secular as hypotheses rather than theses would be a good starting point. Looking at the sacred as something ‘mysterious’ and the secular as something ‘phenomenon’ would create an impression that they are univocal terms referring to specific concepts or systems. They are specific concepts but are not univocal terms that can be defined unilaterally. The “bewitchment of our intelligence” (*PI*, 109)<sup>2</sup> seeks a focus on “*craving for generality ... [or the] method of science*” (*BB*, 18)<sup>3</sup> – an urge for definition of the terms concerned. Even outside the scheme of Wittgenstein, the terms can have only semantic nuances and no definitions. Definitions (i.e., ‘explanation’ *PI*, 109) involve applicability to particular situations. In the case of the sacred and the secular, particular situations may betray the assumed definitions – each may imply contradictory as well as complementary applications in various situations. The sacred may imply worship of a deity, religion, rituals, doctrines, objects, places of worship, doctrines, authority, mantras, religious outfits, fundamentalism or fanaticism, fear about future, etc. The secular may imply ideologies like Marxism, consumerism, materialism and the other concepts like progress, temporal affairs, politics, scientific and technological revolutions, atheism, agnosticism, scepticism, etc. These are the roles and meanings ascribed to the sacred and the secular by the protagonists of various philosophies, ideologies, revolutions, or religions. However, they never communicate a uniform definition or meaning.

The word ‘sacred’ comes from ‘*sacer*’ or ‘*sacrare*’ (Latin) which means ‘holy’ or ‘make holy’, and the Greek equivalent is ‘*hagios*’ which means ‘reverence’ or ‘religious awe’; the word ‘secular’ comes from ‘*saeculum*’ (Latin) which means ‘world or age’. With

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<sup>2</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953 (Henceforth, *PI*).

<sup>3</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, ed. Anthony Kenny, Oxford: Blackwell, 1958.

these semantics, the words are employed in various situations according to the needs of the one who employs them. In short, whatever is related to God, religion, worship, or other-worldly (*noumenal* – Kant) is referred to as the sacred and whatever is temporal, immediate or experiential is referred to as the secular. The sacred evokes ‘awe’ and the secular evokes ‘immediacy’. While religion and religious people resorted to the sacred as the ground of being, answers to origin of life, unpredictable future and destiny, and the invisible protector and guardian of life and activities, the proponents of the secular concentrated on ‘immediacy’ as the ground of being, contingency, change and relativity as the mode of being and activities in the world.<sup>4</sup> These semantically restricted terms are given wider scope of application through ‘explanations’. Such ‘explanations’ tell us that there are no theses of what the sacred or the secular is, rather only hypotheses. These hypotheses “have the character of *depth* ... deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language” (*PI*, 111), and lead us to misunderstand and misinterpret the terms. Each hypothesis and aspects of hypothesis force upon the intelligence of the people the deceptive character of depth, truth and may conceal its falsity and shallowness.

### **3. The Sacred and the Secular Dichotomy: A Human Construct**

One may wonder whether these hypotheses are right or wrong. There is nothing completely wrong or right but it demands scrutiny from the aspect of meaning. Both the concepts of the sacred and the secular are human constructs, which would constitute a legitimate affair given the philosophical method of Wittgenstein (*PI*, 609 and *Z*, 325).<sup>5</sup> But their alleged dichotomy would be alien to Wittgenstein, and if there is dichotomy

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<sup>4</sup>George F. McLean, *Traces of God in a Secular Culture*, New York: Alba House, 1973, 5.

