

THE PERSON: PROJECT OF NATURE, NURTURE AND GRACE

Philosophical Investigations after Wittgenstein

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1. Introduction

Wittgenstein once said: ‘I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view.’¹ In this paper I present a conception of human person: We are rooted in nature, formed by nurture and sustained by God; positively we act upon the world, build up the community and move towards God. The methodology is Wittgensteinian, that of assembling reminders, criss-crossing the terrain, and providing an *Übersicht* of the person from a religious perspective. I do not claim that this is a general thesis that philosophy can establish nor do I claim that this is the religious point of view that Wittgenstein himself held; rather this is how Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigations stimulated me to thoughts of my own. This is, to use a Wittgensteinian expression, a form of life: how we live, move and have our being.

‘Know thyself’ is the fundamental philosophical quest; it is a quest for the meaning of life. This philosophical tradition also insists that the unexamined life is not worth living. Wittgenstein related the ultimate questions regarding the meaning and the purpose of life with belief in God:

To believe in a God means to understand the question about the meaning of life.

To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter.

To believe in God means to see that life has a meaning.²

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¹Rhees, ed., *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981, 94.

²Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961, 74.

Following Wittgenstein, I describe human beings as persons living in relation to nature, community and God. This is a religious point of view, presenting being human as an ongoing project to be realised by living the fundamental relations. Nature, fellow human beings and God are seen in this religious point of view, as persons and fitting partners, not as objects that are thrown against (*objectum*), or standing against (*gegenstand*) my project of self-realisation. My existence is fundamentally co-existence and pro-existence. Wittgenstein's sketches on human subjectivity help us not only to reject the dualism of body and mind but also to treat person as 'a living human being' affirming our *being* in nature and *becoming* by nurture. We are not just natural beings; we are also formed by community and become persons through a dynamic process.

Beginning with Descartes, modern philosophy spoke of a self-conscious and autonomous thinking substance, independent of body and world. Modern Western society, to a large extent, rejects God and declares itself totally free and struggles to overcome limitations set by body, world and religion. In all these three fields – religion, philosophy and society – there is a persisting temptation to think of an autonomous self-conscious subject. Wittgenstein was indeed challenged and puzzled by the apparently mysterious and elusive nature of 'self'/'ego'/'I'. He struggled himself to clarify the confusions regarding the nature of self, both in his early and later philosophy. At the beginning of the *Blue Book*, he identified a source of 'philosophical bewilderment:' 'a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it.'³ Applied to problem of person, philosophers tend to ask 'What sort of entity is person?' and come up with a number of answers, which are far from our actual life. From a Wittgensteinian point of view, the task of philosophy, is to raise the questions 'How is the word 'person' used?' and 'What is the grammar of the word?' and to describe the grammar of the word that will provide us with a surveyable representation of the use of the word. A grammatical investigation of 'person' and related words would remind us of the obvious fact that persons are neither bodies nor bodiless selves, but beings with distinctive ways of life.

Human beings as individuals – complete in oneself and separate from others – would remain just as beings-in-the-world. Persons, however, are not merely beings-in-the-world but beings-together-with-others. Though we are born as natural beings, we become persons through nurture. Human babies are equipped with fewer instincts for survival compared with other

³Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, 1.

species in the animal kingdom and have long periods of infancy and maturation. Nurture comprises those aspects of human activity which are socially rather than genetically transmitted. In every significant event in human life, we could see the overlapping and criss-crossing of nature and nurture, individual and community. The making of a person and realising one’s self is a joint venture of nature, nurture and grace. We begin by sketching landscape for the relation between body and soul in a living human being.

2. The Person: Body-Soul Unity

Descartes rightly observed that ‘one can perfectly well engage in first-person thinking even though one is not in a position to keep track of oneself as a physical object.’⁴ From the observation that ‘I could suppose I had no body,’ ‘but not that I was not,’ he, however, postulated an ego that owns and controls the body. To say that a human being has such-and-such a sort of body is not to imply that the person is a thinking thing that owns the body. Descartes, who argued for such a view, admitted that the soul is not merely present in the body as a sailor is present in a ship, but rather very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that soul and the body form a unit.⁵ They are two separate entities and it is the ‘thinking thing’ that owns and controls the body and their unity is contingent. To hold that ‘the ego is mental’⁶ is to place oneself in a long tradition starting from Plato of isolating the spiritual from the physical.

Wittgenstein argued that to say that ‘a human being is not a body,’ does not necessarily imply that some new entity besides body, namely, the ego, has been discovered.⁷ It is equally true that a human being is not identical with ego or some other entity – a mind, soul, spirit or will. As I cannot identify my self with my body, I cannot do so with my mind. A human being is neither a body nor a mind. A human being, however, is not without a mind or a body. It is true that we do not assign psychological predicates to the body and its parts, but we cannot ascribe them to the mind either. Otherwise it would be the mind that sees, smells, feels, thinks, desires, decides, etc. This is a difficult situation, because we want to say:

⁴Campbell, J. *Past, Space and Self*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, 90.

