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LANGUAGE AND TRUTH OF AESTHETICAL AND ETHICAL PRACTICES
Philosophical Explorations after Wittgenstein

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1. Introduction

Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (TLP)[1] remarked, "It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Aesthetics and Ethics are one and the same)" (6.421). Aesthetics and ethics are one and the same because they cannot be put into words as they are not concerning contingent matters of fact; they concern matters which cannot be otherwise. The logic of aesthetical and ethical discourses is different from that of the propositions of natural science. Like logic and unlike science, aesthetics and ethics are not discourses on contingent matters of fact and cannot be expressed in bipolar propositions. According to this view, there cannot be any truth value in the discourses on ethics and aesthetics as "The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science" (TLP 4.11). Wittgenstein famously summed up his early philosophy in the *Tractatus*: "What can be said at all can be said clearly and what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (Preface). Aesthetics and Ethics are included among the subjects that could not be said clearly and therefore must be passed over in silence. This looks like just the opposite of what we generally agree and practice. There are aesthetic and ethical discourses and they are fundamental to human forms of living. Wittgenstein also admitted that "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical" (TLP 6.522). The mystical would include all that is beyond what is the case and what cannot be given in propositions of natural science – aesthetics, ethics, philosophy, religion, etc.

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[1]Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, C. K. Ogden, trans., London: Routledge, 1922. The abbreviation TLP is used for references in the text.

Our everyday life experiences resist theoretical discourses. For example, Wittgenstein wrote: "Describe the aroma of coffee. – Why can't it be done? Do we lack the words? And for what are words lacking? – But how do we get the idea that such a description must after all be possible? Have you ever felt the lack of such a description? Have you tried to describe the aroma and not succeeded?" (PI 610).[2] Similar examples can be drawn from the world of literature and fine arts as well as from the world of ethics and religion. We are not able to describe the aesthetic and ethical sense of the discourses, though they are shown in the discourses and actions.

Though Wittgenstein began his *Lecture on Ethics* with Moore's view of Ethics, as "the general enquiry into what is good," he extended it further to include also "the most essential part of what is generally called Aesthetics." This shows again how he has interlinked philosophy, ethics and aesthetics in his logical and linguistic investigations. According to him, instead of saying 'Ethics is the enquiry into what is good' he could have said "Ethics is the enquiry into what is valuable, or, into what is really important, or ... into the meaning of life, or into what makes life worth living, or into the right way of living. I believe if you look at all these phrases you will get a rough idea as to what it is that Ethics is concerned with" (LE 5).[3] All these phrases could give us also a rough idea as to what it is that Aesthetics is concerned with.

In this paper I shall explore the family resemblance between aesthetics and ethics through a study of Wittgenstein's remarks on aesthetical and ethical discourses, judgements and practices. He rejects the craving for analytic definition of aesthetic and ethical terms such as "beautiful," "art," "good," "just," etc. and treats such terms as family-resemblance concepts. There are neither ostensive definitions nor a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of these terms. The uses of these terms are inter-related in variety of ways, with a "complicated network of overlapping similarities" (PI 65). This family resemblance is linguistic, conceptual and ontological. Wittgenstein's thoughts on aesthetics and ethics are interwoven with his philosophical investigations on language, logic, mathematics, rule following, mind, etc. They are also intimately connected with his life.

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[2]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953. The abbreviation PI is used in the text.

[3]Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics", *Philosophical Review* (1965), 3-12. The abbreviation LE is used for the references in the text.

2. Aesthetics and Ethics in the Life and Works of Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein had abiding interest in Ethics and Aesthetics philosophically as well as in his personal life. Wittgenstein was a talented artist in many fields of fine arts. He enjoyed music and had fine sense of music, performed Schubert songs, sculpted a bust of Drobil, designed a house for his sister, and helped generously artists of his time. His philosophical writings are also evidence for particular literary styles and his language is considered as one of the greatest in German philosophical prose. He gave great importance to the style and considered correct style as integral to philosophy and lamented that his style is not poetic enough.

The autobiographical notes, letters and conversations with friends reveal Wittgenstein's struggles with ethical life. He wrote to Russell: "Before everything else I must become pure."[4] When he made a detailed confession to Fania Pascal, she asked in exasperation, "What is it? You want to be perfect?" His reply was: "Of course I want to be perfect!"[5] "Call me a truth-seeker," he once wrote to his sister (who had, in a letter, called him a great philosopher), "and I will be satisfied."[6] In his continuous search for truth, he struggled himself like a monk to remain pure and perfect. He was convinced that he cannot be a philosopher unless he is a good human being.