<sup>5</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, eds. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969 (Henceforth *Z*).

between the two, it could be the result of human construction of an ideal language: “... we construct ideal languages” (*PI*, 81).<sup>6</sup>

Let us look into the two forms of the construct. The ‘awe’ that animated human being from time immemorial with regard to the utter contingency, feeling of insecurity and fear of the other, made human beings to look for a being who is absolute and powerful, and capable of rescuing from adverse situations. In other words, the secular-contingency makes human being to look for the sacred. This is basically the theory of any primitive religion, and continues to be the foundational aspect of any religious belief and the concept of the sacred. Religion is “... human recognition of a superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship.”<sup>7</sup> It is the recognition that all things are manifested and controlled by a transcendental power which goes beyond our perception and knowledge. It is legitimate to have such ‘awe’ and the consequent recognition. “... [T]o comfort us in our suffering and allay our fear of death, to explain things we can’t otherwise explain, to encourage group cooperation in the face of trials and enemies.”<sup>8</sup> However, binding the sacred to a particular religion is a human endeavour.<sup>9</sup> Human beings have tirelessly made attempts to prove the existence of the sacred (i.e., God), give names (Yahweh, Allah, Iswara, etc.), put in competition with other similar entities (tussle between monotheism and polytheism), build altars and sacred spaces or places, compile poems and mantras and organise sacrifices or rituals to

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<sup>6</sup>According to Bertrand Russell, an ideal language would answer all the philosophical problems. But according to Wittgenstein (in *Tractatus*), the ideal language conceals the ordinary language which is a natural phenomenon.

<sup>7</sup>Concise Oxford Dictionary, *s.v.*

<sup>8</sup>Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, London: Penguin Books, 2007, 103.

<sup>9</sup>The word ‘binding’ is preferred in the case of religion because religion comes from the word ‘*religare*’ which means to bind (*ligare* is to bind). I do not intend now to argue for the legitimacy or illegitimacy of such binding as it would be dealt differently, later on.

propitiate them, create communities of likeminded people, outline doctrines on faith and morals for an orderly life in the community, etc. There are also many elements such as violence, human sacrifice, terrorism, god-man/woman culture, legalism, proselytism, superstition, authoritarianism, etc., which are the consequent faces of such a construct. It is not at all exaggerating to say that the present day religion and religious space in the world are constructed gradually from the foundational 'awe' of human antiquity.

From the end of the seventeenth century onwards, the rigid side of the human construct of the sacred has been under severe attack from various quarters. David Hume considered religion and religious experience as sick men's dreams and a system of unfounded rationality.<sup>10</sup> Later on, Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche attributed reverence to the sacred as a disposition of a fragile, imaginative and neurotic mind.<sup>11</sup> The critics of religion consider different aspects of the system of the sacred as the purposive perpetuation by human mind and customs. For many of them, as a religious person is born into a religious community where he or she gets membership, protection, rule of life, and way of life, etc., belief in the sacred is not natural to human being. Many are ordinarily taught not to scrutinise or refine the rationale of the religious belief; instead, it is imposed upon them. Thus, religion is something socially constituted with irrational beliefs, and conventional rituals or practices. The cultic endeavour of the sacred is manifest in the rituals that become a trance medium whereby human beings are made to believe that they have a consoling, pacifying and strengthening experience because of the mysterious and secret character; they are also made to believe that the transcendence is made immanent through such an act. Religious experience of the sacred is also considered as a psychic phenomenon whereby human person is falsely positioned against the personified natural forces and

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<sup>10</sup>David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, London: A & H Bradlaugh Bonner, 1889, 4 & 74.

<sup>11</sup>Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*, 127.

made to believe that religious beliefs and practices would tackle them.<sup>12</sup>

While the sacred is constituted by the human recognition of the perpetuation of the ‘awe’, the secular is also a human construct like any concept and the corresponding word is a human construct that is connected to the reality empirically and logically. However, when a concept is made into an ideology or a system the concept becomes a forceful construct. It is constituted in the minds/lives of the people sociologically, politically and economically. The secular outlook of the people had been part of human growth since the antiquity. The philosophical doctrines of materialism and atomism are the forerunners of secular ideology. The period of enlightenment embarked the advent of secular life and philosophy. It began as a reaction to modernism, authoritarianism and religious overtones in political and social life. The perception was that human being was oppressed, subjugated and victimised by the religious and moral superpowers. Thus, a secular humanism was sought as a remedy to the plight of human being. Human being became the centre of life – social, political and economic. The religion and religious affiliations were side-lined or considered only as matters of private life.<sup>13</sup>