⁵Descartes, Sixth Meditation.

⁶Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, 73.

⁷Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein’s Lectures, Cambridge 1932-35: From the Notes of Alice Ambrose and Margaret Macdonald*, A. Ambrose, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, 60.

‘it cannot be a ‘nothing’.’ To avoid this embarrassment, ‘I presuppose the inner in so far as I presuppose a human being.’⁸ In the very next sentence, however, Wittgenstein remarks: ‘The ‘inner’ is a delusion. That is: the whole complex of ideas alluded to by this word is like a painted curtain drawn in front of the scene of the actual word use.’ The ‘inner’ is a delusion, if we think it is something similar to other physical objects that can be located, named, described and defined. It is also not like the inside of something, a box, for example, or something like an inner room or inner cave. This is not a denial of ‘inner;’ it means the inner cannot be spoken of in the language of object and designation. The inner corresponds to human subjectivity.

According to Wittgenstein, the assumption of the ego as an independent entity results from philosophical confusions. When we are forced to recognise that the word ‘I’ is not used, in some important occasions, to designate a body, we look for an immaterial one. ‘Where our language suggests a body and there is none: there, we should like to say, is a spirit.’⁹ This is because of the bewitching power of the picture of the language in which words always name objects. According to this picture, the meaning of a word is always the object for which the word stands. If body is not a proper object for self, we feel forced to posit an immaterial substance – the real ego. In his view, ‘to say that the ego is mental is like saying that the number 3 is of a mental or an immaterial nature, when we recognize that the numeral “3” isn’t used as a sign for a physical object.’¹⁰ What we need to do is to remind ourselves the fact that ‘inner’ is not a name of a material or immaterial object. That is not denying the reality of the inner. What is resisted is our temptation to treat it as a material or ethereal object. We should remind ourselves that the inner is not bodily; ‘inner’ does not refer to something in the way ‘body’ refers to body. It is not the inner that is deluding; it is to assume the inner as an object, material or ethereal, that is the delusion. ‘There are inner and outer concepts, inner and outer ways of looking at human beings. Indeed there are also inner and outer facts – just as there are for example physical and mathematical facts. But they do not stand to each other like plants of

⁸Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, ed., G. H. Von Wright, and Heikki Nyman, trans., C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue, London: Basil Blackwell, 1990, 84.

⁹Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953, 39.

¹⁰Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, 73.

different species.’¹¹ They relate to each other in a variety of ways in the stream of our life and thought. According to Wittgenstein, ‘The inner is tied up with the outer not only empirically, but also logically.’¹² Wittgenstein is realist about the inner; but we should not see it as an object similar to a material object. Wittgenstein does not assume that all that is real is empirical. According to him, ‘Not empiricism and yet realism in philosophy, that is the hardest thing’.¹³ In his famous example of shopping for ‘five red apples,’ he has shown that we use words differently. ‘Five’, ‘red’ and ‘apple’ are meaningful words and they are used differently in our language and life. ‘Body’ and ‘soul’ are used differently.

To see the empirical as well as logical inter-relations of ‘body’ and ‘soul,’ we have to examine how these words and other similar words are used in our actual language use. Following Wittgenstein, instead of searching for a Merkmal-definition of ‘soul/mind/will,’ we should better raise the question: ‘How is the word ‘soul/mind/will’ used?’ As with the use of ‘my body,’ the expression ‘my mind/soul/will’ points to a distinction between ‘soul/mind/will’ and the possessor. We want to draw attention to the fact that it is not the soul that perceives, thinks, remembers, loves, wills, believes, etc.; it is the human being who is the subject of these predicates. It is wrong to give a pre-eminence to the soul. Wittgenstein does not want to treat ‘the head and heart as loci of the soul.’¹⁴ ‘What sort of entity is the ‘inner’?’ like ‘What sort of entity is a number?’ can only be answered insisting that the ‘inner,’ like a number, is not an entity of a sort; neither empirical nor metaphysical, neither bodily nor spiritual. But it is not a ‘nothing’ either. It is not just a matter of opinion that a living human has a soul (mind/spirit/will).¹⁵ That a living human being has a soul is my fundamental attitude in dealing with living human beings. It is not, however, something about which we can talk in the language of physical things. The inner confers a kind of unity to the living human being that is categorically different from the unity conferred by the body. It is a unity that is captured especially from within, from the first-person perspective. According to Luntley, ‘having a mind involves having a point of view

¹¹Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, 63.

¹²Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, 63.

¹³Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees, G. E. M. Anscombe, eds., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978, 325.

¹⁴Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, R. Rhees, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974, 106.

¹⁵Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 178.

upon the world in the sense that it involves experiencing the world in a certain way.’¹⁶ The subject’s point of view, though not expressible in the language of empirical sciences, is something very important to our life as human beings.