His philosophical interests are intertwined with his interests in Aesthetics and Ethics. In October of 1931, he wrote a comment on the ethical dimension of his philosophising, showing parallel with his work as an architect in the late 1920s: "Work on philosophy – like work in architecture in many respects – is really more work on oneself. On one's own conception. On how one sees things. (And what one expects of them)" (CV 24).[7] He wrote to Ludwig von Ficker regarding *Tractatus* that the work is "strictly philosophical and at the same time literary." He also pointed out that "the point of the work is an ethical one."[8] Thus his work on the philosophical logic is at the same time, philosophical, ethical and

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[4]Malcolm, N. "Wittgenstein, Ludwig Josef Johann" in P. Edwards, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 8, New York: Macmillan, 1967, 328.

[5]Rhees, R., ed., *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984, 50.

[6]Monk, R. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, London: Vintage, 1991, 3.

[7]Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, G. H. von Wright, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998. The abbreviation CV is used in the text for references.

[8]Quoted in G. H. von Wright, *Wittgenstein*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1982, 81.

literary. In his writings, the literary remarks are intertwined with topics of the "ethical" and both belong to the "unsayable." He wrote: "In art it is hard to say anything, that is as good as: saying nothing" (CV 26). He concluded his *Lecture on Ethics*:

> My whole tendency and, I believe, the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it (LE 12).

This is true about aesthetic discourse and aesthetic judgement. What we say do not add to our knowledge; however, they are unique and fundamental tendencies in human life. "Really what I should like to say is that here too what is important is not the words you use or what you think while saying them, so much as the difference that they make at different points in your life" (CV 97). Aesthetics and Ethics give meaning and value to life and it is our lives that would give meaning and significance to our aesthetical and ethical discourse and judgement. Only in the stream of life do words and actions have meaning.

Wittgenstein thought that philosophy should be written poetically: "I think I summed up my attitude to philosophy when I said: philosophy ought really to be written as a form of poetic composition" (CV 24). The German text shows more clearly the relation between philosophy and poetry: philosophizing is poetizing.[9] He wrote later in the *Nachlass*: "the philosopher should be a poet" (120, 145r).[10] According to him, like the philosopher, "The poet too must always be asking himself: "is what I am writing really true then? – which does not necessarily mean: "is this how it happens in reality?""(CV 40). Philosophers and poets are committed to truths, but not the same as the empirical truths that are investigated by the scientists. He also confessed that he would have liked to be a poet but was not able to be one.

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[9]*Culture and Value* 24: *"Ich glaube meine Stellung zur Philosphie dadurch zusammengefaßt zu haben, indem ich sagte: Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur dichten*."

[10]Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

3. What Can Be "Said" and What Can Be "Shown"

The distinction between what can be "said" and what can be "shown," is a fundamental thought of the *Tractatus*. According to Wittgenstein, the purpose of the book is to *show* this distinction, as he wrote in the Preface:

> This book deals with the problems of philosophy and shows, as I believe, that the method of formulating these problems rests on the misunderstanding of the logic of our language. Its whole meaning could be summed up somewhat as follows: What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent. The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather – not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

According to Wittgenstein, the only meaningful language is the fact-stating language of the natural sciences and only they can be stated clearly. He began his work with the statement: "The world is all that is the case" (TLP 1) and concluded with: "Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent" (TLP7), implying that meaningful language must be limited to discourses about what is the case. This prescription, however, is impossible to maintain: "We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched" (TLP 6.52). There are no scientific answers for "problems of life;" they are better addressed in discourses on and practices of literature, ethics and religion. He wrote, "The use of the word "science" for "everything that can be meaningfully said" constitutes an "overrating of science" (Nachlass134, 145) and "The urge towards the mystical comes of the non-satisfaction of our wishes by science" (NB 51).[11] The urge towards aesthetical and ethical also comes from a fundamental non-satisfaction of the objective, verifiable and rational world of science. According to the scientific logic, "The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science" (TLP 4.11). Propositions are neatly divided into true or false; if a proposition cannot be classified either as true or false, it does not have cognitive value either. If something does not have truth value and cognitive value, it is nonsense and unsayable. Hence everything that does not belong to the scientific purview, including aesthetical and ethical, belongs to the realm of the unsayable.

[11]Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961. The abbreviation NB is used in the text for references.