The secular is connoted with varieties of meanings. First, there is *secularisation* which focuses on the process of declining influence of religion in the public as well as private life of people. Then, there is *secularism*, which is the ideology that promotes a state without the interference or influence of religion, and, finally, the word the *secular* denotes something that is of the world. These three connotations also do not commune similar meanings but different but progressive meanings. Further, they have added or subtracted meanings in different countries, regions or localities.

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<sup>12</sup>Roger Scruton, “The Sacred and Secular,” <[princeton.edu/sites/jmadison/calendar/.../ScrutonPaper](http://princeton.edu/sites/jmadison/calendar/.../ScrutonPaper)> (17 December 2014), 3-5.

<sup>13</sup>For a detailed account of secular humanism, see, James Hitchcock, *What Is Secular Humanism? Why Humanism Became Secular and How It Is Changing Our World*, Michigan: Servant Books, 1982, 40-48.

The dichotomy between the sacred and the secular has been created by unfounded and blind criticism of each by the opposite camps. According to Wittgenstein, such criticisms would not match the forms of life of the sacred and the secular. For those who are at the lower level of the form of life may not be able to understand and live the higher levels of form of life. In the same way, those who are not part of the form of life may not even be able to evaluate the said form of life. "... [I]t *can* be understood *wrongly*, and the words are *not* valid for such person" (CV, 37).<sup>14</sup> Those who oppose or criticise each can do it, as it appears to be but may do it wrongly – the rightness can be accrued to the one who is embedded in the form of life with particular language-game. While searching for the meaning of each, open-mindedness is required to understand whatever is revealed by each in one's life.

### 3. The Sacred and the Secular: Forms of Life

'Form of life' is an expression, of which a non-deterministic reading is preferred by Wittgenstein than a definition of the kind of what the sacred or the secular is. Further, it is non-systematic, communal in nature and founded on functions and agreement. There is also another preferred terminology – stream of life – for the form of life.<sup>15</sup> These and many other characteristics of form of life enable us to deal with the questions of the sacred and the secular. It seems to me that the uncanny and in-deterministic way of approaching life becomes the characteristic feature of Wittgenstein's philosophical engagements. The questions on the sacred and the secular are to be approached in a similar way. Disengagement with the triadic nexus of language, world and life might not lead an investigator into the peculiar philosophy of Wittgenstein.<sup>16</sup> Language is the language of the form of life,

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<sup>14</sup>Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998 (Henceforth CV).

<sup>15</sup>Rudder Lynn Baker, "On the Very Idea of Form of Life," *Inquiry* 27 (1984), 278.

<sup>16</sup>David Kishik, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life*, New York: Continuum, 2008, 47.



form of life is the life in the world, and the world is the totality of forms of life. “To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life” (*PI*, 19). A language of the sacred as well as of the secular indicates that there is a possibility of them being unique forms of life. Language is not the conglomeration of systematically arranged words that depict a reality (*Tractarian* position, i.e., a position that was given a new approach by Wittgenstein in his later writings), but it is the expression of what the form of life is. To understand what language is for Wittgenstein we need one of his further concepts, namely, ‘language-game.’ “Here the term ‘language-game’ means [*sic*] to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life” (*PI*, 23). Communication is an activity, and activity is a form of life. In such an activity there can be many components which may look sometimes contradictory as well as complementary. Giving orders, obeying them, description, reporting, speculating, forming and testing a hypothesis, play-acting, making a joke, forming riddles, translating a language, etc., are such components (*PI*, 23). In all these components, there are words although they have a meaning or sense only in the particular activity and in the whole language-game. In other words, there are many words in an activity and many activities constitute a form of life, and probably many forms of life constitute the world and human life. There is no one thing that would give foundation to the world or language or form of life but numerous ones; there is, however, a foundation without which any life is not possible (*PO*, 193).<sup>17</sup> The world, language or life is not behind facts, words or events rather facts, words and events constitute human life in the world (*PO*, 255).<sup>18</sup>

The term ‘sacred’ is a form of life rather than a system or entity or state that can be explained. Since form of life is not a well-defined system, it does not have a word-reality

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<sup>17</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions*, eds. Klagge, J. and A. Nordman, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993 (Henceforth *PO*).