We use ‘mind,’ ‘soul,’ ‘spirit,’ ‘reason,’ ‘will,’ etc., to refer to what we indicate by human subjectivity. If we look and see at all these terms and their use what we observe is ‘a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.’ There is no single property (or a sum of properties) like a fibre that runs through the whole length of the thread, on the part of all and only phenomena so called but only overlapping of many fibres. A grammatical investigation gives a description of the various uses of these words clarifying the existence and nature of the inner. It is used in our language as a principle to unite all the mental, rational and spiritual characteristics, something characteristic of human beings. Though we can make sense of the demonstrative ‘this body,’ we cannot make sense of ‘this mind (soul/spirit/will).’ We could only say, ‘I meant my mind, but could only point to it via my body.’¹⁷

Human beings as a rule are recognized by the appearance of their bodies. The characteristics of a human body do change, but gradually and within a recognizable range. ‘We are inclined to use personal names in the way we do, only as a consequence of these facts.’ ‘If facts were different,’ for example, ‘all human bodies which exist looked alike’ or ‘the shape, size and characteristics of behaviour periodically undergo a complete change,’ then the use of names would also change. Thus the use of the concept of a person depends on certain contingent facts. This, as far as philosophy is concerned, should be treated not only as an empirical fact but also as a logical fact; for ‘The inner is tied up with the outer logically, and not just empirically.’¹⁸

I can talk about myself and in this regard sometimes I do talk about my body, which is a material thing that can be identified and described like other material bodies in physical terms. Accordingly, I ascribe myself material characteristics like height, weight, colour and my body is just like and part of the world among others, among beasts, plants, stones, etc. A body, including my body, has some shape and occupies some space excluding other bodies. It

¹⁶Luntley, M. *Reason, Truth and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned*, London, New York: Routledge, 1995, 57.

¹⁷Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, 66.

¹⁸Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, 64.

could be perceived by the senses and could be moved to occupy other spaces. It could be picked out, identified, labelled and described like any other material thing. There are, however, important differences between material bodies and living bodies and between plants and animals and more importantly for our purpose between animals and human beings. ‘Our attitude to what is alive and what is dead is not the same. All our reactions are different. – If anyone says: “That cannot simply come from the fact that the living move about in such-and-such a way and a dead one not,” then I want to intimate to him that this is a case of the transition ‘from quantity to quality’.’¹⁹ This is a fundamental attitude.

Applied to human beings, ‘having a body’ is grammatically distinct from ‘being a body’ though we use both ‘I have a body’ and ‘I am a body.’ The distinctions with regard to the use of ‘having’ and ‘being’ with regard to ‘body,’ ‘soul,’ ‘mind,’ ‘will,’ etc. in relation to ‘human being’ are blurred. These expressions with ‘having’ are not anything like a human being owning something. I have two hands and they are part of my body; but my body and mind are not part of anything. I do have a special relation to my body. It is uniquely mine, not just like having land or other properties. Human beings are not, however, identical with their bodies. Though I am bodily, I am not my body. ‘We can’t substitute for “I” a description of a body.’²⁰ It cannot be used without a body either. Even mental and spiritual properties are expressed in and through the body. Although a human body reacts to a great variety of stimuli, even when I am asleep or unconscious, it is not the bearer of the sensations, moods, thoughts and so on. ‘I’ is not used here ‘because we recognize a particular person by his bodily characteristics,’²¹ a feature particularly obvious in first-person experiential propositions. We don’t say ‘Now I feel much better: the feeling in my facial muscles and round about the corners of my mouth is good.’²² When I say, ‘I feel much better’ others understand me from the context and from the tone of my voice, expression in my face, and other fine shades of behaviour. ‘It is always presupposed that the person who smiles is human, and not just that what smiles is a human body.’²³ The smile is expressed on the face and we can have a smile only on a human face and we cannot separate the smile from the face.

¹⁹Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 284.

²⁰Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, 74.

²¹Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, 69.

²²Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. I, G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, eds., Oxford: Blackwell, 1980, 454.

²³Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on The Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, 84.

We cannot separate the soul from the body: “I noticed that he was out of humour.” Is this a report about his behaviour or his state of mind? (“The sky looks threatening”: is this about the present or the future?) Both; not side-by-side, however, but about the one via the other.’²⁴ The body is the medium by which the presence of the soul is brought about. It is in and through our bodies that we are present to the world and to fellow human beings and relate to them and live in collaboration and conversation. It is to be remembered, not just as an empirical fact but also as a logical fact, that ‘human being’ does not mean the same as ‘this body,’ although it ‘only has meaning with reference to a body.’²⁵ We cannot drive a wedge between the body that expresses an idea of human action, and the body that is the subject matter of the idea of action, because it is part of the sense of human action that utterer and subject should be one and the same.²⁶ It is in this spirit we can understand his remark: ‘The human body is the best picture of the human soul.’²⁷