It is characteristic of the scientific point of view to offer explanations in the form of theories or hypotheses for everything. A complete theoretical explanation which is objective, verifiable and universal is seen as the ideal, though often we satisfy with an inference to the best explanation. It is very difficult to be cured of the disease of wanting to explain (RFM 333),[12] partly because of the enormous success and influence of science and technology in our daily lives. Understanding seems to be identified with scientific explanation in terms of abstraction and theory formation. We become oblivious to other obvious forms of understanding in Aesthetics and Ethics where methods and rules of empirical explanations are not appropriate.

Aesthetic and ethical explanations are not causal explanations, as is the case generally with scientific explanation. Wittgenstein observed in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* that the puzzles arising from the effects the arts have are not puzzles about how these things are caused. They are not subject to verification by scientific experiments. The aesthetic and ethical value of an object or an action cannot be reduced to the psychological effect it has on people. Something is valuable aesthetically or ethically by their intrinsic values in relation to the forms of life (LC 11-18, 21).[13] As in the many fields of human experiences and practices, in Ethics and Aesthetics also we understand more than what we can express and we express more than what we can theoretically articulate and systematically explain. According to Wittgenstein, "Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness" (BB 18).[14] Philosophers who were put to sleep by the success of science[15]

[12]Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees, G. E. M. Anscombe, eds., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978. RFM is used as abbreviation in the text.

[13]Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, C. Barrett, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966. LC is used as abbreviation in the text.

[14]Wittgenstein, *The Blue and the Brown Books*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958. BB is used as abbreviation in the text.

[15]"In order to marvel human beings – and perhaps peoples – have to wake up. Science is a way of sending them off to sleep again" (CV 7).

happily see their roles as under-labourers to the master builders of science.[16]

According to Wittgenstein's point of view in the *Tractatus*, there is an important distinction between the world as the totality of facts, what can be said, on the one hand, and the mystical, what cannot be said but only shown, on the other. This also demarcates sense from nonsense. For those who are under the spell of the scientific point of view there is nothing to be silent about; what we can speak about is all that matters in life; the rest is neither true nor meaningful. Wittgenstein, however, did not share this scientific view of life. He remarked: "I may find scientific questions interesting, but they never really grip me. Only conceptual & aesthetic questions have that effect on me. At bottom it leaves me cold whether scientific problems are solved; but not those other questions" (CV 79). The aesthetic and ethical questions are of paramount interest for Wittgenstein. He lamented of the culture of the time which over-emphasised the role of science: "People nowadays think, scientists are there to instruct them, poets, musicians, etc. to entertain them. That the latter have something to teach them; that never occurs to them" (CV 36). For him, what matters in human life and gives value and meaning to life lay beyond the boundaries of scientific experiments and systematic language. For, we will not find values among the facts of the world, for everything is what it is. The world is 'all that is the case' and science addresses the question: what is the case and how things are. The sense of the world, what constitutes its value, must lie outside the world. It cannot be one more fact among the scientifically observable facts in the world. Aesthetics describes what seems to be the case and Ethics investigates what ought to be the case. Both of them have, of course, relations with what is the case; they are not limited to the latter, however. The truth and meaning of scientific discourses are intertwined with the truth and meaning of philosophical, aesthetical and ethical discourses and seeing these connections is important for various language games in the

[16]Locke wrote in "The Epistle to the Reader" in his classic work, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: "The commonwealth of learning is not at this time without master-builders, whose mighty designs, in advancing the sciences, will leave lasting monuments to the admiration of posterity; but everyone must not hope to be a Boyle or a Sydenham; and in an age that produces such masters as the great Huygenius and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain, it is ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge…"

complicated forms of life. Wittgenstein even while investigating the logic of an ideal language was sensitive to the great importance to what lies outside of the purview of science, which includes aesthetical and ethical, and to preserve it from the bewitchment of the sciences.

In the *Zettel*, to the observation by the interlocutor that ""Joy" surely designates an inward thing," Wittgenstein replied: "No. "Joy" designates nothing. Neither any inward nor any outward thing" (*Z* 487). "It is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either!" (*PI* 304). Aesthetics or Ethics is not an experience of something; but not a nothing either. Aesthetic and ethical discourses are not about what is the case; aesthetic and ethical judgements are not regarding how things are in the world, though such judgements can be made only in relation to what is the case. Though there is a distinction between what is the case and what seems to me the case, they are not separate. Aesthetic and ethical truths are different from empirical truths. What is the case can be judged in terms of true and false; what seems to me the case is of another category. This is also true about ethical judgments which are made on what is the case normatively on the basis of what ought to be the case. For example, the truth of the ethical prescription, "You should speak the truth," is different from "You should speak well." Aesthetical and ethical discourses have their own style; they are expressed in symbolic language with plurality of meanings rather than in conceptual language of uniform meaning. That does not mean that "You should speak the truth" means different things; it has plurality of applications and meaning is to be understood in use.