<sup>18</sup>My focus here is the human world which is constituted and not the ontological world “which is the case.”

correspondence as well as there is no innate meaning of the sacred so that a human being understands the term 'sacred'.<sup>19</sup> To project two extreme positions that 'a word corresponds [*sic*] to an object/reality' and 'a word has an innate meaning' is to take language as something universal, rigid and ostensive, and to consider that the mastery of such language would answer the problems of human life (i.e., the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular), could be the philosophical problem of the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. The word has meaning only in the form of life where activity of the sacred is embedded. Sense of the sacred is embedded in all the activities of the community or tribe. The activity is not a mechanical one but a living one. "A form of life is neither a possession nor a state but, indeed, an *activity* – a *vita activa*. *Living* ... [is] the only fulfilment of the purpose of existence, seems to have a secret affinity with ... *speaking*: the *speaking* of language ("*Das Sprechender Sprache*"), the *living* of life."<sup>20</sup> The complexity of human life is like an organism. Just as an organism is a complex whole, language, world and form of life, etc., are complex. Thus, to approach the form of life as a unilateral project would betray the purpose of philosophy. The sacred as a living manifestation of the form of life is indeed the life of human being. Form of life is not what we correspond or are oriented to, rather what we live. Though the sense of the sacred is gradually manifested in the human life, it is not something that makes human being to face the sacred 'other', but the sacred is embedded in the very form of life. The sacred is not set over and against human beings as an entity of worship or fear but the sense of the sacred is the very life of human beings where he or she venerates, worships and obeys. However, the recognition happens gradually almost in a negative way. There is no question of 'belief' in the sacred as if the sacred is an alien other, but a progressive unfolding of the 'intimate other' in the form of life. Thus, the 'sacred' is not a

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<sup>19</sup>Cartesian obsession was with the innateness of concepts, meaning and thinking.

<sup>20</sup>Kishik, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life*, 60.

static or eternal concept or entity but is the power or current in the stream of life.

The concept of language-game sheds further light into the forms of life, namely, the sacred and the secular. Language is commonly understood as a medium of communication, and combining Wittgensteinian form of life with language as an activity we have language-game; *language* is a *game* where *speaking* is an *activity of living*. “The origin and the primitive form of the language-game is reaction; only from this can the more complicated forms grow ... ‘in the beginning was the deed’” (CV, 36). Speaking is not a monotonous activity; it is met with a response, and action-reaction is the form of living. Sacredness as being embedded in the form of life is evident in the language-game of the form of life. According to Max Black, there are three types of language-games<sup>21</sup> and the language-game of the sacred belongs to the second kind where complexity of actions is involved.

How could human behaviour be described? Surely only by sketching the actions of a variety of humans, as they are all mixed up together. What determines our judgment, our concepts and reactions ... the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action (Z, 567).

Language-games in a form of life manifest the sense of the sacred, and the sense can be obscured when only facts of the sacred are taken into account rather than the whole language-

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<sup>21</sup>Max Black. “Wittgenstein’s Language-Games” in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Critical Assessments*, ed. Stuart Shanker, London: Croom Helm, 1986, 74-76, cited in K. C. Pandey, *Religious Beliefs, Superstitions and Wittgenstein*, New Delhi: Readworthy, 2009, 146. According to Max Black, linguistic behaviour of a community follows a set pattern based on a definite language-game (as described in *PI*, 2 21, 48, 143, 630), complex activities and responses which are unconventional and arbitrary (*PI*, 23), and language-games of accuracy (like using stopwatch to time a visual image), which have no major role in human form of life (*Z*, 82).

game where the sense is embedded.<sup>22</sup> Speaking of a language is part of an activity where form of life is the whole of an activity. The hypothesis that might bewitch us may be considered as an individual fact that is severed from the whole language-game.