A picture of body can correspond to an idea (*Vorstellung*) of soul. We cannot have pictures of soul. A picture of body can, however, correspond to a *Vorstellung* of a soul. We look at photographs and portraits and see human beings not just bodies. We see the expression of soul in a face and in the bodily posture. We see happy, sad, serious, and fearful persons not just pictures of bodies. However, the picture itself is not soul nor does it stand equivalent to the word ‘soul.’ Words and pictures are used to represent imaginatively the soul; they are not soul(s). An idea of soul is not a picture of a soul, nor a picture of a body, nor the word ‘soul.’ It is not replaceable in the language-game by anything that we should call a picture. The idea of soul certainly enters into the language-game in a sense; only not as a picture.²⁸ The word ‘soul’ cannot mean what it does by way of a picture qua picture: there cannot be a picture of soul; however, pictures can correspond to it. The idea of soul represents something for which there cannot be a picture; yet we typically use

²⁴Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, p. 179.

²⁵Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein’s Lectures, Cambridge 1932-35*, 62.

²⁶Kenny, A. *The Legacy of Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984, 87.

²⁷Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, part II, 178.

²⁸‘The image of pain is not a picture and this image is not replaceable in the language-game by anything that we should call a picture. – The image of pain certainly enters into the language game in a sense; only not as a picture.’ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 300. The meaning would be clearer if *Vorstellung* is translated as idea or concept rather than image.

pictures in our talking about soul. This is true also about what we say regarding ‘mind,’ ‘spirit,’ ‘will,’ ‘inner,’ etc. with necessary changes depending on the context. They are all pictured using pictures of body. ‘Body’ and ‘soul’ are, thus, used to speak about human beings. The expressions regarding body are interwoven with expressions regarding mind, soul, spirit, reason, will, etc. They do not stand for separate parts of the human person, but for the whole human being considered from different perspectives. All of them are interwoven to give a synoptic view of human beings.

At a certain stage in his pervasive and persistent attempts in clarifying the concepts regarding the human subject, Wittgenstein made the following illuminating remark: ‘It comes to this: only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious.’²⁹ From an empirical point of view, it is merely a description, a common sense report. It is revealing, however, from a philosophical point of view; it puts an end to our struggles to decide between body and soul, matter and spirit as the essence of human being. The category of human being is drawn here as fundamental to our language-game; the basis of all our talk on human beings. Human being is what it is and is neither to be reduced to some other thing like body, mind, soul, spirit, reason, will, etc., though they are used in relation to the concept of ‘human being,’ nor is it a compound of such entities. We do speak of body, soul, mind, will, reason, spirit, etc., but we should not forget at any stage that we are speaking about human body, human soul, human mind, etc., and that the subject is always a living human being.

Human beings are neither bodies nor bodiless selves, but beings with distinctive psychophysical characteristics. The use of ‘living human being,’ as Evans observed, ‘simply spans the gap between the mental and the physical, and is no more intimately connected with one aspect of our self-conception than the other.’³⁰ It is primitive in the sense that it is not an ‘abstraction’ from or a ‘fiction’ constructed out of other basic concepts. It is not to be analysed in terms of body or soul nor as that of an animated body or of an embodied anima. A human being is no more a thinking substance than a bodily thing. He/she is a living creature that perceives its environment, and responds in various ways with its own goals and purposes. In their responses to the environment human beings are creative to such an extent that they make the

²⁹Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 281.

³⁰Evans, G. *The Varieties of Reference*, J. McDowell, ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, 256.

given world, a human world. To conceive them simply as automatons is not intelligible. A living human being is an embodied subject with active and passive bodily and spiritual (rational, emotional, volitional, etc.) powers and is substantially and creatively present in the world. We live, move and have our being in the world.

A human being cannot be reduced to ‘body,’ ‘mind,’ ‘soul,’ ‘reason’ or ‘will’ or a combination of all these or some of them. I may be proud or ashamed of myself without being proud or ashamed of my body or mind. I may hurt my foot, but it is I who suffer, not my foot. My foot may hurt, but it does not hurt itself; it hurts me and it is I who have hurt myself. I may be conscious of a sharp pain in my foot, but my head is neither conscious nor unconscious of it. ‘It is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat, the part that hurts when someone else is in pain’³¹ and, ‘if someone has a pain in his hand, then the hand does not say so . . . and one does not comfort the hand, but the sufferer: one looks into his face.’³² It is human beings, not their bodily organs like eyes, ears, hearts, and brains that behave. A person sees with his eyes, and listens with his ears but eyes do not see nor do the ears hear. It is not like writing with a pen. Hearts beat and pump blood, but they do not fall in or out of love; it is human beings who love and take care. Emotions are exhibited in human face, tone of voice, bodily responses, and in other fine shades of behaviour. It is the human being who expresses thoughts, opinions, and beliefs in utterances and manifests them in deeds. Therefore, ‘Instead of “attitude toward the soul” one could also say “attitude toward a human.”’³³

What we learn from these investigations is that the concept of person is to be treated as something fundamental. It can neither be reduced to bodily or mental characteristics nor be seen as a product of body and something else. Human being is a fundamental concept. There are no metaphysical definitions for human being and our inability to produce definitions or sufficient and necessary conditions or criteria for human subject is not ignorance. Nor is it the result of the depth or mystery of the topic; it is just a matter of the primitiveness and irreducibility of the concept of a ‘living human being.’³⁴ We agree in our judgements regarding human beings and our attitude to human beings is different from our attitudes to other objects, living and non-living.