4. Practice: Key to Understand Aesthetics and Ethics after Wittgenstein

Following Wittgenstein, I would like to argue that like language, Aesthetics and Ethics are practices (refer PI 202). The notion of practice would clarify that the elements of objectivity, regularity and normativity are interwoven in Aesthetics and Ethics. They make sense only in the context of objective, regular and normative practices.

First of all, Ethics/Aesthetics is objective; there is a distinction between thinking that one is following ethical precepts and actually following them. Objectivity safeguards the distinction between seems/thinks so and is so. Though it is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, whatever seems aesthetical to me is aesthetical is not an acceptable position; this is all the more so in Ethics. Following ethical precepts and aesthetical guidelines is something that persons actually do, not merely something that seems so to the agents. It is only in the actual

practice that Ethics/Aesthetics is understood and followed. Practices provide the objective criteria for following ethical precepts and aesthetic events. A person's sincere belief that he/she is following an ethical precept or aesthetic guideline, though necessary, is not sufficient to judge that he/she is actually following an ethical precept or an aesthetic principle.

Secondly, there is regularity, meaning, Ethics and Aesthetics are repeatable procedures. In order to describe ethical and aesthetic events one has to describe practices, not one-time occurrences, whatever it might be (refer RFM 335). Like other practices, they are repeatable over time (and place) and across persons and they can be taught and learned. One action does not make a practice, ethical or aesthetical. As I am not justified to judge on the rule-following character of a creature on Mars who looked at something like a signpost, and then walked parallel to it (Nachlass124, 187), I have no justification to judge on its ethical or aesthetical character by observing one action, even if I knew all its feelings at that moment. It must act in a certain regular way. I need to see the action being repeated a number of times and more importantly its connection with the rest of the Martian's life.

Whether I would be able to judge the action of the Martian depends on how much I know about its stream of life. An action, like a word, can be judged only in the stream of life. Following an ethical/aesthetical precept involves the mastery of many interrelated practices and a whole web of human behaviour. One cannot do an action just once and claim that it is an ethical/aesthetical act. The whole circumstance would make the point clear, especially what preceded and followed that act. What in a complicated surrounding, we call ethical or aesthetical, we would not call it so if it stood in isolation; it relates to a way of living. Indeed, ethical and aesthetical acts will have their significance only in the context of a regular human life. The bedrock of our practices, including Ethics and Aesthetics, is the regularity of practice and agreement in judgements. This is something fundamental. Ethical and aesthetical take place in the sphere of actual behaviour of living human beings and its foundations are in the stream of our lives. As in the other cases of practices, we need normative regularity, not just natural regularity. That is our third point, normativity.

Normativity, here, means that regularity is subject to standards of correctness. Ethics and Aesthetics are concerned with how we ought to do rather than stating what or how we do. The distinction between is and ought ought to be kept here; there is a correct way of doing an ethical and aesthetic practice. These practices are not just regularities of behaviour but

regularities that have a normative force, ways human beings ought to act. It is manifested in a regularity that is normative which presupposes understanding and judgement. The judgement itself is possible only where an established pattern of behaviour is discernible. It is essential to have such standards of correctness to specify the scope and content of any ethical/aesthetical practice. This does not rule out creativity, growth and development in such practices. As in other practices, we not only inhabit these patterns but also shape them as we go on responsibly and creatively.

With regard to empirical and logical practices, the fact that most of us use similar concepts to represent the world means that our judging takes place within the context of an agreed framework such that disagreements are in principle resolvable. "People don't come to blows over it" (PI 240), as Wittgenstein remarked. Ethical/aesthetical precepts, however, do not make assertions about the world but propose ways of living, and disagreements about them cannot be resolved by reference to empirical and grammatical facts. What differentiates an ethical/aesthetical claim from an expression of preference is the claim to general validity, the claim that it is not just one way of being human but a correct way of being human. The value judgements are distinguished also by their personal dimension, meaning they are not accepted by all whereas the empirical judgements are accepted by the vast majority of us.

In answer to the question 'Why do you find certain ethical/aesthetical practices significant?' one typically narrates stories. Here giving examples and telling stories is not an indirect means of explaining – in default of a better. In the end, however, one can only reiterate one's reaction and say that it is because they are significant. Understanding such a response is similar to understanding a piece of music, according to Wittgenstein.