Just as the language of the sacred is embedded in the language-game, and can be distorted when taken to be unconnected to the rest of the game, the language of the secular is also embedded in the form of life of human beings. The secular language is not a peculiar language that is alien to some part of the people. It is fully accessible to all who are part of the form of life or the language-game of the secular. If the secular language-game has distinct words or deeds, they will be in the domain of those who play the game. If many people manifest the behaviour of those who belong to the particular secular language-game, one cannot assert that they do not know the language-game. In a deeper analysis, it is difficult to analyse and categorise who belong to the sacred language-game and who belongs to the secular language-game. People who profess to be deeply religious (i.e., oriented towards the sacred) may be secular in fact and *vice versa*.

#### **4. The Sacred and the Secular: Meaning as Use**

Do words such as the sacred and the secular have meaning in the form of life? The essence of language is not the meaning hidden underneath words or language-games. The meaning lies open to the view and not something *beneath* the surface (*PI*, 92). Words might depict reality, not the static reality, but the reality, which is in flux or in activity. The world *is* as it *was in the beginning* and *ever shall be* does not have any meaning, and the excellence that beckons human person is to synchronise with the ever-changing reality of the world with the music of form of life. The words that correspond to reality have meaning only in the hustle of human life (*PI*, 424). Again, to imagine that form of words has similar formulas in all its applications would put someone into the troubled waters, at the discovery that a

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<sup>22</sup>Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, London: Vintage, 1991, 346.

particular word has altogether different meanings in different forms of life (*PI*, 349).<sup>23</sup> “When you treat language as alienated from its possible use, when you are oblivious to what you can *do* with your words, you lose your sense of direction.”<sup>24</sup> The meaning of the sacred and the secular is to be understood in the whole hurly-burly of human actions where, quietude and movement, prayer and work, reflection and action, etc., go hand in hand as if in a stream of life.

The word and its corollaries in life have meaning only because of their use. Both empirical and metaphysical emphases on the word have their disadvantages. If we consider the sacred as something other-worldly (transcendent) or holy or divine only, and the secular as something immanent in the world, the words become obsolete and static – (“But we, in our conceptual world, keep on seeing the same” [*Z*, 568]), conveying monotonous meaning for progressive generations. Words become dynamic when we see different meanings in the similar occasions and the similar meanings in different occasions (*LWPP*, 285).<sup>25</sup> Concepts or words are not just for an occasion but for a variety of occasions with recurring variations (*Z*, 568). Just as a pattern in the weave is interwoven with many others (*Z*, 569), one word is interwoven with many other words, concepts, activities, or uses. Seeing the words with the above extreme positions make the language retreat from human life; for, in the language, “[w]e are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm” (*PI*, 108). Even if there is a metaphysical leaning on the part of a word (I strongly believe that there is a metaphysical leaning for each word we use), the word’s meaning is embedded with its use in the phenomenon of language of the human being. “The meaning of word is its use in the language” (*PI*, 43). The meaning is related to use and the use

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<sup>23</sup>Kishik, *Wittgenstein’s Form of Life*, 51.

<sup>24</sup>Kishik, *Wittgenstein’s Form of Life*, 51.