³¹Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, eds., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967, 540.

³²Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 286.

³³Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, 38.

³⁴McGinn, *The Character of Mind*, Oxford: University Press, 1999, 146.

In all the sketches on self, person, I, body, mind, soul, will, consciousness, etc., we are to take into account the concept of living human being as fundamental. It is only in relation to such terms that human subjectivity can be expressed. Also those terms have their currency only in relation to ‘human beings.’ We can rightly use ‘body,’ ‘mind,’ ‘soul,’ ‘will,’ ‘reason,’ etc., with regard to human beings. We note the similarities and differences in the use of these words and understand their meanings in their contexts. ‘What goes on within also has meaning only in the stream of life.’³⁵ Care is to be taken, however, not to reduce human subjectivity into any one or a definite grouping of them. We also look and see how these words and other related expressions are interwoven to give the fabric of human subjectivity. As Wittgenstein observed, ‘... one pattern in the weave is interwoven with many others’³⁶ and one has to see them in the context of the ‘weave of our life.’³⁷

The identity and continuity through time of a ‘living human being’ is intelligible in the context of human life, and it is just that continuity which allows us to talk about human beings, rather than just about points of views, pointilliste scatter of thoughts and random sequences of experiences. ‘Prima facie, such continuity does not need anything underlying it of a mysterious and indefinable nature, any more than the continuity of a physical object needs to be thus supported.’³⁸ A living human being is not just a bundle of perceptions or a collection of points of views or a host of relations. He/she is living, dynamic and creative, and at the same time subject to bounds and bonds. The nature of such bonds and bounds to world, community and God will be made clear in the coming sections. It is the project of the thesis to present living human beings as rooted in and acting on the world, formed by and extended to the community and dependent on and oriented to God. At this stage I conclude with Evans, ‘All the peculiarities we have noticed about ‘I’-thoughts are consistent with and indeed, at points encourage, the idea that there is a living human being which those thoughts concern.’³⁹ The human being is indeed the best picture of human subjectivity. If someone insists on asking ‘What is self?’ we can simply answer, ‘a living human being.’ By nature we are human beings endowed with body and mind, reason and will,

³⁵Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on The Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, 30.

³⁶Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, 569.

³⁷Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, 174.

³⁸Madell, *The Identity of the Self*, Edinburgh: The University Press, 1981, 10.

³⁹Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, 256.

feelings and passions. How we develop them and become fully human depends on our nature as well as nurture. Being human is a joint venture of nature and nurture – that I present in the next section.

3. The Person: Product and Project of Nature and Community

As human persons are no more thinking substances than bodily things, they are no more natural beings than social beings. They are living creatures that perceive their environment, and respond in various ways with their goals and purposes. In their responses to the environment human beings are creative to such an extent that they make the given world, a human world. To conceive them simply as automatons and natural beings is not intelligible. Human persons are embodied subjects with active and passive bodily and spiritual (rational, emotional, volitional, etc.) powers and are substantially and creatively present in the world. We live, move and have our being in the world, both in the natural and the social world. Care is to be taken, however, not to reduce a person into either nature or society. One pattern in the weave is interwoven with many others and one has to see them in the context of the weave of our life. The conceptual clarification on nature and community throw light on who we are and how we live in conversation and collaboration with fellow human beings. As natural beings ‘the world is my world;’ as social beings, however, ‘the world is our world.’ By living in the world, we transform the world and make it a human world. Nature and community are not contraries nor do they stand at opposite poles. They are related to each other not just empirically but logically. ‘The motto here’, following Wittgenstein, ‘is always: Take a wider look round.’⁴⁰

The roles of nature and community are to be seen from the point of view of being person without reducing one to the other. It is equally wrong to deny the role of community in an attempt to secure the place of individuals or to present individuals as gifts of community. Human existence is coexistence and pro-existence giving due importance both to the individual and to the society. Persons are substantially present in the world, as subjects, engaging both with other subjects and objects in the world. It is tempting to think that a human being first exists in nature and, then, for the sake of growth and development, enters into all kinds of social contacts with others in the cultural world. Being in relation with others is, then, seen as something consequent and contingent – an important addition – to being an individual. Such an approach tends to speak of *der Mensch* – an individual complete in

⁴⁰Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 127.

itself and separate from others. It is true that living human beings, like other animals, interact directly in a physico-biological way within the spatio-temporal environment; but they live, move and have their beings as persons in the social world.