> Why must these bars be played just so? Why do I want to produce just this pattern of variation in loudness and tempo? I would like to say "Because I know what it's all about." But what is it all about? I should not be able to say. For explanation I can only translate the musical picture into a picture in another medium and let the one picture throw light on the other (PG 41).[17]

One has to understand the music, its characteristics by similarities of one musical note with another and its relation to other aspects of human life. Finally, one has to listen to the music and understand it. It is possible that there would be human beings who would lack this musical ear. Similarly,

[17]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, R. Rhees, ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974. PG is used as abbreviation in the text.

after giving various examples to elucidate an ethical picture what one could say further as a final argument against someone who did not want to go that way, would be: "Why, don't you see …!" – and that is no argument (refer RFM 50). That is not an argument not because it is something outside the realm of reason, but because it concerns the conditions for the possibility of the operations of reasons in following an ethical practice.[18] One has to see ethical connections, the way we perceive beauty in aesthetic objects and music in what we hear. As a result of practice, we hear something musical, see something beautiful and take something ethical. What we understand by 'music', 'beauty' and 'ethical' transcend what we describe in explaining 'music,' 'beauty' and 'ethics' and we speak about these phenomena more than what we can systematise. However, as Wittgenstein observes, 'Bit by bit there forms a system of what is believed', what we take to be musical, beautiful and ethical. If, according to Wittgenstein, "a poet too has constantly to ask himself; 'but is what I am writing really true?'" (CV 40), one has to raise the same question: 'Is what I am doing really true?' Here, the claim to truth expresses the claim that one way of living/being human is uniquely correct and that the standards embodied in this fundamental attitude are to be recognized by everyone just because this is so. We are committed to the truth of what we do and we cannot be indifferent regarding the truth of what we believe. One does not typically come to ethical perspectives through empirical observation and experimentation or philosophical investigations. Philosophical investigations clarify the concepts involved and their meanings as given by synoptic representations of the respective practices in ethical forms of life. One's belief and understanding of them are ultimately shown in one's life. The practices and beliefs are internally related and like other aspects of life, Ethics and Aesthetics are also "characterised by what we can and cannot do" (Z 345).[19] This is not a matter of not having sufficient explanations. We have reached the bedrock of explanations. At the bedrock level, however, the ethical and aesthetical practices do not stand alone; they are interwoven with other empirical claims and value judgements and held together by what lies around them.

They typically persuade others to recognize the validity of their claims, but their considerations provide only a framework or system of

[18]Luntley, M. *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, 110.

[19]Wittgenstein, *Zettel,* G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, eds., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967. The abbreviation Z is used in the text.

reference rather than an independent foundation. They can only persuade others with the need to make a fundamental option that cannot be made on the basis of scientific evidence or philosophical investigations. One can learn this knowledge not by taking a course in it, but through experience and training. One can also teach others by giving from time to time the right tip. – 'This is what 'learning' and 'teaching' are like here. – What one acquires here is not a technique; one learns correct judgments' (PI p. 227).

The rules here do not form a theoretical system but people follow them rightly as shown in their practices and ultimately in their lives. Wittgenstein wrote: "One can freely compare a firmly rooted picture in us with a superstition; but one can also say that one must always come to a firm ground, be it now a picture or not so that a picture at the source of all thoughts must be respected and not be treated as superstition (Nachlass138, 32b-33a.)."[20] Moreover, "If someone asks: How could the surroundings force the ethical in someone? – the answer is that he may indeed say, "There's no such thing as must", but at the same time under such circumstances such & such will be done' (Nachlass 173, 17r.)."[21] Aesthetical and ethical practices find their final justification in the stream of life. Life remains, as in the case of other practices, the bedrock of explanations.

5. Use of Pictures in Aesthetical and Ethical Discourses

In Wittgenstein's terms, we use pictures in our aesthetic and ethical discourses. These pictures are from our lives in the world and they are seen from an ethical/aesthetic point of view so that they correspond to ethical/aesthetic experience. "The picture has to be used in an entirely different way" (LC 63) from the way we use pictures in empirical matters. "An image (*Vorstellung*) is not a picture (*Bild*), but a picture (*Bild*) can correspond to it" (PI 301).[22] A picture can correspond to an idea or concept of aesthetical/ethical. However, the picture itself is not aesthetical or ethical; it is used in such discourses. "To believe in the truth of such a

[20]"*Ein in uns festes Bild kann man freilich dem Aberglauben vergleichen, aber doch auch sagen, daß man immer auf irgendeinen festen Grund kommen muß, sei er nun ein Bild, oder nicht, und also sei ein Bild am Grunde alles Denkens zu respektieren und nicht als ein Aberglaube zu behandeln*."