<sup>25</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. II, eds. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and Maximillian A. E. Aue, London: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

is related to act. “Words are also deeds” (*PI*, 546). The distinction among *seeing*, *conceptualising*, *speaking*, *acting*, *living*, etc., becomes patterns in the same weave. “It is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game” (*OC*, 204). Acting involves the rest. One pattern can never be isolated from the others. There are multiple ways of use of a word in our life; some are familiar to us but some are difficult to grasp, and some, though grasped, are difficult to describe the grasped. “The use of this word in the ordinary circumstances of our life is of course extremely familiar to us. But the part the word plays in our life, and therewith the language-game in which we employ it, would be difficult to describe even in rough outline” (*PI*, 156). The words of the sacred and the secular may be very much familiar to us – ‘I know what it is’ (hypothesis) – but may miss its application (meaning) in one’s own life (meaning as use). Here we need to employ what Wittgenstein said in his *Tractatus* that it is not in ‘saying but showing’ (*TLP*, 4.022, 4.1212; 5.61)<sup>26</sup> the use of the meaning of the word (sign) comes alive in our form of life (*PI*, 432). The expression ‘the sacred’ refers to a phenomenon of human life just as the expression ‘the secular’ refers to another phenomenon of human life. There is no independent meaning to each of them that could be used uniformly on all occasions rather the use is dynamically discovered in each evolving language-game.

### 5. The Sacred and the Secular: Dissolving Dichotomy

Following meaning as use, clarifying the use of words ‘the sacred’ and ‘the secular’ might help us dissolve the dichotomy. Wittgenstein once said: “Only something supernatural [the sacred] can express the supernatural” (*CV*, 107). If there is something supernatural existing, then the revelation (revealing/manifesting) of the same has to be done by the supernatural itself, and any attempt from the part of the natural can never manifest the supernatural. However, belief in the sacred is not based on natural proofs and a believer needs no

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<sup>26</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, C. K. Ogden, trans., London: Routledge, 1922.

evidence, and if evidences are there, they are there to analyse and make the case of the existence of the sacred by the intellect (CV, 97). However, for a believer the proof is not at all necessary. Believing is an activity rather than a state of mind. Many things are interrelated in the act of believing and the separation of one from the other or giving importance to one over the other betray the very dynamism of believing in the sacred. Life can educate to believing, experiences and thoughts may force the concept of beliefs upon us, conscience may tell us to believe, etc., and so the ‘belief-behaviour’ is a multi-dimensional working of language in a stream of life.

With regard to the secular a similar outlook is needed. The secular is not devoid of sacredness or, in other words, the sacred and the secular are embedded in the use of language in the human life. “The meaning of life, the meaning of the world, we can call God” (NB, 73). The sacred (i.e., God) is analogously depicted as the meaning of life and meaning of the world. The sacred can neither be looked from outside of life and outside the world, nor are they in life or in the world as empirical facts. It is the meaning of life and world, and the meaning is given by use. Thus, meaning of the word ‘sacred’ is the use of the word in a form of life – a meaning that is embedded in the reality. “The way you use the word ‘God’ does not show *whom* you mean but *what* you mean” (CV, 58).<sup>27</sup> The sacred and the secular converge at the ‘meaning point’; “The world and life are one” (NB, 77). There is no dichotomy between world and life, word and world, life and activity, and the sacred and the secular. Believing in the sacred becomes an antidote to the obsession with the empirical facts of the world. “To believe in God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of matter” (NB, 73). To view the world as a collection of facts leads one to focus on the minute details of the world forgetting the whole language-game in

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<sup>27</sup>God as a metaphysical reality has meaning for a human person when the reality is manifested in linguistic, rational, anthropological, and sociological dimensions of being human. The reality of God is recognised in all these ways and not just in any unilateral way.

which human beings live their life. The world cannot be reduced to facts or empirical realities alone as language could be reduced to mere words. The moment we focus on any singular detail of the world as the only thing needed in our life, then we give emphasis to the secular as the only way of life. Such an attitude would bring about a fragmented or consumeristic attitude to the secular. The sacred, disconnected from the world, remains a hallucination for lazy people who are satisfied in being idle in the world.