Human subjectivity is shown in the spatio-temporal world through one’s substantial and creative presence and engagement with objects in the world. One is to be reminded, however, of the obvious fact that persons are not just natural beings. Persons are social beings who live in collaboration and conversation with other human beings in an inter-subjective world. This is not just something additional and consequent, but something constitutive and existential of being human. One has to see the fundamental similarities and differences in our engagement with things and other living human beings. Both of them constitute and shape our streams of life. This is not merely an empirical fact, but a conceptual fact that shapes the framework of a philosophical anthropology. Persons are not only rooted in the world of things but also formed by and extended to the world of persons. Being person is a joint venture of nature and community in which nurture plays a substantial role.

Persons are not just bundles of perceptions or collections of points of views or hosts of relations. They are living, dynamic and creative, and at the same time subject to bounds and bonds to world, community and God. Persons are rooted in and acting on the world, formed by and extended to the community and dependent on and oriented to God. By nature, we are human beings endowed with body and mind, reason and will, feelings and passions. How we develop them and become persons depend on our nature as well as community. A living human being is substantially present in the world in collaboration and conversation with fellow human beings. It is a dynamic and creative process of being person and becoming fully human, realising our potentialities. A person is not just present in the natural world in direct interaction with other objects in the world, but also in a community, where being and becoming fully human depend on interaction with fellow human beings. The notion of becoming fully human, does not mean that there are degrees of more or less in human beings. None of the human beings are less than human beings, even if some of the physical or mental faculties are not fully developed. What the notion of ‘fully’ picks up is that we are not just born; we are formed and we become; we are not merely finished products but continuous projects. There is a creative process in being human which is not completed by birth. It is a fundamental fact that we belong to a community; it is not just a homely

reminder of an empirical fact but a logical fact that functions as a basic presupposition in the way we live, move and have our being. It is an existentially fundamental fact of life that is given showing who we are and how we live in our forms of life.

It is an obvious fact of life that naturally we belong to a community and thereby to a culture. Belonging to a community does not necessarily mean that persons are always surrounded by other human beings. Even when persons are physically isolated they have fundamental openness and belongingness to other human beings. This is not something that to be argued in a theoretical way; it is something to look and see. We belong to a community in our characteristic ways of being human. A person in being present to the world naturally is present also to other human beings socially. Being present to others is characteristically different from being present to objects and this capacity is of enormous significance in the growth and development of a human being – on being a person. According to Archer,

it is just as ineluctable that we have subject/subject relationships in the social realm as that we had subject/object relations in the practical world and bodily/environmental relations in the nature. The three together make up the human condition; they stem from our human nature and we would not be recognisably human in the absence of any of them.⁴¹

Limiting our engagements to the natural world of things significantly alters the character of our being persons.

We could describe a person 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, is not what one man is doing now, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action.⁴²

Our ways of being person involves fellow human beings. This is a conceptual point (not merely an empirical fact) that picks up the fact that we belong to a community. Here the question is also not on the theoretical possibility of a human life without any possible or actual contact with other human beings but on our characteristic ways of being person. Our investigations on person must look and see how persons actually live, move and have their being rather than building-up fantastic theories about language, thought and content in

⁴¹Archer, *Being Human: the Problem of Agency*, Cambridge: University Press, 2000, 215.

⁴²Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, 567.

abstraction. Life in its variety and complexity is the conceptual framework of anything that is significantly human.

A lot of stage-setting is presupposed for life as a person, including a shareable human nature and the uniformity of the nature of the world in which we live, move and have our being. This is what I learn from Wittgenstein when he uses expressions like ‘stream,’ ‘weave,’ ‘web,’ ‘form,’ ‘hurly-burly’ and ‘bustle’ of life. They make up not just the empirical but also the conceptual background against which a conceptual clarification on person is possible. According to Wittgenstein, ‘Seeing life as a weave ... where one pattern is not always complete and is varied in a multiplicity of ways ... and is interwoven with many others.’⁴³ The necessary stability of our lives is provided by the interweaving of the many patterns rather than by any one single pattern. If one were to take away the surrounding contexts and the patterns in the weave, the web of collaboration and conversation, only empty marks, noises and movements would remain. Our common ways of acting, speaking and experiencing are the patterns in the weave of life. There is a certain regularity in the way persons are and the way the world is. How persons interact with the objects in the world give rise to similar sensations. When cold, we extend our hands towards the fire, but excessive heat lead us to withdraw them, and ‘it is upon these prior physiological signifiers that our language of feelings is built and our emotional expressiveness is born.’⁴⁴ It is upon nature that community builds up and it is nurture that brings individuals to the realm of person.