[21]"*Fragt man: Wie könnte die Umgebung den Menschen, das Ethische in ihm zwingen? – so ist die Antwort, daß er zwar sagen mag "Kein Mensch muß müssen," aber doch unter solchen Umständen so & so handeln wird*"

[22]*Vorstellung* is better translated as idea or concept rather than image to bring out the contrast from *Bild* (picture).

picture is to adopt what it says as one's norm of truth."[23] Moreover, as Wittgenstein observed, "a simile must be a simile of something. And if I can describe a fact by means of a simile I must also be able to drop the simile and describe the facts without it" (LE 10). In the case of ethical and aesthetical language, however, there are no facts behind the similes that could be independently described. "And so what at first appeared to be a simile now seems to be mere nonsense" (LE 10).

The *Tractatus* used an a priori, logical method with the assumption that language must be purified and analysed to conform to the logician's ideals. In contrast, the *Investigations* used a descriptive method: "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that" (PI 340). According to the *Tractatus* philosophical problems arise because "the logic of our language is misunderstood" (T Preface). We have these problems, according to the *Investigations,* because "we do not command a clear view of the use of our words" (*PI* 122). Though in both works he was concerned to find the limits of language and thought, in the *Investigations*, he moves from the realm of logic and form to that of ordinary language and actual use as the centre of the philosopher's attention and from an emphasis on definition and analysis to description of 'language-games,' 'family resemblance' and 'stream of life.' Ethical and aesthetic discourses could also be better understood and described in terms of 'language-games,' 'family resemblance' and 'stream of life.'

In his *Lecture on Ethics*, Wittgenstein made a distinction between relative and absolute value; the former is an empirical judgement while the latter is an ethical value statement. He clarified: "although all judgments of relative value can be shown to be mere statement of facts, no statement of fact can ever be, or imply, a judgment of absolute value" (LE 6). Aesthetic judgements are also not statements of facts and statements of facts cannot express aesthetic value. Language of information is different from the language of aesthetics and ethics. It is not that we use a different language but a different use of the language. "Do not forget that a poem even though it is composed in the language-game of information is not used in the language-game of giving information" (Z 160). He observed, "Our words used as we use them in science, are vessels capable only of containing and conveying meaning and sense, natural meaning and sense. Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water and if I were to pour out a gallon over it" (LE 7).

[23]Phillips, D. Z. *Wittgenstein and Religion*, London: Macmillan Press, 1993, 44.

Wittgenstein in his *Lecture on Ethics* narrated three pictures of absolute value: wonder that anything exists, feelings of absolute safety and absolute guilt and related them with the religious pictures of God as Creator, Father and Judge respectively. His ethical thoughts were interwoven with religious beliefs, though he did not consider himself as a religious person. He was using a kind of *via eminentiae* to speak on Ethics – wonder that anything exists, feelings of absolute safety and absolute guilt. Believers could see these experiences as related to God. Wittgenstein compared them with the views of God as Creator, Father and Judge. These pictures are used often in literary works. The first, the experience of wonder at the existence of the world is, in his view, exactly what "people were referring to when they said that God created the world." According to him,

> When someone who believes in God looks around him and asks, "Where did everything that I see come from?" "Where did everything come from?" he is not asking for a (causal) explanation; and the point of his question is that it is the expression of such a request. Thus, he is expressing an attitude toward all explanations (RC 317).[24]

This is not a scientific enquiry regarding the origin of the world but wonder at the existence of the world here and now. In other words, this is to see the world as a miracle (LE 11). A miracle, for Wittgenstein is "a gesture which God makes" (CV 51); "It must be as it were a sacred gesture" (CV 57). For believers this is to confess God's presence and power in the created world; to see the world as God's world rather than merely as a material world, 'my world' or 'our world.' The scientific point of view does not see the world as a miracle, but something that is there for exploration, experimentation and explanation. From a scientific point of view, "the world is all that is the case" (TLP 1). Scientists try to understand its workings and to control the order of events. They are not typically moved by wonder but curiosity. There is nothing 'mystical' about it. Religious believers, on the other hand, see the world in its relation to God. The world is seen as God's world; he created it and sustains it miraculously.