Humanism in all its forms exalts nobility of human beings and their life in the world. Existentialists like Heidegger, Sartre, and Nietzsche have looked at human phenomenon and crowned human being with the authenticity of existence and freedom in existence: it is human being who is the splendour being, free being and super being. Wittgenstein too gives importance to human being and the human form of life but in a quite different way. A “living human being” (*PI*, 281) can see, speak, act, etc. Human form of life is a specific form of life, and it is human being who discovers meaning in the form of life. Words, concepts and meanings are embedded in the human form of life. They are interwoven in the way of living (*LWPP* II, 43) so that human being can live a life that is worthy of human form of life and such “... a way of living makes what is problematic disappear” (*CV*, 31). Since life, meaning and world are one and the meaning of life and world can be called as the sacred, a way of living with the world and the sacred would not be difficult. In the lived life of a human being, the dichotomy would disappear. However, even “[t]he concept of a living being has the same indeterminacy as that of a language” (*Z*, 326). Just like language which is a game played well would bring meaning into the game, the life lived well would bring meaning to the life.

## 6. “Back to the Rough Ground” (*PI* 107)

Recognizing the indicators of hypotheses, dichotomy, language-game and the meaning of the sacred and the secular, I think Wittgenstein has a point for us: “We have got onto slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions



are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground!” (PI 107). However lofty they are, if ideals alienate one human being from another, it would denigrate the very prospect of the ideals. What binds one with another, however crude it may look, would give grip to the way of life. While they can disparage human life, if they are sought in opposition to the other and enhance the life, embracing them as complementing to each other will enable us to realize them as ennobling human life in all its forms.

It seems that science and humanism are the driving forces behind radical secularism and it wages its war against the sacred and makes it alien to progressive human generation. People place their hope in sciences (as a secular endeavour) and put confidence in the secular humanism to nullify the misery of the world and to unite the world with the globalizing phenomenon. But it is science (without the sense of the sacred) and technology that can cause unrest in the world, make people desperate and dream promise of peace and progress (CV 72). So, blind confidence in the radical secular would be a self-defeating experience. Sense of the sacred, on the other hand, cannot be confident of its historicity. Historicity will not convince anyone of the validity of the religion but its message would do a much superior job (CV 37). True religiosity (the sense of the sacred) can “... destroy vanity and penetrate every nook and cranny” (CV 54). The religious concepts like ‘God’ or the sacred do not refer to an entity, and the statements that ‘God exists’ make a reference to a commitment to a certain frame of reference or form of life, a commitment not by arguments but by experiences – a reference which has helped people to find comfort and solace (CV 50). Thus, the sacred needs the secular and the secular needs the sacred for living human beings to dissolve the very problems they face in life. This is the new way of thinking (CV 55) – a thinking that uproots the old ways of thinking that dichotomised and paralysed the life of living human beings and bewitched their intelligence with the deceptive and polarising ideal languages. It is supposed that the sacred belongs to the realm of

unsayable and the secular belongs to the realm of sayable, and sacred belongs to showable and the secular belongs to sayable. This is not exactly the same in Wittgenstein; both the sacred and the secular belong to the realm of showable and, in other words, there is a limit even in the sayable of the secular and the sacred. Experience of the sacred is a human experience just as the life in the secular is a human experience. Instead of discarding one experience over the other, the best way is to look closer to the apparent alien experience - whether it be the sacred or the secular - as another side of the human experience. The sacred and the secular are two sides of the same coin!

## **7. Conclusion**

Experience of sacredness and secularity is gradually developed and evolved in the human form of life. Such a gradual construction is legitimate but the dichotomy between the two is the negative side of such a construction. This dichotomy can be dissolved by discovering the meaning of the sacred and the secular. The meaning does not consist in the semantic nuances but the nuances in the use of the words in particular language-games of the form of life one is in. The use of the words in language-games is a dynamic activity. Meaning of the words is embedded in human experience. One cannot look for the sacred and the secular outside the world of human experience. Both enhance human way of life and demand the respect that they duly deserve.