In learning language, for example, we do not merely learn the pronunciation, spelling and syntax of words, but the forms of life which make those sounds and ink marks the words they are, play their role in the respective language-games – asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying, etc.⁴⁵ We learn words and we use them in various life situations as we move on. Wittgenstein rightly points out that we are given lessons neither in introspection nor in ostensive definition to use the word ‘pain.’ Instead, we learn words in certain contexts and those words have a function in the weave of life and the patterns are varied and interconnected. Similarly, we judge an action according to its background within the ‘bustle of life.’ This background is not ‘monochrome,’ but ‘a very complicated filigree pattern,’

⁴³Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, 568, 569.

⁴⁴Archer, *Being Human: the Problem of Agency*, 155.

⁴⁵Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Scepticism, Morality and Tragedy*, Oxford: University Press, 1999, 177.

with a rich variety and a certain indefiniteness. It would be artificial to draw a conceptual boundary line where there is not some special justification for it.⁴⁶ Through repeated uses children are taught the use of the word ‘pain.’ The children also learn the similarities and differences with regard to physical pain, mental pain, pain at the suffering/death of a loved one, etc. They also learn about the similarities and differences among the use of words ‘you,’ ‘I,’ ‘he,’ ‘she,’ ‘they,’ etc. What they learn is not the sum total of what was taught. They understand that one does not speak univocally, but analogically in these occasions. In Wittgensteinian terms, the children learn that ‘This and similar things are called ‘pain’ and that ‘you,’ ‘I,’ ‘he,’ ‘she,’ ‘they,’ etc. are used to speak about human beings.’ He sees connexions and judges accordingly. According to Cavell, ‘Persons who cannot use words, or gestures, in these ways with you may yet be in your world, but perhaps not of your flesh.’⁴⁷ They have different nature, nurture and culture. ‘We cannot find our feet with them,’⁴⁸ Wittgenstein would say.

4. The Person: Product and Project of Grace

Persons are not only product and project of nature and community, but also product and project of grace. By faith, I am a Christian and by culture, I am an Indian.⁴⁹ Being a Christian and being an Indian are fundamental dimensions of my life. They provide the system of co-ordinates that make me who I am. I see myself as a product of nature and nurture sustained by God and the project of my life is to work in the world, build up the community and walk toward God freely and faithfully. There are indispensable personal and communitarian, natural and cultural dimensions. Though born into a culture and nurtured accordingly, I have to live critically and creatively my life as a person. All those who nurtured me – parents, sisters, brothers, priests, nuns, teachers and friends – can only show the way, I have to walk on my feet. It is not primarily a question of understanding the meaning of life but living accordingly. I see religious significance in my life in the world and my religious point of view gives meaning to my life and shapes the stream of my life, my way

⁴⁶Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman, eds., Oxford: Blackwell, 1980, 624-628.

⁴⁷Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 189.

⁴⁸*Wir können uns nicht in sie finden* literally means we cannot find us in them. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, part II, 223.

⁴⁹Being an Indian or a Christian are also polychrome perspectives; a number of fibres interweave to provide an *übersicht* of Indian or Christian.

of being fully human. Living in contact with God makes me strong and helps me to realise my potentialities more fully.

It is part of my philosophical vision sustained by faith that Jesus Christ, by his death on the cross, transformed the cross, a torture instrument, into the source of life and now I see my threefold relationship with God, community and the world in the symbol of a cross. I am rooted in nature, formed by nurture and sustained by God; positively I act upon the world, build up the community and move towards God. From a Wittgensteinian point of view, this is the picture by which I live, move and have my being. This picture (the symbol of the cross and its symbolic meaning) is constantly before me, influences my decisions and forms the stream of my life. My being human is described in terms of these fundamental existential relations. The symbol of Christianity thus becomes the symbol of my self-realisation.

From the Indian point of view, this is both *atmavidya* (self knowledge) and *atmasakshatkara* (self realisation). This vision of life I find expressed in the Vedic concept of *ṛta*, denoting the harmonious inter-relationship between gods, humans and nature. All these three are equally co-responsible to safeguard and keep up the *ṛtas* in other realms. Humans protect and nourish the animal and plant worlds, these in turn produce sustenance for people; people offer these things in sacrifice to gods, and gods in turn protect the other two realities. None of these three entities, according to the Vedic vision, is superior or inferior to another in the triad. Only the unified and goal oriented involvement and activities of these three guarantee the universal harmony. Maintaining and promoting the *rta* thus becomes my *dharma* (duty, religion).