The feeling of absolute safety has been described as feeling safe in the "hands of God" (LE 10). Malcolm, in his *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, mentions an incident in Wittgenstein's life at about the age of twenty-one that had caused a change in his attitude to religion.

> In Vienna he saw a play that was a mediocre drama, but in it one of the characters expressed the thought that no matter what happened in

[24]Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, G. E. M. Anscombe, ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 1977. RC is used as abbreviation in the text.

> the world, nothing bad could happen to him – he was independent of fate and circumstances. Wittgenstein was struck by this stoic thought; for the first time he saw the possibility of religion.[25]

Only in the hands of God is one absolutely safe. To be safe normally means that I am protected from some perceived bad states of affairs. It is categorically different ('nonsense,' according to LE) to say that I am safe whatever happens. This is to give an absolute value, which can be seen only in relation to God, the Absolute Reality. Again this is a special use ('misuse,' according to LE) of the word 'safe' as the other example of wonder at the existence of the world (LE 9). In his personal life, however, Wittgenstein could not submit himself into God's hands: ""Trust in God." But I am far away from trusting God. From where I am to trusting God is a long way,"[26] he wrote in his diary in 1946 (Nachlass 133, 9r). He believed, however, that "a being that is in relation with God is strong" (Nachlass 183, 56).[27]

The experience of absolute guilt is "described by the phrase that God disapproves of our conduct" (LE 10). According to Malcolm,

> Wittgenstein did once say that he thought that he could understand the conception of God, in so far as it is involved in one's awareness of one's own sin and guilt. … I think that the ideas of Divine judgement, forgiveness, and redemption had some intelligibility for him, as being related in his mind to feelings of disgust with himself, an intense desire for purity, and a sense of the helplessness of human beings to make themselves better.[28]

The thought that one-day he has to give an account of his life is a dominant streak in his religious remarks. It is not just that the Judge would examine his case, but that he should judge himself is overpowering for Wittgenstein. As he struggled for perfection, he always found himself wanting; sometimes outright disgusting.

> This sentence [God disapproves of our conduct] can be, for example, the expression of the highest responsibility. Just imagine, after all, that you were placed before the judge! What would your life look like, how would it appear to yourself if you stood in front of him? Quite irrespective of

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[25]Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 58.

[26]""*Auf Gott vertrauen.*" *Aber vom Gottvertrauen bin ich weit entfernt. Von da, wo ich bin, zum Gottvertrauen ist ein weiter Weg.*"

[27]"*Ein Wesen, das mit Gott in Verbindung steht, ist stark.*"

[28]Malcolm, N. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, 59.

> how it would appear to him & whether he is understanding or not understanding, merciful or not merciful (Nachlass183, 147).

In spite of the fact that God is a terrible or merciful Judge who would examine my life in the strictest possible way (or with understanding) I must so live that I can stand before him when he comes (Nachlass 183, 185). Here the ideal of the duty of a genius becomes the duty of a slave to the master. In his personal life Wittgenstein could not submit himself to become a slave, though he prayed: "Lord, if only I knew that I am a slave!" (Nachlass 183, 210).[29] He also confessed: "I cannot utter the word "Lord" meaningfully. Because I do not believe that he will come to judge me; because that says nothing to me. And it could only say something to me if I were to live quite differently" (CV 38). Here also philosophy cannot resolve the truth of the issue whether there is a God, whether he is merciful or very strict, or whether there is a judgement.

Wittgenstein related his ethical views not only with religious pictures but also with aesthetical values. Though an admirer of Kierkegaard he seems to have brought closer the aesthetical, ethical and religious in their distinction from scientific and empirical descriptions. According to him, "The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man" (TLP 6.43). The aesthetical and ethical worlds are categorically different from the empirical world. It is not an empirical difference but in the way we live, move, and have our being in the world. It is the life that gives meaning and significance to our words and deeds, which includes aesthetical and ethical.

6. Conclusion

What I learn from Wittgenstein is that one has to take aesthetics and ethics as something fundamental and resist temptations to explain it or to reduce it to something else for which a philosophical or scientific point of view is capable of providing an answer. The aesthetical and ethical are fundamental not because of any epistemic or phenomenological property, but by virtue of the place it occupies in our lives. Following Wittgenstein, ethical and aesthetic language is a matter for "A Grammatical Investigation." "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar)" (*PI* 373). "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that" (*PI* 340). In a grammatical investigation we ask questions like: "How did we learn the meaning of this word? "How would one set

[29] *"Das Knien bedeutet, daß man ein Sklave ist.* (*Darin könnte die Religion bestehen.*) *Herr, wenn ich nur wußte, daß ich ein Sklave bin*!"

about teaching a child to use this word?" (*PI* 77, 244). "In order to get clear about aesthetic words you have to describe ways of living. We think we have to talk about aesthetic judgments like "This is beautiful," but we find that if we have to talk about aesthetic judgments we don't find these words at all, but a word used something like a gesture, accompanying a complicated activity" (*LC* 35). This is also true about ethical judgements; we need to describe ways of living for clarifying ethical concepts and precepts.

A grammatical investigation shows that the use of the words like 'good,' 'beautiful,' and 'just' have rich filigree patterns and remain concepts without fixed boundaries. We may draw the boundaries to serve particular purposes. However, "A sharper concept would not be the same concept. That is: the sharper concept wouldn't have the value for us that the blurred one does" (LW I, 267).[30] Following Augustine, one could say regarding many of the key aesthetic and ethical words like 'good,' 'beautiful' and 'just:'

> Something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it, is something that we need to remind ourselves of. (And it is obviously something of which for some reason it is difficult to remind oneself) (PI 42).[31]

In fact, the search for an object that stands for 'beauty' or 'good' is the result of ignorance regarding both the language and truth of the aesthetical and ethical. It is the deep-seated philosophical prejudice that bewitches us to treat all words as names referring to objects. Aesthetical and ethical language is part of human language-use and forms a kind of family resemblance from a varied and interconnected complex network of different language-games. All are not of equal value, but they overlap and crisscross, witnessing and contributing to the richness of human experience, shedding light on the nature of Aesthetics and Ethics. It is to be reminded that we do not use any special language in these fields of human life. It is a special use of our ordinary language. A critical understanding of the use of the word would involve looking into the actual uses of the word, their internal coherence, their functions in the stream of life and how they are related to the rest of life. We should remind ourselves constantly of Wittgenstein's repeated observation that 'Only in the stream of thought and life do words

[30]Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on The Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. I, ed., G. H. Von Wright, and Heikki Nyman, trans., C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue, London: Basil Blackwell, 1990. The abbreviation LW I is used in the text.

[31]He quoted Augustine in Latin, "*quid est ergo tempus? si nemo ex me quaerat scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio*."

have meaning' (Nachlass 137, 29a, 41b, 66a; 138, 24b; 232, 765; 233a, 35).[32] The attempts to find the meanings of aesthetical and ethical vocabulary, removing all their surrounding thought and life are bound to fail. The meaning of such words cannot be found, if one excludes all the ethical and aesthetical discourses and practices that are interwoven with other aspects of human life. Once these familiar surroundings are excluded, 'good,' 'beautiful,' 'just,' etc. becomes problematic, which is not the case in the particular language games. The concept of 'good,', 'beautiful,' 'just,' etc. are characterized by their particular functions in human life (Z 532). One would like to say 'good,', 'beautiful,' 'just,' etc. have this position in our life; has these connexions. That is to say: we only call 'good,', 'beautiful,' 'just,' etc. what have these positions, these connexions.[33] Wittgenstein asks: "How did we learn the meaning of this word? From what sort of examples? In what language-games?" "How would one set about teaching a child to use this word?" (refer PI 77, 244). We should also remind ourselves, "we learn words in certain contexts" (BB 9) and explore those contexts of applications.

What I learn from Wittgenstein is that one has to take these aesthetical and ethical concepts as something fundamental and resist the temptation to explain them or to reduce them to something else for which a philosophical or scientific point of view is capable of providing an answer. These concepts are something fundamental not because of any epistemic or phenomenological properties, but by virtue of their place it occupies in human lives.[34] Scientists are not called upon to pass judgements on the truths about aesthetics and ethics; they are not susceptible for empirical verification. Nonetheless we cannot be genuinely indifferent to the question of whether our aesthetic and ethical judgements are true or not. If we discover that those truths are false, we reject them. There are in our lives, however, many more truths than are acquired by way of personal verification. That does not mean that they are not real. As in other matters of philosophy, though hard to achieve, realism but not empiricism (RFM 325) is the noble goal in a philosophical discourse on Aesthetics and Ethics, after Wittgenstein.

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[32]"*Nur in dem Fluß der Gedanken und des Lebens haben die Worte Bedeutung.*"

[33]'The concept of pain is characterized by its particular function in our life' (Z 532). 'Pain has this position in our life; has these connexions; (That is to say: we only call "pain" what has this position, these connexions)' (Z 533).

[34]Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion*, 233.