I see myself at the meeting point of the horizontal and vertical bars of the cross. The lower part of the vertical bar shows my rootedness in nature. I depend on the nature for my being and becoming. I live by the fruits of nature. According to one Biblical tradition the first human being is created from the earth. The name of the first man, Adam is related to the Hebrew word for ground, *adamah*. According to the Book of *Genesis*, God formed Adam from *adamah* (2.7) and placed him on *adamah* ‘to work on it and take care of it’ (2.15). Though I am from the nature, live by the fruits of nature and when I die, return to it, I carry within me the breath of God; that’s what makes me a living human being (2.7). That indicates that I am not merely a product of nature and that I should never be a slave to the material world; rather I should master it and live on it according to God’s plan. I have a certain power over my life on earth. At this level of nature,

ṛta points to the fundamental and intrinsic law of nature: the powers of nature – the elements, the heavenly bodies like sun, moon and stars – function in an orderly manner; the seasons of the year appear in the appointed time and manner. All these together with the human beings contribute to the cosmic harmony. The law and order, which is also called *ṛta*, in the agricultural activities in tune with the recurring seasons of the year. There is an inner law and dynamism in the earth, in the process of cultivation, in the seeds and plants, and in the growth and fruit bearing of the plants. If there is a harmonious blending of all these elements, the harvest is abundant, which in turn gladdens the lives of the people. This is the ontological extension of *ṛta* in the daily life and activities of humans. *Ṛta* here alludes to two things: it is the inner dynamism and equilibrium which are intrinsic to the powers of nature; and it is also the harmonious way of manifestations of these cosmic powers, and effects of these powers in nature. From the Christian point of view, my relationship to nature is that of creative stewardship. It is given to me to realise myself and to work on it, to maintain and to develop. I work on nature and transform it for my well-being, for the benefit of others and for the glory of God.

The upper part of the cross symbolises my dependence on and orientation to God. I totally depend on God for my being and becoming. I see myself as a creature, servant and child. Absolute obedience in faith is required of me. God decides what is good and bad; I have to follow it and live according to His commands. That's the purpose of my life: In Him I live, move and have my being. When I try to make my life independent of and against the will of God, I am moving away from the purpose of my life; I am committing a sin. Sin is, according to this view, a futile attempt at self-realisation without reference to God and fellow human beings. As I turn away from God, I distort the harmony (*ṛta*) of my relationship to nature and to fellow human beings. In the Biblical story of the first sin, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and hid from him; they turned against each other and the work on the ground became hard and the earth produced only thorns and thistles. Instead of bringing blessings on one another and on earth, they brought curses. The cross by restoring those relations brings back, once again, the blessings on humankind and on nature.

The horizontal bar of the cross shows my solidarity and friendship with my fellow human beings. According to the Biblical story in the book of Genesis, the second human being, Eve is formed from the body of the first human being, Adam. When God brought Eve before Adam, he said: 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called

woman, for she was taken out of man’ (2.23). God created Eve as a suitable helper and fitting partner for Adam. They are equal in dignity and mutually support each other to live in harmony on earth bringing blessings on the world for the Glory of God. Because God is the Father of all human beings and I am one of his children, all others are my sisters and brothers. I am formed by nurture and contribute to the well-being of the community. It becomes my religious duty to love and care for them – especially those who are in need, materially, emotionally and spiritually. When I move away from this religious duty, I am turning against both God and my fellow human beings. This would distort God’s image in me and I move away from God bringing curses rather than blessing on myself, others and on the world. Ideally, I receive blessings from God and become a blessing to others on earth. I become what I am through my substantial and creative presence in the world, as a product and project of nature, nurture and culture, sustained by God.

5. Conclusion

Since from a Wittgensteinian point of view, working in philosophy is working on oneself, ‘On how one sees things,’⁵⁰ I have presented how I see my life as a person. Nature and society are partners in the project of *atmasakshatkara*, which cannot be realised without nurture and grace of God. From a Christian point of view, it is the grace of God that designed this project and makes *atmaskshatkara* a possible reality. The picture of *atmasakshatkara*, that I have sketched in this paper is a joint venture of nature and society and gets its final sanction in my relation with God. I believe, together with Wittgenstein, that a human being who is in relation to God is more complete.⁵¹

What is emphasised here is the logical point that a person’s relation to the body, mind, nature, community and God belong to different language-games and they interweave to give meaning to the life of a person in the web of life. Belonging to a community is part of becoming person. Though to become fully human one need not necessarily be surrounded by others, a person must be open to others; one cannot remain a private individual. Here, care is taken not to reduce the individual into a community or to separate the individual from nature and community. The

⁵⁰Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, G. H. von Wright, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998, 24.

⁵¹*Ein Wesen, das mit Gott Verbindung steht, ist Stark.* Wittgenstein, *Nachlass*, MS 183.56, CD Version.

person is not just a living body or a bundle of perceptions, thoughts or judgements but is a living human being actively and creatively engaging in varying relations with God, community and world. The world becomes a human world, rather than a biological environment. ‘The world as I found it’⁵² is ‘the world I live in’ in conversation and collaboration with other persons. From a religious point of view, I live in ‘God’s world,’ the handwork of God, and it is given to me to realise my potentialities – to become fully human and to have life in its fullness together with other persons. From this religious point of view, a person is rooted and acting in the world, formed by and extended to the community, and sustained by and oriented to God.

⁵²Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, C. K. Ogden, trans., London: Routledge, 1922, 5.631.